

## BOOK REVIEW

Alessandro Biondi, *Gli accenti nei papiri greci biblici* (Papyrologica Castroctaviana: Rome and Barcelona 1983) xii + 84 pages, 5 plates

This is the first work on ancient accentuation to give close attention to Biblical papyri without treating them merely as a subcategory of literary texts. It is also the first comprehensive study of accents and breathing marks in a large group of papyri since B. Laum's *Das Alexandrinische Akzentuationssystem* (Paderborn 1928). The project is needed and welcome, especially in view of the author's intention (p.ix) of approaching the problem in as systematic a way as possible; unfortunately this intention is seriously undermined by inaccuracies and unpersuasive argument.

Biondi finds accents and breathing marks written by the original scribe in 55 of the 248 Old and New Testament papyri. In tables he shows (1) the chronological distribution of the 55 texts (second to seventh centuries of our era), and the fraction they represent of Biblical papyri from each century; (2) information on the proportion of erroneous accents to text in each century; and (3) a synopsis of the 55 papyri, identifying them by Testament, catalogue number (Aland or O'Callaghan: Van Haelst is not mentioned), and certain codicological features. There is a survey of the ways that accents and breathing marks are used in the 19 papyri where they are rare (these texts exemplify, for Biondi, the "ordinary" use of the signs) and in 8 where they occur frequently.

The author determines that the fundamental role of accents and breathing marks in Biblical papyri was to eliminate ambiguity, as between οὐ and οὔ, εἰς and εἶς. A secondary but related function was to lend emphasis--to highlight unfamiliar Semitic names, for example, or words important for theological or other reasons. The diacritic and emphatic use of accents, he stresses (pp. 59, 61f., 67), represents a system utterly unlike that of literary papyri. This literary practice that he alludes to is that found in the Paris Alcman and the London Bacchylides (Pack<sup>2</sup> 78, 175), where grave accents sometimes distinguish the atonic syllables from the tonic, and where more than one accent may be written on a single word.

Biondi proposes, finally, a theory of "unilinear collisions" to explain the historical coexistence of the Biblical and other systems. This theory is based on the idea that the original (and, for Biblical papyri, the