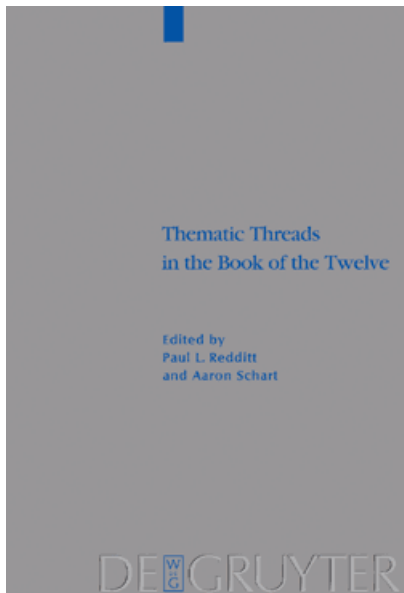


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Redditt, Paul L., and Aaron Scharf, eds.

Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve

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This volume contains papers presented between 1999 and 2002 in the “Formation of the Book of the Twelve Seminar” of the Society of Biblical Literature. As such it represents very different views about and interests in the overall subject and questions: Is it meaningful to read the Book of the Twelve (i.e., the Minor Prophets) as *one* book, as, for example, the books of Isaiah or Jeremiah? If so, what does the scholarly community gain from such a reading strategy? It is no wonder that the first question receives an almost unanimous affirmative answer by the authors, even if several of the contributors mention the hesitations about the project by Ehud Ben Zvi and John Barton. As for the second question, the majority of the articles are very instructive; there is indeed something to gain from a synchronic and coherent reading of the Book of the Twelve.

It should be said from the outset that this well-edited volume is an adequate starting point for new scholarly readers on these questions, not least due to co-editor Paul L. Redditt’s instructive research review that introduces the collection. Here he treats five issues raised by the members of the seminar: (1) the challenge to demonstrate coherence within the Book of Twelve, including the question of how to understand such a coherence (Which types of coherence do we find? How far can coherence be demonstrated? Which coherence? Is it intentional or not?); (2) redactional techniques such as catchwords, inclusion, and chiasmus; (3) stages of growth (three or more, admitting that “these

differences . . . show how difficult it can be to reconstruct a lengthy redactional process” [17] and even mentioning E. W. Conrad’s view that such studies are speculative and unnecessary); (4) the question of the relationship of the Book of Twelve to other (mainly prophetic) corpora such as Ezekiel, Chronicles, and Isaiah; and (5) the advantages of reading the Twelve as a book.

After this introduction the volume is divided into three main sections, and I have to confine myself to commenting on but a few of the essays in each to illustrate the contributors’ scholarly aims and methodologies.

The first four articles deal with method: “The Ties That Bind: Intertextuality, the Identification of Verbal Parallels, and Reading Strategies in the Book of the Twelve” (Richard L. Schulz); “The Fifth Vision of Amos in Context” (Aaron Schart); “Psalms in the Book of the Twelve: How Misplaced Are They?” (Erhard S. Gerstenberger); and “Forming the Twelve and Forming Canon” (Edgar W. Conrad).

Schulz discusses criteria for the fragile discipline of intertextual analyses. Far too often intertextual connections between texts and corpora have been (and are) urged without sufficient methodological care, and to this reviewer Schulz’s criteria seem to be both welcome and well-balanced: “In seeking significant verbal parallels, one should look for *verbal* and *syntactical correspondence* that goes beyond one key or uncommon term or even a series of commonly occurring terms, also evaluating whether the expression is simply formulaic or idiomatic” (32). Using this and other criteria, Schulz identifies intertextual links both within the Book of the Twelve and between the Twelve and the Pentateuch and Isaiah, respectively. Such links, then, serve both to link the individual Minor Prophets and to emphasize larger theological subjects. (But what happened to the notes on page 39?) Schart, in his turn, takes his readers on a veritable redaction-critical tour de force through the growing process of the fifth vision in Amos 9, from layer 1, the oldest literary layer (Amos 9:1–4*), to layer 8, the Christian redaction of Amos 9. These two essays read together demonstrate how different methodologies supplement each other and add to the overall picture.

Part 2 treats the canonical order in the Book of the Twelve: “Hosea’s Land Theme in the Book of the Twelve” (Laurie L. Braaten); “The Place and Function of Joel in the Book of the Twelve” (Marvin A. Sweeney); “The Repentance of Nineveh in the Story of Jonah and Nahum’s Prophecy of the City’s Destruction—A Coherent Reading of the Book of the Twelve as Reflected in the Aggadah” (Beate Ego); and “The Canonical Location of Habakkuk” (Joseph A. Everson).

