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NO ABSTRACTS

PIERO BARTOLONI, *Studi sulla ceramica Fenicia e Punica di Sardegna*, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Roma, 1983, 84 & 10 fig.

It is common knowledge that a typological study of pottery is very important for the fixing of chronology. But it is also true that such a fixing is full of problems. The author of this work is fully aware of the difficult task he has tackled. Cross references are important for the study of dating pottery and this kind of comparative study has produced satisfactory results. In this work the author works with a limited geographical area, viz. Sardinia, where the Phoenicians exercised their influence as it is well illustrated by Bartoloni's teacher, Prof. Sabatini Moscati in a number of publications. The author continues this firm tradition in this book. He begins his study with an investigation into the archaic pottery of the *tofet* of Sulcis with special emphasis on the influence of Greek pottery. One of the main problems is the scarcity of pottery. In his second chapter the author discusses the Punic pottery of Sulcis and Monte Sirai, both places excavated by Italian archaeologists. Again the author has encountered numerous problems which still awaits solutions, but in spite of this he could propose certain solutions and put the discovered material into perspective. The third chapter concerns Phoenician and Punic pottery of Tharros. We have also a number of line-drawings of types of pottery which are very useful.

The study is very important for future investigation into types of pottery, the history of the Phoenicians in the West, their culture and religion. It can be warmly recommended.

F. C. Fensham

PHILIP JOHANNES NEL, *The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1982, 142, Beiheft für Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Band 158.

This dissertation written for a doctor's degree at the University of Stellenbosch, is an excellent addition to the growing literature on Old Testament Wisdom Literature. It begins with an introductory chapter on the Wisdom literature of Israel in which the author warns against a too broad classification of Wisdom. In this chapter he also discusses certain problems in connection with the Wisdom Literature, the aims and the method of his study.

Chapter 2 is concerned with a literary analysis which the author calls "The formal structure of Wisdom". It is a study of the genres of Wisdom. In chapter 3 the author studies the grammatical structure of Wisdom Admonitions. This part is mainly concentrated on types of clauses, e.g. final, subordinate, result clauses. Here a careful analysis is made of the structure of the language. From this important form-critical conclusions are drawn. We cannot discuss all the conclusions of the author, because that will take us too far afield. Some of the conclusions are that the sayings of Proverbs do not represent a uniform ethos. The literary form of the admonition is no direct indication of what the *Sitz im Leben* might be and to determine it the wisdom saying must be considered. If one has to fix a *Sitz im Leben* the Israelite city seems to meet the requirements. This may explain the diversity of the ethos encountered in Proverbs. This is an excellent chapter where a study of grammatical structure is fruitfully combined with a literary analysis. The literary analysis is not left hanging in the air, but is firmly based on what is actually written in Proverbs.

In chapter 4 the author studies the ethos of the Wisdom. An important discussion is given of the role and function of the motivation. The conclusion is that the motivation is an irreplaceable structural element of the admonition. The main intention of motivation is to illuminate the truth and validity of the admonition. Final conclusions are that the theological context with the *yir'at Yahweh* as the final limit and goal of Wisdom, is an absolute condition which must be considered when the ethos is studied; the knowledge expressed in the Wisdom is oriented to created order, viz. Wisdom is the knowledge of the created order and of God himself; the theological context forms part and parcel of a theology of creation; the ethos can be qualified as an ethos of subordination to the divine order.

This study is remarkably free of printing errors. I have noticed only two, viz. on p. 30 where

"Particle" is written instead of "Participle" and on p. 81 "pristly" instead of "priestly".

All in all this is a most readable interpretation of the ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions with a fresh approach. It can be heartily recommended for further study.

F. C. Fensham

ANNA MARIA BISI – MARIA GIULIA GUZZO AMADASI – VINCENZO TUSA, *Grotto Regina*, I, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Roma, 1969, 67, 38 fig. tav. XXXII.

