

of Stanley Jones, referred to frequently in the footnotes, is listed neither in the Bibliography nor in the Index. Missing throughout is the work of A. Malherbe, even though Tomson finds in the Cynic tradition one of the important influences on Paul—via the Hillelite Rabbis, of course. The editors clearly failed to do their job.

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Walton, John H. *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990. 256 pp. \$19.95.

The scholarly evangelical community has for some years had a love-hate relationship with the cultures and literature of the ancient Near East. In teaching courses on the Old Testament books, evangelical instructors can be faulted for several limited or prejudicial positions: (1) treating the history and literature of the ancient Near East as an almost unimportant framework for understanding the OT; (2) behaving as if the writings of the Hebrew Bible *must* (according to their own presuppositions) be so utterly distinct from that larger world from which they came, that one need hardly mention anything about that world or its thought; (3) limiting their interest only to the extrabiblical literature which (they suppose) sheds light on the meaning of specific passages from the Bible; (4) considering such literature worthy of attention only if they were convinced that it enabled them to "prove" an earliest-possible date for the biblical literature under study; or, (5) studying Near Eastern literature and religion formally at the graduate level as an effective way of "dodging" the real problems in literary history with which the various disciplines of modern biblical criticism confront us.

Surely it is time to accept that the OT books may be fairly classed by specific genre with the literature of the ancient Near East. For this, John Walton's new work offers much light and guidance. This work is an invitation to conservative scholars to look more closely at the proper fields of Near Eastern literature to which the biblical books belong.

Walton's genres are those which have been typically described in works like *ANET* (3d ed.). His work shows what the Old Testament has in common with its Near Eastern contemporary documents, as well as how it differs from them, both thematically and religiously.

Walton arranges the Near Eastern material according to genres, treating each in its own chapter: cosmology, personal archives and epics, legal texts, covenants and treaties, historical literature, hymns (with prayers and incantations), wisdom literature, prophetic, and apocalyptic literature. Each chapter closes with a brief, usually current bibliography for further

study. The book ends with a chapter of brief conclusions and subject and author indexes.

In each chapter Walton identifies the theme or genre at hand, then presents pertinent materials from different regions of the Middle East. This section lists most relevant and current publications along with selective bibliographical information. Additionally the author summarizes the content of each ancient work and suggests a date of composition. This section in each chapter would have been even more helpful if there were a list of the specific books or passages from the Old Testament which belong in the genre under discussion. These could have been treated identically to the nonbiblical materials.

The informed reader will at times take exception to Walton's classifications. For instance, chap. 2 ("Personal Archives and Epics") would have been an appropriate place to discuss the numerous biblical genealogies and personnel lists. From the Near Eastern literature one would certainly have expected to find some treatment of the Gilgamesh epic. Gilgamesh is dealt with only in part in the initial chapter ("Cosmology"), where its flood account is compared with that of Genesis.

The section on genre identification is followed by a discussion of each literary piece, together with a comparison of its content and ideas with those of the corresponding Bible material. This is truly the heart of Walton's contribution to scholarship. In each case his remarks regarding similarities and differences are careful and tentative. Rather than relying on his own knowledge or opinions, Walter has drawn extensively from the conclusions of recent scholarship on the character and meaning of the ancient Near Eastern literary types. The author offers on nearly every page lengthy quotations from the specialists so that the reader may become informed on the position of each. Where there is debate, Walton juxtaposes alternate views. His own comments introduce the variant conclusions and offer smooth transitions from one point in the debate to the next.

Six chapters contain a curious section called "Cases of Alleged Borrowing." Walton has apparently seen the need to confront modern historical criticism's frequent allegations that a theme, genre, or document within the Hebrew Bible is dependent in some way on the literature of the older, surrounding cultures. Walton challenges such claims by examining the literary features which have led to such conclusions. For example, after emphasizing the differences as well as similarities between the creation story in Genesis 1-2 and *Enuma Elish* (34-38), Walton opts for a cautious position. He accounts for the similarities by recognizing "a common tradition in the past of the roots" of Israelites and Babylonians as "the source from which the similarities are derived" (37). This same degree of tentativeness, fairness, and honesty characterizes the entire book.

The teacher and advanced student of the Old Testament will find Walton's organizational and bibliographical work a valuable resource.

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Westermann, Claus. *The Parables of Jesus in the Light of the Old Testament*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990. 211 pp. \$12.95.

This book was originally published in German in 1984 and was developed from a paper presented at a meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study in July 1983. In this book Westermann first studies the parables in the OT and then seeks to apply the results to the NT parables.

Westermann questions the basic assumption of parable studies that parables serve to illustrate. His study of OT parables show that parables have different functions depending on their contexts. And their contexts are limited primarily to the prophetic books and the Psalms.

In Gen 49 and Deut 33 the parable has the function of praise or censure. In the Song of Songs in the context of love songs it functions as homage or praise. In the Proverbs, it serves to provide insight and understanding.

In the prophets primarily from Amos on the functions of parables are to intensify the indictments or accusations and the announcement of judgment. In the Psalms in the God-laments, they serve to radicalize the indictment against God and in the confessions of trust to confirm one's trust. The parables in Job's laments serve the same function as the God-laments in the Psalms, i.e., to intensify the indictment against God.

Turning to the NT, Westermann insists that the understanding of Jesus' parables can only come about by establishing the contexts in which they were uttered. In his critique of NT parable interpretation, he emphasizes that the assumption of most NT scholars that the function of parables is to illustrate and clarify has to be abandoned. Their use must be determined from the context. He rejects attempts to study the parables from a timeless and unhistorical linguistic phenomenon called "metaphor" (Ricoeur, Juengel, Weder).

In studying the NT parables he first groups them in order to determine their contexts. He has four groups: 1) Stories involving sudden change; 2) Parables of growth; 3) Announcement of judgment in a parable; 4) Instruction for present action.

He sees that by grouping the parables in this way, one can see their different functions. These groups can be broadly categorized into two groups, one dealing with God's activity and the other with instructions for human action. The first of these two groups can be divided to the saving acts of God and to the blessing activity of God. The second group can also