

"Instruction of Amenemope" and Proverbs, Currid tests this connection specifically with Proverbs 22: 17-25. The conclusion is reached that no direct relationship can be proven between the Egyptian document and Proverbs, but Currid does allow for the Hebrew author to have a "general familiarity with the genre of Egyptian wisdom literature" (216).

Part 5 incorporates two chapters examining "Egyptian and Israelite Prophecy." The first chapter, "Knowing the Divine Will: The Art of Divination in Ancient Egypt" sets up the various methods by which ancient peoples performed divining acts. These methods included oracles, astrology, communication with the dead, lecanomancy, prophecy, and dream interpretation. In particular, dream interpretation contributes to an understanding of the Joseph story. The second chapter looks at "Hebrew Prophecies against Egypt," especially the theme of a dry Nile River which is frequently attested to in Hebrew prophetic writings. A dried up Nile represented the downfall of the Egyptian state since the Nile essentially was the life blood of the Egyptian civilization, providing food, transportation, and a wide variety of other necessities.

Throughout the book, the problem of originality and borrowing is breached by Currid but he skillfully and at times understandably maneuvers around this conundrum. The problem of borrowing has been a dilemma of scholars for a long time and will remain so until new texts or other evidence are discovered.

This book provides a succinct yet scholarly approach to the relationship between ancient Egypt and the OT. Detailed in discussion but easily comprehended, Currid has done a masterful job in providing a wide range of evidence for his discussions and conclusions. Combined with lengthy footnotes and an ample bibliography, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* sheds new light on the relationship between Egypt and Israel as well as begs for new study and research in this area.

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Crüsemann, Frank. *The Torah—Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*. Trans. by Allan W. Mahnke. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. 1-xv + 460 pp. \$44.00.

Crüsemann's masterpiece—*Die Tora: Theologie und Social-geschichte des alttestamentlichen Gesetzes* (1992) is made available to English reading scholars by Mahnke's excellent translation. Crüsemann's treatment of the Torah is without doubt a very outstanding contribution to the understanding of the development of the Torah within Israel. Its growth, its meaning, and purpose can only be understood and appreciated when it is contextualized into its theological and social background. One of Crüsemann's major tasks is to show that because this background has been greatly neglected by Christians, many distortions have arisen and an ever-widening gulf between Christians and Jews has come about.

Crüsemann's use of the several methodologies and disciplines is remarkable. His main task is "to make the term Torah more generally possible and theologically necessary" (1). He seeks to fulfill this momentous task in eight chapters and a very impressive bibliography of 78 pages.

In chapter 1 Crüsemann seeks to find the origin of the concept Torah and its development in the Pentateuch. First of all he establishes the idea that in Christian theology there is "a distorted picture of the biblical concept of Torah" (1). Foremost in this distortion is the effort to bring divorcement between law and gospel (2). Crüsemann's argument is that whether it be labeled law or gospel the concept is about the expression of God's will. His effort to show the local and universal dimension of Torah is without doubt unrivaled by any previous effort to do the same. He writes: "Torah is concerned with transmitting the one will of the one God, creator of all humanity to a single people—his Israel. . . . Even if Torah is given only to and for Israel, there is a place within it for God's instruction to all people" (3, 4). Although Torah is uniquely Israelite it did not spring up in isolation. In origin it probably has great affinity with other Near Eastern laws. Even though there is this probability Torah is uniquely Israelite because it expresses a lively diachronic interpretation culminating in a momentous synchronic interpretation which is contextualized into the very fabric of Israel's experience. Thus he writes, "Law is not an indispensable source for ancient Israel's social history (as for any social history), it is itself a critical part of that history. . . ." (13). Crüsemann reckons that comparison between Israel's law and that of the ancient Near East makes the uniqueness of Israel's law documents stand out clearly" (15). In the first place Israelite law—unlike other laws of the ancient Near East—is seen as direct divine utterance (15). He finds that Israel's law is "simultaneously legal-historical and social-historical." It would seem that although Crüsemann assessed correctly that it is the concept of divine origin and the linkage with a person of the distant past which caused the uniqueness of Israel's law, he allows the search for a socio-historical connection to lessen any intense pursuit for finding reasons for the concept of divine origin. His first chapter on *Torah in the Pentateuch* is mainly to highlight the notion that there are societal relationships in Israelite jurisprudence and that these are contextualized into theological bases and historical fictions all of which need to be examined (16).

In chapters 2 and 3 Crüsemann utilizes historical criticism and tries to establish the significance of prophetic criticism of written law and its connection with Sinai. It is not so much the origin of law in Israel that is dealt with in these chapters but rather the genesis of written law. Having established some similarities between the writings of the eighth-century prophets (mainly working with Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah) and what is written as coming from Sinai (which Crüsemann holds to be a utopian place—57), he concludes that "these are the historically essential stations underlying the way from Torah to Sinai" (57). In other words Crüsemann is saying, here are real historical situations—the deuteronomic movement, the theological challenge of the exile, and the possibilities of Persian authorization—which demanded answers. The answers were to be found in the Torah. "Torah itself became the important form of rescue as cult and law were anchored at this place (i.e., Sinai) from which God had already been rescuing (57). Although extremely well worked out, we are still left with a number of unanswered questions such as: are there any tangible historical facts to the Sinai concept or is it purely fictitious?"

