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The general aim of the Compendia series is “to present a comprehensive picture of Ancient Judaism, particularly in relation to the earliest stages of Christianity” (IX). Section III deals “with the cross-fertilization of ancient Jewish and early Christian thinking” (VII), and “the presence of Jewish traditions within early Christian literature” (IX).

Within this framework the principle of the learned study under consideration is to substantiate “the evidence for the presence of halakha in Paul’s letters” (259). In doing so the writer in practice rejects the three traditional assumptions about the scholarship on Paul “(1) the centre of his thought is a polemic against the Law; (2) the Law for him no longer had a practical meaning; (3) ancient Jewish literature is no source for explaining his letters.” (1).

Instead of the traditional, mainly Patristic and Protestant, approach by which “halakha is hardly taken into account as a positive source for Paul” (188) and in continuance of the “new approach” (18) of e.g. Schweitzer, Davies, Sanders, the writer underpins the viewpoint “that his (sc. Paul’s) historical background was in Judaism as represented in ancient Jewish sources” (18); therefore, “the main emphasis of this study is on the halakhic element in Paul’s letters” (19).

After the first two introductory chapters (Introduction: How to approach Paul and the Law; Chapter One: The Quest for Paul’s Historical Background) Chapter Two: Halakha in Paul’s Letters, stresses the unique character of ‘First Corinthians’ for “halakha is conspicuous in First Corinthians” (81), and “the authoritative, halakhic character of First Corinthians is striking” (86). Chapter Three: The Halakha in First Corinthians, deals with the rest of halakhic material in this letter.

Stating that ‘Idol Offerings’ are conceived “as a touch-stone for the present undertaking” (187), the writer in Chapter Four: Law concerning Idolatry in Early Judaism and Christianity, survey ancient Jewish and Christian attitudes towards idolatry. In Chapter Five: 1 Cor 9:10 ‘on Idol Offerings’, a detailed analysis is offered of the passages under consideration. Chapter Six: Table Fellowship of Jews and Gentiles, deals with Gal 2:11-14 and Rom 14:1-15:13; these passages are considered to follow “the lines of the halakha and conclude(s) in the language of Jewish benedictions” (258). The Conclusion: The Nexus of Halakha and Theology, sum-
marizes the fascinating pattern of Cynico-Stoic trends, halakhic substructure, Apostolic traditions and Pauline parenesis as the texture of Paul’s thought.

The aim and the range of the book are important and impressive. Important, because the writer seriously and skillfully tries “to keep things moving” (274). That is to say, to move them beyond the traditional boundaries and consistently to ask: “Could elements of Jewish traditional law exist side by side with the theology of justification in Paul’s mind?” (62), or, what exactly is “The Nexus of Halakha and Theology”? (259). Impressive, because of the writer’s comprehensive knowledge of, and great proficiency in, ancient Jewish and Christian literature.

Regarding the comprehensiveness, an index of subject-matters (e.g. parenesis, midrash; apocalyptic, mysticism, idolatry, Wisdom, Christ’s body, Cynico-Stoic tradition, Pharisaism, ecclesiology, Apostolic and Tannaitic traditions) would have been of much help.

Regarding the unmistakable proficiency, some questions nevertheless should be asked. They pertain to the domain of Jewish studies and particularly relate to recent developments in the analysis of forms of Rabbinic literature.

The writer states: “Our focus is on halakha.” “A number of parameters will first be defined. Halakha may be described as the tradition of formulated rules of conduct regulating life in Judaism. It has a literary, a legal and a social aspect: halakha is, besides midrash and aggada, one of the classic literary genres of Rabbinic literature; it is also a legal system (...); and it is the whole of traditional behavioural rules of the Jewish people” (...) “The organic interconnection is expressed in the description of halakha as ‘the tradition of formulated rules regulating life’” (19).

The reviewer asks: must not, however, the description of the “formulated rules” (19), that is to say, the formulation, be preliminary to designing the process of the “legal system” and to drawing the development of “the whole of behavioural rules”, starting with the Pharisaic-rabbinic literature “in its various elements and historical phases” (the Qumran writings, Greek Jewish literature, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha or, last but not least, early Christian literature”, 26)? But does the variety of (halakhic) elements involve the development of an unbroken legal system? Is not the primary task in this field to determine the necessary linguistic conditions for a text to be halakhic (e.q. to be midrashic)? Has not the first parameter to be the typical text-form of halakha, and not so much the “literary genre” (“Die Lehre von den Gattungen ist ein großes Schachtelsystem geworden, in welches disparate Gegenstände eingezwängt werden’’, Curtius)? The book abounds with circumscriptions as: direct and indirect forms of halakha, different modes of halakha, halakhic areas, halakhic elements, halakhic substructure, halakhic nature, but why does not the writer make any attempt to give an analytic description of the formal aspect of halakhic passages?

A form-analytic approach could be helpful in distinguishing Pharisaic-rabbinic halakha from Dominical, Apostolic, General and Pauline “halakha”. To what extent do the formal and substantial parameters of Jewish halakha and early Christian “halakha” run parallel? If not at all, or only partially so, does it then make sense to speak of “the framework of the historical study of halakha in Jewish literature and the New Testament” (208) and what then is the consequence for the drawing up of “the history of the halakha” (263)? Does even the suggestion of a historical continuum do justice to the variety of (halakhic) elements?

Different forms may demonstrate different functions. The formal patterns of Pharisaic-Rabbinic halakha do differ from the passages in early Christian literature which possibly contain halakhic elements. Consequently, the assumption is that the respective functions are also different. Therefore, ensuing questions