Gianna Coacci Polsellì – Maria Grulia Guzzo Amadasi-Vincenzo Tusa, *Grotto Regina*, II, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Roma, 1979, 117, 66 fig. tav. XLVI.

The first volume already published for quite a time consists out of a survey of the excavations of 1969. Important for us is the publication of a number of Punic inscriptions discovered in the cave. These inscriptions are short and most of them severely damaged, but the few words which can be read with an amount of certainty, are very important, because, as we all know, Punic inscriptions are not particularly numerous. The second volume is dedicated to the Punic inscriptions and this is a very important contribution to our knowledge of this language, especially the personal names used.

These two volumes are recommended to all who are interested in Phoenician and Punic and the material culture of the Semites in the West.

F. C. Fensham

GOTTHELF BERGSTRÄSSER, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1983, 276, translated by Peter T. Daniels. Price: Kivar 19.50 dollars and Cloth 29.50 dollars.

This is a translation into English of the well-known book of Bergsträsser *Einführung in die Semitischen Sprachen*, 1928. One could ask the question whether it is wise to translate a book published fifty five years ago. But this is a special book which can still be of good use in spite of the progress made in the meantime. To a certain degree some of its important results are not superseded in the past fifty five years. We may call it a classic in its own class. We are grateful to the translator for this great work he has done.

But we must not underestimate the contribution of the translator. It is not a mere translation, but the book is furnished with notes to bring it up to date. An important addition is a chapter on the scripts used as specimens in the book. Also new is an up to date bibliography on the Semitic Languages discussed. The translator mentions the fact that he does not add a discussion on Ugaritic, because Bergsträsser only has discussed Semitic languages with a vowel system in the script. It is, however, a pity that with such a decision most of the North-west Semitic languages are omitted. So it could not be called an introduction to the Semitic Languages, but only to some of the Semitic Languages. In such a case Moscati's book on the Semitic languages is to be preferred.

One characteristic of Bergsträsser's work makes it very useful and that is the specimens. It gives students the unique experience of the language in the original script. We are grateful to have this book in English available and recommend it to all who are interested in the Semitic languages.

F. C. Fensham

WOLFGANG RICHTER, *Transliteration und Transkription*, Eos Verlag, St. Ottilien, Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament, 19. Band, 1983, 155. Price DM 30.

This book is concerned with the transliteration and transcription of Biblical Hebrew. The author is of the opinion that the customary transcription systems are not satisfactory, because they are built on the Tiberian text. It is also a fact that some basic differences exist between the transcription systems of various scholars. The author, since he has written his book *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft*, 1971, has developed a new system in close co-operation with certain

of his students. He is highly critical of a system built on the Tiberian text (Masora), because it is not of any assistance to grammatical or literary analysis. The Masora through their vowel system conceal the structure of the language.

A distinction is made between transliteration and transcription (already by Weinberg). Transliteration is the transmittance of one system of writing into another, e.g. the Hebrew alphabetic characters into a modern system of writing. Transcription is the rendering of a language into writing. The signs used are thus focused either on the language or on the writing, and between these two entities a relationship exists. The author is also fully aware of the problems in connection with a "dead" language like Biblical Hebrew (cf. his discussion from p. 16 onwards). A direct phonetic analysis of Hebrew as a "dead" language is not possible. A transcription is thus almost impossible and only a system of transliteration can thus be satisfactorily undertaken. The author, proceeds to develop his system of transliteration with an analysis into the finest detail. His system is then illustrated by various examples of transliteration of certain texts. The problems of transcription of only a writing system of a "dead" language which mainly consists of consonants, are then discussed. The transcription of an orthographical system can be distinguished from a system of transliteration by the introduction of a few simple principles and the development of certain interpretational elements.

This is an important study of a difficult problem and should be studied by every scholar who is interested in the transliteration and transcription of the text of Hebrew.

