OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES
FOR THE PASTOR’S STUDY

Ninth Edition
2014/updated 2016
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The explosion in the publication of biblical commentaries mentioned in the first edition of this list, which was published in the Fall 1985 issue of the Quarterly, continues unabated. Liberal commentaries! Conservative commentaries! Scholars’ commentaries! Pastors’ commentaries! Lay commentaries! Application commentaries! Dozens of commentary series are appearing on the market, all claiming to meet the Bible student’s needs. Some catalogs carry more than a dozen different commentaries on certain books of the Bible. More commentaries are now appearing on CD-ROMs or by download. More purely on-line commentaries are appearing. It has become almost impossible to keep up with the latest developments because of the mass of material. It is not surprising that seminary students, who are in the process of building their theological libraries, frequently ask for a list of recommended commentaries to guide them in their purchases. This 9th edition of this list is intended to address that need and at the same time to provide up-to-date information for parish pastors who are adding to their libraries or doing research for a paper (The 3rd Edition was published in WLQ, Jan. 1996, the fourth in WLQ, Summer 2001, the subsequent versions have been electronic only.) The list below is based on a combination of personal use of the commentaries, consultation with other seminary professors, and the evaluations of reviewers and bibliographers.


Any list of commentaries is naturally subjective and open to dispute. The following criteria were used in compiling this list. Exegetical commentaries based on the original languages were given preference over commentaries based on the English text. An attempt has been made to choose recent commentaries which include up-to-date linguistic, archeological, and historical information and which include a summary or evaluation of recent scholarship and critical views concerning the biblical book. Preference is given to sound Lutheran commentaries and then Evangelical commentaries with a high view of Scripture.

For some books, especially of the Old Testament, no commentary is available which meets all these criteria. In many cases, a conservative, Evangelical commentary, which has a high view of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture and which maintains a scriptural view of the authorship of the biblical books, is the best choice available. In some cases one must settle for even less, although the available selection of OT commentaries has improved in the last decade. There are now many more Evangelical commentaries available on the Old Testament, and a distinctly Lutheran series is well underway from Concordia. The proliferation of Evangelical commentaries is, however, a mixed blessing since many “Evangelical” commentaries make more concessions to the views of negative higher criticism than commentaries bearing such a label would have in the past. Therefore, inclusion of a commentary on this list is not an endorsement of all its doctrinal or isagogical views. The term “best rated” refers to the evaluation of academic reviewers,
not to the theological worth of the volume. It is assumed that the readers will be able to sort the wheat from
the chaff. Only English commentaries are included, except for a few German commentaries which are an
important part of our Synodical Conference heritage. Some out-of-print books are included since students
may obtain them through book auctions, and many older books are being reprinted or appearing in CD-ROM
collections or online.

Since the quality of volumes within any series varies, as your lead commentary on each biblical book it
is wise to choose the best volumes from various sets, rather than to buy one complete set. If your budget
permits, you can also buy one or two of the best sets and then supplement your library with the best volumes
from other series. Another reason to avoid commitment to one-author sets is that authors tend to repeat
themselves when writing on similar subjects. So if, for example, you have one writer on Matthew, get
someone else on Mark and a third writer on Luke.

In choosing individual volumes consider 1) the length and thoroughness of the volume; 2) the depth of
its treatment of the original text—is the author more interested in what the text says or in his own opinion
about the topic the text is discussing? Does the author give special attention to the most difficult passages, or
does he spend a lot of time explaining the obvious? 3) the clarity of its organization; 4) its readability—
does the author provide apt statements and striking expressions useful for sermons and classes? 5) last but
not least, the author’s theological stance.

Volumes marked with an asterisk are more recommended. Reprints of older commentaries may be
published by a different publisher than the original printing. Whenever possible, the original publication
date and the most recent publisher have been used in this list. Commentary titles are not included in the lists
below unless they are markedly different from the name of the biblical book which the commentary covers.

OLD TESTAMENT SINGLE VOLUME

Single volume commentaries are generally too brief to be very helpful for exegetical work. The
Concordia Study Bible based on the NIV serves the purpose of a one-volume commentary and is a better
choice than any of the one-volume commentaries on the market. Lutheran Study Bible based on the ESV is
a more recent Concordia project but is somewhat weak on archaeology. But for those who want a one-
volume commentary The Concordia Self-Study Commentary (1979) by Roehrs and Franzmann is the best
choice.

