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MICHAUD, J.-M. (ed.), - La Bible et l'héritage d'Ougarit. (Proche-Orient et Littérature Ougaritique). G.G.C. Éditions, Montréal, 2005. (22,9 cm, X, 245). ISBN 2-89444-201-7.

This collection of essays is presented as a homage to André Caquot (1923-2004). Some of them were read at the international conference in Sherbrooke 2005, 'Le royaume d'Ougarit de la Crète à l'Euphrate'. It can be regarded as a fitting token of respect for this renowned scholar in Ugaritic studies, as it offers a good survey of the present state of scholarly research in this field. Most contributions are aimed at the interested non professional, some are more technical. The title of this compilation points to a problem which from the beginning of Ugaritic studies was a burden on the scholarly research: the relation to the Bible. The clear parallels to the language and religion of ancient Israel attracted much attention. It certainly helped to raise the funds for excavations and publications, but it also constantly threatened to take away the attention from the study of the Ugaritic culture itself. This tension is beautifully illustrated by the title of the conference in Sherbrooke, restricting itself to Ugaritic studies, and the title of the present book which clearly is meant to attract the attention of a broader public. Within the book the reader will note that some writers do not want to give in to the wish to look at the archaeological and literary remains of Ugarit from the point of view of Biblical studies. It would have been worthwhile to pay more attention to this methodological problem, for instance, by describing the history of Ugaritic research. One misses references to influential publications in this field, like the series *Ras Shamra Parallels* and the monograph by Oswald Loretz, *Ugarit und die Bibel*.

The table of contents at the end of the book creates the impression of the book as a comprehensive and consistently built up overview of the civilisation, history and religion of Ugarit. Even the reference to the fact that we are dealing with contributions by different authors is missing. All this is misleading. What is offered here is a mix of very different approaches, with overlapping presentations and sometimes contradictory conclusions. One finds the minimalist approach, minutely describing the material evidence and very cautious concerning its interpretation, next to a maximalist approach with bold attempts using the Ugaritic evidence for comprehensive religion-historical theories.

In his introduction Jean-Marc Michaud warns against 'pan-Ugaritism' (without mentioning Mitchell Dahood who is usually related to it) and offers a good example how the Biblical references to the god of Israel as 'El' or 'Elohim' can be read against the background of the way the god El is pictured in Ugaritic texts, without suggesting direct influence. Michaud also gives a survey of the archaeological and historical evidence, which is partly repeated in the next contributions by Carole Roche (about the civilization of Ugarit) and Yves Calvet (about the geographical environment). Juan-Pablo Vita describes the military history of Ugarit, summarizing his previous publications on this subject. Vita uses texts from the Old Testament books of Judges, Samuel and Kings to fill in some of the gaps of information. Not everyone will agree that these sources can be used for this purpose. It is also remarkable that he is very positive about the new, until now not public new evidence from recently discovered texts, supporting his theory about the relatively great military power of ancient Ugarit.

Pierre Bordreuil reads – like Michaud did with the god of Israel – the stories about Moses against the religious background of Ugarit. He notes many similarities, suggesting that the writers of the Old Testament stories about Moses and his god in many ways reacted to the images of El and Baal as can be found in the texts from Ugarit. Dennis Pardee stays far away

from these discussions and theories about possible relations. He offers a survey of the ritual and magical texts, summarizing his extensive publications on this subject, with a translation of the most important texts.

Hedwige Rouillard-Bonraisin comes with the hardly surprising suggestion that the Ugaritic *rapa'uma* are related to the Biblical *repha'im* and may help to explain why this word can be used both of an ethnic group and of the spirits of the dead. She presents the relevant evidence from the Old Testament and from Ugarit (partly repeating what could be read in the previous chapter). Her conclusions are not new and one misses the references to and discussion with some of the recent studies on this subject. The same can be said about the contribution by José-Angel Zamora on drunkenness in Ugarit and in the Old Testament. Again, we come across texts already translated and discussed by Pardee. Compared to other contributions in this volume, his references to secondary literature is extensive (the only article with a separate bibliography). Nevertheless, he only covers a small part of the scholarly discussion on the Marzeach.

When it comes to the interpretation of Ugaritic texts and the comparison with Biblical texts, Nicolas Wyatt can be regarded as the counterpart of Dennis Pardee. Wyatt defends a theory about twins, incest and death within the royal family, with far reaching consequences for the interpretation of a number of Ugaritic and Old Testament stories. It is easy to put aside this approach as speculative, but one could also appreciate it as a creative experiment which could help us to come closer to the way of thinking in ancient cultures like the one in Ugarit. We should not underestimate the gap with modern thinking and simply assume that we are able to get a good overview of the culture and religion of ancient Ugarit and to understand the thoughts and beliefs of its inhabitants.

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