F. C. Fensham

RÜDIGER BARTELMUS, *HYH Bedeutung und Funktion eines hebräischen "Allerweltswortes"*, Eos Verlag, St. Ottilien, Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament, 17. Band, 1982, 251. Price: DM 33.

A very frequent term in Old Testament Hebrew is the root *hyh*. The aim of this study is to clarify problems in connection with the function of this root. The author discusses the history of the investigation into the "meaning" of *hyh*. The study of C. H. Ratschow of 1941 is discussed and the author demonstrates how modern scholarship is influenced by it (e.g. Boman, *THAT* and *ThWAT*). In spite of James Barr's severe criticism of the methods employed to reach finality on the meaning of *hyh*, modern scholars still adhere to the conclusions reached by Ratschow. The problem with Barr is that no positive proposal is made to solve the problem. It is, thus, clear that a new investigation into the function of *hyh* is a necessity. And it is now done by the author in an exemplary fashion.

First of all the author has correctly decided that a methodological approach is necessary. The linguistic position must be elucidated. In an interesting discussion the author makes his choice in the enormous field of modern linguistic theory. His approach links up with those of K. Bühler, E. Koschmieder and A. Denz. The influence of Wolfgang Richter is also visible in many instances.

With this theoretical base firmly fixed, the author tackles the different functions of the root *hyh*, which *inter alia* brings him in contact with the important issue of the function and meaning of the Hebrew verbal system. At the same time the author, on account of the function of *hyh* in the sentence, discusses the whole problem of nominal and verbal sentences. Is the functioning of *hyh* in the sentence nominal or verbal? The important conclusion of the author is that an earlier notion of some scholars to relate the function to the time sphere, is correct, but must not be regarded as one of more functions of the root. It is the only function! (cf. p. 102). *Hyh* is only a "Tempusmarker".

At the end of his discussion the author takes up the *crux interpretum* of Ex. 3:14, viz. *'hyh 'šr hyh*. The more important modern interpretations are investigated and criticism given. According to the author it is to be regarded as a nominal sentence with a future time aspect. His translation is: "Ich werde sein, wer immer ich sein werde". It shows that knowledge of his Name does not give the one who has the knowledge, any power over the Lord. In dogmatic terms one could express it as follows: As *deus revelatus* the Lord is also *deus absconditus* (cf. p. 233 and cf. also F. C. Fensham, *Exodus*, 1977, 26).

This is sufficient to illustrate the importance of this study. Especially gratifying is the author's readable presentation of a difficult linguistic subject. The avoiding of unnecessary

difficult linguistic terminology and the lucid manner in which the arguments are expressed, are to be welcomed. Here we have an excellent study on *hyh* based on modern linguistic research which can be heartily recommended.

F. C. Fensham

La religione Fenicia, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Roma, 1981, 147.

This is a product of a colloquium held in Rome on 6th March 1979. Various aspects of the Phoenician Religion are discussed and the latest research is considered. The book commences with a methodological contribution by Paolo Xella on "Aspects and Problems of a historical religious investigation". The next contribution by G. Garbini is on "The Continuity and Innovations of the Phoenician Religion". Here we have in short an excellent summary in a diachronic way of the Phoenician religion. Interesting is Garbini's view that the Phoenicians spontaneously accepted alien religious influence (Amorite, Anatolian, Iranian, Greek) and then progressively eliminated such an influence. Mitchell Dahood has written on one of his latest topics, viz. "Ebla, Ugarit and Phoenician Religion". It is, as one may expect, full of new ideas. Of interest is Dahood's surmise that according to evidence from Ebla *ršp gn* should not be translated by "Reshef of the garden", but as "Reshef of the city Gnu" (but cf. remarks by Paolo Xella on pp. 58-59). The next contribution by Gabriella Scandoni Matthiae is on "The Problem of Egyptian Influence on the Phoenician Religion". J. Alberto Soggin writes about "The Phoenician Religion according to the Information of the Bible". The contribution by Sergio Ribichini is about "Adonis: Oriental Connotations and the Classical Tradition". Cf. our discussion of Ribichini's book *Adonis* in this volume. The book is concluded with a contribution by Christiano Grottanelli on "Sanctuaries and Divinities of the Western Colonies".

