

The Minor Prophets

A THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION



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InterVarsity Press
ivpress.com

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Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.

www.ivpress.com.

Reading the Minor Prophets with the Church and in the Academy

FROM ITS INCEPTION, the church received the Old Testament as Holy Scripture. The result is that we never read the Minor Prophets *de novo* but always in the company of that one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. In this chapter we will explore how the church has read the Minor Prophets and then attend to modern study of them in the academy, much of which has operated apart from Christian faith.¹

It is important to be aware that the early church had access to Hebrew and Greek versions of the Minor Prophets. Jews were scattered across the Mediterranean, and once Alexander the Great conquered Persia, Greek became the *lingua franca* of his empire, and thus a demand for the Old Testament in Greek grew. Between the third century BC and the first century AD, the entire Old Testament was translated into Greek, and not surprisingly it became the form of the Old Testament used by many Jews and was inherited as such by most Christians. In terms of the mission of the early church, what thereby became the Septuagint was of vital importance.² After Pentecost, the Old Testament was already available throughout the Roman Empire in Greek, and it provided a vocabulary and language for speaking about Christian faith, thereby laying a foundation for the rapid spread of the gospel.

However, that there were Greek and Hebrew versions of the Old Testament available complicates matters today for textual critics who seek to establish the original version of the text, since the Septuagint is far older than the Hebrew

¹For a helpful, recent introduction to the Minor Prophets, see Julia M. O'Brien, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

²See Ellis R. Brotzman and Eric R. Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), chap. 4.

Masoretic Text. In recent decades Old Testament textual criticism has become exceedingly complex, and readers are referred to Ellis Brotzman and Eric Tully's *Old Testament Textual Criticism* for an up-to-date and accessible orientation to the subject. With some Old Testament books there are significant differences between the Septuagint and the MT, but fortunately divergence between Greek and Hebrew traditions in the Minor Prophets is not as severe as, say, one finds in Jeremiah.³ As we will see below, a major issue in contemporary studies of the Minor Prophets is whether they are twelve individual books or a collection, namely, the Book of the Twelve. This is a key site of difference in the Greek and Hebrew text traditions.⁴ In this respect it is worth noting that their order differs in the MT and the LXX, as evident in table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Order of Minor Prophets in MT and LXX

MASORETIC TEXT	SEPTUAGINT
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Amos
Amos	Micah
Obadiah	Joel
Jonah	Obadiah
Micah	Jonah
Nahum	Nahum
Habakkuk	Habakkuk
Zephaniah	Zephaniah
Haggai	Haggai
Zechariah	Zechariah
Malachi	Malachi

THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE MINOR PROPHETS

The Bible “formed Christians into a people and gave them a language,” Robert Wilken writes. Early, educated Christians knew the great books of the Greek and Roman traditions. “Yet when they took the Bible in hand they were overwhelmed. It came upon them like a torrent leaping down the side of a mountain.”⁵ These early Christians thus received the Minor Prophets as Scripture, mostly in the Greek manuscript tradition. As an inner-Jewish

³On these differences see Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 286-326.

⁴See the still-helpful discussion of Russell Fuller, “The Form and Formation of the Book of the Twelve: The Evidence from the Judean Desert,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House, JSOTSup 235 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 86-101; see also the more recent explorations of Greek and Hebrew manuscript traditions of the Twelve in Jakob Wöhrle and Lena-Sophia Tiemeyer, eds., *The Book of the Twelve: Composition, Reception and Interpretation*, VTSup 184 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 271-304.

⁵Robert L. Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 52-53.

movement, Christianity was founded on the Old Testament. The Scriptures of Israel “provided the terms and the images, the context, within which the apostles made sense of what happened [in Jesus of Nazareth], and with which they explained it and preached it, justifying the claim that Christ died and rose ‘according to the Scriptures’ [1 Cor 15:3-5].”⁶ In the early centuries of the Christian church (AD 100–400), the Old Testament became the foundation for presenting Jesus in the economy of God.

For early Christians, the *hypothesis* [unitive plot of the text] that held together the unwieldy bulk of Scripture was the rule of faith, while Scripture’s *skopos* [the key purpose of the text] was to convey Christ. When Christians used this rationale, it was because they believed Scripture ultimately derived from a single author, God the Father, through his Son (the Logos) and the Spirit.⁷

Amid this ecology, the Old Testament provided a prophetic foundation to the reality of God’s salvation in Jesus the Messiah. “There was no Christian understanding of Jesus of Nazareth without a dependence on the Hebrew prophets.”⁸

Ignatius of Antioch (ca. AD 35–110) asserts,

But as for myself, the archives are Jesus Christ, the sacred archives are his crucifixion, his death, his burial and his resurrection, and the faith which is through him: in these I wish to be justified by your prayers. . . . But something special comes with the Gospel: the coming of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, his passion, and his resurrection. *For the beloved prophets proclaimed him*, but the gospel is the completion of immortality. (*To the Philadelphians* 8.2–9.2)⁹

In this way, the Old Testament is seen as prophetic of the work of Jesus and his gospel, and it was read as a series of prooftexts or prophecies about Jesus’ messiahship.¹⁰ In no small part the Minor Prophets fund that vision. “A good

⁶John Behr, *The Way to Nicea*, Formation of Christian Theology 1 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 27.

⁷Lisa D. Maugans Driver, *Christ at the Center: The Early Christian Era* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 110. See Wilken, *Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 61-69, on the Bible as “a single story.” Wilken notes, “The rule of faith, which, of course, was drawn from the Bible, reverberated back on the Bible as a key to its interpretation” (66).

⁸Ronald E. Heine, “Early Christian Reception of the Prophets,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets*, ed. Carolyn J. Sharp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 407.

⁹Except where otherwise noted, all translations of ancient and modern languages derive from the authors.