OLD TESTAMENT SETS

The general characteristics of each set and the name of its publisher are given below. Theological
classifications will not necessarily be repeated for individual volumes in the book listings unless the volume
in question has a stance different from the general position of its series.

**The Concordia Commentary (Concordia) is still in progress, but the initial volumes are all best buys for
Lutheran pastors. It appears that this series will become the commentary which provides an up-to-date
replacement for Keil and Delitzsch as the Lutheran standard.

*New International Commentary (NICOT) (Eerdmans). Some early volumes are being replaced by new
works. Recent progress has been slow. Some of its volumes are the best recent works on the books they
cover. Others make too many concessions to negative criticism, but are still useful. It was once the best in-
depth set available, but its stock seems to be falling.

*The New American Commentary (NAC) by Broadman Press competes with the NICOT as the best series of
conservative Evangelical commentaries on the Old Testament, particularly for the historical books. It
represents a conservative Baptist viewpoint. It is a bit less “academic” than the NICOT, but in some respects the volumes are more useful for pastors. May be millennial in some volumes.

*Tyndale (TOT) (Inter-Varsity Press). This set is generally conservative and evangelical. It is now complete. Although it is semi-popular in style, it is, nevertheless, useful for some books for which there is no recent, conservative, in-depth commentary. Its inexpensive paperback format makes it one of the best choices for a second “back-up” commentary on OT books.

*Expositor’s Bible Commentary (EBC) (Zondervan). Six volumes cover the whole OT. Evangelical, generally conservative. Many authors are premillennialists, but this slant does not show up as often as one might expect. An economical way to get up-to-date information on the whole OT. A set to back up your first commentary on each book. Now available on CD-ROM.

*Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Revised Edition (REBC) (Zondervan). Now updated and revised with 60% of the volumes by new authors. Useful but not heavy duty.

*Keil-Delitzsch (KD) (Eerdmans). Though this set is over a century old and is dated in some respects, it has not yet been replaced by a suitable Lutheran series which covers the whole Old Testament. Though generally conservative, it is not sound in all places. It is not the most readable series. Since it is no longer under copyright, it is often included on CD-ROM collections such as the Ages Library. It’s also available online for free in the E-sword package: [http://www.e-sword.net/commentaries.html](http://www.e-sword.net/commentaries.html)

Although our own *People’s Bible (PB) is written to be a lay commentary, it should also be of great help to our pastors for sermon and Bible class preparation. It can be supplemented by other sets for exegetical work. It is normally not mentioned in the following lists, unless no conservative exegetical commentary is available on that book.

*New International Version Application Commentary (NIVAC) (Zondervan). As the title suggests, it focuses more on application than on detailed exegesis of the Hebrew text, though some volumes offer more exegesis than others. Volumes vary in quality and thoroughness.

Some volumes of Word’s Communicator’s Commentary (ComCom) are worthwhile on application of the text, but many are too shallow. Inter-Varsity’s The Bible Speaks Today (TBST) has some useful volumes. Readability and practical application is their long suit.

Reformed Expository Commentary aims to give careful attention to the biblical text, to present doctrinal conclusions compatible with the Reformed faith, and to provide practical applications of the doctrines found in the Bible. This is not an in-depth exegetical commentary. There are a number of references to the Hebrew text, however, and the busy pastor who is seeking a sampling of such insights will appreciate them.

So far only three volumes of Baker’s *Expositor’s Guide to the Historical Books (EGHB) are available. Both are very fine additions to a pastor’s library, but it seems this series is progressing slowly or defunct.

The first few volumes of *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (WEC), a series begun by Moody and rumored to be completed by Baker, looked promising, but this series too seems to be on permanent hiatus.

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament (ACCOT) (InterVarsity) – a compilation of patristic commentary on the Old Testament.

Apollos Old Testament Commentary (AOTC) (Intervarsity)  Just getting underway with five volumes.

Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (BCOTWP)—some good volumes and some disasters.  Series now complete.

Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament  A new series to keep an eye on.  So far only three volumes are available—Obadiah, Jonah, Ruth.

The following series are weak theologically, but are often helpful with linguistic, textual, and historical information for detailed exegesis. They also provide information on recent critical views. They are recommended more for library use than for purchase:

Hermeneia (HERM) (Fortress)—all volumes are very poor theologically, some are quite useful linguistically.

The Anchor Bible (AB) (Doubleday—now published by Yale)—some horrible, some quite useful, especially on the historical books.

