

to honor one's father and mother (94) on the ground that "the objects of Chinese commemorating rites are not powerful gods, but deceased relatives and loved ones, including fathers, mothers, and Confucius," and that "unlike religion and idolatry, the purpose of the Chinese commemorating rites is not to pursue any supernatural power, but to express thanksgiving to ancestors and to pay secular respect to Confucius" (91). How could this form of worship, or reverence as Wei calls it, in which participants display offerings and burn incense and candles in front of their ancestors' memorial tablets (90) not be equated with idolatry and the death-related practices (Lev 19:28; 20:6, 27; Deut 14:1–2; 18:10–13) that God prohibited the Israelites from practicing? These texts speak against any practice involved in ancestral worship. In general, mourning and remembering the dead were not forbidden for the Israelites. What was forbidden was the connection of these practices with pagan idolatrous rites. Although divination and ancestral worship were common practices in the nations surrounding Israel, the Israelites were not to consult the occult world because they were given a better revelation by God. The same prohibition is also applicable to Christians of all eras and socio-cultural and religious contexts. Any spiritual attempt to establish contact with the dead is deemed an abomination by God (18:10–13). Wei's sympathetic connection of Chinese commemorating rites of the ancestors to biblical commands such as Exodus 20:12 minimizes change in the lives of converts, whereas the Word of God challenges people individually and corporately to turn from their unbiblical practices. Wei's perspective is very susceptible to opening the door to syncretism as Chinese Christians continue to maintain beliefs and practices that stand in conflict with the Word of God. Faithfulness to biblical principles should never be overshadowed by any form of sensitivity to local traditions and religious practices.

Since the church was, and still is, being established through the agency of the Holy Spirit wherever the gospel is preached, a biblically-based perspective on pneumatology is as important as ecclesiology (3). This makes *The Spirit over the Earth*, in spite of some weaknesses, full of insights, well worth the read, and a valuable theological resource for ministers, teachers, and intercultural missionaries.

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Jaillard, Dominique, and Christophe Nihan, eds. *Writing Laws in Antiquity/ L'écriture du droit dans l'Antiquité*. BZABR 19. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017. 170 pp. Hardcover. EUR 58.00.

Writing Laws in Antiquity consists of seven essays, which were originally presented at a conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 2011, entitled "Codes de lois et lois sacrées: la rédaction et la codification des lois en Grèce et dans l'Israël ancien" [Law Codes and Sacred Laws: The Redaction and Codification of Laws in Greece and Ancient Israel]. The purpose of this conference was a comparison of "the creation and the transmission of legal collections in ancient Greece and in the ancient Near East, including Mesopotamia, Egypt and

Israel" (9). The book is divided in two parts. Part one, entitled "Codes, Codification and Legislators," consists of four essays. Three of them are written in French and one in English. The second part, entitled "Writing Ritual Norms: Meaning and Functions," includes three essays, one in French and two in English.

The organization of the book reflects the distinctive approach taken at the conference, based on two methodological insights. First, the conference intentionally focused on differences between the legal traditions of the examined ancient cultures. This stands in contrast to many recent studies which examined possible "mutual influences between Greek and ancient near Eastern laws" (10). Taking this approach, the goal was "to question . . . some problematic generalizations in the study of ancient laws; and to illuminate the specifics of the social structures and institutional processes involved in the writing of laws in each culture" (11). Second, the conference "sought to integrate, or reintegrate, the case of the so-called 'sacred laws' in Greece in the discussion of ancient legal collections" (11). The term "sacred laws" refers to a body of legal inscriptions primarily dealing with rituals of different Greek cities. Scholarship has often treated the sacred laws separately from the other legal material, due to its differences in genre, matter, and social function. Whereas this may be understandable to a modern mind, it does "not necessarily correspond to the practices of ancient societies, in which rituals and (more generally) 'religion' were embedded in virtually all aspects and dimensions of the life of the city" (11).

The first essay, by Sophie Démare-Lafont, addresses the codification of laws in Mesopotamia. She points out that scholars hesitate to use the term "code" or "codification" for the Mesopotamian law collections, since codes should have a prologue, a body of laws, and an epilogue. Therefore, only three legal collections of Mesopotamia properly deserve the label of a "code": the Code Ur-Nammu, the Code of Lipit-Ishtar, and the Code of Hammurabi (21–22). Elaborating further on the process of "codification," Démare-Lafont observes that all Mesopotamian legal collections contain hints to collecting, organizing, and publishing activity regarding the legal material. In addition, she argues that the Mesopotamian legal collections are compilations of existing laws, rather than a result of legal reforms (27–28). She mentions that none of these collections was understood as exhaustive. However, they functioned as types of theorems, on which a decision could be taken regarding a particular case (28–29). Finally, she argues that each region used its own local body of laws. In case those local laws were not able to solve the issue at hand, the legal principles of these codes were applied (29–31).