¹⁰Eugen J. Pentiu, *The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 18-19.

number of the twelve prophets were given prominence in key places of the New Testament, but among the church fathers *they were accorded an even more significant role* in scriptural exegesis of prophecies pointing to Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah.”¹¹

In the second to the fourth centuries AD, key texts emerged from the Old Testament to demonstrate truths about Jesus. These “proofs from prophecy” were developed among others in Justin Martyr (ca. AD 100–165) and Eusebius (ca. AD 260–340). Ronald Heine identifies six proofs of prophecy from the early days of the church.¹² Two proofs derive from the Minor Prophets: Zechariah 6:12, demonstrating the preexistence of Christ, and Micah 5:1 [5:2], demonstrating the prophets foretold the incarnation by revealing the birthplace of Jesus.

Based on Zechariah LXX, the early church read Zechariah 6:12 as a prophecy about Jesus’ preexistence: “Behold! A man, ‘East’ [*anatolē*] is his name, and from beneath him he will rise up [*anatelei*] and build the house of the LORD” (Zech 6:12 LXX). The man’s name in the Greek is linked to the notion of rising, the east, or the eastern sky. The Greek translator reads something other than the Hebrew, which is not “east” but “Branch” or “Sprout” (*šemaḥ*). The Hebrew term offers a horticultural image; the Greek presents a celestial image. For early Christian interpreters with little Hebrew, the celestial image cast a vision of a heavenly figure who built the house of the Lord; the referent could be understood as the preexistent Christ. This understanding appears in Justin Martyr, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Eusebius, and Ambrose.¹³ By contrast, the Hebrew tradition of reading *šemaḥ* is messianic, but not in terms of the preexistence of Jesus. Rather, the term indicates the “Branch” of the Davidic house that will be anointed and appointed by God for his redemptive purpose. This can be applied typologically to Jesus, as the messianic priest-king who builds the house of the Lord.¹⁴

The second key prophetic proof of Jesus’ ministry comes in Micah 5:1 [5:2], which speaks of Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Davidic king. Micah 5:1 [5:2] was important for the Christian church precisely because of

¹¹Alberto Ferreiro, “Introduction to the Minor Prophets,” in *The Twelve Prophets*, ed. Alberto Ferreiro, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament 14 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), xxxviii, emphasis added.

¹²Ronald E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought*, Evangelical Ressourcement (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 97–141.

¹³See Heine, *Reading the Old Testament*, 105–7.

¹⁴Al Wolters, *Zechariah*, HCOT 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 193–96.

its geographic specificity. Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius each use the specificity of Bethlehem to argue that the Messiah could only be born in this place, not in any other; moreover, no one in Jewish history was born there that could fit the leadership role of the anointed king of Israel (“messiah”) *except* Jesus (not even David!). Thus, this text demonstrates the incarnation of Jesus in this place (Bethlehem) at this unique time in history.¹⁵

The major patristic and medieval works on the Minor Prophets are listed in table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Influential Patristic and Medieval commentaries on the Twelve Prophets

AUTHOR	SCOPE OF COMMENTARY
Origen (ca. AD 184–253)	all Twelve Prophets (known to Eusebius but lost)
Didymus the Blind (ca. AD 313–398)	Zechariah
Jerome (AD 340–420)	all Twelve Prophets
Theodore of Mopsuestia (AD 350–428)	all Twelve Prophets
Cyril of Alexandria (AD 378–444)	all Twelve Prophets
Theodoret of Cyrus (AD 393–458)	all Twelve Prophets
Venerable Bede (672–735 AD)	all Twelve Prophets (written but lost)
Išoʿdad of Merv (ca. AD 850)	all Twelve Prophets
Monks of the Abbey of St. Germain, authorship unclear: Haimo of Halberstadt (died ca. AD 855) or Remegius of Auxerre (AD 841–908)	all Twelve Prophets
Theophylact of Ochrid (AD 1088–1120)	Hosea, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Micah
Rupert of Deutz (AD 1075–1129)	all Twelve Prophets
Andrew of St. Victor (AD 1110–1175)	all Twelve Prophets
<i>Glossa Ordinaria</i> (twelfth century AD onwards), authorship unclear: Gilbert of Auxerre (d. 1134) or Ralph of Laon (d. 1133)	all Twelve Prophets
Albertus Magnus (AD 1200–1280)	all Twelve Prophets
Nicholas of Lyra (AD 1270–1349)	all Twelve Prophets

While the church fathers are agreed in seeing the Minor Prophets as a major source for the disclosure of Christ, the difference between Alexandrian and Antiochene readings must be noted, as seen, for example, in the contrast between Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria. Wilken speaks of allegorical interpretation as inevitable, but this inevitability is

¹⁵Heine, *Reading the Old Testament*, 120–21.

placed in question by the far more historical interpretation of the Antiochene fathers, such as Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹⁶ In his work on Theodore, Rowan Greer notes of allegorical exegesis, “The exegesis by means of fulfillment of prophecy . . . tends so to see all events in terms of their fulfillment, that the events themselves become unimportant and meaningless. Prophecy then becomes not a speaking to the contemporary scene, but purely prediction of events to come in the distant future.”¹⁷ The Antiochenes disagreed with the Alexandrians on *how* to determine what the Old Testament is saying. Whereas Origen followed Philo in resorting to allegory, “The Antiochenes, beginning at least with Lucian, Eusebius of Emesa, and Eustathius of Antioch, strongly opposed Origen, believing that an interpreter should always stay with what the text actually states. Theodore became the leading spokesperson for this critical viewpoint, being especially concerned about what is the right standard for interpreting the Christian Scriptures.”¹⁸

THE MINOR PROPHETS AND MODERN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The Renaissance in Europe prioritized the original languages in biblical interpretation as well as in classical resources. The priority of going back “to the sources” (*ad fontes*) resonates in the work of Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin.¹⁹ These Christian leaders exhibit pastoral sensibilities in their interpretation of the Minor Prophets, always and ever engaging the biblical text from the reality of God’s salvific work in Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, and the community of the Christian church that Jesus instantiates. In this way, it is appropriate to argue that Luther and Calvin read the Minor Prophets as participants within the divine drama of redemption in Christ

¹⁶Wilken, *Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 69-77.

