In conclusion, readers will find this an informative and thought-provoking book. Although the Epilogue is a little disappointing, this is balanced by numerous observations throughout on all kinds of topics of more or less relevance to the main thesis. Taken as a whole, Murray's analysis features two general tendencies. Firstly, it engages in a reconstruction of a world-view which is not spelled out in the Bible, but has to be pieced together from various remnants and by working backwards from post-biblical material. One is reminded of several recent studies and, indeed, Murray refers not infrequently to Barker's *The Older Testament* (London, 1987; see the review in *JJS* XLIII (1992), pp. 143–5). Work of this nature will doubtless go on in view of increasing awareness of an important factor: if the Bible does not represent the sum of Israelite practice and belief, then 'non-scriptural' traditions expressed fully only in later Second Temple literature may be of ancient origin. Secondly, while Murray is fully at home in the historical-critical world, he has sought to connect the results of his study to a current issue. This introduces a subjective element into the book (at least towards the end), but by no means constitutes a return to pre-critical days. Inasmuch as the historical-critical method has fallen from its monopolistic position among biblical scholars, this sort of combination is surely set to continue, especially given the realization that no one way of reading the Bible can ever be entirely independent of other approaches.

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This is an extensively revised and enlarged English edition of the author's *Biqqoret Nusah ha-Mi'ra*—*Pirqê Mabo*, published in Jerusalem in 1989. Professor Tov covers far more than the title might suggest, as the book starts with full accounts of medieval Masoretic manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, Qumran biblical texts, and the ancient translations, followed by a long section on the history and transmission of the biblical text. The chapters on textual criticism occupy the last third of the book. Many subsections are preceded by bibliographies covering some of the most important and most recent works on the subject under discussion: this device serves to keep the main text uncluttered and the footnotes to a minimum. Throughout the book the author gives a generous number of examples, often set off from the text in the form of tables. At the end of the volume there are thirty full-page plates of biblical manuscripts, scrolls and editions. There are indexes for the biblical references and ancient sources, subjects, and authors, but there is no separate bibliography.

Textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible is hardly a new subject, but the discoveries of biblical texts from the Judean Desert have opened up a whole new dimension. Sadly, the enormous impact that the discoveries should have had upon the field has been somewhat dissipated by the painfully slow publication rate of the material. But with wider access to the fragments in recent years, and the appearance of some more editions, the time is ripe for a full re-assessment of the significance of Qumran for the history of the biblical text. Since Professor Tov is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls publication project, he is obviously better informed than most to comment on the subject, and he provides a helpful description of the textual situation at Qumran. Nevertheless, this reviewer felt that the Qumran section was a little over-succinct and could have been expanded. For instance, in the pages devoted to the grouping of the Qumran texts (pp. 114–17), Tov gives rough percentages for
each of the five groups (proto-Masoretic texts, pre-Samaritan texts, texts written in the Qumran practice, texts close to the Hebrew Vorlage of the Old Greek, non-aligned texts) without stating whether the figure is a percentage of the total number of individual fragments (does a fragment containing a couple of verses have the same status as 1Qlsa?) or of the total number of individual biblical texts, or even of the total amount of biblical text found at Qumran. How large does a fragment have to be in order to be identifiable as part of a group? Some explanation of method is surely called for here, as these percentages, however approximate, are likely to end up in many a student essay.

In other places imprecision is not the fault of the author but inherent in the nature of the subject. Take the statement on p. 24, 'The representatives of $M$ form a tight group which differs from other texts. Nevertheless, no special characteristics of $M$ can be identified on a textual level, except for the accuracy and quality of its text for most of the biblical books.' Here Tov gives the impression of saying, 'I can't describe a Masoretic (or proto-Masoretic) text, but I know one when I see one.' The problem is that his analysis is normally so acute that the reader tends to expect him to bring order out of chaos every time and to forget that this is a divine prerogative.

Further down on the same page, Tov states that 'the preference of $M$ by a central stream in Judaism does not necessarily imply that it contains the best text of the Bible'. This begs the question that if so, why do we not base our best text of the Bible on other sources such as the Old Greek or a Qumran text in books such as Samuel, Jeremiah or Ezekiel? Of course the answer is that Tov is dealing strictly with textual criticism of the Hebrew here, not with the reconstruction of the original text of the Bible, but occasionally the reader needs reminding.

But the comment also hints tantalizingly at a more radical position than that which Tov generally adopts. For the most part he makes the Hebrew biblical text central, and defines as the ultimate goal of textual criticism the reconstruction of the single original text, i.e. the copy which contained 'the finished literary product and which stood at the beginning of the process of textual transmission' (p. 171). However, later on he comments on the impossibility of constructing a common stemma, 'partly because there is no certainty that these texts indeed derived from one common text' (p. 190). He is not so pessimistic about the whole exercise that it seems to be a wild goose chase rather than a quest for the Holy Grail, and he is correct in his emphasis on the inadequacy of rules for textual criticism compared with sound common sense and a bit of intuition. The examples of parallel and consecutive literary strata are particularly well presented, and enable the author to draw a distinction between literary and textual criticism. The chapter on conjectural emendations is also very instructive. The last chapter, on critical editions of the Hebrew Bible, is more of an appendix than a discussion, and it therefore ends the book rather abruptly, without warning or conclusion.

None of the criticisms above are in any way significant, and the work is bursting with good things. Because of the sheer range of subject matter as well as Tov's authoritative and crystal-clear treatment of it, this book is essential reading for the student, and a valuable addition to the scholar's library. Not only does it represent a very considerable achievement on the part of Professor Tov, but the publishers have done it full justice by producing it so attractively.

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PATRICK W. SKEHAN, EUGENE ULRICH and JUDITH E. SANDERSON, Qumran Cave 4: IV Palaeo-Hebrew and Greek Biblical Manuscripts (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert