

This study will certainly create some good conversations about justification and encourage further study into the doctrine of salvation in the early centuries of Christianity. This book is also a helpful supplement to Alistair E. McGrath's masterful study on justification, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and even to Michael Horton's recent contributions in volume 1 on *Justification*, *New Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

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Berman, Joshua A. *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xi + 307 pp. Hardcover. USD 99.00.

Currently, the extreme fragmentation in the field of Pentateuchal Theory has occasioned the publication of several attempts to bridge the gap between differing academic communities, producing new paradigms for the study of the compositional history of the Pentateuch (for e.g., Jan Christian Gertz, et al., eds., *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel and North America*, FAT 111 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016], 3). Inconsistency in the Torah represents a call for a more modest methodological agenda in regards to both the application of source critical methods for Pentateuchal composition studies and to the abounding speculative results of such methods in recent publications. In this regard, Joshua A. Berman's book stands in line with another forthcoming publication (see L. S. Baker, et al., eds., *Exploring the Composition of the Pentateuch I* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming]). The book is a major contemporary critique of source criticism's claims for literary consistency, proposing that ancient literary conventions do not align with modern critical expectations in terms of unity, readability, coherence and scientific precision. Berman urges scholars to pursue the integration of ancient literary conventions in the formulation of any serious compositional paradigm of the Pentateuch.

Berman draws from several of his previously published papers to compose the book's chapters and sections (10–11). This material is then organized into thirteen chapters, which are further divided into three parts. The first part deals with two problems: first, the duplication of narrative accounts of a single event, and second the historical disparity between the narratives of Exodus and Numbers, on the one hand, and Deuteronomy on the other. Berman responds to the first problem by observing that ancient Egyptian sources resort to literary duplication in the depiction of the battle of Kadesh (1274 BCE). He defends the existence of a different literary expectation behind the composition of the literary duplication found in the massive

walls of Luxor, the Ramesseum and Abydos, which display two accounts of that event, each carved side by side. Berman notices that the accounts have discrepancies in terms of style, precision, and historiographical mismatch, characterizing them in connection to the exhortatory nature of premodern historiography, as sampled by Greek, Roman, and Medieval sources. Berman suggests reading the Exodus sea account (Exod 13:17–15:19) in light of the Kadesh inscriptions of Ramses II. He argues that the parallels between the Biblical and the Egyptian compositions attest of the former's literary dependence on the latter. Such dependence, convincingly, demonstrates a common literary strategy that undermines the modern source-critical perspective of a Priestly and a non-Priestly layer for Exodus 13:17–15:19.

I think Berman's study on the Kadesh inscriptions of Ramses II will be held as paradigmatic for serious future studies on the occurrence of literary duplication in the Pentateuch. However, although it sounds appealing that different expectations characterized the relation between author and reader in Antiquity, I think that such a claim must be further substantiated by additional studies on the possibility of the presence of the exhortation genre in Ancient Near Eastern compositions. Such studies could show whether Berman's hortatory readings of the Kadesh inscriptions and of the Biblical account are simply a replacement of the modern source critical anachronistic approach by another of the same kind, or not. My observation relates to the danger of anachronistically imposing the literary conventions of one Ancient community upon another since the Greek, Roman and Medieval authors have millennia separating them from their Egyptian New Kingdom counterparts.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the historical disparity between the narrative of Exodus and that of Numbers with Deuteronomy. Berman shows the significance of the Hittite literary reworking of history for understanding Deuteronomy. The author reads the historical discrepancies between Deuteronomy 1–3 and Exodus/Leviticus, in light of the principle of diplomatic signaling found in the Hittite historical prologue and in the Amarna letters. Diplomatic signaling is the idea that shifts in the diplomatic relationship between the Hittite suzerain and his vassals were communicated by changes in the suzerain's display of history as found in the historical prologue of a renewed treaty. Berman suggests that Deuteronomy 1–3 similarly approaches the past events of Israel for communicating changes in the relationship between YHWH and Israel based on a distinctive historical perspective of past events. Though in agreement with Berman's argument, I have argued elsewhere that the propagandistic nature and diplomatic use of history supporting his argumentation can be further nuanced by Amnon Altman's concept of history as presented to the divine assembly (see Jiří Moskala and Felipe A. Masotti, "The Hittite Treaty Prologue Tradition and the Literary Structure of the Book of Deuteronomy," in *Composition of the Pentateuch*). Thus, the Hittite prologue tradition stands, not only as a royal tool for diplomatic signaling, but also as a

human agreement on what was ultimately accepted as the normative divine version of history. It was primarily based on the suzerain's intention to display military power for enforcing order and to communicate his decisions towards a needed diplomatic change (propaganda/diplomatic concept). However, this consequently validated the idea that the gods were on his side—that the divine council watches over the divinely assigned human dynamics (divine council/legal concept), a fact that strongly parallels Deuteronomy's covenantal form as a representation of a divinely communicated review of the Exodus covenant.

The second part turns to inconsistencies among the several distinct Pentateuchal law codes. The following arguments comprise Berman's main line of reasoning: Ancient law was composed as non-statutory (ch. 5); the modern notion of strict construction is alien to the Ancient legal thought (ch. 6); ancient narrative accounts may acknowledge the validity of an old law code and concomitantly diverge from its specific dictates (ch. 7); biblical narrative shows the existence of normative consciousness in regards to Pentateuchal discordant laws by combining them in a same narrative account (ch. 8); legal revision in the Pentateuch is complementary by nature (ch. 9); and, empirical models for the understanding of legal discrepancy must take into account the complementary nature of the evidence coming from Ancient sources (ch. 10).