¹⁷Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (London: Faith Press, 1961), 95. See also Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), chaps. 3–4.

¹⁸McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 18.

¹⁹For Luther, see his commentaries on the Minor Prophets and the recent work of Andrew J. Niggemann, *Martin Luther’s Hebrew in Mid-career: The Minor Prophets Translation*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019). For Calvin, see his commentaries and Jon Balsarak, *Establishing the Remnant Church in France: Calvin’s Lectures on the Minor Prophets, 1556–1559*, Brill Series in Church History 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Frederik A. V. Harms, *In God’s Custody: The Church, A History of Divine Protection, A Study of John Calvin’s Ecclesiology Based on His Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); G. Sujin Pak, “Luther and Calvin on the Nature and Function of Prophecy: The Case of the Minor Prophets,” in *Calvin and Luther: The Continuing Relationship*, ed. R. Ward Holder (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 13-37.

rather than on the outside of it. They sit firmly within the scope of traditional Christian interpretation.²⁰

Yet, Luther and Calvin nonetheless represent transitional figures in the history of interpretation of the Minor Prophets on the way toward modern biblical interpretation. On the one hand, they were interested in interpretation in the original languages (especially Hebrew exegesis of the prophetic books) and were interested in the historical situations of the prophetic books. On this front, they can be marshaled as exemplars of modern biblical interpretation. On the other hand, they remained radically committed to each of the Minor Prophets as testifying distinctively within the unified testimony of Scripture to proclaim Christ, albeit with different emphases: Luther with his law-gospel dialectic, and Calvin with a covenantal structure to the Old Testament leading to Jesus Christ. In this they represent the best of what we find in premodern biblical interpretation. And they cannot be marshaled as exemplars of modern biblical interpretation in the historical turn, if one means by this historical events disconnected from the economy of divine providence.

Regarding Christian interpretation, one should note that, on the whole, they align with the Antiochene tradition rather than the Alexandrian. This is immediately apparent when one reads Calvin on the Minor Prophets. David Puckett notes, “Calvin was uncomfortable with traditional Christian exegesis of the Old Testament promises because he believed interpreters were wrong to ignore the historical circumstances in which the promises were originally given.”²¹

The great strength in the history of interpretation is the indelible link forged between the Minor Prophets and Jesus of Nazareth. A weakness—albeit one addressed by the Antiochenes, the Reformers, and their followers—is a potential failure to hear the witness of the Minor Prophets first on their own terms. In many ways historical criticism helpfully retrieves this historical dimension; alas, it overcorrects and easily ends up losing the link with Jesus and the New Testament.

²⁰Thomas Renz, “Luther’s Lectures on Habakkuk as an Example of Participatory Exegesis,” in *Reading the Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets*, ed. David G. Firth and Brittany N. Melton, SSBT (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022), 64-87.

²¹David L. Puckett, *John Calvin’s Exegesis of the Old Testament*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 125. Puckett suggests that Calvin’s concern to interpret according to the intention of the author is most clearly seen in his exegesis of Hosea (34).

When modernity took hold in the West, it manifested itself in every discipline, including biblical studies. Amid the diversity in modernity, the radical Enlightenment came to dominate, and it was extremely wary of the role of religion in the great public spheres of life, including the university.²² Whereas in Marxism and the Soviet Empire religion was clearly identified as the enemy, in the West religion was tolerated but privatized. In the public spheres of life and in academic studies, autonomous reason should reign supreme as the royal route to truth.

Christian scholars responded to this challenge in different ways. Some accepted the epistemic foundation(s) provided by the Enlightenment and were comfortable leaving their faith at the door of their studies and lecture rooms.²³ Others were more critical. A perennial temptation of believers was to withdraw into Pietism, a temptation that evangelicalism fell afoul of for the first half of the twentieth century.

For those who remained committed to rigorous academic study of the Bible, the new developments could not be ignored. The historical turn in biblical studies, with its method of historical criticism(s), dominated all major universities by the start of the twentieth century. As we will see below, historical criticism brought immense gains to study of the Minor Prophets. However, it had a shadow side, which believing scholars struggled to come to grips with.

The historical turn: Historical criticism and the Minor Prophets. With the historical turn in biblical studies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scholars probed the words and the experiences of prophets to get *behind the text* to their authentic core and genius. Heinrich Ewald's influential account of prophets appeared in the 1830s. He believed the prophet received a vision from God for his time, and his inner spirit was captivated by the divine vision so that he could do nothing but communicate the message to the people of his day.²⁴ Those influenced by Ewald (e.g., Bernard Duhm) saw the historical-critical work of profiling the prophet as essential to discerning between authentic, early prophecy and the later, inauthentic tradition that grew from the early prophet.

²²Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

²³See Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), for the view that accepting the epistemic foundation(s) provided by the Enlightenment was a mistake.

²⁴Heinrich Ewald, *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes* (Stuttgart: Adolph Krabbe, 1840).

Duhm's *The Theology of the Prophets* (1875) established modern study of the prophets in the academy and is our starting point for how the Minor Prophets have been read since then.²⁵ Duhm saw the prophets as geniuses whose spiritual insight came from their direct encounters with God. Prophets were unique and specially gifted to communicate their spontaneous vision to contemporaries. Religious ritual, legal material, and a theocratic state were later innovations developed in the Persian period but did not represent the high point of prophecy.²⁶ For Duhm, the purest forms of prophetic speech emerged early in Israel's history, and they were then incrementally encumbered by innovations and tradition. Duhm applied his insights to the Minor Prophets both in his *The Theology of the Prophets* and a later translation of the Twelve.²⁷ Duhm's scholarly program launched source-critical analysis of the prophetic books, including the Minor Prophets. Scholars became interested in which early sources informed later sources and how these sources were brought together into the form of the text in which we now find them.

