

The Bible is not a history book in the modern sense, although the writers believed the data they worked with was historical; personal bias, both theological and nontheological must be recognized as affecting reconstruction; often most of the data desired is missing in the Bible, necessitating that scholars consult other sources such as archaeology, iconography, and inscriptions, which also suffer from the same problem. The study focuses on Israelite religion in its institutional expressions rather than individualistic expressions, and on Israel's religious practice rather than credal beliefs. The study is also motivated by contemporary interests such as the continuing interest in monotheism by major world religions, and interest in Northwest Semitic goddesses and the gender language applied to Yahweh. Lastly, the difference between the history of Israel's religion and the normative expressions of belief must be made clear; the latter are matters of personal faith, not historical reality. In other words, the "essence" of the religion is a secondary abstraction. Smith admits that given these considerations the picture portrayed will always be partial and subjective.

The book demonstrates impressive scholarship. About 30 percent of the text consists of notes in reduced print size. Regardless of one's agreement with Smith's assumptions, the book contains a wealth of information on Israelite religion and the environment in which it took shape.

Andrews University

A. JOSEF GREIG

Tomson, Peter J. *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*. *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. xix + 327 pp. \$29.95.

In this work Tomson presents an argument against F. C. Baur and his influence on modern Pauline studies. He writes, "The basic Tübingen approach, which as Munck wrote is still widely supported, involves an antithesis between the revolutionary Paul of his own letters and the harmonizing Paul, who makes compromises with the Jews, created by Acts" (269). For his part, Tomson proposes that "while the working of Pauline motifs in Acts is unmistakably secondary, the basic correspondence between Paul and Acts on the significance of halakha constitutes a situation fundamentally different from the one presupposed by dominant post-Tuebingen scholarship" (269). Of course, Munck wrote in 1954, and at that time the Tübingen paradigm was *still* basically intact. Studies into Christian origins during the last 35 years have greatly modified and nuanced Baur's work. Apparently Tomson wishes to uproot it. His efforts in this regard, however, prove rather inadequate. Even if Hegelian

dialectics are no longer in vogue, many of Baur's basic observations have only been corroborated by further studies.

Tomson claims to have found the point of departure for his study in A. Schweitzer's analysis of Paul's ethic of the *status quo*. Clearly he was also influential on Tomson's rejection of righteousness by faith as the core of Paul's thought, a not unpopular opinion these days. But Tomson also follows Schweitzer in understanding Paul within the perspective of a thoroughly futuristic eschatology. The tensions of living between the times, according to Tomson, did not affect Paul because his present was totally controlled by his past.

Tomson argues for two things: (1) "that halakha was pervasive in Paul's thought" (264), and (2) that Paul had a "fundamentally positive relationship to the halakha" (263). About the second it may be conceded that Paul does not make derogatory remarks about "Jewish casuistry," a rather common phenomenon in some biblical scholarship, and in that regard Tomson's efforts toward better Jewish-Christian relations are praiseworthy. Has anyone of late questioned the Pauline use of halakha? The first argument, however, merits careful weighing. Tomson finds his sources in 1 Cor 7; 8:6-8; 9:19-23; 10:23-29; 11:2-16, 23-25; 14:34-36; Gal 2: 11-14; Rom 14:1-15:13. One could question whether this list qualifies as "pervasive." The problem is complicated by the fact that, in order to show the use of halakhic traditions in these texts, Tomson has to interpret them in contrived ways, or to force in parallels. (The problems encountered in the dating of Rabbinic traditions are never faced.) Moreover, clearly stated words of Paul are often ignored. Among them is one of his most famous halakhot, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:19).

Basic to Tomson's exegesis is the presupposition that Paul's Christianity did nothing to his Judaism. As a result he concludes that Paul held dual memberships (Jewish and Christian), envisioned dual elections (for all Israel and for all Jews and Gentiles) and preached dual gospels (one law-observant for Jews and one law-free for Gentiles). To characterize his methodological inconsistencies we may use an example. The possibility that 1 Cor 14:34-36 might be an interpolation is never considered and as a result we learn that Paul enjoined women to prophesy *silently* in church. The phrase "not being myself under the law" in 1 Cor 9:30, however, is taken to be a later addition on text-critical grounds, while ignoring one of the basic rules of textual criticism. Also problematic are his translations from the Greek, which cannot be taken up in detail here. It is regrettable that Tomson's considerable learning has been aimed at a preconceived conclusion.

Besides being linguistically, exegetically, and methodologically wrongheaded, the book is full of syntactical obscurities, English words used in the wrong sense, and spelling and typographical errors. The work

of Stanley Jones, referred to frequently in the footnotes, is listed neither in the Bibliography nor in the Index. Missing throughout is the work of A. Malherbe, even though Tomson finds in the Cynic tradition one of the important influences on Paul—via the Hillelite Rabbis, of course. The editors clearly failed to do their job.

Saint Mary's College  
Notre Dame, IN 46556

HEROLD WEISS

Walton, John H. *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990. 256 pp. \$19.95.

The scholarly evangelical community has for some years had a love-hate relationship with the cultures and literature of the ancient Near East. In teaching courses on the Old Testament books, evangelical instructors can be faulted for several limited or prejudicial positions: (1) treating the history and literature of the ancient Near East as an almost unimportant framework for understanding the OT; (2) behaving as if the writings of the Hebrew Bible *must* (according to their own presuppositions) be so utterly distinct from that larger world from which they came, that one need hardly mention anything about that world or its thought; (3) limiting their interest only to the extrabiblical literature which (they suppose) sheds light on the meaning of specific passages from the Bible; (4) considering such literature worthy of attention only if they were convinced that it enabled them to "prove" an earliest-possible date for the biblical literature under study; or, (5) studying Near Eastern literature and religion formally at the graduate level as an effective way of "dodging" the real problems in literary history with which the various disciplines of modern biblical criticism confront us.

Surely it is time to accept that the OT books may be fairly classed by specific genre with the literature of the ancient Near East. For this, John Walton's new work offers much light and guidance. This work is an invitation to conservative scholars to look more closely at the proper fields of Near Eastern literature to which the biblical books belong.

Walton's genres are those which have been typically described in works like *ANET* (3d ed.). His work shows what the Old Testament has in common with its Near Eastern contemporary documents, as well as how it differs from them, both thematically and religiously.

Walton arranges the Near Eastern material according to genres, treating each in its own chapter: cosmology, personal archives and epics, legal texts, covenants and treaties, historical literature, hymns (with prayers and incantations), wisdom literature, prophetic, and apocalyptic literature. Each chapter closes with a brief, usually current bibliography for further