BOOK REVIEWS

Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible, by C. D. Ginsburg. Prolegomenon by H. M. Orlinsky. Ktav Publishing House, New York, 1966 (reprint), pp. xv, 374; $22.50.

The Ktav Publishing House of New York City has reprinted C. D. Ginsburg's massive *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*. The book was originally published in 1897. By and large, it set forth the principles which guided Ginsburg in his four volume edition of the Hebrew Bible, which he prepared for the British and Foreign Bible Society. The first volume appeared in 1908, the two volumes of the prophets in 1911 and the last in 1926, twelve years after his death. Seventy years ago this Introduction (all the thousand pages of it) was a most important piece of work, but seventy years is a long time ago, and a very, very great deal of work has been done since then. Nowadays the volume is partly a museum piece, though it remains part of the material which every student of the text must study carefully. Not everything, even in an old book, is wholly out of date. Ginsburg's descriptions of manuscripts and early printed editions are most useful, and perhaps the reprinting can be justified on that ground.

The new element in this publication is the 45-page Prolegomenon by Professor Harry M. Orlinsky of the Hebrew Union College, New York. He gives a careful critical evaluation of Ginsburg's work and of that of his predecessors and successors. I wish Professor Orlinsky had written a very great deal more and had published it separately, and I sincerely hope he will do this at some future date. His theme is that it is not possible to produce *the* Masoretic Text, but that it is possible to produce *a* Masoretic Text. He says, for instance, of the edition which I had the honour to prepare for the Bible Society that it 'is as good as any other'. What I think about all this myself is to be found in *Textus* 11 (Annual of the Hebrew University Bible Project, ed. C. Rabin), 1962, pp. 8–13. My own view is that there are two main traditions of the Ben Asher Text (which is what is usually meant by the Masoretic text); one is that produced by Jacob ben Chayim and the other that favoured by Norzi and Lonzano (both seventeenth century). Professor Orlinsky's article is a careful, competent and informative piece of work. As I said, my complaint is that there is not nearly enough of it.

But to return to Christian D. Ginsburg and his work. His industry was phenomenal. This particular volume is crowded with the most minute detail. The same amazing patience and industry is to be seen in the Bible Society four-volume Hebrew Bible (1908–26). It contains not only the text but variant readings of 75 manuscripts and 22 earliest printed Bibles. Another monumental work was his four-volume edition of *The Massorah* (1881–1905), of which a fifth volume never appeared. This huge imperial folio edition consists of a compilation of masoretic notes from many manuscripts and some early printed editions. The labour and care were positively enormous. He published many other works, including the work on the Massorah by the famous Elias Levita and that by Jacob ben Chayim. All his work was marked

by the same careful and exact scholarship, and his industry was exemplary. Whoever elects to study the Masoretic Text must walk this same road, hour after hour, and always as careful at the end of the day as at the beginning, and the same month after month and year after year. It is not easy, and Ginsburg is most highly to be praised for all this.