This is a very important book on the difficult topic of Phoenician religion. One of the real problems is the lack of sources. Another problem is the interpretation of the sources extant. In this book we have excellent contributions by expert scholars. We can recommend it warmly.

F. C. Fensham

AUGUSTIN RUDOLF MÜLLER, *Martin Bubers Verdeutschung der Schrift*, Eos Verlag, St. Ottilien, Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament, 14. Band, 1982, 177.

The science of translation in the wake of the development of modern linguistics has developed considerably in recent years. Different kinds of translations can be distinguished. In our time two kinds of translations are used, viz. the idiolectal method and the method of the dynamic equivalent. The former method is mainly concerned to stay as close as possible to the colour of the source language even if some of the renderings are close to the Hebrew idiom. The method of the dynamic equivalent is mainly concerned to render the source language in a dynamic way into the idiomatic expressiveness of the receptor language. Nothing must obscure this idiomatic expressiveness.

A. R. Müller in his discussion of Martin Buber's translation of the Hebrew Bible does not elaborate on the method of translation of Buber. The author is rightly of opinion that it is unnecessary to investigate Buber's method in the light of modern scholarship. One must judge Buber's translation in the light of its own time. On account of the distinction we have made above, one could classify Buber's translation to a certain degree as idiolect. It is strongly focused on the source language and tries to convey through a magnificent knowledge of German the original colour of the Hebrew. But it is much more than this. Buber and Rosenzweig with their excellent knowledge of ancient Jewish traditions display this in their translation, as the author has illustrated. At the same time some of Buber's Scriptural conceptions are also carried into his translation, e.g. his critical stance against the literary criticism of the Pentateuch (cf. pp. 143ff). So it is clear that in any translation we have three elements viz. the source language, the receptor language and the translator in between. It is impossible to have a kind of neutral translation. It is always coloured by the conceptions of the translator(s).

The work of Müller is only restricted to 2 Sam. 18 and 19, but in his discussions various

other parts of Buber's translation are also examined. It is an impossible task to discuss the whole translation.

In 1978 was the centenary of Buber's birthday and this was commemorated in different ways. Buber was such a versatile person, an authority on a wide variety of fields that this book dedicated to one of his life-tasks, the translation of the Hebrew Bible, is to be welcomed. The grammatical analysis of Müller's translation is excellent and can be warmly recommended.

F. C. Fensham

SERGIO RIBICHINI, *Adonis. Aspetti "Orientali" di un mito Greco*, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Roma, 1981, 212.

This is a methodological study of how to trace the oriental characteristics of a Greek myth back into history. Fortunately there are several traces to follow, but the development of myth is such a difficult process that some of the traces rather obscure the issue instead of being of any help. The author has succeeded in collecting all the available material from Greek and Ancient Near Eastern sources and to produce an acceptable interpretation.

In the first chapter "The Morphology of a Hero" the myths concerning Adonis are discussed as well as the cult. The second part of the book is concerned with the oriental aspects of Adonis which are subdivided into three parts, viz. his birth, various elements and his death. Under the subdivision "Birth" the author discusses the names and appellations of Adonis, his parents, his birth and its localisation in the East. Under "Various Elements" the author studies the following: Perfume and music, consort of Aphrodite and the resultant disaster, and the garden of Adonis. Under "The Death" the following topics are discussed: the laceration of the hunter, lamentation of a dead hero, the descent to the Underworld and return. The next topic is "Adonis of the Near East" and this is subdivided into the cult and the identification. Under "The Cult" the following are discussed: Adonis and Byblos; the ritual festival; the sanctuary of Afka, etc. Under "The Identification" the following: Adonis and Eshmun; Adonis and Osiris; Adonis and Tammus, and Adonis and the Phoenician City divinities.

