

Every chapter contains a number of new theories. This makes for stimulating reading. In chapter 3, for example, the argument proposed by D. Schmandt-Besserat that writing developed through a complex system of clay tokens during the Uruk period is presented as though it were widely accepted. Unfortunately, the scholars who have severely criticized this hypothesis, particularly J. Oates and P. Michalowski, are not mentioned. Also, in the discussion on the nature of the countryside (chap. 4), Postgate does not mention that, due to the changing sociopolitical structure, villages of the urban period differ quantitatively from earlier preurban villages, as has been pointed out in S. Falconer's work in Jordan. Another, perhaps related, problem is Postgate's failure to note or recognize the apparent fluidity between the nomadic groups and the urban population as viewed from the dimorphic model of M. Rowton. Such disagreements are minor, however, and do not detract from the overall contribution of a book of this vast depth and magnitude.

Postgate writes in a fluent and captivating style that will prove attractive to any interested reader. Yet his originality and substantive coverage of the early period of Mesopotamian cultural development make this book at the same time an invaluable tool for specialists in Near Eastern archaeology, epigraphy, and historiography. Numerous primary texts which encompass legal, economic, commercial, and social subjects are reproduced throughout the volume, providing the reader with valuable insights into the rich diversity of the evidence available from this period. The repeated and wholesome emphasis on the relationship between the archaeological record and textual sources gives credit to the breadth of the writer's knowledge and encourages new archaeological research techniques, such as faunal analysis for the reconstruction of ancient food systems.

Numerous maps, chronological charts, and photographs contribute to the strength and cohesiveness of the individual chapters. The extensive bibliography indicates the need for a knowledge of French and German by the specialist. An index on subjects and modern authors is provided, although it might have been more useful to provide two separate indexes, one on subjects and another on authors.

All in all, *Ancient Mesopotamia* is a successful *tour de force*. It is a welcome addition to quality secondary literature on early Mesopotamian history. Not only does this work provide a largely up-to-date review of research, but unlike its predecessors, it presents a new synthesis by means of an approach heretofore unparalleled. This makes it a necessity on the reading list of any person seriously interested in the rise of culture and civilization in ancient Mesopotamia.

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Schoors, Antoon. *The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words: A Study of the Language of Qoheleth*. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 41. Leuven: Peeters, 1992. xiv + 260 pp. \$45.00.

The idiosyncratic nature of the language of Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) has long been recognized. Though the book has some points of contact with various

other biblical books, within the Hebrew canon it stands *sui generis*. Since the inception of critical scholarship, this is most frequently accounted for by assigning a late date. However, in 1988 Daniel C. Fredericks published *Qoheleth's Language: Re-evaluating Its Nature and Date*, in which he argued strongly for at least a preexilic 8th-7th century B.C. date.

In his review of Fredericks' book, Schoors concluded, "Fredericks has built a strong case and it will no longer be possible to speak simply of the late characteristics of Qoheleth's language without a bad conscience. The situation of those defending a postexilic date of that language . . . has become much more complicated" (*JBL* 108 [1989]: 700). It is in part against this backdrop that Schoors writes in defense of the critical view.

In the introduction, Schoors furnishes the traditional survey of the literature grouped around the four principal theories that have been proposed to account for Qoheleth's distinctive language. The first is the Mishnaic Hebrew theory, a *crux interpretum*. Is the language of Qoheleth proto-rabbinic or biblical Hebrew? The second and third theories are related: the Aramaic influence theory, and the Aramaic translation theory. The former is admitted to a greater or lesser degree; but as for the latter, translations usually smooth out rather than complicate, a characteristic clearly lacking in Qoheleth. The fourth is the Canaanite-Phoenician influence theory and is, not surprisingly, connected with Dahood's name. Seen from this perspective, the author of Qoheleth wrote in Hebrew, but used Phoenician orthography, which is to say he did not use *matres lectionis* (vowel letters). Though himself a student of Dahood, in the final analysis Schoors rejects this theory.

Schoors's specific point of departure was C. F. Whitley's *Koheleth: His Language and Thought*, which had just become available when Schoors began his research. Though Schoors found much to commend in Whitley's work, he was dissatisfied with the linguistic analysis. As a consequence he decided to deal with grammar and vocabulary in two separate volumes in his own study. This first volume, the grammar, is in turn divided into three chapters which deal successively with orthography and phonetics, morphology, and syntax. Also included are a list of abbreviations (placed at the end of the work rather than the beginning), extensive bibliographies (first of Qoheleth, then of the works cited), and a very helpful series of indexes to the Bible and other ancient texts.

Of necessity, traditional grammars are eclectic since they must include a wide body of literature, both prose and poetic. On the other hand, it is easy for a grammar based on one book to be myopic. However, Schoors combines the features of both, since the specifics of Qoheleth are always set in the larger context, not only of Hebrew (biblical and Mishnaic), but also of the cognate languages and the various biblical versions.

This is a very thorough and careful analysis, unfortunately far too often marred by typographical errors, including—but by no means limited to—the Hebrew itself. An argument that turns on vocalization is difficult to follow when one is unable to trust the accuracy of the text. A few examples are: ׀׀ for ׀׀ (2); ׀ for ׀ (?) (12); 'te' for 'to' (20); and "conects" for "connects" (35).

Since the conclusions based upon the full study are not yet available, Schoors provides an interim conclusion, confirming the general consensus among critical scholars. Of Fredericks he says, "His argumentation is too analytical, showing the evident weakness of most of the arguments taken on their own" (222). In place of that, Schoors presents what he calls the "the argument of convergency, viz, the general picture presented by the combination of all pertinent features" (*ibid.*).

The volume calls for Hebrew study on the part of the reader/student measured in years, not quarters, including a facility with post-biblical Hebrew. In addition, a good grasp of the cognate languages such as Aramaic and Syriac is desirable. Thus it is best suited to a graduate course, especially when coupled with the works of Fredericks and/or Whitley.

The choice of Qoheleth as a subject for linguistic analysis is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the book is not central to the curriculum in most seminaries. On the other hand, if it were included, the absence of prior knowledge might permit a greater degree of objectivity in interpreting it. However, this would be by no means automatic. Given the works of two careful scholars with diametrically opposing views, it is all too easy to accept the one that aligns with one's own presuppositions.

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Tov, Emanuel. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992. xl + 456 pp. \$40.00.

The goal of textual criticism is to establish as accurately as possible the original form of ancient texts, and, though this is often overlooked, it is the basis for all further studies of any given text. Because of the paucity of material available prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible was often seen as primarily synonymous with the study of the various daughter translations, especially the Greek Septuagint (LXX); but only secondarily concerned with what is known of the Hebrew text itself—if students had the requisite command of Hebrew.

It is not surprising, then, that when Tov published his *The Text-critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem Biblical Studies, 3 [Jerusalem: Simor Ltd., 1981]), it was hailed as a definitive work on textual criticism. This perception seemed confirmed by the fact that on the first page of the introduction, Tov began by talking about the aims of OT textual criticism. As a result, when this current volume based on the Hebrew Bible was published, not a few scholars felt that Tov had perhaps betrayed them. When the book was publicly reviewed in Tov's presence, scholar after scholar focused on the relation between the LXX and the Hebrew Text, claiming that Tov had given undue priority to the latter over the former. As Tov makes abundantly clear in the book, this criticism is unwarranted and unjustified, given the focus of the present study.