

point and that a parable cannot be originally from Jesus if allegorical elements are present. However, it seems to me it does not necessarily hold that because there are three or two characters, or even one, it means that the parable has three or two points, or one. It is possible to look at the parable of the lost sheep as pointing to the great value that Jesus places upon the lost without necessarily saying there are three points to the parable. And is it necessarily allegorical to say that the shepherd in the parable points to Jesus? It seems to me that allegory as generally used deals with a much more extended and consistent application of symbols. What we have in this case is an illustration of a point.

However, we can thank Blomberg for pointing up weaknesses in current positions and suggesting new ways of looking at parables.

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Brooks, Roger. *The Spirit of the Ten Commandments: Shattering the Myth of Rabbinic Legalism*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990. xiv + 199. \$21.95.

Confronted by a variety of student opinion on the meaning of Jewish law (*halakhah*), which compared it to Catholic casuistry, and contrasted it with Christian spirituality, Brooks sets out to clarify the day-to-day practice of Jewish law as the purveyor of morality, ethics and spirituality.

Contrasting Rabbinic Judaism with the notion of Pharisaic adherence to the letter of the law, Brooks gives a picture of the halakhic process which perceives the authority of law to come not only from Scripture, but from moral example and the entire halakhic process in which the Rabbis engaged.

This halakhic process, or legal discourse, in which diversity of opinion is common, gained contemporary relevance through consideration of a particular case, thus the casuistic character of Jewish Law. The discourse also advanced the student to new levels of holiness in act and intellect by seeking to educate and win the mind. In other words, a special kind of understanding came from involvement in the halakhic process and the heuristically derived insights. The practical grasp of one's duties in specific cases resulted from it.

In chapters three, four, and five, entitled: "In Search of the Rabbinic Agenda Within Scripture," "In Search of the Rabbinic Meaning of Scripture," and "In Search of Rabbinic Authority," Brooks explains several vital points by examples of rabbinic teaching.

The first is that the relation of sources of authority, the balance of ethical and theological issues, and the practical needs of legal interpretation express the goals of the Talmud. The second point is that

rabbinic meaning of Scripture lies in understanding the paradigmatic character of the Ten Utterances which permits reactualizing them at all times in history. Thus a particular moment in history is transcended by those who emulate and understand the rabbis and their theology.

The third point is that while the Commandments are an absolute authority, further clarification is offered by rabbinic moral theology as it probes the questions of purpose and consequence. By the halakhic process one is moved by the letter and the spirit of biblical law to a life of holiness through "absolute" submission to God and "exclusive" recognition of God's acts.

Brooks has adequately demonstrated that rabbinic theology is not a slavishly literal or fundamentalistic, thus legalistic, approach to biblical law. It is the practical and spiritual integration of the word of God with the word of humanity.

Brooks has given us an inside picture of the halakhic process, of rabbinic theology. By reading this book we get a feeling for the particular kind of reasoning the rabbis employed. It would be very difficult to characterize rabbinic theology as legalistic after understanding its inner dynamic. The book also serves to correct the popular notion that Judaism, by its legalism, was divorced from history. Such a charge seems impossible in view of the appeal in rabbinic interpretation to the acts of God, especially the Ten Utterances, in order to create a transhistorical perspective on divine-human relationship, and ultimately bring everything within the interpretive process to focus on specific situations in the here-and-now.

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Brueggemann, Walter. *Israel's Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988. xii + 196 pp. Paperback, \$10.95.

The thesis of Professor Brueggemann's book is that the Psalms "can only be understood and used rightly if we attend to their social interaction and function" (ix). In the preface Brueggemann states that he seeks to "advance our current situation in Psalms studies"; "be attentive to the central task of the pastor," which is the "liturgical task of nurturing a communal, intentional, and often alternative imagination"; and explore the "social reality of the Psalms," expressed in the communal experience of "world-making" or "social construction" (x). Then he tells the reader how he will go about it: he will study the Psalms critically from a sociological perspective, guided in his study by the presupposition that "it is no longer tenable to imagine that there is a 'given' world into which we may fit, and which we have only to describe, and to which we may bear witness. That