It seems as if various characteristics of several gods in the Ancient Near East were combined in the Greek Adonis. It is thus impossible to associate Adonis with a specific god of the Ancient Near East because of the lack of sources to form a firm opinion on the character of the city gods of Phoenicia, especially those who were served in the cycle of dying and resurrected gods. The Syro-Palestinian background of the Greek Adonis can be accepted, viz. Adonis, the son of a king, loved by a goddess, Eastern and Phoenician. The morphology of Adonis was formed gradually over a long period in which concrete and diverse realities of the ancient world were utilised and modified.

We can only admire the courage of the author to tackle such a difficult subject. What he has achieved, is the clearcut conclusion that the myth of Adonis has its origin in the Ancient Near East, but also that many problems still remained unsolved. This intriguing book can be heartily recommended.

F. C. Fensham

LÉON EPSZTEIN, *La justice sociale dans le Proche-Orient Ancien et le peuple de la Bible*, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1983, 272. Price: Ff 69,50.

The study of social justice in the Biblical world and in the Ancient Near East has become popular nowadays. And rightly so. Social justice is one of the main problems of our times. The author tackles this issue from a broad basis. In the first place the legal codes of Mesopotamia are studied. Here one should expect also an analysis of the practical legal material to determine whether the laws of the codes were applied or not. In the second place the term *Maat* in the Egyptian world is investigated as it is reflected in the Old Empire, the First Intermediary Period, the Middle Empire and the New Empire. In the third place certain terms used for justice in the Old Testament are studied, e.g. *mišpāṭ* and *šēdākā*. In the fourth place the author gives a survey of the history of the literary critical approach to the Old Testament and this is followed by a useful survey of a sociological approach to the Bible. Viewpoints like those of

Max Weber, Adolphe Lods, Antonin Causse, C. van Leeuwen, J. Lindblom, S. Nyström which are wellknown, are given. To me came as a surprise the views of the American L. Wallis, not known to me up to now. In the fifth place a chapter is dedicated to Old Testament justice and the historical materialistic approach. In the sixth place the author discusses nomadism and social justice. It is a pity that the important studies of Kupper, Luke and Rowton are omitted. In the seventh place an important chapter is dedicated to social justice and the prophets. The author illustrates how the dynamic message of social justice of the prophets influenced later times. It is one of the most important principles of Christianity and it is one of the corner-stones of the socialistic utopia of Marx (p. 170). In the eighth place the social legal material of the Pentateuch is discussed. Here unfortunately the important works of Gerstenberger, Richter, Schultz and Liedke are omitted. The study is concluded with a short summary of every chapter.

We have here a useful survey of the latest studies on social justice in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament. The sections on the Ancient Near East are not particularly strong, but to build that out would have taken another 300-400 pages. Another problem is the author's utilisation of footnotes. They are sometimes used for obvious facts of a general nature (cf. e.g. p. 65). One should limit footnotes only to new ideas proposed by scholars or certain important information.

Scholars interested in social justice in the Ancient Near East have here a useful survey of the material.

F. C. Fensham

JOHANNES P. FLOSS, *Kunden oder Kundschafter?* Eos. Verlag, St. Ottilien, Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament, 16. Band, 1982, 249. Price: DM 32

The author by using the method of Prof. Wolfgang Richter studies a piece of narrative (Jos. 2:1-24). He starts his study with a discussion of different views on the literary development of Jos. 2. The solution of the literary problem by Martin Noth is not satisfactory and the idea of Alt and Noth that we have here an etiological legend is unacceptable, because this idea is carried into the text. There is nothing in the text to substantiate it.

