

phenomenon" (p. 111) in the ancient world, inasmuch as it "consists essentially of an up-dating of pre-exilic Israelite eschatology by the use of motifs drawn from Persian and Greek sources" (*ibid.*).

The composite character of the Sibyllines, as literature and as ideology, is the focal point of a final chapter entitled "The Syncretism of the Sibyllina." Here there is a curious discrepancy between the descriptive statements in the chapter itself and the summary of the chapter. First the summary: "Even though the sibyllina at all stages embodied non-Jewish material, they were not, properly speaking, syncretistic" (p. 118). What, then, are we to make of the following statements? "As might be expected in the documents of a small community in an international situation, they [*sic*] freely used borrowed ideas and formulations to express its ideas" (p. 111) and "on a deeper level the oracles were merely giving expression to the world-view of the community which produced them," or ". . . they *naturally* blended Hellenistic ideas with the biblical tradition which formed the basis of their culture" (p. 114; emphasis added). What are such statements if not good definitions of syncretism? The concluding remark on p. 118 appears almost to have been written before or independently of the chapter itself. Furthermore, given the author's own analysis of the Sibyllines as self-consciously eclectic literature, one wonders how the result could be anything but syncretistic.

Apart from this single reservation, however, Collins's work is a welcome contribution to our knowledge of Judaism in late antiquity. It opens an important perspective on the history of Judaism in Egypt, and in the process it underscores the almost endless variety within post-exilic Judaism. This is just the sort of volume for calling our attention to future needs in the field — here I think particularly of the need for a comprehensive treatment of Judaism in Egypt. Finally, Collins's work offers solid justification, if such be needed, of the lasting value of the SBL dissertation series.

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*Syntactical Evidence of Semitic Sources in Greek Documents*, by Raymond A. Martin. Septuagint and Cognate Studies, 3. Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974. Pp. vi+165. \$2.80; CSR members \$2.

This book represents incredible industry and remarkable clarity of presentation as it tries to establish objective criteria for determining "translated Greek." In ch. 1 Martin discusses seventeen syntactical criteria by which he believes translated Greek can be isolated from original Greek composition. Criteria 1-8 involve the relative infrequency of certain prepositions in Greek translations of Hebrew or Aramaic. The other nine criteria are: the frequency of *kai* coordinating independent clauses in relation to the frequency of *de*; separation of the Greek article from its substantive; the infrequency in translation-Greek of dependent genitives preceding the word on which they depend; the greater frequency of dependent genitive personal pronouns in Greek which is a translation of a Semitic language; the greater frequency of genitive personal pronouns dependent upon anarthrous substantives in translation-Greek; the infrequency in translation-Greek of attributive adjectives preceding the word they qualify; the relative infrequency of attributive adjectives in translation-Greek; the frequency of adverbial participles; and the frequency of the dative case.

The sample of translated Greek is ordinarily selected from the LXX while such writers as Plutarch, Polybius, Epictetus, and Josephus — plus selections from the papyri — serve as the raw material for Martin's statistical analysis of original Greek compositions. Those documents

known to be translations of Semitic languages have from 9 to 14 occurrences of translation-Greek frequencies while the original Greek compositions have no frequencies of the 17 criteria that are characteristic of translation-Greek.

In ch. 2 Martin runs tests to determine if the criteria work with units shorter than 50 lines. He finds that the differences between the original Greek and the translated Greek are always sufficient for deciding in units of 31-50 lines. This holds true for most units of 16-30 lines and in many units of even 4-15 lines in length.

Finally, these criteria are used in ch. 3 to analyze the Book of Acts to see which sections may have been translated from a Semitic original. The writer of Acts 15:36-28:31 is demonstrably not dependent on Semitic sources, and so this section reveals his own style of writing Greek. In Acts 1:1-15:35, however, no less than sixteen sections exhibit the characteristics of translation-Greek according to the 17 criteria: 1:15-26; 2:1-4; 4:23-31; 5:17-26; 5:27-32; 5:33-42; 6:1-7; 6:8-15; 7:9-16; 7:17-22; 7:30-43; 9:10-19a; 11:1-18; 13:16b-25; 13:26-41; 14:8-20. Another six sections are considered to go back only probably to Semitic sources: 2:29-36; 2:37-42; 7:1-8; 7:44-50; 9:19b-22; 9:32-35.

These criteria go considerably beyond such older methods as looking for obvious Semitisms and mistranslations, or reading a text and gaining the general impression that it is a translation of a Semitic language. What should be done now is to examine carefully the sixteen sections of Acts 1-15 to specify as precisely as possible the character of the Semitic literary sources which have been detected. Perhaps a computer could be used to check out the validity of these criteria on an even wider scale. The present book, which consists primarily of tightly drawn tables indicating the frequency of the various criteria, was achieved solely by the prodigious energy of the author.

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*Understanding the Talmud.* Selected with introductions by Alan Corré. New York: Ktav, 1975. Pp. xii+468. \$12.50/\$5.95.

Judging from the prefatory *apologia* for reading ancient religious literature at all, and from the very basic level of the opening essays by A. Cohen ("The Mishna") and I. Abrahams ("The Talmud"), this volume of thirty-five essays evidently is intended to be an introduction to the Talmud for persons with no prior experience in the literature whatever. Even as a handbook for beginners, however, the collection has shortcomings. Although the editor, who is chairman of the Department of Hebraic Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, has given the book a formal structure by grouping the essays into the categories "Introduction (Mishna, Talmud, Midrash)," "Background — the World Within," "Background — the World Without," "Movements," "Law," "Religious Ideas," and has written a short preface to each category, the reader closes the book without the sense of having been systematically guided around the linguistic, formal, and historical pitfalls which mark the near approaches to the Talmud. (To cite an obvious example, the novice is given no guidance on how to look up mishnaic and talmudic references.) The essays are uneven in degree of technical difficulty. A real beginner would be put off, I should think, by the wealth of geographical detail in A. Büchler's essay on "The Economic Condition of Judaea After the Destruction" or the untranslated Hebrew citations in B. Cohen's "An Essay on Possession in Jewish Law." Finally, even a newcomer to the field might suspect that a collection of essays which average almost forty years in age might not give him/her benefit of the most recent advances in the field.

Without gainsaying these criticisms, however, I do not hesitate to recommend this book as collateral reading in courses on western religions or even introductions to Jewish thought.