Continental Commentaries (ContCom) (Augsburg)—a few useful volumes.

The Old Testament Library (OTL) (Westminster)—ditto.

JPS Torah Series (JPST) (Jewish Publication Society)—some volumes of this series on the Pentateuch are helpful with the Hebrew text and the rabbinic interpretation.

The International Critical Commentary (ICC) (T&T Clark)—the original volumes are quite dated.  Replacements are beginning to appear (NICC).

Many of the Old Testament commentaries of the *Word Bible Commentary (WBC)* fall into the liberal category.  This is disappointing since it was expected that this series would be more conservative.  Several of the more recent volumes of this series have been quite useful, but as a whole the series is a very mixed bag.  In spite of their theological shortcomings the *Word* and *Hermeneia* volumes often provide the help with difficulties in the Hebrew text.

The following series are generally not recommended.  Some are too critical, without enough redeeming linguistic value; others are too brief:  *Brazos, Berit Olam, The New Century Bible, Interpretation, Interpreter’s Bible, New Interpreter’s Bible, International Theological Commentary, Broadman’s, Cambridge Bible Commentary, Daily Study Commentary, Good News Commentary, Torch Commentary, Moody’s Everyman’s Commentary.*  This list is not comprehensive.

The *NET* is an online translation rather than a commentary but its notes have a lot of linguistic and textual information which is useful to the exegete.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

The Anchor Bible (AB)
Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament (ACCOT)
Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (BCOTWP)
  The Bible Speaks Today (TBST)
Bible Student’s Commentary (BSC)
Communicator’s Commentary (ComCom)
THE BEST VOLUMES ON SPECIFIC BOOKS

**CONCORDIA COMMENTARY (Concordia)**
Continental Commentaries (ContCom)
Expositor’s Bible Commentary (EBC)
*Expositor’s Guide to the Historical Books (EGHB)
Hermeneia (HERM)
International Critical Commentary (ICC)
JPS Torah (JPST)
*Keil-Delitzsch (KD)
*New American Commentary (NAC)
New Century Bible Commentary (NCBC)
*New International Commentary (NICOT)
New International Biblical Commentary (NIBCOT)
New International Version Application Commentary (NICAC)
*People’s Bible (PB)
Reformed Expository Commentary
The Old Testament Library (OTL)
*Tyndale Old Testament (TOT)
Word Bible Commentary (WBC)
Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (ZECOT)

* indicates most recommended series

THE PENTATEUCH

**GENESIS** For a commentary which covers the whole book, this is a tough choice, because even Evangelical commentaries often waver on the crucial early chapters of Genesis. One-volume commentaries on Genesis are often skimpy on difficult points. Hamilton and Wenham are the most highly rated, recent, Evangelical commentaries on the whole book.

**Lawrenz and Jeske, NPH, 2004,** fills the need for a sound treatment of Genesis 1-11. At present there are no plans to extend this commentary beyond the first eleven chapters.

*Hamilton, NICOT, Genesis 1-17, 1990; Genesis 18-50, 1995. Good overview of different view points, but sometimes wishy-washy on taking a stand on key issues.


Others to consider as backups:


Sarna, JPST, 1989. Jewish commentary, helpful with the Hebrew.


Don’t forget Luther’s Works, Volumes 1-8, American Edition, for theological insight.
EXODUS  We need help here. No recent, conservative, exegetical commentary is available. The Word volume by Durham is one of the theological low points of the series. Until a worthy contender comes along, make-do with:

*Stuart, NAC, 2006. Series is useful as a second commentary on historical books.]
Childs, OTL, 1974. Moderately liberal, but useful for linguistic information, this is the most highly regarded commentary on Exodus.
Cassuto, Magnes, 1951, is helpful with the Hebrew.
Jacob, Ktav, 1992 reprint. Traditional Jewish commentary.
Houtman, Kampen Kok, 1993—3 volume Dutch commentary being translated to English.

LEVITICUS  Some pretty good choices are available:

*Hartley, WBC, 1992. Makes too many concessions to critical views but is helpful on interpretation of the Hebrew text.
Levine, JPST, 1989, is also helpful on the Hebrew.
(EBC Vol 2 by Harris,REBC by Hess; or Harrison, TOT, 1980, make good backups).