Sigmund Mowinckel built on Duhm's research, but he was interested in tradition and in the social contexts, especially the cult, which he argued provided the matrix for prophetic speech.²⁸ Mowinckel adapted his tradition-historical method from his doctoral supervisor, Hermann Gunkel. In Mowinckel's understanding, the Minor Prophets did not begin as a book but as short, individual sayings infused with tradition. These sayings were spoken orally and then later inscribed as written sayings. Scribes or other prophets spliced together these sayings with other material to form prophetic passages and then individual books. Later scribes or prophets spliced these into the corpus of the Twelve Prophets. For Mowinckel, the goal of interpreting the Minor Prophets was to explore the entire process so as to determine the growth and development of the tradition.

A focus on individual, orally delivered and then (later) written sayings within the growth of a tradition comprises the work of form criticism on the Prophets. A central figure in this respect is Claus Westermann, whose *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (1964) was foundational and continues to influence research. Westermann contended that the most basic genre of

²⁵Bernard Duhm, *Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Religion* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1875).

²⁶Duhm, *Die Theologie der Propheten*, 264-76.

²⁷Bernard Duhm, *Die Zwölf Propheten in den Bersmassen Urschrift* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910).

²⁸Sigmund Mowinckel, *Prophecy and Tradition: The Prophetic Books in the Light of the Study of the Growth and History of Tradition* (Oslo: J. Dybwad, 1946).

prophetic speech is one in which a divinely appointed prophet of Yahweh pronounced judgment against an individual or nation. The phrase “thus says the LORD” indicates the “messenger formula,” and it has an analog in the ancient Near East, particularly Mari texts (see chap. 2).²⁹ The oral forms Westermann recognized are listed in table 1.3.

Table 1.3. Forms of prophetic messages

PROPHETIC GENRES	KEY FEATURES	EXAMPLES FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS
Prophetic utterance	Hebrew: <i>nē'um YHWH</i> , “utterance of Yahweh.” The most basic genre in prophetic speech. This phrase can occur at the beginning, middle, or end of a prophetic word from God to a person or group.	Hos 2:15 [2:13], 18 [16], 23 [21]; 11:11; Joel 2:12; Amos 2:11, 16; 3:10, 15; 4:3, 6, 8, 9-11; 9:7-8, 13; Obad 4, 8; Mic 4:6; 5:9 [5:10]; Zeph 1:2-3, 10; 3:8; Hag 1:13; 2:4, 14, 17, 23; Zech 1:4; 2:9 [2:6], 14 [10]; 8:17; 10:12; 11:6; 12:4; 13:8; Mal 1:2
Messenger speech	Hebrew: <i>kōh 'amar YHWH</i> , “thus says the LORD” or <i>'amar YHWH</i> , “says the LORD.” Used in prophetic books, it indicates God’s speech to the prophet as well as the prophet’s self-identification as the spokesperson and messenger for God. The messenger speech suggests a word-for-word disclosure of God’s message to the audience through the prophet.	Amos 1:3, 5-6, 8-9, 11, 13, 15; 2:1, 3-4, 6; 3:11-12; 5:3-4, 16-17, 27; 7:17; 9:15; Obad 1; Mic 2:3; 3:5; Nahum 1:12; Hag 1:2, 5, 7; 2:6, 11; Zech 1:3-4, 14, 16-17; 2:12 [2:8]; 3:7; 6:12; 8:2-4, 6-9, 14, 19-20, 23; 11:4; Mal 1:4
Oracle/pronouncement	Hebrew: <i>maṣṣā'</i> , “oracle.” The <i>maṣṣā'</i> oracle in prophetic superscriptions especially is a generic term for a divine revelation given to a prophet. Such oracles achieve two things: (1) they identify and reveal God’s intentions in human affairs, and (2) they provide direction for human response in the light of God’s revelation.	Nahum 1:1; Hab 1:1; Zech 9:1; 12:1; Mal 1:1
Judgment oracle	Announcement of judgment or disaster on individuals, groups, or nations. This genre contains four basic aspects: (1) introduction to the judgment, (2) statement of the reasons for judgment (the accusation), (3) a logical connector (often Hebrew <i>lākēn</i> or <i>'al-kēn</i> , “therefore”) linking the statement of disaster and the rationale for the announcement of judgment/punishment that will follow, and (4) the judgment/punishment that will be meted out.	Hos 2:7-9 [2:5-7]; Amos 1-2; 4:1-2; 7:14-17; Mic 1:2-7; 2:1-4, 9-12; 3:1-4; 6:9-16; Zeph 2:8-11; Hag 1:1-11; Zech 7:8-14
Oracle against nations	A kind of judgment oracle, but this form is directed against foreign nations who threaten Israel or Judah, or those nations that do not meet the standard of Yahweh’s justice and righteousness.	Amos 1-2; Joel 4:4-8 [3:4-8]; Obadiah; Nahum
Disputation text	Hebrew: <i>rib</i> . The disputation takes on the characteristics of a trial in which Yahweh is the prosecutor and judge. Clearly, the offending party is the defendant. No set pattern emerges, but God brings a disputation against the defendant, and God is the arbiter of the complaint.	Hos 4; Mic 6

²⁹Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, trans. Hugh C. White (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 90-128.