In his essay Braaten shows quite convincingly the inclusion between the opening and the closing of the Twelve (MT): Hosea-Joel and Malachi. He follows the semantic thread of the connection between the land and its fertility god who sows and harvests for good and for bad throughout these books. Moreover, he demonstrates the function of the “scroll of remembrance” in Mal 3:16 as “a means of beginning the reversal of the situation in Hosea,” and following Nogalski, he argues that the scroll functions as both “torah” and as “the words of the prophets.” As such it has served both as public exhortatory speech and in the familial torah instruction. As a bonus the reader is presented an inspiring reading of Hosea and instructive notes that can lead one deeply into this puzzling book. Sweeney considers the meaning of the different redactions of the Twelve in MT, LXX, and Qumran (4QXII^a), taking his point of departure in the placing of the late book of Joel and drawing lines to the historical setting of not only the Twelve but also the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Part 3, “Thematic Threads,” is the most substantial with its eight articles: “Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve” (James L. Crenshaw); “The Day(s) of YHWH in the Book of the Twelve” (James D. Nogalski); “Die prophetische Ehemetaphorik und die Bewertung der Prophetie im Zwölfprophetenbuch” (Gerlinde Baumann); “Exile as Purification: Reconstructing the ‘Book of the Four’ ” (Rainer Albertz); “Futurism in the Pre-exilic Minor Prophets compared with That of the Postexilic Minor Prophets” (Simon J. De Vries); “Haggai-Zechariah: Prophecy after the Manner of Ezekiel” (Stephen S. Tuell); “The Perspective of the Nations in the Book of Micah as a ‘Systematization’ on the Nations’ Role in Joel, Jonah, and Nahum? Reflections on a Context-Oriented Exegesis” (Burkhard M. Zapff); and “Endings as New Beginnings: Returning to the Lord, the Day of the Lord, and Renewal in the Book of the Twelve” (Paul R. House).

By and large the essays seem to be divided into two parts: the diachronic and the synchronic. Baumann, one of only two female contributors to the volume (and German both of them!), combines these two methodologies in a reading where she describes the Twelve as a patchwork made up by already-completed units. On the one hand, the meaning of each little text-unit is important in itself, but on the other hand these units are put into lines and patterns that add yet another meaning to the original meaning (215). Baumann illustrates her methodology by following two very different threads (*Längsschnitte*) through the Twelve: the marriage metaphor and the assessment of prophecy. The metaphor of the marriage between Yahweh and Israel/Judah—or the motif of Yahweh’s love for Israel/Judah—frames the Book of the Twelve from the marriage and divorce in Hosea, through the punishment of daughter Zion in Micah (1:5–7; 4:9–15) and of Nineveh in Nah 3:4–7, to the joy and restoration of daughter Zion in Zeph 3:14–17; Zech 2:14; 9:9, ending with Yahweh’s eternal love for Israel in Malachi. Baumann uses this line to draw conclusions about the textual history of the Twelve where the early

“marriage” texts are found in the beginning of the scroll, the late texts at the end. From this she also draws conclusions about the canonical history of the Hebrew Bible, especially the prophetic books. She then follows the second thread and reaches the conclusion that the completed piece of art of the Book of the Twelve hides many patterns waiting to be unveiled. As usual, I am amazed (and perplexed) by the confidence of German scholars in the ability of redaction-critical studies to reveal textual history, but on her own methodological conditions Baumann presents a meticulous analysis that brings the scholarly dialogue a step forward.

The closing essay is by one of the “grand old men” in the field, Paul R. House, who presents a synchronic reading of the books in the Book of the Twelve in order to “grasp certain elements of literary unity that divulge theological themes” (314). These elements form a pattern, also well known from other parts of the Hebrew Bible, and include “threats brought about by covenant disobedience, calls for change, promises associated with change, larger threats for rejecting the opportunity to change, and promises of eventual renewal” (318). The overall theme of the twelve prophetic books is the sin of Israel and its neighbors and God’s reaction to this sinfulness in punishment and in forgiveness, when the sinners repent. He concludes that the Book of the Twelve “offers a post-exilic readership a clear choice based on their spiritual heritage. Those who first held the whole corpus in their hands lived between the day of the Lord that brought exile and the day of the Lord that would bring them final security” (338). It is no surprise to any reader that the main theme for the Old Testament prophets, including the Twelve, is sin and what to do about it. However, House’s essay adds new meanings to this truism through his demonstration of intertextuality and a theological thread in the Minor Prophets. He thus demonstrates that there is an epistemological surplus to be gained from a coherent, synchronic reading of the Book of the Twelve.

The volume is supplied with two indices, one of works cited and a Scripture index; misprints are few, and the publishers have made a fine and durable binding that, unfortunately, is not too average these days.

The book is warmly recommended, even if new readers in the field maybe should consider not beginning here but with its predecessor, *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney; SBLSymS 15; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). But that is only in order to begin with the beginning.