

Erbes, Johann E. *The Peshitta and the Versions: A Study of the Peshitta Variants in Joshua 1-5 in Relation to Their Equivalents in the Ancient Versions*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Semitica Upsaliensia, vol. 16. Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University Library, 1999. 374 pp. Paper, \$62.50.

One of the remarkable developments in biblical scholarship over the past several decades has been renewed scholarly interest in the Syriac Bible. One reason for this interest is that for most books of the Syriac OT we finally have a reliable text with which to work. The Leiden edition of the Peshitta OT, which is now nearing completion, has provided a more secure textual base for such research than was ever available in the past. As a result, modern scholars have been able to determine better than ever before the textual affinities of the Peshitta. This is a welcome development.

In the book under review here Erbes has provided a detailed and thorough analysis of the Syriac text of the first five chapters of the book of Joshua. His work on Joshua originated as a 1999 Ph.D. dissertation completed at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. Erbes describes these chapters of Joshua not only in relation to the Hebrew text, but also in relation to the Greek, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Coptic, and Latin texts as well. In my opinion his work is now the definitive treatment of the Syriac text for these chapters. It is Erbes's intention to provide similar coverage for the remaining chapters of Joshua in the future. When that work is finished we will have for Joshua one of the most thoroughgoing textual analyses that is to be found for any book of the Syriac Bible. This is therefore a volume that should be consulted by all those who are interested in the role that the Syriac Bible plays in OT textual criticism.

The general approach adopted in the book and the major conclusions reached are as follows. In the apparatus of the Leiden edition for Joshua, which Erbes published in 1991, there are 459 Syriac variants for the first five chapters of Joshua. Erbes deals with each of these variants in the present volume, discussing their textual affinities and their relationship to readings found in the other ancient evidence. The sheer volume of material that is included is staggering. Some 3,000 versional details, affecting approximately 15 percent of the text of Joshua, are taken into account. Erbes concludes that in this portion of Joshua the text of the Peshitta is very close to the Hebrew Masoretic text. Occasionally it is influenced by the Septuagint. There is no evidence of influence from the Aramaic Targum, although there are points of contact between the Peshitta and the Ethiopic version. The Vulgate has little to contribute to this study, but the Coptic demonstrates an early origin for certain readings found in medieval Greek manuscripts. Because of its closeness to the MT the Peshitta of Joshua does not have a major role to play in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, according to Erbes. In his view the Syriac version probably dates to the second century of the Christian era, a date with which I would concur.

Erbes employs a comparative method in analyzing the readings of the Syriac text of Joshua. He of course situates the Syriac text against its parent Hebrew text, attempting to explain its distinctive features. As he points out, some of these features are due to the Syriac translator(s) having used a Hebrew *Vorlage* that was slightly different from the MT. Many other differences in the Peshitta are due to various translation techniques adopted by the translator(s). Erbes also takes into account the other ancient versions, so as to determine whether there are textual

affinities shared between them. He presents the evidence of the following versions: the Greek, the Aramaic, the Ethiopic, the Coptic, and the Latin. Herein is one of the chief values of this book: it makes available in a convenient location the essential textual data for evaluating the Syriac variants in these chapters of Joshua.

Another strength of this book is its careful sifting of the sometimes-difficult textual evidence for Joshua. Erbes demonstrates a judicious balance and fair handling of the materials as he goes about his text-critical assignment. When the evidence is clear he draws out the conclusions that are warranted. When the evidence is not convincingly clear in terms of the conclusions that it points to, he shows appropriate restraint. Although his resolution of problem passages is not equally persuasive in every case due to the limitations of the available evidence, his presentation of the data allows the reader to reach his or her own conclusions.

The book has been executed with considerable care. Typographical errors, whether in English or in one of the ancient languages cited throughout the book, are relatively few and far between. Given the complexity of the multilingual content of the book, the level of accuracy that has been reached is commendable.

I have only two concerns to express. First, the system of abbreviations utilized throughout the book is extremely complicated. This, along with the multilingual presentation of ancient texts, may prove to be a deterrent for many readers. This difficulty probably cannot be avoided entirely, but if there were some way to simplify the presentation this would be highly desirable. Second, there is a tendency to use terminology of dependence that is actually anachronistic when describing the relationship of the Syriac version to the Masoretic text. For example, in many places the author speaks of the Peshitta as "following" or being "based on" or being "a direct translation from" (or some similar expression) the Masoretic text. But an earlier text does not "follow" a later one. To say so is to invert the logical sequence. It would be preferable instead to speak of agreement or congruence with the MT rather than to speak of dependence upon it. In fact, Erbes often avoids this problem, describing the Peshitta as agreeing with "the equivalent of" the Masoretic text. But a more consistent use of suitable terminology is desirable.

These are relatively minor points, and they should not detract from the fact that this is an excellent textual treatment of these five chapters of Joshua. We look forward to the author's discussion of the remaining portions of the book of Joshua, a task that may require yet another three volumes!

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Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. xcii + 928 pp. Hardcover, \$50.00.

With the recent publication of several exhaustive commentaries on Luke, one might be tempted to not make another investment of time and money for yet another lengthy commentary on the same book. Such a decision, in this case, would be a mistake for unlike most Lukan commentaries, Green's commentary approaches Luke from a literary perspective while "showing very little concern for traditional form-critical and redaction-critical issues" (viii). It is this literary