The second essay, by Françoise Ruzé, elaborates on the codification of laws in Archaic Greece. She points out that the early available sources such as the tradition of the lawgivers (Zaleucos, Charondas, and Solon), or inscriptions (Gortyn Code in Crete, etc.) indicate a codification, to a certain extent. Laws were grouped around certain topics, such as rights of citizens, economy, or family (37). Greek legal collections, similar to the Mesopotamian law collections, should also be understood as partial. Taking a closer look at the circumstances leading to putting laws in written form, Ruzé observes that it

often took place in times of social conflict (e. g., Solon's legal reform), with the intention to stabilize the social relations.

Gary N. Knoppers compares and contrasts Greek lawgivers with Moses. Applying a critical lens to both and treating them as semi-historical figures, he discusses fascinating parallels (63–69), such as the acquirement of their position as lawgivers, their interactions with divinity, their authoritative and authorial behavior, as well as their achievement in creating a law code that was still associated with their person way beyond their lifetime. However, Knoppers also acknowledges the clear differences in nature between the Torah and other Greek bodies of law. For example, the Torah's inclusion of narrative elements besides legal material, and the depiction of many crises which "lead to the promulgation of new laws or to the adjustment of older laws," (70) made the Torah unique. He ends his essay with a call to further compare Moses with traditions of lawgivers beyond the border of Ancient Greece.

Sandra Lippert's essay concludes the first part by addressing the codification of Egyptian law. Scholarship generally argues that Egyptians avoided creating a law code, since they feared limiting the King's freedom. However, Darius I commanded his Satrap to compile the available Egyptian law. By doing so, he initiated a process of codification of Egyptian law over six generations of legislator kings. Lippert's discussion builds on a reference by Diodorus Siculus. However, she further analyzes various sources, which prove not only the historicity of Darius I's action, but also provide information regarding particular content of this Egyptian law code.

In the beginning of the second part, which focuses on "sacred laws," Pierre Brulé addresses the *hiéra* "sacred" and *hosia* "profane" laws in classical sources, as discussed in the deliberative assemblies in Athens and other Greek cities. Based on these sources, Brulé concludes that it is not possible to set the two in a clear relation. However, the assemblies usually first discussed the sacred issues and later, the profane. Brulé further analyzes the proportion of sacred decrees versus profane decrees and concludes that in the case of Athens, only 5% of the decrees dealt with sacred issues. However, these kinds of decrees were often published.

Anselm C. Hagedorn's essay elaborates on differences regarding the sacredness of the laws in the Hebrew Bible and the written laws in Greece, in particular the Gortyn Code of Crete. Although the Hebrew Bible contains only a few references to YHWH's writing activity regarding laws, the Torah was perceived as a divine law and closely associated with the person of Moses. Hagedorn states that "an understanding of the legal core of Deuteronomy that is removed from either YHWH or Moses is impossible" (121). Thus, biblical law is a religious law. Regarding Greek law, Hagedorn concludes that "we do not find any legal material that was stipulated by a deity" (124) and further, "the laws from Gortyn can function without any divine legislation and are not traced back to a mythical figure of a lawgiver from a distant past" (130).

The final essay by Jan-Mathieu Carbon and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge investigates the codification of sacred laws in Ancient Greece. They discuss the use of different terminology used in the sacred law collection, namely

patria, “unrecorded or ancestral customs”; *nomoi*, “instructions for rituals”; and *psephismata*, “dynamic decrees seeking to augment or revitalize existing cultic norms” (142). They observe that these terms were used interchangeably, which complicates drawing conclusions on a potential codification of sacred laws. However, analyzing the phrase “*hieros nomos*” in the given body of literature, they conclude that in certain cases, “*hieroi nomoi* were, to a certain degree, formalized and codified as ‘sacred laws’.” But they also point out that these codes were very diverse in regards to their “structure, terminology and categorization,” due to “the lack of uniformity that characterized Greek polytheism, but also because of the heterogeneity of the various city-states and sanctuaries” (152). They conclude their essay suggesting renaming the collection of “sacred laws” using the term “Greek ritual norms.” This label would give more justice to the diversity of the material dealt with.

