there developed what he calls an "absolutism:" being made in the image of God, which meant to be endowed with reason, humans are to subject everything, including themselves, to their "dominion" and shape everything in light of "enlightened" reason. Semple depicts this "absolutism"—as Barth portrays it—in the vision and drive of John Wesley to "spread holiness throughout the land and to make disciples of all nations" (p. 3). Right from the outset, Wesley upheld the *universal* availability of the salvation offered in Christ; it was a matter of consciously *choosing* the offered grace. All humans are equal in this offer and shared experience of salvation; melding them all into the one community of the saved throughout the whole world was the high, "absolutist" vision of the founder of Methodism. He also shared the Enlightenment affirmation of this world; it is *here* and not in some otherworldly and future place where the experience of salvation takes place. It is, therefore, *this* world and its communal life that is to be transformed by the work of Christ's followers.

Methodists in Canada prayed and worked diligently so that this land "would truly become the Lord's dominion and a Christian model for the entire world" (p. 3). Semple reminds the reader that it was Psalm 72 to which the Fathers of Canadian Confederation turned to determine in what language to speak of this land and that they chose "dominion." The Methodist vision, which this reviewer understands in terms of Barth's concept of "absolutism," guides the structure of Semple's book. He has divided it into two major parts. The first covers the period from John Wesley's work and the emergence of Methodism in Britain and the United States and the arrival and growth of this "movement" in Canada to the middle of the 19th century. It pays attention to and paints an impressive, vivid picture of Methodist mass-evangelism and the drive to establish a socially-caring Protestantism. The second part looks in some depth at the consolidation of Methodism in Canada. Through a number of unions on the part of the half dozen or so Methodist groupings, culminating in the establishment in 1884 of The Methodist Church of Canada, Methodism became the largest Protestant denomination in Canada. It was only natural that it spearheaded the drive which resulted in the formation of the United Church of Canada.

But Semple's more consuming interest is in how this denomination set out to create a moral social order, to promote God's kingdom, the Lord's dominion here on earth. He describes the various ways in which Methodists went about achieving this goal through extensive work in education, mission activity in this young and expanding "dominion of Canada" as well as overseas, and in seeking to influence public-policy legislation. At the same time, Semple describes the ideological roots and manifestations that often accompanied the theology, ethics and structures of Canadian Methodism. His judgment appears astute, fair, and generous to this reviewer.

The book is intended for both the interested "history-buff" and the serious scholar. It is eminently readable and, without doubt, a significant contribution to the promotion of knowledge about Canada.

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JUDAISM: ANCIENT

Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature, by David Kraemer. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi + 261. $49.95.

David Kraemer provides a history of rabbinic attitudes to suffering from the Mishnah (ca. 200 CE) to the completion of the Babylonian Talmud (ca. 600 CE). En route, he treats his theme in passages from a broad range of rabbinic documents, setting them against the backdrop of the Hebrew Bible and the varieties of Second Temple Judaism. Kraemer's approach is to progress in chronological sequence through the documents, demonstrating how each compares and contrasts with its predecessors. The diverse views expressed within each of these documents are set historically in the time of its redaction, viewing the document as the shaper of the traditions it contains. Kraemer seeks to understand the documentary history of suffering against the changing historical circumstances in which the documents were created and to which each offers a distinctive response. He additionally seeks to link each document's responses to suffering to the social stance of its authors/editors.

Already in the Hebrew Bible, Kraemer discerns a wide variety of attitudes toward suffering, but he identifies a standard explanation against which others will be measured: human sufferings, whether of individuals or the people, are punishments from God for violations of the commandments. Where alternative biblical views exist, as they do in rich variety, Kraemer represents them as dissatisfied rejections of the standard explanation.

Second Temple Jewish sources are treated briefly as a bridge to the later rabbinic sources. Of particular note are significant transformations of received biblical responses: suffering as a substitute for atoning sacrifice, premature death of the righteous as a divine rescue from the clutches of sin, suffering as a test to be mastered, reward of the righteous in a future world, and increasing resort to dualistic schemes of good and evil.

Kraemer looks to the Mishnah, redacted after the destruction of the second temple (70 CE) and the failed Bar Kochba revolt (135 CE), to respond to those events and their attendant sufferings, but is disappointed. The fact that the Mishnah hardly mentions them is a sign of its avoidance

or "denial" of history, suggesting that "suffering, like history, is a matter of almost no concern to the Mishnah's teachers" (p. 54). Where the Mishnah does address such matters, its approach is "highly traditional," retaining an "archaic" biblical view of the direct and proportional link between sin and punishment. In light of the alternatives available to its authors, the Mishnah's choice represents a "reactionary redirection," a refusal to accommodate to "new realities," a utopian blindness to the world around them. Somewhat better is the (post-) mishnaic tractate *Pirqe Avot*, which at least admits to the problem of suffering by deferring reward of the righteous to the world to come. According to Kraemer, this small shift reflects an opening of the rabbinic social and ideological circle to more popular Jewish influences.

Next in line, the Tosefta is only slightly broader in its range of responses to personal suffering and the destruction of the temple. In particular, the Tosefta gives greater expression to the view that the righteous will have to await their divine rewards in the future world, attributes atoning efficacy to suffering, and makes more frequent reference to the destruction of the temple and the desire for its restoration. The Tosefta, therefore, in contrast to the Mishnah, "is evidence of significant development in the rabbis' willingness to grant the reality and impact of (no longer quite so) recent events" (p. 74).

