

However, this is a minor issue compared with what Carson offers as his "test case" in the doctrine of final punishment (516). It is in this area, he believes, that evangelicalism reflects "greater diversity, greater pluralism if you will, than anything the movement experienced half a century ago" (443). Carson fairly states the conditionalist position, and attempts to counter it with word studies and exegesis. One might complain, though, that his exegesis of passages such as Mark 9:47-48 is overly literalistic and wooden. While examining the words of some of the relevant passages, Carson does not take adequate cognizance of the powerful NT resurrection theme. In fact, "resurrection" does not even occur in the book's comprehensive index. Exegesis cannot afford to ignore the bigger picture provided by systematic theology. His argument is at its weakest when he attempts to explain why hell's punishment is eternal: "What is hard to prove, but seems to me probable, is that one reason why the conscious punishment of hell is ongoing is because sin is ongoing" (533). This line of reasoning appears to be more consistent with cosmic dualism than with biblical soteriology and eschatology. Still, as one who disagrees with Carson on this issue, I share his concern that evangelicalism may lose its emphasis on the possibility of humans being finally lost. Ironically, however, the traditional doctrine of hell has possibly done more to promote universalism than any other single factor.

*The Gagging of God* is designed to introduce the reader to the hermeneutical pitfalls of our age by attempting to steer a course between the excesses of propositional and metaphorical theology alike (190). It also offers some thoughtful strategies for evangelization of the postmodern generations (511-514). Yet, *The Gagging of God* does not appear to be distinguished by great optimism that this mission is possible. Would the Christians of the apostolic age have accomplished what they did if their perceptions of the dangers of their age outshone their sense of the possibilities opened to them by the Holy Spirit? In the end, I could not escape the feeling that this vigorously written, well-documented book was intended also to "gag" some of Carson's fellow-evangelicals who have turned away from the Calvinism which previously so dominated the movement.

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Currid, John D. *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997. 269 pp. Paper, \$21.99.

John D. Currid's *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* is a triumph in the area of comparative research between Egypt and the OT. The book undertakes an examination of a much-forgotten subject and justly treats the relevant evidence in order to illustrate the connections and differences between the two ancient cultures as well as looking to Egyptian sources for illumination on OT books and stories.

In Part I, Currid initiates his investigation of the relationship between Egyptian and Hebrew cultures with an "Introduction" into the state of research on the subject and reasons for its unfortunate neglect in the scholarly world. In addition to pointing out this neglect, Currid also tangles with the question of

myth versus history, primarily regarding Mesopotamian mythology and Hebrew history. The reader should note that Currid understands the OT as original historical accounts and this stance effects the manner by which Currid analyzes the Egyptian data and how he relates and compares it to the Hebrew accounts.

The second chapter of the "Introduction" compares the cosmologies of the four major cultures of the ancient Near East. Currid surveys the origin stories from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in order to show the differences between the thought behind the stories. Important to note here is that the Egyptian data is rather difficult to date and so Egyptian cosmological motifs come from the Old through New Kingdoms. This problem of dating effects the comparison of Egyptian and Hebrew origin stories which follows in the next chapter.

Part 2 of the book investigates the "Egyptian Elements in the Pentateuch." In this part, Currid begins with a comparison between Egyptian and Hebrew cosmogonies. Besides the problem of dating, Currid rightly indicates that a standard and uniform Egyptian cosmology did not exist throughout the country but differed from city to city. At the same time, though, several key connections must be acknowledged between the Egyptian and Hebrew cosmologies without losing the unique Hebrew idea of redemption and salvation.

The next few chapters deal with the Joseph narrative and the Exodus. Currid turns to the Egyptian data in order to illuminate and understand better these OT stories. The author examines the social status of Potiphar by looking at the various adjectives and positions the OT assigns him. Besides Potiphar, the episode of the serpent, the historicity of the ten plagues, and the itinerary of the exodus are also examined.

Part 3 concerns the "Contacts between Israel and Egypt in the Historical Books." The first section of this part examines possible areas of connection between Egypt and the United Monarchy. The marriage of Solomon to one of Pharaoh's daughters is considered in light of the identification of the Pharaoh, on which no consensus has been reached. Solomon's taxation system and administrative structures are also investigated. Although Currid does an admirable job in presenting these topics, again no agreement among scholars has been reached as to whether any relationship indeed existed between Egypt and Israel on these two points.

The second section of Part 3 examines Shoshenk's invasion of Palestine at the beginning of the Monarchy. Set against an introduction to the historical reliability of the OT, Currid argues the reliability of the biblical account by using Egyptian records, especially the Bubastite Portal at Karnak. Currid ends his discussion on the invasion of Shoshenk by examining the possible reasons for the incursion and settles on the reestablishment of trade routes in Palestine.

Part 4 is a short section describing the "Egyptian Wisdom Literature and the Poetical Books." The sole chapter in this part details the possible relationship between the "Instruction of Amenemope" and the OT book of Proverbs. Currid takes up the discussion of whether Egyptian literature influenced the writings of Hebrew wisdom, in particular the book of Proverbs. After examining the background of scholarly debate pertaining to the connection between the

"Instruction of Amenemope" and Proverbs, Currid tests this connection specifically with Proverbs 22: 17-25. The conclusion is reached that no direct relationship can be proven between the Egyptian document and Proverbs, but Currid does allow for the Hebrew author to have a "general familiarity with the genre of Egyptian wisdom literature" (216).

Part 5 incorporates two chapters examining "Egyptian and Israelite Prophecy." The first chapter, "Knowing the Divine Will: The Art of Divination in Ancient Egypt" sets up the various methods by which ancient peoples performed divining acts. These methods included oracles, astrology, communication with the dead, lecanomancy, prophecy, and dream interpretation. In particular, dream interpretation contributes to an understanding of the Joseph story. The second chapter looks at "Hebrew Prophecies against Egypt," especially the theme of a dry Nile River which is frequently attested to in Hebrew prophetic writings. A dried up Nile represented the downfall of the Egyptian state since the Nile essentially was the life blood of the Egyptian civilization, providing food, transportation, and a wide variety of other necessities.

Throughout the book, the problem of originality and borrowing is breached by Currid but he skillfully and at times understandably maneuvers around this conundrum. The problem of borrowing has been a dilemma of scholars for a long time and will remain so until new texts or other evidence are discovered.

This book provides a succinct yet scholarly approach to the relationship between ancient Egypt and the OT. Detailed in discussion but easily comprehended, Currid has done a masterful job in providing a wide range of evidence for his discussions and conclusions. Combined with lengthy footnotes and an ample bibliography, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* sheds new light on the relationship between Egypt and Israel as well as begs for new study and research in this area.

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Crüsemann, Frank. *The Torah—Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*. Trans. by Allan W. Mahnke. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. 1-xv + 460 pp. \$44.00.

Crüsemann's masterpiece—*Die Tora: Theologie und Social-geschichte des alttestamentlichen Gesetzes* (1992) is made available to English reading scholars by Mahnke's excellent translation. Crüsemann's treatment of the Torah is without doubt a very outstanding contribution to the understanding of the development of the Torah within Israel. Its growth, its meaning, and purpose can only be understood and appreciated when it is contextualized into its theological and social background. One of Crüsemann's major tasks is to show that because this background has been greatly neglected by Christians, many distortions have arisen and an ever-widening gulf between Christians and Jews has come about.

Crüsemann's use of the several methodologies and disciplines is remarkable. His main task is "to make the term Torah more generally possible and theologically necessary" (1). He seeks to fulfill this momentous task in eight chapters and a very impressive bibliography of 78 pages.