

Bernal, Martin. *Cadmean Letters*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990. xiii + 156 pp. \$19.50.

Martin Bernal has taken upon himself the formidable task of reshaping scholarly thought on Semitic and Egyptian influences in the formation of classical Greek culture. The study begins with a history of how Eurocentrism and anti-Semitism have seriously skewed our understanding of relations between Greece, Egypt, and the Levant. As a result, scholarly inertia has held in place conclusions based on unfounded racial presuppositions. The first chapter of *Cadmean Letters* chronicles this history with special reference to the transmission of the alphabet from the Levant to Greece. The transmission tends to be dated to the Iron Age, from as late as the 7th century (Classics) to as early as the 11th century (Semitics). Bernal would date the primary transmission of the alphabet to the Bronze Age, before or during the 15th century.

In chaps. 2 and 3 Bernal makes specific critiques of the standard models for the transmission of the alphabet and proposes his own model. He criticizes the simplistic tree model of transmission, preferring a wave model in which waves of influence move out from one or more centers, each leaving its mark. Bernal sees two major waves in the transmission of the alphabet. These moved from the Levant to Greece, one in the Bronze Age and the second in the Iron Age. Bernal also questions the idea that "primitive" syllabaries were replaced by the more advanced alphabet. Rather he points out several examples of how the alphabet was used to form syllabaries, especially those of Iberia.

In chaps. 4 and 5 the author gives a detailed analysis of the Spanish syllabaries and the Greek alphabet to show that the Semitic alphabet of the 14th-15th centuries must have been the alphabet of primary transmission responsible for these two writing systems. By the 11th century the alphabet of the Levant, especially Phoenicia, had lost many of the features clearly evidenced in the alphabets and syllabaries of the Mediterranean world.

Bernal argues that at least some of the Greek vowels were invented in a Semitic context prior to the transmission of the alphabet. His strongest argument concerns the letter *epsilon* (*E*) which is derived from *hē*. Bernal points out that the second vowel ²*alep* of Ugaritic (²*i*) is strikingly similar to the form of *hē*. He describes this ²*alep* as a *hē* with a diacritical mark to indicate that it is the vowel. Bernal's weakest argument concerns the ³*ayin* which became the Greek *omicron*. Bernal also argues that the "added letters" at the end of the Greek alphabet (*phi*, *chi*, *psi*, and *omega*) are among the oldest of the Greek letters. The strong Phoenician influence in the archaic period reshaped the alphabet, which was already widespread throughout the Greek world. As a result, those letters which did not fit the Phoenician pattern were relegated to the end of the alphabet. At this time

some letters already present in Greek use were reshaped under Phoenician influence.

Following a brief conclusion concentrating on the Greek alphabet, Bernal includes a one-page appendix consisting of a letter sent in 1915 by his grandfather, Alan Gardiner, to his grandmother, after Gardiner presented a paper on the transmission of the alphabet. The letter gives a brief insight into the personalities and issues of the period. Following the bibliography is an index of authorities cited.

The chief difficulty of Bernal's thesis is the presence of long silent periods in the record. Of course, such silences already exist in the accepted models. Also, many of the important epigraphic finds are not archaeologically datable, so these "silent" periods may not be quite so silent. However, Bernal goes to extremes when he derides what he calls a "fetish for attestation" (p. 64). Although available evidence is limited, this is one "fetish" which needs to be more popular.

The inertia against which Bernal is moving is very great. His work is carefully done and has great merit. *Cadmean Letters* is an important contribution to the study of the alphabet's transmission. As Bernal stands alone in this field, his work should be read critically. More important, it should be read.

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Clines, David J. A. *Job 1-20*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 17. Dallas: Word Books, 1989. 651 pp. \$24.99.

Because the Book of Job is one of the greatest works of world literature, most commentary writers approach it with trepidation. Clines considered his task "nearly as dangerous as composing a ninth symphony" (p. xi).

In a commentary on Job one looks quickly to examine the author's views on a number of problems: relationship of the prose story and poetry dialogue, the alleged 'disarray' in the third cycle of speeches, the place of the poem on wisdom in chapter 28, and whether the Elihu speeches constituted part of the original composition. (See C. S. Rodd, "Which Is the Best Commentary? Part iv: Job," *Expository Times* 97 [1986]: 356-360.)

Clines is not dogmatic, but he believes it probable that the author of the prologue and epilogue story is also the poet of the dialogue, and that he wrote the prose deliberately for its place in the book.

Since the commentary covers only the first twenty chapters of Job, the third cycle of speeches is not addressed. From the outline in the introduction, however, it appears that Clines does not resort to re-arrangement of the text. On the other hand, he does allow for the possibility of "dislocation in the