Writing Laws in Antiquity comes with an excellent three-part introduction, written by the editors. In the first part, they introduce the distinctive approach taken in this book. By focusing on the differences, rather than commonalities, regarding the written law in antique societies, the book was predestined to make a new contribution to the current discussion. In the second part, the editors summarize every article in one paragraph. This is especially helpful since four out of the seven essays are written in French. In the third part, the editors synthesize the three major contributions of this collection: (a) the re-evaluation of the relationship between the written and unwritten law; (b) the re-evaluation of the relationship between written laws and structures of authority in antique societies; and (c) the re-evaluation of the relationship between written laws and ancient religion. The common tenor of all the essays is the fundamental critique on present scholarship for oversimplifying issues related to written laws in ancient cultures.

Reading the book, I located a few areas which could be improved. First, the essays in the book are fairly unrelated to each other, especially the four articles in the first part, which deal with the same issue in four different cultures. While, on several occasions, the authors refer to the close contact between these ancient societies, each author stays within the borders of the discussed society. The editors’ attempt to synthesize the content of the contributors in the third part of the introduction addresses common issues researchers will face in studying each society. However, how the differences regarding the written laws came to exist, despite the close contact of these cultures and the mutual influence they had on each other, remains untouched.

Second, I wish that the editors had added a chapter on written law in the Roman society to the first part of the book. This would complete the book regarding written laws in ancient cultures, making it more relevant for New Testament scholarship, which deals with a culture influenced by Roman society. Especially, in regard to Paul’s preference to work within Roman colonies.

Finally, throughout the book, the authors use the term “unwritten law” for customs and norms which were known in ancient societies. They argue that those unwritten laws coexisted with the ones actually documented. On the other hand, scholarly literature also uses the term “unwritten law” as a

technical term in reference to natural law. It would have been beneficial to at least clarify how the term “unwritten law” is used in this book. In addition, the omission of any reference to the Greco-Roman concept of natural law is puzzling, since natural law was also a major factor in shaping ancient written laws.

Despite those shortcomings, the quality of each essay is undisputed. Any reader of this book should be aware that the language of the articles is often technical and the issues discussed are very specific and complex. Therefore, a certain familiarity with the subject matter is a prerequisite to actually benefitting from *Writing Laws in Antiquity*.

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Laansma, Jon C., and Randall X. Gauthier. *The Handy Guide to Difficult and Irregular Greek Verbs: Aids for Readers of the Greek New Testament*. The Handy Guide Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017. 80 pp. Softcover. USD 13.99.

The Handy Guide to Difficult and Irregular Greek Verbs is a cooperation of Jon C. Laansma and Randall X. Gauthier. Laansma holds a position as an associate professor at Wheaton College for Ancient Languages and New Testament (backcover). Besides Koine Greek, his past publications point to his expertise in the Letter to the Hebrews. Gauthier serves as a research fellow with the Department of Hebrew at the University of the Free State in South Africa (ibid.). His publications indicate his expertise in Septuagint studies, where he specializes in the Greek versions of the Psalms.

The Handy Guide to Difficult and Irregular Greek Verbs is the second volume in Kregel’s *The Handy Guide Series*. Douglas S. Huffman serves as the series editor and the author of the first 112-page-long volume, (*The Handy Guide to New Testament Greek: Grammar, Syntax, and Diagramming*. The Handy Guide Series [Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012]). With this series, the publisher seeks to enable ambitious students of Koine Greek to fluently read the Greek New Testament. Kregel decided to match the size of the volumes with the size of the printed version of the Greek New Testament (USB⁵ and NA²⁸). This neat feature allows one to always carry the *Handy Guide(s)* together with a hard copy of the Greek New Testament. Having easy access to the printed version is an essential part of the publisher’s philosophy to reach fluency in reading the Greek New Testament. Laansma and Gauthier state in the introduction that, “After a year or two of elementary Greek grammar, the best thing a student can do is read, read, read. Turn off all parsing aids and close all interlinears. With a text and a print dictionary in hand, read, read, read” (13).

In the Preface, the authors point to the key contribution of this publication, which is “a list of difficult verb forms (second–sixth principal parts) in order of frequency of occurrence; the frequencies represent counts of all of the verbs (simplex + compounds) that share the same stem” (11). This contribution will help the student give priority of learning to those difficult and irregular verbs which appear most frequently. Since those are the verbs which play a major factor in preventing a smooth