

Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, The New American Commentary 21A. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2004. 496pp. Hardcover, \$29.99

Anyone searching for a thorough, up to date analysis of Haggai and Malachi need look no further. This contribution to the *NAC* takes its place among the best works of contemporary OT scholarship—evangelical or otherwise. Taylor, Professor of Old Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary contributes the commentary on Haggai, and Clendenen, General Editor of the series and Executive Editor of Bibles and Reference Books at Broadman and Holman, comments on Malachi.

The strength of this commentary lies in the fact that each author has done what he does best. Taylor's expertise lies in text critical studies and grammar. The first task of exegesis is to establish the text to be studied, and Taylor provides a masterful discussion of the evidence for the text of Haggai. Those seeking guidance in sorting out the difficulties of Hebrew grammar would do well to consult Taylor's treatment of things grammatical. His presentations of both the historical background and Haggai's use of other OT texts are helpful as well. My only complaint is that at points Taylor seems overly cautious in his assessments, but perhaps that simply means he is more discerning than his student. Readers of the whole Bible will especially benefit from the nuanced presentation of Zerubbabel "as a representative figure. Just as the name David could carry associations of a royal figure who is in the Davidic line but who transcends the historical figure of David, so it is with Zerubbabel" (200). Here is a sensitive treatment of the OT in its own historical setting, which nevertheless maintains that "Haggai's promises given to Zerubbabel, while true of him in a limited way, find their ultimate expression in a greater Zerubbabel who was to come" (200). Taylor is neither "foolish" nor "slow of heart" (see Luke 24:25).

Ray Clendenen wrote his dissertation on "A Textlinguistic Approach to the Book of Malachi," and we enjoy the fruits of his study here. An enlightening discussion of the historical context of Malachi is followed by especially valuable material on Malachi's literary style and the structure of the book. Clendenen uses modern linguistics to improve upon older form critical approaches to the book, arguing that Malachi should be understood as a "hortatory discourse." This matches the way that the text was intended function in its original setting, and though Malachi is dead he still speaks. This approach to the book elucidates its essential unity, which, as Clendenen helpfully shows, presents three interlocking themes. The overarching theme is the honor due to Yahweh, and Malachi charges his contemporaries with defaming God by their faithless lifestyles. God's name is particularly profaned as the people evidence a pagan approach to marriage and money. Given divorce rates among contemporary Christians and the success of the "health and wealth gospel," we need to hear the message of Malachi, which makes this a timely commentary. I would love to elaborate upon the literary artistry reflected in the chiasm of the book's "semantic structure," but reviews have limitations, so I refer you to Clendenen's discussion (see pp. 227–31). This commentary is also strengthened by biblical-theological excursions as Clendenen addresses broader questions such as Divine Impassability, Immutability, and Tithing. Robust and informed whole-Bible exegesis brought to bear on pressing questions of the faith: for this we can be thankful.

Amos 8:11 describes a famine in the land, not the lack of bread and water, but a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord. This famine reigns in not a few evangelical churches. But even in those where the Bible is faithfully proclaimed, I wonder when the last time Haggai or Malachi was preached? Paul said that *all* Scripture is God breathed and *useful* (2 Tim 3:16). May we unleash the sword of the Spirit; and may the Word of God prosper among us. With the publication of this volume, anyone who can read can be equipped to preach and teach Haggai and Malachi. May we heed Paul's admonition: "study to show thyself approved."

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