NUMBERS  Things are looking up here:

*Harrison, WEC, 1990, is the best available overall, but
*Ashley, NICOT, 1993, is most helpful on difficult passages.
Milgrom, JPST, 1990, is helpful on the Hebrew text.
Levine, AB, Numbers 1-20, 1993, Numbers 21-36, 2000, is helpful on the Hebrew but critical.
(Good backups—*Wenham, TOT, 1982, and EBC Vol 2 by Allen.)
Not recommended: Budd, Word.
DEUTERONOMY Still a little thin here:
*Merrill, NAC, 1994. Another useful volume from this series.
Ridderbos, BSC, 1984. Many of the volumes of this Dutch series by Zondervan have been supplanted by the BSC, but this defense of Mosaic authorship is still useful.
Weinfeld, AB, Numbers 1-11, 1991, highly rated but critical.
(Good backups—*Thompson, TOT, 1974; EBC Vol 3, 1992; Braun, The People’s Bible).

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

JOSHUA
*Woudstra, NICOT, 1981. Still a contender for second place.
Butler, WBC, 1983, and Boling, AB, 1982, for bibliographies and technical information, but both too critical.
(Backup—EBC Vol 3 )

JUDGES Things are looking up, but could still use a “heavy-weight.”
Boda, REBC, 2013, helpful.
Younger, NIVAC, 2002. More on the original text than most of this series.
Boling, AB, 1975, for help with Hebrew and background.

RUTH One volume will give you everything you need on Ruth:
Bush, WBC, 1996, with Esther.
(Backups—Block, NAC on Judges. Cundall/Morris, TOT, 1968. EBC, Vol 3.)
Also Campbell, AB, 1975. Useful on the social background.
Sasson, JSOT, 1989, is useful on the Hebrew.

Things are looking somewhat better for the next six books than they did a few years ago, but no heavy weights are available.

1 and 2 SAMUEL Still missing an in-depth conservative commentary.
*Bergen, NAC, 1996. Helpful, but relatively brief.

Youngblood in *EBC 3*, Zondervan, 1992. *REBC 2009*


1 and 2 KINGS Still lacking an in-depth Evangelical commentary.


Devries, *1 Kg*, *WBC*, 1985. Too critical,


(Backup—Keil Delitzsch)

1 and 2 CHRONICLES Still waiting for a good commentary.

Hill, *NIVAC*, 2003. Treats as historical but with some critical concessions. On application,


Braun, *1 Ch*, *WBC*, 1986. Liberal, but help with the Hebrew.


Japhet, *OTL*, 1993. May be more useful than the *WBC* volumes. Good on Hebrew, weak theology.


Williamson, *NCB*, 1982. Maybe useful in a weak field,

EZRA and NEHEMIAH Several good choices here.


Williamson, *WBC*, 1985, is the most highly rated, but more critical.


ESTHER Adequate resources to fill the need, but no conservative in-depth commentary is available.


*Breneman, included in the Ezra-Nehemiah volume cited above.


Moore, *AB*, 1971. For linguistic and historical information, but weak otherwise.

POETICAL BOOKS

**JOB** One of the most difficult books in Hebrew. No recent, in-depth Evangelical option.


*Andersen, TOT, 1976. Good, but limited in size.


Alden, NAC, 1993. Less comprehensive than Hartley, but perhaps useful for pastors.

*Honsey, People’s Bible, 1992, will be most helpful to the pastor on the theology. Christo-centric.

(Backup—*EBC Vol. 4 by Smick. REBC, 2010.)

*Zuck, Sitting With Job, Baker, 1992, is not a commentary but a useful volume of essays on topics from Job.


For additional help with the Hebrew of this very difficult book see:


**PSALMS**

**Brug, Psalms I and II, NPH, 2005. Lutheran with focus on Messianic prophecy.**


*Kidner’s treatment (TOT, 2 vol, 1973, 1975) is brief, but useful.

*In EBC Vol 5 (1991) REBC, 2008, the treatment by VanGemerden is useful, but brief.

Delitzsch (3 volumes, 1867) remains a standard.

Leupold’s exposition (Baker, 1959/1972) is useful for Lutheran insights.

Zorn (1921), Starke (1750), and Hengstenberg (1869) are useful German Lutheran works.

Stoeckhardt’s comments on selected psalms (1915) are also available in English.

Lillegard’s study (1954) is useful for Lutheran insights.

Perowne (1878) and Alexander (1850) are useful evangelical classics available in reprint.

*WBC (3 vol by Craigie, Tate, and Allen, 1983-1990) and ConC (2 vol by Kraus, 1966/1987-1989) help with up-to-date linguistic information, but are unsatisfactory theologically.

