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NO ABSTRACTS

REVIEW OF BOOKS

JOHN C. L. GIBSON, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions*, Vol. I, Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 116, £3; *Aramaic Inscriptions including Inscriptions in the Dialect of Zinjirli*, Vol. II, Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 192+12 plates, £ 11.50.

John C. L. Gibson of the University of Edinburgh has done for the English speaking scholarly world what Donner and Röllig have done for the Germans: He has produced a corpus of Hebrew, Moabite and Aramaic inscriptions with very useful introductions and notes accompanied with a bibliography. With the rapid discovery of new texts in Palestine and Syria any work on this subject becomes antiquated within a few years. The publication of a very important Ammonite inscription mentioning Balaam by Dutch Scholars, is in the press. Recently an inscription is discovered at Isbet Sarte from the twelfth or thirteenth Century B.C. which, according to those who have read it, would shed fresh light on the religion of Israel. At the same time the study of scholars on the old texts proceeded, cf. e.g. E. Lipinski, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics*, I, 1975 and Degen-Müller-Röllig, *Neue Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, I-II, 1971 onwards. But it is still to be welcomed to have certain texts collected with the necessary notes supplied. There are not many new proposals on difficult passages in Gibson's work, but it is a useful work to consult. A few remarks at random will suffice: Sometimes one expects a little more elaboration on certain interesting points, e.g. on p. 52 (vol. I). The difference in orthography between *yyn* at Arad and *yn* at Samaria is mentioned without any comment. A discussion on the possibility that in the South the diphthong has not contracted like in the North, would have been useful. In Gibson's translation of the Sefire-inscription treaty terminology has not been taken sufficiently into account, e.g. his translation of *ʔbr'* with "good things" (p. 35, vol. II) and *lšlm* with "to ask after his welfare" (p. 47, Vol. II). One further point, I think that the title of the book mentioning Syrian Semitic inscriptions is ambiguous, because the area from which the inscriptions are drawn, is much wider than what we traditionally understand under Syria. We would also prefer to see more Ugaritic material incorporated in the discussions.

By and large, we can recommend this painstaking piece of work to every scholar who studies Northwest Semitic languages.

F. C. F.

WILLIBALD KUHNIGK, *Nordwestsemitische Studien zum Hoseabuch*, Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1974, pp. 177, \$12.

This study as various other studies, e.g. those of Blommerde, Sabottka and Cathcart, was done under guidance of Mitchell Dahood. It is, thus, not surprising that in this study the same method is followed than in the others. Philological notes are written on various passages of Hosea with strong emphasis on Ugaritic. Many times a difficult passage is explained by producing an Ugaritic parallel. We are not always convinced that the parallel is clear enough to be of any value. The problem of many centuries between the Ugaritic material and the Hebrew of Hosea remains real. One should expect that a diachronic development should have been pointed out. But Hosea is a difficult book and its Hebrew is still more difficult. The study of Kuhnigk has shed light on many difficult problems and has brought to light new perspectives. I want to single out one fine example, viz. Hos. 9:1-4 where an illuminating discussion is given of problems in connection with the understanding of the Hebrew of this passage. (espec. the discussion of M.T. *lō' yir'ēm* and its difficulties). Also interesting is the *Exkurs* on Hosea and Dt. 32:1-43 which is useful indeed (pp. 35-39). The problem with a study which is dedicated

to philology and certain poetic devices (as it is encountered in Ugaritic), is that other important facets are neglected, e.g. in the discussion of Hos. 1:9b (pp. 4-5) a grammatical and stylistic note is written without any reference to this formula's Ancient Near Eastern background, viz. the parallelism with adoption contracts and a probable close affinity with the covenant idea.

This book is to be recommended to every scholar who wants to study Hosea. Nobody can ignore a work in which fresh insights abound.

F. C. F.

JOHN F. A. SAWYER, *A Modern Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1976, pp. 216, £4.

