

genuine traditions, deductions from other parts of scripture, considerations of first principles, and guesswork, inspired or otherwise. Ethiopian Christianity produced a similar approach, which like most things Ethiopian, has been hardly considered in the West. This deficiency has been remedied by Roger W. Cowley in a remarkable work of scholarship which earned him the degree of DD at Cambridge: *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge University Press [1989], £35.00/\$64.50, pp. 490, ISBN 0-521-35219-3). Like much Near-Eastern learning, the Ethiopian tradition was essentially oral, and late to be written down, and it may be dead in the present condition in that unhappy country; but this volume shows the range of the Ethiopians' curiosity: the languages, written and unwritten, of the sons of Noah, the names of the Magi, the story behind the woman who anointed Jesus, why Pharaoh's daughter was bathing in the Nile (Ethiopic tradition agrees with Greek-Coptic in calling her Termuthis, rather than the Jewish Bitya), the precise date of creation, which language God spoke before Babel, and where the sun goes at night. Cowley illustrates this tradition with two annotated texts, on creation and on the christology of Hebrews. Both these texts show some anti-Islamic features, as might be expected. The author shows clearly the indebtedness of the tradition to Jewish, Arabic, and particularly Syriac sources. An interesting question is the extent of Coptic influence on the Ethiopians, since both churches are monophysite. This is an area which could well be explored at a future date.

J. D. RAY

A NEW TOOL FOR LEARNING SYRIAC

The last thirty years have seen several Syriac grammars: in 1962 L. H. Brockington revised Theodore Robinson's 'Syriac Grammar', and in 1980 John Healey produced his 'First Studies in Syriac' as one of Birmingham University's Semitic Study Aids: now one of the JSOT manuals is G. A. Kiraz's *The Syriac Primer* (JSOT Manuals 5, Sheffield Academic Press, £8.95/\$14.50, pp. 273 with cassette, ISBN 1-85075-199-4). Different from Brockington, Healey, and the earlier master, Nöldeke, Kiraz introduces students to the contemporary as well as the ancient, classical language.

To help students – particularly lone students – all Syriac sentences in the grammatical exposition are given translations – even a 'cover sheet' is provided to be torn out and used to cover the cribb! Exercises are printed with ample space to write answers (even enough space for correcting wrong answers!), and the whole operation, written and oral, with cassette tape,

is organized with great care. Well-known difficulties are pointed out early: confusion of characters of similar shape and distinction of *d* and *r* with dots below and above. Advanced reading contains passages from the Sermon on the Mount and Proverbs, moving into creeds and prayers for pardon; classical and contemporary poetry are both represented. Why, one wonders, is not more of the classical giants, Ephrem and Aphrahat, included? The different scripts are adequately introduced and exercised.

There is, however, one snag. The grammars mentioned above (including Nöldeke) – the grammars commonly used – all follow the East Syrian traditions of pronunciation on which most of us have been brought up, e.g. *qām* 'he arose' where the vowel *zqāā* is a long *ā*. However, Kiraz follows the West Syrian tradition where our *ā* is pronounced *ō*, whence 'Peshitto' for Peshitta. This difference could lead to difficulties in teaching use in this country, but otherwise the work is encouraging and good.

JOHN G. SNAITH

FESTSCHRIFTEN

I have said before that *Festschriften* are impossible to review. Merely to list the names of the contributors and the titles of their articles would take up far more than the normal length of our reviews. What is an Editor to do when he has five *Festschriften* on his desk?

Brevard S. Childs is a scholar of international renown, at ease among the books of the New Testament equally with the Old. Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen and Robert R. Wilson have edited *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation* (Fortress Press [1988], n.p., pp. 347, ISBN 0-8006-0854-2). An international team of contributors consider important issues dear to Childs's heart – canon and the interpretation of scripture, solidly grounded in the exegesis of specific texts. These are essays which advance biblical study in several important ways.

The early death of Peter C. Craigie deprived Old Testament scholarship of a writer with a wide range of interests. Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor are the editors of a memorial volume: *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and other studies in memory of Peter C. Craigie* (Sheffield Academic Press [1988], £30.00/\$50.00, pp. 633, ISBN 1-85075-189-7). The studies are grouped in three sections: 'Ancient Near Eastern Studies', 'Ugaritic and Biblical Studies', and 'Biblical and Theological Studies', thirty-four in all, and an Appendix contains an 'Academic Biography