PROPHETIC GENRES	KEY FEATURES	EXAMPLES FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS
Woe oracle	Hebrew: <i>hōy</i> . This is a critique of a specific action of an offending party. Two basic elements emerge in the oracle: (1) an introductory exclamation using <i>hōy</i> , “woe!” followed by a participle or noun describing the actions/attitude in question; and (2) additional elements that give further specificity to the situation of the critique.	Hos 7:13; Amos 6:1-7; Mic 2:1; Nahum 1; Hab 2:6-20; Zeph 3:1; Zech 11:17
Prophetic instruction	This prophetic instruction is a didactic form used to provide guidance to individuals and groups. Often it is associated with priestly instruction in the light of a specific question and emerges with characteristics of wisdom instruction.	Hag 2:11-13; Mic 6:6-8; (Hab 2:1?)
Prophetic liturgy	These liturgies encompass prayers, complaints, and hymns and use cultic language and terminology as well as theophanic elements, suggesting that these liturgies were developed and perhaps performed.	Joel 1–2; Nahum 1; Hab 3
Salvation oracle	A counterpart to the judgment oracle, this is a message of restoration or salvation by the hand of Yahweh. It is composed of three elements: (1) notice of the situation that will lead to a change, often including the Hebrew particle <i>ya ‘an kī</i> , “because”; (2) an announcement of salvation or blessing, often including the Hebrew <i>lākēn</i> , “therefore,” followed by a statement of disaster that will <i>not</i> occur; and (3) Yahweh’s act of salvation and/or blessing. In some cases, the reassurance <i>‘al tīrā</i> , “do not fear,” appears as well.	Hos 1:10–2:1; Joel 2:21–22; Obad 17–21; Mic 2:12–13; 4:1–5; Nahum 1:12–15; Zeph 3:14–20; Hag 2:4–8, 20–23; Zech 8:20–23; 9:9–17
Messianic oracle	A variation on the salvation oracle, this is a specific message of future hope that depicts a future messianic king anointed and appointed by Yahweh for his task of just rule and deliverance.	Hos 3:5; Mic 2:13; 5:1–8; Zeph 3:15; Hab 3:13; Zech 9:9; 14:9, 17; Mal 1:14

Toward the literary turn. James Muilenburg praised the achievements of form criticism, but he supplemented it with rhetorical criticism.³⁰ Because form criticism tended to fixate on conventions, to separate form from content, and to isolate small units from the broader literary context, it neglects the “individual, personal, unique, particular, distinctive, precise, versatile, and fluid features of the text.” Form criticism was unable to assess the *intentionality* of Hebrew composition, the “structural patterns, verbal sequences, and stylistic devices that make a coherent whole.”³¹

Muilenburg’s goal was to address these limitations with rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical criticism (1) defines “the limits or scope of a literary unit, to recognize precisely where and how it begins and ends.” One recognizes textual limits by assessing form and content. (2) Rhetorical criticism then discerns

³⁰James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” In *Beyond Form Criticism*, ed. Paul R. House (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 49–69, esp. 50–52.

³¹Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 26.

structure in the text by exploring component parts within it and delineating rhetorical devices “employed for marking, on the one hand, the sequence and movements of the pericope, and on the other, the shifts or breaks in the development of the writer’s thought.” Rhetorical devices are identified by assessing, *inter alia*, particles, adverbs, interjections, and conjunctions. Stylistic and narrative analysis are important as well (including intertextuality): “The narrators and poets of ancient Israel and her Near Eastern neighbors were dominated not only by the formal and traditional modes of speech of the literary genres or types, but also by the techniques of narrative and poetic composition.”³²

Sometimes dubbed *new form criticism*, rhetorical criticism in the Minor Prophets is extraordinarily fertile, emerging in the late 1960s and persisting to the present day.³³ In rhetorical criticism, one notes a *literary* turn toward the Minor Prophets away from purely *historical* study of these texts. A recent collection of essays devoted to the written-ness of prophetic texts and their compositional design speaks to the stability of this approach in assessing the Minor Prophets.³⁴

Rhetorical criticism thus signals a move toward an analysis of the Minor Prophets as literature. Literary studies analyze the Minor Prophets as artifacts: they are literary art and should be read and interpreted in relation to their aesthetics.³⁵ Literary studies of the prophets explore the vitality of poetics, parallelism, metaphor, imagery, sound and sense, and other features common to close reading of biblical prophets. One witnesses this kind of application to the Minor Prophets in, for example, the landmark Zephaniah commentary of Adele Berlin, Herbert Mark’s literary analysis of the Twelve Prophets, Francis Landy’s literary reading of Hosea, and works devoted to poetics in both individual prophetic books and the Minor Prophets as a whole (e.g., plot development, characterization, narrative techniques, metaphor, poetry and parallelism, imagery, intertextuality, and thematic explorations).³⁶

³²Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” 57, 59.

³³See the bibliography of rhetorical approaches to the Minor Prophets in Duane F. Watson and Alan Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method*, BIS 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 92-97.

³⁴Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, eds., *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, Ancient Near East Monographs 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015); see also John Robert Barker, *Disputed Temple: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Haggai* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

³⁵For an excellent introduction to literary studies, see David J. H. Beldman, “Literary Approaches and Old Testament Interpretation,” in *Hearing the Old Testament: Listening for God’s Address*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew and David J. H. Beldman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 67-95.

³⁶Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah*, AB 25A (New York: Doubleday, 1994); Herbert Marks, “The Twelve Prophets,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge,

Comparably, some scholars explore unifying themes and concepts in a literary/synchronic reading of the Minor Prophets, rather than purely diachronic explorations offered in historical criticism. Paul House and Edgar Conrad execute literary readings of the corpus of the Minor Prophets thematically (House) and the Twelve within the Latter Prophets (Conrad).³⁷ House's work is thematic, while Conrad focuses on the role of the reader in a synthetic analysis of the text.

