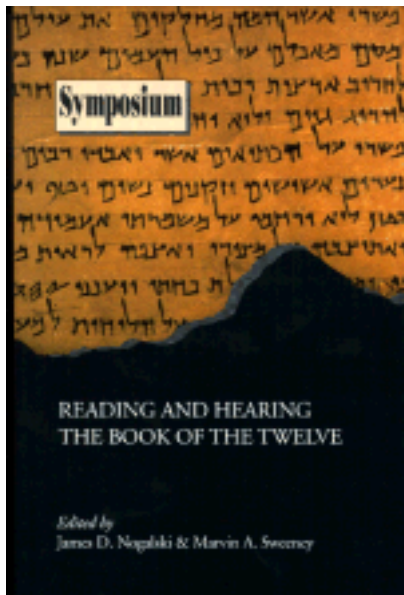


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**Nogalski, James D., and Marvin A. Sweeney, eds.**

***Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve***

Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 15

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Unlike many edited collections, this volume is highly unified, offering thirteen closely related essays devoted to the nature of the unity of the Book of the Twelve. The complementarity of the essays is not accidental: all grew out of discussions in the Society of Biblical Literature seminar on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve and/or a session devoted to the topic at the 1997 SBL International Meeting.

Part 1, "Reading the Book of the Twelve," includes six essays. David Petersen, "A Book of the Twelve?" surveys the standard arguments for the unity of the Twelve and concludes they are not self-evident. He suggests, but does not argue extensively, that the unifying theme of the Twelve is the "Day of Yahweh." Paul Redditt's "The Production and Reading of the Book of the Twelve" offers a generic sociological profile of the producers of the Twelve (they were male and elite), then surveys the history of the interpretation of the Twelve, discerning that in Jewish and Christian interpretation the Twelve have been interpreted as individual books even while commentators acknowledge that the books constitute a unit. Redditt also mentions several benefits that come from reading Twelve as a unity. Aaron Schart, in "Reconstructing the Redaction History of the Twelve Prophets: Problems and Models," summarizes some of the reasons the Twelve have been treated as unity and, like others, points to the unity of the Twelve as a window into the creation of canon. In "Sequence and Interpretation in the Book of the Twelve,"

Marvin Sweeney attempts to discern the organizing principles for the MT and LXX order of books; the MT, for example, exhibits more concern with Jerusalem than does the LXX. Barry Jones's "The Book of the Twelve as a Witness to Ancient Biblical Interpretation" argues that the placement of books within the Twelve witnesses to how the books were understood by later communities and correlates canonical ordering with selected postbiblical interpretations. Finally, Rolf Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," traces the theme of the "Day of Yahweh" in the Twelve and concludes that, although not all of the individual books speak of the Day in exactly the same way, Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah present a common message, which constitutes the core of the Twelve's understanding of the Day.

Part 2, "Hearing the Book of the Twelve," includes seven essays. In "Joel as 'Literary Anchor' for the Book of the Twelve," James Nogalski argues that Joel was shaped to be the interpretative key to the Twelve and demonstrates how it anticipates most of the themes of the Twelve. John Watts's "Superscriptions and Incipits in the Book of the Twelve" provides a detailed taxonomy of superscriptions and incipits (opening sentences) and suggests the process of their development. Paul House, in "The Character of God in the Book of the Twelve," offers a literary study of the characterization of Yahweh in the Twelve, concluding that God is one who loves, warns, destroys, and renews. House also argues that all the writers believed that they spoke of the same deity and hence that the Twelve creates a unified characterization of God. Mark Biddle, "'Israel' and 'Jacob' in the Book of Micah: Micah in the Context of the Twelve," studies the usage of these location terms in Micah, usually seen by scholars to be used inconsistently in the book, and concludes that the usage in Micah is due to redaction: "the redaction responsible for the core of Mic 4–5 may also have given Mic 1:6–16 its current shape" (161). Byron Curtis, in "The Zion-Daughter Oracles: Evidence on the Identity and Ideology of the Late Redactors of the Book of the Twelve," claims that an early collection of Minor Prophets once ended with Zephaniah. The ending of Zephaniah creates an editorial bridge between this preexilic/exilic collection and the final three postexilic books. In a similar way, the Zion-Daughter oracle in Zech 9 provides a transition to the material of the late restoration. In "Remnant, Redactor, and Biblical Theologian: A Comparative Study of Coherence in Micah and the Twelve," Kenneth Cuffey outlines criteria for determining the "coherence" of a corpus, how it holds together in terms of theme, structure, and perspective. Cuffey applies these criteria first to Micah, concluding that the final form of Micah is indeed a unity, then to the Twelve, concluding that, while the Twelve may meet the criteria, determining whether this coherence is intentional or coincidental is impossible. He offers scholars further standards for determining intentional coherence of a corpus. Finally, James Watts, in "A Frame for the Book of the Twelve: Hosea 1–3 and Malachi," claims that the opening and closing of the Twelve provide a coherent frame for

the material: both use the language of domestic relations to describe God's love for Israel. Watts argues that Malachi is much more specific than Hosea and thus that the whole of the Twelve is meant to be read in a fifth-century context.

The collection helpfully brings together into a single volume representative work of the Formation of the Book of the Twelve seminar. The group has done much to shift scholarly opinion toward a presumption of the unity of the Twelve, and the volume gives its reader a good sense of the seminar's conversations.

Not surprisingly, given the nature of the seminar itself, the unity of the Twelve is largely assumed in these essays rather than explicitly argued. Modeling only occasional disagreement between contributors, it reads as largely an in-house conversation. Petersen raises a few concerns about common arguments for unity, and Cuffey offers suggestions for how scholars might be more careful about attributing interconnections to authorial/redactional intent, but neither substantively challenges the consensus that dominates the book.

These essays demonstrate well that reading the Twelve as a whole yields interesting results. For example, while many interpreters view Jonah and Nahum as contrary perspectives on the boundaries of community, Rendtorff suggests that canonical placement posits Nineveh as one who offered but ultimately rejected the opportunity to repent. Various essays also provide thoughtful reflection on the Day of Yahweh theme in the Twelve. Many of the essays, however, assume too readily that connections between individual books are the legacy of an author rather than a reader. Many insights are equally available to those who read intertextually in a Kristevan/poststructuralist way.

The discussion here is largely literary and redactional. It shows little concern with the sociological dimensions of the creation of the collection. Although Redditt claims to offer exactly that, his findings are too general to be useful. How does positing an elite male authorship distinguish the Twelve from other biblical literature? Many of the essays also easily slide into theological discussion without sufficient self-reflection. House's claim, for example, that the writers of the Twelve believed they all witnessed to the same deity cannot be defended on historical grounds, and such a claim ignores the possibility that ancient people, like modern ones, made competing and not necessarily complementarity claims about the divine.

*Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* is a good introduction to the current dominance of the Twelve-as-a-unity paradigm in the study of the Minor Prophets. For critical engagement about the methodological dimensions of the nature of this unity, the volume would need to be supplemented by other work in the field.