One of the important characteristics of this study is the thorough textual critical approach where the principles laid down by D. Barthelemy, viz. "critique textuelle interne" and "critique textuelle externe", are followed through. It is interesting that in Jos. 2 LXX has certain important deviations and Floss is of opinion that with a thorough study of the text combined with a linguistic and literary approach, one can prefer some of the renderings of LXX to that of MT. Sometimes it seems as if one must also apply the "critique textuelle interne" to LXX rigidly and this is not always done by the author (cf. e.g. J. Cook, *JNSL* 10 (1982), 25-36).

The author then proceeds to study Jos. 2 from a linguistic angle according to the method of Prof. Richter. It is interesting that the author has a different methodological approach to certain linguistic and literary issues than e.g. Harald Schweizer in his *Metaphorische Grammatik* (cf. pp. 88-90). Floss follows Prof. Richter in this regard.

In his conclusions the author shows that certain consequences of the literary analysis of Alt and Noth can be upheld; although with a more thorough linguistic and literary analysis they can be refined. With the method applied by the author, it is possible to discover in a small literary unit like Jos. 2 a preliterate tradition. This is reached in three stages, viz. through textual and literary criticism as well as the analysis of the textual structure. But it seems as if an analysis of Jos. 2 is not sufficient to reach final conclusions. The author is of opinion that Jos. 6 must also be analysed in conjunction with Jos. 2 to draw the final consequences.

This interesting study can be heartily recommended.

F. C. Fensham

C. STEYL, *'n Beknopte Grammatika van Bybelse Aramees*, Die Universiteit van Oranje-Vrystaat, Bloemfontein, 1982, 93.

This is the first grammar of Biblical Aramaic in Afrikaans. It is written by C. Steyl, former

lecturer in Semitic Languages at the University of Orange Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

It has the same methodological approach as the Hebrew grammar of J. F. A. Sawyer. It is mainly concerned with morphology and syntax. The phonology is discussed in an addendum as well as a short historical sketch of the Aramaeans and their language. Biblical Aramaic is also placed amongst the Semitic languages of the first millennium BC. The grammar is discussed from relatively simple forms to the more complicated, e.g. from the regular verb to the irregular forms. Every chapter commences with a number of sentences taken directly from the Bible which form specimens of the grammatical and syntactical forms discussed in the chapter. These sentences are then grammatically discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the formal grammar and the chapter is concluded by a word list and several sentences in Biblical Aramaic to be translated. We have in this book the necessary paradigms, to a certain extent a necessity. It is, however, a question whether this kind of mechanical memorising of word lists can be useful. An approach in which the semantic value is assessed in the structure of the language, must be preferred. But this is to certain extent done in the specimens from the Bible and in the sentences.

It is an interesting grammar and can be heartily recommended to those with a knowledge of Afrikaans.

F. C. Fensham

THEODOR SEIDL, *Tora für den "Aussatz"-Fall*, Eos Verlag, St. Ottilien, Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament, 18, Band, 1982, 266. Price DM 32.

The author as a student of Prof. Wolfgang Richter, mainly follows the method of his teacher in the study of Lev. 13 and 14. We may call it a test-case of this method on a legal text. In this method every phenomenon in the text is studied in the finest detail. Nothing is left untouched. The study starts with the text itself and by evaluating textual critical deviations the best possible text is fixed. The next step is the study of the unity of these two chapters. In this the borders of the texts are fixed and this is done from a grammatical point of view. The author discovers, by using this method, four "Kerntexte", viz. Lev. 13:2-8, 13:18-23, 13:40-46 and 14:3b-8d. In spite of his meticulous study the author could not as result of the limitations of the text, solve all the problems inherent in the text. At the conclusion of his study these problems are mentioned, e.g. the forms and functions of the "constructio pendens" as it is applied to the casuistic legal formulas; forms and functions of the Hebrew conditional sentences and certain observations on the structure of the conditional sentences to differentiate the type of text of casuistic laws in the Covenant Code, Deuteronomy, "Heiligkeitgesetz" and Priestly Code and a more precise definition of the designation of the "Gattung" of "the priestly ritual", "the priestly *tôrâ*" and "the priestly rubric".