Raymond Van Leeuwen and Ruth Scoralick assess how, in diverse ways, the self-disclosure of Yahweh emerges in the Minor Prophets through the thematic repetition of Exodus 34:6-7 in Hosea 1:6; Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:9; Micah 7:18-20; and Nahum 1:2-3. These and other texts that allude to Yahweh's attributes lend to the Twelve a thematic unity.³⁸

In separate studies, Rolf Rendtorff and Paul-Gerhard Schwesig assess the significance of the day of Yahweh as a significant theme in most of the Minor Prophets.³⁹ One finds mention of it in Hosea 9:5; Joel 3:4 [2:31]; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15; Micah 2:4; Habakkuk 3:16; Zephaniah 1:7-16; Haggai 2:23; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:1 [3:19]. At this point, it suffices to note that in its presentation in the Book of the Twelve, the day of Yahweh is an event of the revelation of Yahweh where he enacts judgment and/or salvation for Israel and/or the nations. We shall say more about the day of Yahweh in chapter six.

Finally, Jason T. LeCureaux argues that the theme of return and restoration is a unifying theme in the Minor Prophets.⁴⁰ The language of *šûb*

MA: Belknap, 1987), 207-33; Francis Landy, *Hosea*, Readings (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Brad E. Kelle, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Stuart Lasine, *Jonah and the Human Condition: Life and Death in Yahweh's World*, LHBOTS 688 (London: T&T Clark, 2019).

³⁷Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve*, JSOTSup 97 (Sheffield: Almond, 1990); Edgar W. Conrad, "Reading Isaiah and the Twelve as Prophetic Books," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, VTSup 70 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3-17; Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism*, JSOTSup 376 (London: T&T Clark, 2003).

³⁸Raymond C. van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. L. Perdue, B. B. Scott, and W. J. Wiseman (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 31-49. For a different exploration on this theme, see Ruth Scoralick, *Gottes Güte und Gottes Zorn. Die Gottesprädikationen in Exodus 34,6f und ihre intertextuellen Beziehungen zum Zwölfprophetenbuch*, HBS 33 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2002).

³⁹For major studies on the theme, see Rolf Rendtorff, "Alas for the Day! The 'Day of the LORD' in the Book of the Twelve," in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 186-97; Paul-Gerhard Schwesig, *Die Rolle der Tag-JHWHs-Dichtungen im Dodekapropheten*, BZAW 366 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

⁴⁰For a full study, see Jason T. LeCureaux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, HBM 41 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012).

as “restore/return” emerges as prominently as the day of Yahweh. See, for example, Hosea 11; Joel 4:1, 4, 7 [3:1, 4, 7]; Amos 9:11; Obadiah 1:15; Micah 4:8; 5:3 [5:4]; Nahum 2:3 [2:2]; Zephaniah 2:7, 10; 3:20; Zechariah 9:12; 10:6, 9; Malachi 3:7.

The literary turn did not mean historical criticism ceased, and in redaction criticism of the Minor Prophets the literary and historical came together.⁴¹ Redaction criticism attends not to the original prophet who uttered the words of prophecy but rather (akin to tradition history) how scribes received, interpreted, and reinterpreted earlier prophecy for their day, editing earlier texts to compose a new prophetic text for new generations. In the twentieth century especially, redaction criticism assessed how individual prophetic books in the Minor Prophets developed and were edited together. Marvin Sweeney provides a helpful overview of redaction criticism of each book in the corpus, as does the recent edited volume by Jakob Wöhrle and Lena-Sophia Tiemeyer.⁴²

In the late twentieth century, however, redaction criticism attended to the editing and growth of the entirety of the Minor Prophets as a unified, composite book. As early as 1921, Karl Budde argued that the editing of the Minor Prophets leaves us unable to see the form and nature (“Gestalt und Persönlichkeit”) of each individual prophet in his own time.⁴³ He argues that the prophetic books in the Minor Prophets tend to strip away biographical details (he explores Hosea, Amos, and Micah), leaving the prophets sitting loose to history. When we read the book of Amos or Hosea, for example, we do not read the words of an originating prophet or his biographical experiences, but rather we read the perspectives of later editors that refract the former words of Amos or Hosea and incorporate them into a final scribal composition that comprises the *book* called Amos or Hosea within a corpus called the Minor Prophets (“the Twelve”). For Budde, the scribal activity was completed in the third or fourth centuries BC, and the scribes deleted the biographical profiles of the prophets so that Yahweh’s voice predominated. Budde argues that

⁴¹For an excellent introduction to redaction criticism of the Minor Prophets, see Marvin A. Sweeney, “The Prophets and Prophetic Books, Prophetic Circles and Traditions,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 3/2, *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Magne Saebø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 500-530; Wöhrle and Tiemeyer, *Book of the Twelve*.

⁴²Sweeney, “Prophets and Prophetic Books,” 525-29.

⁴³Karl Budde, “Eine Folgeschwere Redaktion des Zwölfprophetenbuch,” *ZAW* 39 (1921): 218-29; see esp. 218.

the theological focus in the editorial process made the Twelve a more sacred book.⁴⁴

Scholars respond in various ways to Budde's basic hypothesis of the editing of the entire corpus.⁴⁵ If the individual books are edited, and if the edited books are brought together into *one* Book of the Twelve, then perhaps the edited volume should be read as a whole instead of one by one. In fact, the ancients may have viewed the Minor Prophets as a unified book. Among Jewish interpreters, these prophetic books were read in some way as a collection. Jewish rabbis identified the Minor Prophets simply with the moniker *terê 'āsār*, "The Twelve," indicating the collection of these twelve smallish prophetic books ought to be understood in some way together. The Jewish text of Sirach (ca. 200 BC) reflects this disposition in Sirach 49:10. In this text, the "bones of the Twelve prophets" comfort Jacob with words of hope. The prophets in view are the Minor Prophets or "the Twelve," providing a message of hope for God's people.