But what of the lasting effect of Ginsburg's work and his contribution to the producing of a sound Hebrew text of the Old Testament? Professor Orlinsky thinks that Ginsburg's *Introduction* 'is now experiencing a revival'. I think that here he is being far too optimistic. We must remember that it is very easy to be critical of Ginsburg's work seventy years later, but very much of what we now accept that is different from Ginsburg's point of view is actually due to Ginsburg's own work. I doubt very much whether we would be able to think as we do if it had not been for Ginsburg. He was a great compiler, though he was rather like the converted scribe of Matt. 13: 52 who 'bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old' and like the fisherman of verses 47–48, except that he never threw anything away. For instance, in his four-volume edition of the Hebrew Bible, all these manuscript readings are given, and it looks as though he tended to count heads and go by the majority. Some of these manuscripts are very good, some are very bad, and some are good in parts. I think myself that the three-volume manuscript British Museum Oriental 2626–27–28 is worth all the rest put together, except for the Yemenite manuscript Oriental 2375. Only I would say that it is the first hand of Or. 2626–27–28 which counts, for nearly all these Spanish (Sephardi) manuscripts have been 'corrected' to the Jacob ben Chayim text (second Rabbinic Bible, Bomberg 1524–25), which Ginsburg believed to be the true Masoretic Text. Ginsburg took no account of 'corrections' naturally, since he believed the ben Chayim text to be correct. His compilation of Masoretic Notes has the same characteristic. They are all there, collected and classified. The four imperial folio volumes are most useful indeed, and I myself have every reason to be grateful for all Ginsburg's work, but I discovered that it is necessary to know to which manuscript a particular massora belongs: is it an Ashkenazi (French, German) manuscript, carefully or carelessly copied from an earlier not very carefully copied manuscript? Is it a carefully copied Sephardi manuscript? Does the note agree with what is in the manuscript? Or has the note been copied from elsewhere? And so on, endlessly. Ginsburg's contribution was in one way 'love's labour lost', but if he had not done all this work, then all labour on the text would have been 'lost labour'. As Orlinsky says: most modern study is 'a criticism of the work of Jacob ben Chayim in the sixteenth century and of Baer and Ginsburg in the late nineteenth century'. This is right, but I would put it another way: these men blazed the trail, and their work was just as important to students of the text as was Michael Faraday's in his field. Everybody praises Faraday because he led the way to a new approach, and I praise Ginsburg.

And for the comfort of the ordinary Hebrew student—the differences in the various editions are minute compared with the variations in the New Testament manuscripts. They consist mostly of whether the long 'o' and the long 'i' appear as a letter or a dot, and of variations in the accents. There

are very few instances where there is a variation in a word. For the ordinary Hebrew student most of it is, between you and me, much ado about next to nothing. On the other hand, this is a sacred text, and it is right and proper that one here and one there should labour night and day if possible, to get it exactly right. This kind of study has a fascination all its own, though maybe it has to be experienced to be believed.

NORMAN H SNAITH.

The New English Bible Reviewed. Edited by Dennis Nineham. Epworth Press, 1966, pp. xv, 160; 21s.

This book consists of twenty-three reviews of the New English Bible New Testament written by New Testament scholars of varying national, theological and ecclesiastical backgrounds. Practically all the reviews have appeared in one or other of the main theological or religious journals of the Western world; one is written by an Australian Lutheran, one by an outstanding Roman Catholic scholar, one has been specially written for this book.

It is probable that most serious students of the N.E.B. New Testament will already be familiar with a number of these reviews and for them it may only be a matter of convenience that they now appear in a single volume. There is however something to be said for a general anthology of this kind in the hands of the ordinary reader. Five years have elapsed since the New Testament was published and in that time there has been opportunity both for a detailed examination of the translation as it has been used in a wide variety of contexts, and for sober reflection as to the measure of success which the translators achieved. In particular the many Bible translators who have sought guidance in the pages of the N.E.B. and who have undoubtedly formed opinions of their own as to the helpfulness of the translation for their own work will find this collection of earlier reviews of interest and value. Of late, the N.E.B. has sometimes been held up as a model for those engaged in New Testament translation into the manifold languages of the world. Such translators will find in the pages of this book much to support this general claim and much that will require them to interpret it with caution and reserve. In this connection Dr Nineham's introductory essay and the index of the New Testament texts should prove very useful.

WILFRED J. BRADNOCK

The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible

The Acts of the Apostles, by J. W. Packer, 1966, pp. 233; 18s. 6d.; School edition 11s. 6d.; Paper edition 9s. 6d., $1.65.

The Pastoral Letters, by A. T. Hanson, 1966, pp. 126; 15s., $3; School edition 9s. 6d.; Paper edition 8s. 6d., $1.65.

The general features of these excellent commentaries have been mentioned in reviews of previous volumes. The two volumes now to hand maintain the