

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

easy 'givenness' is now seen to be theologically unconvincing and sociologically naive" (x).

By the end of the preface the reader recognizes that the rest of the book requires reading with wide-open eyes. Some comfort may come from Brueggemann's hope that his book will be a "statement of an evangelical sort" (xi).

There are five chapters. In chapter 1, "Praise as a Constitutive Act," the author develops the idea that the cultic act of praise "creates a world." Praise is not merely responsive, but constitutive of reality. In chapter 2, "The 'World' of Israel's Doxology," Brueggemann develops the idea further and says that Israel's praise creates a "particular world in which Israel may live" and "makes available a world over which Jahweh rules." Chapter 3, "Doxology at the Edge of Ideology: The King of Majesty and Mercy," defines the world Israel's praise creates in terms of "grace and truth"—*hesed* and *ʾemeth*. Chapter 4, "Doxology Without Reason: The Loss of Israel's World of Hope," focuses on the nature of the God who rules the world created by Israel's praise. He is a God who "acts decisively against the status quo in order to create new social possibility" (94). He is not the absolute God preferred by the king. The final chapter, "Doxology Inside the 'Claims of Time and Sorrow,'" reflects on the significance of the study for the "praise of the contemporary church," as well as the "responsibility of pastoral leadership as world-making" (123).

Brueggemann sees Old Testament pastors such as Jeremiah and Isaiah as not "fooled nor seduced by the grand claims" of Israel's praise, which hesees as analogous to the contemporary "religious right allied . . . with American militarism and participating in all of the fears that justify such militarism." But he is critical of "religious liberalism" as well, which is so certain of its ability to solve social problems that praise is "crowded out by the claims and perspectives of the social sciences" (127). Contemporary liturgies of praise put a lid on all "present reality" (135).

The book is a good example of theology written for theologians. The author plays the scholar-quoting game with gusto and will no doubt leave the busy parish pastor, whose primary concern is to build the faith of his people, lost in the maze created by references to "Kaufman's account," "Lebacqz's account," "Gunkel's understanding," "Mowinckel's hypothesis," "Kegan argues," "Kaufman states," sprinkled liberally throughout the book. It does not, however, generate much confidence in the Bible as inspired revelation from God. The authority is not Scripture, but the religious sociology of Israel.

Granting the author's presupposition, Jahweh becomes a liturgical construct of Israel's "world-making." Her words of praise create the King! This raises some questions. If Israel disappears from the scene, does the "world" her liturgy creates or evokes also disappear? What does that say

about revealed religion? Will a more "mature" faith evolve from the ashes of such a sociological creation of Israel's religious imagination?

*Israel's Praise* is a book that can make the reader mad, sad, and glad all at the same time. But it is a book that makes one think and think deeply. The best part, in which Brueggemann talks about pain as the matrix of praise, is to be found in pp. 129-160.

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Dybdahl, J. *Old Testament Grace*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1990. 152 pp. \$16.95.

Too often the Old Testament has been misunderstood by Christians. Since Marcion, the God of Law and Justice of the Old Testament has been opposed to the God of Grace and Love of the New Testament. For Dybdahl, God's personality is not split; the God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament (chap. 1). Stories (chap. 2), institutions, rituals and symbols (chap. 3), and texts and words (chap. 4) witness to the pervasive presence of grace in the Old Testament. Hence the author infers responses to grace (chap. 5) and addresses objections to the Old Testament grace (chap. 6). The Old Testament is not only for the Old Testament people; even the New Testament Christian can learn grace from the Old Testament (chap. 7). The author accompanies this biblical demonstration with modern anecdotes, mostly taken from his own experience. In fact, the whole book stems from within his personal conversion and spiritual pilgrimage.

The book is short, well organized, and clearly written. However, Old Testament grace is much more complex than it may appear through this sometimes sketchy presentation. Dybdahl's systematic, yet practical and rather homiletical discourse does not do full justice to the beauty and the richness of the Hebrew concept of grace. The many stories illustrating grace in the Old Testament do not include the Genesis creation account, God's act of grace *par excellence*. The author's choice of "grace-filled words" (95-98) is somewhat arbitrary. For instance, he does not mention the important word *rah'mim* (compassion, mercy), while he gives special treatment to the word *s'dāqāh*. The former is a technical word for grace—it is translated in the LXX by *charis* (grace), while the latter is not. Admittedly, the word *s'dāqāh*, which expresses rather the opposite idea of justice, is often associated with Hebrew words for grace (Pss 116:5; 141:5; 145:17; Prov 12:10; Mic 6:8; etc.), thus showing an affinity between the Hebrew concept of justice and grace (see p. 143). Words such as "truth" (Deut 6:8, 9, 12; Isa 49:15; Ps 89), "covenant" (Deut 7:9; Ps 25:10; Dan 9:4), "peace" (Num 6:25-26), "glory" (Ps 84:11; Exod 33:18-19), and "love"