It is impossible to discuss here all the detail of this rich study. It is done in an "Textimmanent" way and the principle of diachronic study is only applied insofar as it can be derived from the text itself. But one must accept that this kind of text has also connections to the wider world of the Ancient Near East. I think the next step should be to compare the Old Testament text with other comparable material of the Ancient Near East and to make certain deductions for a better understanding of the Old Testament text, because the Hebrew people formed part of the Ancient Near East.

But the study of the author is an excellent attempt to wed thorough linguistics with a literary approach and can be heartily recommended.

F. C. Fensham

F. CHARLES FENSHAM, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (NICOT)*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1982.

The Commentary is divided in two parts (Ezra – Nehemiah) with an extensive introduction to the textual, historical, cultural and theological context of Ezra and Nehemiah. Fensham offers his own translation of the text and then provides a well-ordered exposition of the text.

The Commentary is supplemented by a comprehensive bibliography and useful indexes of subjects, authors, personal names, place names, Scriptural and non-Biblical references as well as glossaries of Hebrew, Aramaic and other foreign language terms.

Despite the intricacy of the textual problems of Ezra and Nehemiah, Fensham has succeeded in creating a systematic and vivid picture of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. The success is chiefly the result of Fensham's profound knowledge of the Ancient Near East, as reflected throughout the Commentary in his demarcation of historical, cultural and theological incidents.

Fensham gives a clear and judicious discussion of the content of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, always guided by the reliable nature of the Chronistic redaction, the authenticity of the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah as well as a conservative approach to the MT (cf. his discussions of Ezra 3:3, 4:6-23, 7:1-28 and Neh. 8:9). Fensham opts decidedly for two debatable features of the theological context of Ezra and Nehemiah: Firstly, the sacrificial atonement of sins is a post-exilic continuation of the pre-exilic phenomenon. Secondly, the covenant was most probably the most persistent theological existential in pre- and post-exilic periods and the legitimate context of the religious reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Fensham has paid close attention to the various viewpoints of the scholarly world (cf. e.g. extensive references, p. 68-76) on the major problems of the text and context of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Fensham offers no new suggestions concerning the interruption of Nehemiah's memoirs by a part of Ezra's memoirs (Neh. 8-10). He accepts the Chronicler's composition of the Ezra-memoirs in a comparatively free style (p. 215).

The character of the Thanksgiving hymn (Neh. 9:6-37) is explained by Fensham as though it might have a didactic objective to "instruct history" (p. 223f). This viewpoint could have been argued more efficiently by placing greater stress on the credo-character of this passage. The extent of harmony between the two major Pentateuchal traditions (i.e. the Sinai tradition and the tradition of the promise of the land) in this hymn is noteworthy. The Deuteronomistic dogma of retribution is also evident from this passage.

Although Fensham did not avoid the consequences of a Chronistic redaction of Ezra and Nehemiah, greater emphasis could have been placed on the conceptual strategies of the Chronicler in order to facilitate a better understanding of the real historical event – in other words, the history behind the historiography should have been scrutinised more closely. From this point of view new light could be shed on problems relative to the relationship between Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar (p. 63), Levites and priests (p. 112), Nehemiah's affinity for Deuteronomistic tradition, etc. This approach would probably shed some light on the religious reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. The following problem, in this respect, still requires attention: Does the historical picture of Ezra and Nehemiah reflect an orthodox legitimization of Israelite nationalism (in view of the re-occupation of Jerusalem and other parts of the land)?

The Commentary of Fensham is indeed a valuable contribution to textual and contextual scholarship concerning Ezra and Nehemiah and offers excellent guidelines for preachers seeking a well-presented frame of reference.

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