iron furnace, must have "their primary meanings in the monarchic and later periods, not the premonarchic period. They do not record historical facts about Iron Age I" (page 267).

This, she claims, is true also of the famous passage in I Samuel 13:19–22, regarding the lack of smiths in the land of Israel, the parade citation for the (now) discredited thesis of a Philistine iron monopoly (page 205). As this section of I Samuel also mentions the *ʿibrim* or Hebrews, McNutt's interpretation agrees with that of Oswald Loretz, who claims for all such passages a postexilic date, which I find totally unacceptable.

Our present knowledge of the historical development of iron technology in Cyprus and the Levant certainly accommodates meaningful references to iron usage in an eleventh or even a twelfth century context. There is no reason why references to iron weapons and the resulting use of iron (and steel) symbolism need be ruled technologically inappropriate within the narrative of the Wars against the Philistines or even that of the Conquest of the Promised Land. Such narratives need not be historically reliable, but that decision cannot be based upon technological considerations.

The position of the smith within society and the concept of the divine smith are topics that have generated much discussion in recent years. The Craftsman God (Kothar wa-Hasis in Ugaritic literature; Hephaestus and Daidalos in the Greek tradition) is studied in detail by Sarah Morris in her forthcoming book *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*. McNutt, in attempting to understand the biblical evidence, relies heavily upon ethnographic evidence from premodern Africa. She devotes a separate chapter in her book (pages 39–95) to iron-working in Africa and discusses the evidence again in her article "The African Ironsmith as Marginal Mediator: A Symbolic Analysis" (*Journal of Ritual Studies* 5: 75–98). Using twentieth century C.E. ethnographic evidence to illuminate tenth century B.C.E. archaeological and textual evidence is a difficult task; dealing with Africa on the one hand and Palestine on the other only compounds the problems involved. McNutt is probably not sufficiently cautious in her evaluation of the African ethnographic evidence.

There are still major differences of opinion about the interpretation of African iron-smelting technology (see the exchange between J. E. Rehder, P. Schmidt and D. H. Avery in *Journal of Field Archaeology* 13: 351–57; and the important article by N. David and others "Between bloomery and blast furnace: Mafa iron-smelting technology in North Cameroon" in *African Archaeological Review* 7: 183–208). What is really at issue here, however, is the symbolic nature and the ritualistic interpretation of African iron working. I see in McNutt's interpretation of the African evidence the heavy hand of Mircea Eliade, but he has to admit that her version is corroborated by Africanists who had made iron working their special field of research (notably P. R. Schmidt in *A History of African Archaeology*, edited by P. Robertshaw, London: James Currey, pages 252–70).

The transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age and the shift from bronze to iron as the basic metal in everyday use are very popular research topics these days. McNutt has provided an important statement of the state of affairs in Palestine. Anyone seeking a reliable introduction can feel confident about starting with this volume.

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Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East, *by Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, 276 pp., New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991; $14.95.*

In the foreword to their book, Matthews and Benjamin provide a rationale for their work: to write a book primarily for students. As they note, similar volumes translating ancient texts are available, but these other volumes have limitations the two authors have sought to avoid. For example, these volumes have translations that are "text centered" rather than "reader centered." By "text centered," Matthews and Benjamin mean translations that are more literal, and in the attempt to be faithful to the original, such translations often include obscure idioms and terms. Behind the phrase "reader centered" is an attempt to understand what a typical North American undergraduate is like, especially those with little or no training in Semitic languages and at best only a basic knowledge of the cultures of antiquity. The translations in this volume, therefore, are actually paraphrases of the originals, designed to communicate effectively with such an audience (foreword, page 3).

A portion of the conversation between Utnapishtim and Gilgamesh from the Story of Gilgamesh illustrates the freshness and directness of the renderings:

> "Tell me, Utnapishtim, how did you and your wife become immortal and join the Divine Assembly?"
> "Well, Gilgamesh, let me tell you the story of a divine conspiracy, a secret plot which The Gods devised to exterminate humanity" (page 35).

Without sacrificing fidelity or coherence to the dialogue, this paraphrase of the ancient account certainly reflects current, North American vernacular.

The volume is arranged according to the books in the Hebrew Bible, beginning with Genesis, so that the ancient writings are placed in a comparative framework. Not every book in the Hebrew Bible is listed; the so-called writing prophets (for example Isaiah and Haggai) are conspicuous by their absence. There is an illustration on nearly every page, either a photograph or a line drawing. These illustrations add to the value of the volume. They are not necessarily related by time or culture to the document, but they do illustrate some facet of the text.

There are also appendixes that point a reader to: relevant bibliography; salient facts of Mesopotamia, Egyptian and biblical history; biblical citations inserted in the paraphrases. This last named index is actually a parallels chart that identifies the kind of parallel proposed between the biblical text and ancient writing (for example, genre, motif, vocabulary and social institution).

The volume is definitely "user friendly." With its modest price and decent illustrations, it should be of good service to the current generation of students.

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