The question of how and why Israel survived the other nations and became

significant demands answers. What part did Torah play in their survival? Was it just a product of a remarkable survival?

In chapter 4 he deals with the very important question of the existence of Moses and what sort of contribution was made by this Moses to the development of Torah in Israel. Crüsemann concluded early in the chapter that "The question 'who is, or was, this Moses?' was an impetus for historical-critical research, and it will probably never be answered" (59). In this chapter Crüsemann has not brought us anything new.

Crüsemann's thesis becomes very interesting in chapter 5 where he is dealing with the covenant as the foundation for Torah. He argues that (1) "The Book of the covenant is older than Deuteronomy and is therefore the oldest law book in the Old Testament" (109). (2) "The Book of the Covenant demonstrates all of those characteristics that distinguish biblical law . . . so profoundly from all the other ancient Near Eastern legal documents" (109). (3) "The Book of the Covenant is in every respect an extremely colorful portrait. Its assembled character is almost tangible" (109-110). From these points Crüsemann concludes that "It [the covenant] is what makes up the essence and character of Old Testament law and what then from Deuteronomy on is given the name Torah . . ." (110). Crüsemann then proceeds to show from various arguments how the concept of covenant developed in Israel and how much covenant conveys what is characterized as Torah (110-200).

In chapter 6 he assumes that the Deuteronomic law (Deuteronomy 12-26) is an "attempt by Israel to formulate the will of her God in a law book. This new arrangement was neither extrapolation nor expansion but more of an effort to replace the Book of the Covenant" (201-202). It is very hard to see this as replacement of the covenant. Even based on certain similarities between Deuteronomic law and covenant which Crüsemann himself refers to, it would seem that Deuteronomy has a much closer relationship than replacement. What is probably a truer concept is the idea that Deuteronomy presents "theological reflections upon the law which analyze its meaning and the significance of this gift from God to his people" (203).

This theological expression "was the conscious act of the establishment of freedom." This for Crüsemann was the place where "the heart of the biblical canon was developed" (275). This is of great importance since it is a factor which certainly projects Deuteronomy as a unity and not a mere collection of several fragments. However, there needs to be a greater understanding of Mosaic input into this theological construction. Were the people merely using a name from the distant past or were they expressing appreciation for the work of a man from the distant past? Such questions need clarification in Crüsemann's thesis. He follows the majority of OT scholars in assuming that Deuteronomy is probably a product from the late pre-exilic time (207).

In chapter 7, Crüsemann looks at how the Torah is dealt with in priestly writing. The priestly writing he assumes, "detached the will of God, as expressed in laws, from Exodus, the cult and possession of the land" (277). One question about the priestly writing is this, "Are we dealing with a dissectable, formerly independent writing or an interpretation stratum that simply amplified and

explicated the older texts . . . ?" (280). Crüsemann seems to find much of the priestly material as originating "in the period that was no longer dominated by the cry over guilt and what was lost, but rather consequences and new beginnings" (284), i.e., the period of Ezra and Nehemiah (294).

In chapter 8 Crüsemann specifies the social background to the development of the Pentateuch—or Torah. First, those in debt and the priests formed a social coalition (343). Second, some aristocrats who stayed in Judea desired to secure a relationship with those scattered abroad (343-345). Third, the Persian rule impacted on the prophetic role and demanded "a single law, a single document as the divine law of their God" (345-351).

In all this process of development the Decalogue (Exod 20; Deut 5) played a very significant role. In the Sinai event "it alone was given as God's direct word to the nation" (351). Crüsemann finds two major concepts being developed simultaneously in Israel—the unity of God and the unity of Torah (365-367).

The importance of Crüsemann's book is that he looks at a wide range of arguments and draws from several disciplines and methodologies. Even if the possible dates for the origin of the documents are those posited and argued for a long time now, Crüsemann has managed to show a lively development—social and historical—of the Torah. He also develops a reasonable argument as to why the Pentateuch must be seen as Israel's Torah.

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Ellis, Carl F., Jr. *Free At Last? The Gospel in the African-American Experience*. 2d ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996. 285 pp. \$12.99.

The basic approach of the author is to use the biblical Exodus as a model for the liberation of African-Americans. As the title suggests, the sentiment of the old Negro spiritual is questioned, "Free at last?" The subtitle provides the vision for answering the question.

The book is divided into four parts. The first, "A Primer" (really an introduction) indicates how Black militants rejected the hypocrisy of "the Christianity of the land" (called *Christianity-ism* by Ellis), but replaced it with the "religion" of secular humanism. Ellis says that this is untenable. He claims that like the ancient Israelites, African-Americans must get back in touch with their history, destiny, and collective consciousness (i.e., standards adopted by a people which affect *what* and *how* they do things; the grid used to understand the world). This is possible only through a God-centered view of the world (24-26). God's grace provides the *basis, power, and will* to resist oppression (28-30).

Part 2, "Reflecting Back," consists of six chapters which discuss major phases in the cultural history of the African-American experience. In the first, the Colored or Formative phase, early Black theology formulated a dynamic parallel between the ancient Hebrews and black slaves. Freedom was understood not merely as a reality in the hereafter, but as something to be pursued "this side of the Jordan" (53). Hence, a "*second exodus*": emancipation, Reconstruction and its