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NO ABSTRACTS

REVIEW OF BOOKS

JOHN BRIGHT, *A History of Israel*, SCM. London; Second Edition, 1972 pp. 519 + 16 maps: R9.65.

Thousands of copies of Prof. John Bright's book have been used in colleges and universities throughout the world, and it has been widely accepted as the standard textbook on its subject. Thus, since its original publication in 1959, the book has been in constant demand.

Now, in the light of new knowledge, new discoveries, and especially by reason of new research projects, the 1959 edition has had to be revised. The new edition differs considerably from the old. The footnotes have been entirely revised to take into account literature that has been produced in the last decade. Whole sections have been completely rewritten in the light of recent discussion. The 1972 edition is some ten pages longer than its predecessor; but by means of a different type, the equivalent of approximately two lines of additional material per page has been incorporated.

Before drawing the attention in this book review, chiefly to the changes which have been made, the following points should be noted: It gives a new conception of the deep-rooted and well-developed cultural context within which Israel came into being and by which she was influenced.

Furthermore, it must be said gratefully, that Bright uses archaeological evidence with proper caution and judgement, as in the case of the patriarchal period, enriched our knowledge of the general cultural pattern and has cast new light on incidents and procedures in the narratives of the Book of Genesis.

It is important to note that apart from bringing footnotes up to date, most of the modifications are caused by new archaeological discoveries. These concern the following areas: Neolithic Jericho, Anatolia in the Neolithic period, the Negeb in the Chalcolithic period, the Amorities and many other. Very interesting is also the discussion and re-evaluation of Shiloh, Gezer, Saul's Gibeah, fortification at Beth-Shemesh etc.

It is interesting to note, however that in the 1959 edition, John Bright wrote about "the Israelite amphictyony" (cf. J. Mauchline's review in *VT* II (1961), 238f on the discussion), which, however, creates confusion to a certain degree, especially if one takes into account the fact that Alt and Noth also described the organization of Israel as "amphictycony". In the revised edition (cf. 156 ff) Bright now uses the term "Tribal League". It is significant that Bright possibly discards the term "amphictyony" by reason of the unique nature of the covenant between Jahwe and the people of Israel. In his explanation of the concept "Tribal League" he gives preference to this term, (though the term "amphictyony" is retained on p. 235, presumably inadvertently). Bright concedes the "Tribal League" first developed fully in Palestine, but that it had its origin in the events at Sinai (cf. 160f).

Other notable changes include the admission of truth in Mendenhall's "sociological" account of the Conquest; an amplified discussion of the meaning of the name Yahweh; and the deletion of the suggestion that Ecclesiastes reflects Stoic and Epicurean philosophy.

The excellence of this book as a whole will be admitted without hesitation. The history of Israel is written with a clear awareness of the vital issues which were involved at the various critical points in its history.

We come to the conclusion therefore, that study of this book is to be recommended. Ministers and scholars will certainly find valuable and illuminating factual information in this work. The book also contains scriptural references, subjects and map index as well as 16 maps which further increase the value of the work.

P. J. v. Z.

KEVIN J. CATHCART, *Nahum in the light of Northwest Semitic*, Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1973, 171. Price: 10 dollars.

Father Dahood's students have now in quick succession produced two noteworthy contributions to the Minor Prophets, viz. L. Sabottka's philological commentary on Zephaniah and this one of Cathcart on Nahum. It is not an easy task to write anything on Nahum because of difficult terminology and obscure passages. Cathcart tackles these problems from the Northwest Semitic angle. And it can be said that through his painstaking research many a *crux interpretum* is solved. It is also true that some of his suggestions will not be generally accepted, e.g. his interpretation and discussion of *miqqômēhû* on pages 57-58.

Cathcart has made use of the most important literature on the subject, but here and there something is overlooked, e.g. P. J. van Zijl's discussion of *gā'ar* "rebuke" in *OTWSA*, 1969, 56 ff. (it is also noteworthy that quite a few articles in this issue are written on Nahum) and on *ryt* in the Mesha-inscription reference should be made to G. Ryckmans' proposal in *L'Ancien Testament et l'Orient*, 1957, 103 to connect it to Minaean *ryt* "sacrifice" (e.g. *ryt k'aṭtr* and *ryt kwd*).

One thing is certain and that is that Cathcart has shown in quite a number of instances that NEB following proposals from G. R. Driver which are based on Arabic, is not to be followed. Here and there Cathcart's translation is also open to criticism, e.g. Nah. 3:12 "All your fortifications are fig-trees", should be translated as a simile "all your fortifications are like fig-trees." This would be better modern English. And then the strangling lion! Reviewer of this happens to live in a country with a number of lions are still roaming around and strangling prey with the paws is unknown.

It is much better to accept that a lion by grappling the prey with the mouth at the throat, seems for the eye-witness to strangle it.

Although this book is not a commentary in the real sense of the word, but a philological discussion, it should not be overlooked by any one studying the difficult book of Nahum. It can be recommended for further research.

F. C. F.

SAUL LEVIN, *The Indo-European and Semitic Languages*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1971, 775. Price: 25 dollars.

It takes courage to write a book on the comparison of Indo-European and Semitic Languages. The first condition for such a study is sound knowledge of the languages under discussion. Prof. Levin has an excellent knowledge of Greek, Sanskrit, Hebrew and Aramaic, but admits himself that his knowledge of other languages of the Indo-European and Semitic groups is second hand, like e.g. Accadian and Hittite. It is difficult to give a satisfactory summary of Prof. Levin's position. It is expounded over 775 pp. His theory is more or less as follows: There are certain morphological and other resemblances between Greek, Sanskrit and Hebrew which cannot be ascribed to mere chance. Certain of these resemblances, like i.e. the dual ending, might have been borrowed by the Greeks from the Phoenicians when Phoenician trade expanded to the Aegean world. Other resemblances between Hebrew and Greek may go back to a time when the language of the Hebrew people was not affected by Semitic, and the Hebrews and Greeks had some contacts. This is a brave attempt to solve certain problems of the prehistory of these languages. But one has the uneasy feeling that this attempt is going too far. The author combines evidence which is chronologically far apart, e.g. his usage of the vowels of the Massoretic text of Hebrew with Greek and Sanskrit centuries apart. His attempt to dislodge Hebrew to a certain extent from its pure Semitic background by

minimizing its relation to Accadian and even to Ugaritic is contrary to our overall picture of these languages (cf. e.g. the latest study of W. von Soden, *Sprache, Denken und Begriffsbildung im Alten Orient*, 1974). It seems as if the theory produced by the author is pure conjecture.

F. C. F.