Berman supports his argumentation with detailed work on discrepancy in ancient law codes, ancient narratives, biblical law, and biblical narratives. He develops the arguments/chapters under the assumption that modern understanding about law is connected to various currents of thought developed in the nineteenth century. The most important aspect of these currents is the statutory notion about legal corpora. Under such a notion, the law corresponds to the exact words of a given code which must be acknowledged in its manifested specificities by a judge in a court (strict construction concept). Thus, texts, for modern minds, are the ultimate source of law. Berman contends, however, that in Antiquity, adjudication was performed under a common-law system, in which the legal normativity of a law code and of a judge's decision emanated from "the mores and spirit of the community and its customs" (109). In such contexts, textual law was rather taken as a resource. Thus, complementarity between codes and the lack of strict construction awareness should be expected when legal revision took place throughout time. Here, again, Berman shows how a hortatory tone might be connected with legal instruction in ancient texts, and how such is also the case in the Hebrew Bible's purposed blend of discrepant legal corpora and genres (151). I find the hortatory notion as connected to the legal blending and presentation of law in the Pentateuch more appealing than its use in the first part of his book. Here, in the second part, Berman's conclusions interestingly correlate with studies showing that Israel's liminal moments were marked by the communication of law, stressing the literary polyphonic discourse

conveyed by its connection with narrative (see for e.g., Nanette Stahl, *Law and Liminality in the Bible*, JSOTSup 202 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1995], 21; and James W. Watts, "Story–List–Sanction: A Cross-Cultural Strategy of Ancient Persuasion," in *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks*, eds. Carol S. Lipson and Roberta A. Binkley [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004], 197–212).

The book's third part comprises a critique to modern source-critical scholars' practices. Berman presents the history of the historical-critical paradigm in Biblical studies (ch. 11), exposes what he claims to be the major abusive practices of scholars using the method (ch. 12), and challenges historical-critical conclusions in the study of the flood narrative of Genesis 6–9 (ch. 13). I find the third part to be the most thought-provoking section of the book. The author addresses the main questions entertained by historical-critical scholars throughout the history of the method (203) and demonstrates how the bisectional approach that tempers the current version of the discipline did not reign in the words of its first proponents (206). Berman argues that Spinoza and Richard Simon's highly cautionary approach in the seventeenth century should be held as paradigmatic for the historical-critical study of the Hebrew Bible. He demonstrates how such caution changed as eighteenth century scholars adopted a mechanical-naturalistic worldview and as nineteenth century Biblical scholars were influenced by the German historicist tradition with its emphases on individuation, causality, and primary sources for the assessment of a given historical chain of events. Berman demonstrates how these emphases influenced modern historical-criticism. He argues that modern, source-critical scholars often bisect, negate, and/or suppress data in order to ascribe specific dating to Biblical texts and to group together the layers of what is thought to be their primary sources. The author finally samples a return to Spinoza's methodologically modest agenda by challenging details of the widely accepted, historical-critical views of dual authorship for the flood account (Gen 6–9).

In his urge for methodological modesty, Berman has provided a document that nuances the characterization of the assumptions and procedures of a method that is often misrepresented as purely rational, especially as opposed to studies with more modest methodological perspectives. He has also opened the door for an alternative from the alleged, inescapable academic fate of those who disagree with the abundant, historical critical, deterministic conclusions. I find Berman's call for understanding the Hebrew Bible as a product of the Ancient Near East literary milieu to be foundational. I would argue that in his book, nonstandard, alternative perspectives can be found and built upon, instead of fundamentalist apologetics. As such, the book will engage both avid students who enjoy learning about the history and modern ideas entertained in current historical criticism, as well as scholars who now

will have to deal with the substantial challenges Berman raises against the modern practice of the method.

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Capes, David B., Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards. *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. 462 pp. Hardcover. USD 34.20.

Why another book on Paul? As the title says, the authors wanted “a single textbook that covered, in a manageable size several key aspects of Paul: his background, and introduction to his letters, a survey of his ministry surrounding his letters, and an integrated survey of theology and spirituality” (3–4). It is designed for an “introductory course on Paul” (3) with the hope of covering “multiple facets of Paul” while answering “that perennial question of students: ‘so what?’” (4). The authors have tried to keep their writing simple. Yet they manage to look “at how someone in the first-century Mediterranean saw his world” (5). They also aim to show the “big picture” (6) of Paul’s life and the context of his letters; and did their best to “help bridge the gap” (6) in time and culture between Paul’s letters and us. They also placed their study of Paul’s letters “into the context of his ministry” (6), leaning more on Paul’s description of his life in his letters than Luke’s description of Paul’s life (7). Paul’s letters are studied in chronological order. Nevertheless, for several reasons the authors decided that they “do not find the arguments against the authenticity of the disputed [letters] convincing”. First, because Paul never wrote his letters alone; second, he used a number of preformed traditions; third, he wrote to address different audiences on various occasions; and fourth, the voice of the early church fathers should not be overridden in favor of “modern assumptions” (7–9).

The book is divided into twelve chapters apart from the introduction. These can be divided into five main topics: Paul’s World (ch. 1), life (ch. 2), writings (chs. 3–9), theology and spirituality (ch. 10), and finally his relation to us today (chs. 11–12). The chapters end with three maps of Paul’s missionary trips, a helpful glossary that defines key terms encountered in the book (about nine pages long), an important updated bibliography (eighteen pages with approximately twenty entries each), and indexes of authors, subjects, and biblical texts used. The reading of the book has been a pleasant one. Yet, I would have liked an exhaustive table of contents for the chapters, including the subheadings. One is forced to read through an entire chapter to know what exactly the authors will deal with.

More specifically, the authors address Paul’s writings in chronological order as follows: First, the itinerant epistles—Galatians (ch. 4), the Thessalonian letters (ch. 5), the Corinthian letters (ch. 6), Romans (ch. 7); then the