Hossfeld and Zenger. (Herm ) Psalms 2, 2005, is expected to become the standard for critical commentaries.

Goldingay, 3 volumes, BCOTWP, 2006-2008, is disappointingly liberal. Not recommended except for grammar, etc.

DeClaisse-Walford, Jacobson and Tanner (the new NICOT volume, 2014) tends to focus on what’s trending (e.g. gender neutrality), but the Psalms which Jacobson comments on (interspersed throughout) are worth consulting.

**PROVERBS**

Some recent good developments. Three pretty good choices.

**Steinmann, Concordia, 2009. Best buy for Lutheran pastors.**


In EBC 5 (1991) by Ross is useful, but very brief. Somewhat critical.


Delitzsch is still useful.

**ECCLESIASTES** The recently published Concordia Commentary leaps to the top.

* J. Schuetze, *Nowhere Man*, NPH Bible class.
* Zorn, *Gottestrost* is a useful German work.


**(Backups—EBC 5 (1991) by Wright is somewhat helpful. REBC, Shepherd, 2008. Also the People’s Bible by Ehlke.**)

**SONG OF SOLOMON** The difficulty is choosing between commentaries that take the “natural” approach or the “spiritual” approach.

* Brug, NPH, 1995, tries to give balanced view of both approaches. Very brief. 100 pp. For Bible class.

* Zorn (German) is useful on the “spiritual” interpretation.
* Pope, *AB* (1977) provides a massive linguistic analysis and background information, but is too critical in interpretation.


**THE PROPHETS**
**ISAIAH** No ideal, recent commentary on the whole book is yet available. Most recent efforts are too critical, including Watt’s two volumes in *WBC*. The Concordia is on the way.

**Lessing, Is 40-55, Concordia, 2011.**


*Young, 3 volumes, early *NICOT*, Eerdmans, 1952-1965. Still useful though Oswalt is its intended replacement.*

Motyer, InterVarsity, 1994. An evangelical, one-volume treatment. A good second choice,


(Backup—*EBC* Vol 6, 1986, also covers the major prophets. *REBC*, 2008, by Grogan)

**JEREMIAH** No standout volume. Some good linguistic help, but weak theology.

*Thompson, *NICOT*, 1980. More critical than other volumes in this series, but probably best overall choice here.*


Fretheim, *SHBC* (Smith & Helwys), 2004. 5* on text.


Also McKane, new *ICC*, 1986.


**LAMENTATIONS** Included in Laetsch and Harrison above.

Hillers, *AB* (1972) is the most useful volume on the Hebrew text.


See Dearman and Huey above. Ferris in *REBC* 7.

**EZEKIEL** Millennialism is a problem with many evangelical commentaries on the prophetic books.

**Hummel, 2 volumes, Concordia, 2005, 2007. Sound Lutheran treatment.**


Keil’s work is still helpful.

Zimmerli’s massive 2 vol work in the *HERM* series (1979) is useful for detailed exegesis, but is theologically unsound.

DANIEL
*Young, Eerdmans, 1949. Sound on prophecy, somewhat dry.
*Baldwin, TOT, 1978. Another balanced careful work.
Goldingay, WBC, 1989. Lots of technical help, but very liberal.

MINOR PROPHETS The last decade has produced an embarrassment of riches here. It is now less necessary to settle for critical commentaries here. Because the different series divide the twelve books differently, it is difficult to make a consecutive listing of volumes.

On all twelve books:
*The five TOT volumes on the minor prophets give brief, solid treatments:
  *Hubbard, Hosea, 1989. One of the more thorough TOT.
  *Hubbard, Joel and Amos, 1989.
*The WBC volumes by *Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, (1987) and by Smith, Micah-Malachi (1984) are more Evangelical than most of this series.

Some other selected volumes:
HOSEA  Dearman, NICOT, 2010. 5* on the text.
  Kidner, TBST, 1981. Lively interpretation.
JOEL  *Finley, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, WEC, 1990. Evangelical.
MICAH  Waltke, Eerdmans, 2007, 5* on text.
  Patterson, WEC, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, WEC, 1991.
  Armerding in EBC 7. REBC 8, 2008.
ZEPHANIAH  See Baker, *TOT*, above.
   Boda, *NIVAC*, 2004. Also on Zechariah.  5*

MESSIANIC PROPHECY
*Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament* (2 Vol), McDonald  Publishing Reprint. 1854 original.
   In-depth exegetical articles on key passages.