Indeed, some explore the Minor Prophets not only as twelve individual prophetic books but also as an anthology that can be read as *one* book. James Nogalski offers a comprehensive redaction-critical exploration of the Minor Prophets.⁴⁶ He argues for an early "Book of the Four," namely, portions of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah as well as a collection of Haggai-Zechariah 1-8. Scribes united the twelve prophets together through intentionally repeated terms ("catchword chains") that tie the corpus together. For example: Hosea 14:2 [14:1] // Joel 2:12; 4:16 [3:16] // Amos 1:2; 9:12 // Obadiah 19, 1 // Jonah (messenger to nations); Jonah 4:2 // Micah 7:18-19 // Nahum 1:2-3; 1:1 // Habakkuk 1:1; 2:20 // Zephaniah 1:7.⁴⁷ The book of Joel is key to Nogalski's argument. In his estimation, the entire corpus gains significant shape with the addition of Joel and the editorial activity to the other

⁴⁴Budde, "Eine Folgeschwere Redaktion," 225-26. Budde's conclusion remains untenable, and most have rejected or ignored it even while recognizing the genuine insight of the edited nature of the twelve prophetic books.

⁴⁵See James D. Nogalski, "Where *Are* the Prophets in the Book of the Twelve?," in Boda, Floyd, and Toffelmire, *Book of the Twelve*, 163-82. Nogalski agrees with Budde that the Book of the Twelve does not focus on the profile of the prophet in the same way as does, say, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel. "The character of the core material collected does *not* focus upon the prophet as person. There are no large scale prophetic narrative collections; in fact, there are no prophetic narratives apart from Jonah, Amos 7:10-17, and Hos 1 and 3" (182).

⁴⁶James D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 217 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993); Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 218 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993).

⁴⁷For a full listing of how the Minor Prophets allude to one another, see Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 290-91.

books that went along with the Joel layer. It serves as the literary anchor to the remainder of the Minor Prophets.⁴⁸

Others nuance Nogalski's approach. Christopher Seitz recognizes the fertility of redactional models but presses beyond them to read the Twelve Prophets canonically, taking the edited nature of the Twelve as foundational for a canonical and theological reading. In so doing, Seitz builds on the impetus of Brevard Childs.⁴⁹ For Seitz, a canonical reading of the Twelve (indeed, of the prophets) opens up theological associations between texts, framing divine agency and human response. Thus the Twelve Prophets becomes an index to identify divine, rather than merely human, intentions for Israel and the nations. History is not about excavating the lives of the prophets or the history of Israel in the Twelve, but rather the Twelve is understood as projecting an economy of divine action in past, present, and future.

Returning to redaction criticism, Aaron Scharf agrees with Nogalski on many points, but for him the touchstone book is Amos rather than Joel. He argues for a six-step model of editorial development by which the final form of the Twelve gained its shape.⁵⁰ Amos and Hosea were combined, then a Deuteronomistic editor added Micah and Zephaniah to compose the Book of the Four prophets. Nahum and Habakkuk then were added, followed by the Haggai-Zechariah corpus. Joel and Obadiah were then brought into the corpus, with Jonah and Malachi finalizing the process.

Dissatisfied with previous models because they neglect the redactional development of the individual books in concert with the redaction of the Minor Prophets as a whole, Wöhrle explores each individual book's redactional history (except Hosea) and relates these to the development of the Twelve in its entirety. He confirms a Book of the Four and the Haggai-Zechariah 1-8 corpus. However, his model proceeds along an eight-step process of editorial growth to arrive at the final shape of the Twelve.⁵¹ This

⁴⁸Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*, 274-80.

⁴⁹Christopher R. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: Toward a New Introduction to the Prophets*, STI (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 93-246; Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 77-104.

⁵⁰Aaron Scharf, *Die Entstehung Des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Neubearbeitungen von Amos Im Rahmen schriftenübergreifender Redaktionsprozesse*, BZAW 260 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997).

⁵¹Jakob Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Entstehung und Komposition*, BZAW 360 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006); Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen*, BZAW 389 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

brief overview barely scratches the surface, as German-speaking scholarship (especially) continues to explore redactional models for the Twelve.

However, some are not as convinced by redactional models for a unified Book of the Twelve. Tchavdar Hadjiev asserts, “The ‘Book of the Twelve’ was not rediscovered but (re)invented by modern scholarship.”⁵² Similarly, Ehud Ben Zvi thinks that the Twelve ought to be read as a compilation, or anthology, of twelve individual prophetic books, without reference to redactional models.⁵³ Ben Zvi argues that even if individual books in the Twelve occur on a single scroll (*a* Book of the Twelve), as evidenced by some Dead Sea Scrolls, a unitary scroll does not necessitate a unified internal reading logic, demonstrated by catchword chains or the like.⁵⁴ The Twelve is a collection of *individual* prophetic books with distinctive contributions. Peterson, too, remains unconvinced that the diversity of models described above provide a clear picture of the redactional development of the Twelve along a unified theme. In his view, the Twelve is an anthology devoted to the theme of the day of the Lord, without committing one to the redactional models described above.⁵⁵

In this volume, we focus on the individual messages of the Minor Prophets and then secondarily correlate these messages within the corpus of the Twelve. In this way, we read these prophetic books as a kind of anthology. We recognize redactional models as we go along, even giving preference to one or another redactional model within the volume at certain points. However, we believe that the anthology model makes best sense of the material. Secondarily, we correlate these individual prophetic books as productive co-texts that can and should be read alongside one another. We

⁵²Tchavdar S. Hadjiev, “A Prophetic Anthology Rather than a Book of the Twelve,” in Wöhrle and Tiemeyer, *Book of the Twelve*, 90-108, here 103.

