

Editors' Foreword

The International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT) offers a multi-perspectival interpretation of the books of the Old Testament to a broad, international audience of scholars, laypeople and pastors. Biblical commentaries too often reflect the fragmented character of contemporary biblical scholarship, where different geographical or methodological sub-groups of scholars pursue specific methodologies and/or theories with little engagement of alternative approaches. This series, published in English and German editions, brings together editors and authors from North America, Europe, and Israel with multiple exegetical perspectives.

From the outset the goal has been to publish a series that was “international, ecumenical and contemporary.” The international character is reflected in the composition of an editorial board with members from six countries and commentators representing a yet broader diversity of scholarly contexts.

The ecumenical dimension is reflected in at least two ways. First, both the editorial board and the list of authors includes scholars with a variety of religious perspectives, both Christian and Jewish. Second, the commentary series not only includes volumes on books in the Jewish Tanach/Protestant Old Testament, but also other books recognized as canonical parts of the Old Testament by diverse Christian confessions (thus including the deuterocanonical Old Testament books).

When it comes to “contemporary,” one central distinguishing feature of this series is its attempt to bring together two broad families of perspectives in analysis of biblical books, perspectives often described as “synchronic” and “diachronic” and all too often understood as incompatible with each other. Historically, diachronic studies arose in Europe, while some of the better known early synchronic studies originated in North America and Israel. Nevertheless, historical studies have continued to be pursued around the world, and focused synchronic work has been done in an ever greater variety of settings. Building on these developments, we aim in this series to bring synchronic and diachronic methods into closer alignment, allowing these approaches to work in a complementary and mutually-informative rather than antagonistic manner.

Since these terms are used in varying ways within biblical studies, it makes sense to specify how they are understood in this series. Within IECOT we understand “synchronic” to embrace a variety of types of study of a biblical text *in one given stage of its development*, particularly its final stage(s) of development in existing manuscripts. “Synchronic” studies embrace non-historical narratological, reader-response and other approaches along with historically-informed exegesis of a particular stage of a biblical text. In contrast, we understand “diachronic” to embrace the full variety of modes of study of a biblical text *over time*.

This diachronic analysis may include use of manuscript evidence (where available) to identify documented pre-stages of a biblical text, judicious use of clues within the biblical text to reconstruct its formation over time, and also an examination of the ways in which a biblical text may be in dialogue with earlier biblical (and non-biblical) motifs, traditions, themes, etc. In other words, diachronic study focuses on what might be termed a “depth dimension” of a given text—how a

text (and its parts) has journeyed over time up to its present form, making the text part of a broader history of traditions, motifs and/or prior compositions. Synchronic analysis focuses on a particular moment (or moments) of that journey, with a particular focus on the final, canonized form (or forms) of the text. Together they represent, in our view, complementary ways of building a textual interpretation.

Of course, each biblical book is different, and each author or team of authors has different ideas of how to incorporate these perspectives into the commentary. The authors will present their ideas in the introduction to each volume. In addition, each author or team of authors will highlight specific contemporary methodological and hermeneutical perspectives—e.g. gender-critical, liberation-theological, reception-historical, social-historical—appropriate to their own strengths and to the biblical book being interpreted. The result, we hope and expect, will be a series of volumes that display a range of ways that various methodologies and discourses can be integrated into the interpretation of the diverse books of the Old Testament.

Fall 2012 The Editors

Author's Preface

The exposition of Joel and Amos in the *Biblischer Kommentar* series came from the pen of Hans Walter Wolff in 1969. From the summer semester of 1967 I was privileged to be his student assistant in Heidelberg. In the winter semester of 1967/68 I attended Wolff's seminar on Tradition and Inspiration in Amos. In 1969 Wolff became my dissertation supervisor. His commentary on Amos was, as it were, my exegetical nourishment.

A quarter of a century later, in 1993, I assumed the position of professor of Old Testament in Marburg. My colleague there was Jörg Jeremias. Very soon after his arrival in Marburg, in 1995, his commentary on Amos in the *Altes Testament Deutsch* series appeared.

A further quarter century later, my own exposition of the book of Amos is about to appear in the *International Exegetical Commentary of the Old Testament*. In view of my background biography, just sketched, it will be evident that the two editors Walter Dietrich and Helmut Utzschneider needed to work very hard to persuade me to take on this task. In retrospect, I am very grateful for their efforts.

There are many metaphors: You follow in the footsteps of the great, stand on the shoulders of giants or even in their shadow. Whatever the metaphor, I think that a new interpretation of Amos in a new series is entirely justified. After all, scholarship has not come to a stop in the past half century. This is particularly clear in the way the Amos visions are seen. For Wolff and Jeremias they are part of the original material in the Amos tradition and are key texts for the overall understanding of the book of Amos, whereas, in step with several recent studies, I take them to be later reflective texts. In addition, the approach with regard to the book as a whole, prepared by Wolff and brought to fruition by Jeremias, is followed even more consistently. The format of the IECOT, which prioritizes the synchronic approach, facilitates this.

But a new commentary does not have to be fully original. Anyone who knows the commentaries and other works of Wolff and Jeremias will quickly discern what I owe to them—and of course to the many others who have dealt with this stirring prophetic book.

I would like to thank the two aforementioned editors Walter Dietrich and Helmut Utzschneider for their encouragement and support, the editorial staff for the careful examination of the manuscript and Mr. Specker of Kohlhammer Verlag for his helpful, competent, and patient care in the development of the manuscript. As a retiree, one no longer has assistants available for proofreading. So I am especially grateful to my wife Christiane for giving me the beginning of her own retirement for a careful review of the proofs.

Marburg and Frankfurt am Main, December 2020