In the last decade or so we have had a quick succession of Biblical Hebrew grammars in English, e.g. those of Lambdin, Moshe Greenberg etc. This is understandable in the light of the fact that modern linguistics has revolutionized our approach to grammar. Sawyer has worked for many years on the new approach of linguistics applied to Biblical Hebrew. I can still recall some of his excellent remarks at I.S.O.T., Upsalla, 1971 addressed to certain Old Testament scholars who are still clinging to the old philological approach. It is, thus, with great expectation that one takes Sawyer's grammar in hand and you are not disappointed. On the contrary, we have here an excellent experiment of a marriage between modern linguistics and Hebrew grammar. The linguistic method which the author has applied is fully worked out in his study *Semantics in Biblical Research*, 1972. This approach is also discussed in Appendix B, pp. 163-173 which is very useful indeed. With new approaches, like the one of modern linguistics, one is apt to overemphasize the point to make the point. The movement away from comparative Semitics is understandable in light of the unscientific studies by scholars who are hunting for new "discoveries" in meaning. On the other hand one would welcome the swinging of the pendulum back to the middle. I think that comparative Semitics is still important for studying a semantic field, especially in those languages where the speakers had close ties and lived in a more or less the same environment. It also is important for a diachronic study. But then the scholar must apply the modern linguistic method rigidly.

The approach of Sawyer in this work is to teach beginners Hebrew structures by bringing them in contact with the Biblical context. His method is much more refined than that of W. Harper, *Introductory Hebrew Method and Manual*, 1921 who has opted also for the contextual approach.

To sum up, here we have an excellent grammar which can be very useful for teachers in Biblical Hebrew. But it is more than that, it is a grammar according to the new linguistic approach in the tradition of scholars like Barr and Sawyer which merits careful study by the scholarly world.

F. C. F.

J. ALBERTO SOGGIN, *Old Testament and Oriental Studies*, Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1975, pp. 256.

J. Alberto Soggin, with the rare gift of speaking many European languages, has a great variety of interests in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East. This volume testifies of Soggin's wide interest and erudition. It is a collection of various articles written in periodicals. Many of the articles are translated from Italian into English and are for the first time available to scholars not acquainted with Italian. This is to be welcomed. It would be impossible to produce a discussion on every of the 32 articles. We want to draw the attention to a few interesting remarks. On pp. 9-10 the author has

pointed out that the opposite views of Alt and Noth against Bright have the tendency to move to each other. If this was true in 1960, it is still more true today, compare e.g. the second revised edition of Bright's *History* with that of S. Herrmann, for both, e.g., the Amphictyonic idea is more or less a dead horse. One feels that it is a pity that some of the articles could not have been brought up to date, e.g. the discussion on the Holy War (pp. 67-71) could have benefited much from recent studies by Weiss and P. D. Miller (cf. e.g. Kevin J. Cathcart's discussion in *Biblical Studies in Contemporary Thought*, 68-76). Soggin's short notes at the end of his book which are mainly of philological nature, are very useful. He has made use of Ugaritic to explain quite a few difficult passages in the Hebrew Bible, e.g. cf. his discussion of the emphatic lamedh (pp. 219-223).

No scholar should bypass the work of Soggin. His book is strongly to be recommended.

F. C. F.

J. ALBERTO SOGGIN, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, SCM Press, London, 1976, pp. 510, £9.50.

This introduction is translated from Italian into English by John Bowden. J. Alberto Soggin with his amazing knowledge of modern languages, is able to take notice of work in many countries. This is clearly reflected in this book. In times of sincere study of the Old Testament all over the world, from Japan to South America and from South Africa to Norway, it is indeed important to take notice of what scholars are proposing. The days are past when Old Testament scholarship is restricted to certain areas in Europe. Soggin's introduction takes notice of scholarship all over the world and it is the first of its kind to do so on such a large scale. We haven't got the space to go into a detailed discussion of this useful and important work. If I am putting a questionmark after certain views, it is not to minimize the value of this book. Firstly I do not think that the discussion of Israelite Law (pp. 147-160) does full justice to modern research, especially concerning the form of legal material. The latest studies of Liedke and Phillips should have been treated and a fuller discussion of Schulz' view on *das Todesrecht* should have been given. The author is very cautious when he approaches studies about the Old Testament covenant (cf. pp. 130-131). We know that it is out of fashion in certain scholarly circles to place any weight on arguments defending the importance of the covenant idea earlier than D. Perlitt has produced to the opinion of many scholars the *Wasserscheidung*. Soggin is critical to the view of Perlitt because he thinks it is erroneous to neglect "the whole traditio-historical approach to the problem" (p. 131). In a very important doctor's thesis Deryck Sheriffs has pointed out that the treaty played an important role in the theological thought of the kings of Mesopotamia right through the first half of the first millennium B.C. This should caution us not to be too cautious about knowledge of a treaty relationship between gods and kings or people at a stage much earlier than D.

But this is enough of questionmarks. We want to recommend this work very strongly as a useful tool for further research.

F. C. F.