⁵³Ehud Ben Zvi, *Social Memory Among the Literati of Yehud*, BZAW 509 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019). This volume comprises substantial contributions Ben Zvi has made in memory studies and the Hebrew Bible over a period of years. For memory and the prophets, see especially his “Remembering the Prophets Through the Reading and Rereading of a Collection of Prophetic Books in Yehud: Methodological Considerations and Explorations,” in *Social Memory Among the Literati*, 80-108.

⁵⁴Ehud Ben Zvi, “Twelve Prophetic Books or ‘The Twelve’: A Few Preliminary Considerations,” in Watts and House, *Forming Prophetic Literature*, 125-57, esp. 131. See also his contribution in Ehud Ben Zvi and James D. Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin: Juxtaposing Views on Interpreting the Book of the Twelve/The Twelve Prophetic Books*, Analecta Gorgiana 201 (intro. Thomas Römer; Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2009), 47-86.

⁵⁵David L. Peterson, “A Book of the Twelve?,” in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, Symposium Series 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 1-10; Ronald L. Troxel, *Prophetic Literature: From Oracles to Books* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 82-83.

also explore what happens when these books are read corporately rather than only individually.⁵⁶

The theological turn. The literary turn in biblical studies was followed by the postmodern turn, with its wild pluralism and smorgasbord of methods. Insofar as the literary turn attended to the books of the Minor Prophets as coherent literary wholes, it presented a major change to historical criticism. However, before the literary turn could be fully appropriated, the postmodern turn was upon us. It yielded a bewildering variety of readings of the Minor Prophets, including deconstructionist, ideological of many sorts, psychoanalytic, and so on.⁵⁷ While too many of these have been examples of eisegesis rather than exegesis, they have provided fresh insights, and we will refer to these where relevant in the chapters that follow. Postmodernism challenged the hegemony of historical criticism but retained its basic presuppositions so that even as postmodernism has waned, historical criticism remains the default mode of much study of the Minor Prophets.

With its diversity, postmodern interpretation opened the door again to religion in biblical studies. Not surprisingly, therefore, a minority approach called theological interpretation developed, building on the seminal theological interpretation of Karl Barth, and Brevard Childs's canonical criticism. This theological turn, in our view, introduces the possibility of fresh readings of the Minor Prophets that draw on all the insights of historical criticism and the literary turn, but it makes the goal of its work listening for God's address through the Minor Prophets today. Theological interpretation is a broad movement but at its best is read *from faith*—thus rejecting the epistemic foundations of the Enlightenment—to *faith*—thus leveraging all our academic resources toward attending to God's address.

Each of the approaches offered in the academy demonstrates some gains. However, our approach in this volume will be to integrate literary, historical, and kerygmatic aspects in the service of theological interpretation. Although we note some historical development of biblical books within and across the Twelve, our main goal is to ascertain the theology of the Twelve not by excavating the world behind the text or the historical development

⁵⁶Note the excellent discussions in Heiko Wenzel, ed., *The Book of the Twelve: An Anthology of Prophetic Books or the Result of Complex Redactional Processes?*, Osnabrücker Studien zur Jüdischen und Christlichen Bibel 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018).

⁵⁷See, e.g., Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

of the Twelve (whether as a unified corpus or as individual books). Our entry into understanding the theological presentation of the Minor Prophets is through a close reading of the biblical texts, their communication strategies, and the world they project and invite us to indwell. Where intertextuality between texts, shared themes, and motifs appears throughout the Twelve, we will explore it to understand more fully how these texts present the God disclosed in these books.

To this end, we must embrace the fact that the Minor Prophets/the Book of the Twelve takes the reader on a journey from the eighth century BC through Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian dominance in the ancient Near East. It is a journey of delight, horror, and hope. These texts display the vagaries of the kingdoms of Israel in the north and Judah in the south, the exile of the northern kingdom and southern kingdom, and finally the restoration period after the exile.

The Minor Prophets thereby present a microcosm of Israel's history, and these texts depict Yahweh governing history, calling Israel and the nations to account. Those who are "wise" (Hos 14:10 [14:9]) are invited to trust in Yahweh's plans because of his justice. God orchestrates history as a movement of judgment and redemption, from the monarchy in the eighth century BC to the Persian period in the fifth century BC. In this movement, God works toward redemption for Israel and the nations. As he is king over his creation (Amos 4), the Twelve present Yahweh's comprehensive attentiveness to *all* of life: humanity, nations (Zeph 3; Mal 1), land (Hos 2:20-25 [2:18-23]), and beasts (Joel 1:18). The Twelve instill hope within its readers that Yahweh will restore creation in the future through his reign. This future emerges through metaphors, images, and distinctive language in the Twelve.⁵⁸ In the meantime, the Minor Prophets expects their readers to be formed and transformed by his word so that they might live well and rightly before God, by faith.

The New Testament provides a fuller context to hear the Twelve as Christian Scripture and reveals the cohesion of the biblical witness. For this reason, each of our chapters on the Minor Prophets will draw attention to New Testament reception and adaptation of the Twelve Prophets as they disclose Jesus of Nazareth, who is the focus of the revelation of God.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Note the careful study of Simon J. De Vries, "Futurism in the Preexilic Minor Prophets Compared with That of the Postexilic Minor Prophets," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, BZAW 325 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 252-72.

⁵⁹Heath A. Thomas, "Hearing the Minor Prophets: The Book of the Twelve and God's Address," in Bartholomew and Beldman, *Hearing the Old Testament*, 372-73.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Firth, David G., and Brittany N. Melton, eds. *Reading the Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets*. SSBT. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022.
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- Wenzel, Heiko, ed. *The Book of the Twelve: An Anthology of Prophetic Books or the Result of Complex Redactional Processes?* Osnabrücker Studien zur Jüdischen und Christlichen Bibel 4. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018.
- Wöhrle, Jakob, and Lena-Sophia Tiemeyer, eds. *The Book of the Twelve: Composition, Reception and Interpretation*. VTSup 184. Leiden: Brill, 2020.*

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