Like the Tosefta, the halakhic midrashim admit a broader range of responses to suffering. Although direct mention of the destruction of the temple remains rare, Kraemer notes an increase in treatments of suffering that he characterizes as "apologetic." Beyond simply affirming the direct link between suffering and sin, we find passages in which positive value is assigned to personal suffering in its own right, as something to be welcomed and even celebrated as a sign of God's love. Kraemer explains the emergence of such views by setting these midrashic documents within the broader historical context of the late third century, replete with suffering, chaos, decline, and the waning fortunes of the rabbinic patriarchate (a lachrymose view of the period that is now largely passé among scholars of both Judaism and late antiquity).

When the Palestinian Talmud (Yerushalmi) is redacted in the early fifth century, the dominant despair due to the ascendancy of Christianity had the opposite effect: a reversion to the standard view of sin and suffering. Thus, the Yerushalmi's response was to "overcome the reality of its age" by rendering history "insignificant" (p. 113). If other Jews had more challenging responses to offer, the tight-knit rabbinic community responsible for the Yerushalmi was able to "suppress" their voices.

Turning to the early aggadic midrashim, redacted in the same region (Galilean Palestine) and time (fourth-fifth centuries) as the Yerushalmi, Kraemer finds more forthright acknowledgments of Israel's sorry historical state and the undeserved suffering of the righteous. There are even subtle registers of complaint, especially in the midrashic *mashal* (parable), where

suggestions of the unfairness of Israel's plight and of God's withdrawal from the world can be heard. In order to explain this difference from the Yerushalmi, Kraemer speculates that the aggadic midrashim are more "attentive and sensitive to the sentiments of the Jews at large" (p. 148).

It is in the Babylonian Talmud (the "Bavli"), that Kraemer finds suffering most readily acknowledged and the widest variety of explanations allowed to coexist. He gathers what he considers to be the most radical rejections of the traditional justification of suffering under the chapter heading "The Bavli Rebels." Still, such expressions tend to be editorially bracketed in the Bavli by more conventional affirmations of suffering's value or purpose. While recognizing the unresolved tension between these combined responses, Kraemer prefers to characterize the Bavli overall by its more radical expressions and to downplay their accompanying palliatives as "piety [that] fails to convince" (p. 189). Why in the Bavli are such rebellious expressions no longer suppressed by its rabbinic editors? Kraemer gives two reasons: Babylonian Jewry experienced greater physical and spiritual stability than did their Palestinian brethren, while the Babylonian rabbis enjoyed less centralized authority to coerce a consistent response to suffering.

When looked at overall, Kraemer's explanatory models for the differences between rabbinic documents break down. For example, he argues that the aggadic midrashim are more expressive and questioning of suffering because there is more of it around them. Yet he portrays the Bavli, which is the most expressive and questioning of suffering, as the product of a relatively stable and secure time and locale, wherein alternative responses to suffering could safely be allowed. Likewise, where non-standard views of suffering surface in rabbinic documents, Kraemer attributes them to long-standing popular responses that the rabbinic elite can no longer suppress. Thus, the aggadic midrashim are more expressive in this regard than the other Palestinian rabbinic texts because they are more popularly attentive. By this reasoning, we should characterize the Bavli as the most popular of rabbinic documents. When Kraemer tries to identify actual sources of *non-rabbinic* Jewish attitudes to suffering, he turns to ancient Jewish prayers and blessings, found in rabbinic literature but said to employ popular formulas. But here it is the "traditional" view of suffering that predominates.

Although, on several occasions, Kraemer alludes to the possibility that a document's treatment of suffering might be a function of its "genre," he never develops this possibility. Perhaps the more structurally and rhetorically discursive the rabbinic document, the more inclusive it is of a variety of traditional responses to suffering. The diversity of rabbinic responses to suffering is as resistant to reductive explanation as is suffering itself.

In conclusion, Kraemer's own dissatisfaction with the standard biblical and Jewish response to suffering (if such exists) too often steers his course. His desire for explanatory neatness in viewing each rabbinic document as

the product of or response to a particular set of historical and social circumstances left this reader unconvinced by the explanatory results. Nevertheless, Kraemer has produced a commendable work of thorough assembling, judicious translating, and careful explicating of rabbinic texts bearing on a perennial and central issue in the history of Judaism and religions.

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Tora für die Völker: Die noachidischen Gebote und Ansätze zu ihrer Rezeption im Christentum, by Klaus Mülller. Studien zu Kirche und Israel 15. Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1994. Pp. 307. DM 29,80.

Müller's very full treatment of the seven Noahide Commandments, completed as a dissertation at the University of Heidelberg, will no doubt be the standard work in the field for the foreseeable future. It provides a masterful and comprehensive survey of research. The seven Noahide Commandments are the principal rabbinic instrument for discussing God's plan for the ultimate disposition of the Gentiles. According to rabbinic law, the nations of the world need to practice only seven commandments, the so-called seven Noahide Commandments, to be judged virtuous, while Israel must practice 613 in order to be vouchsafed the same ultimate rewards of "the world to come." Thus everything depends on righteousness, and the Gentiles, whether they know it or not, are under the way of Torah, albeit a lesser version of it.

After a short introduction, the study outlines the various sources in early rabbinic literature. Chapter 2 sketches the previous major treatments of the material. Chapters 3 and 4 are concerned with several systematic implications of the tannaitic teaching on the seven Noahide Commandments and interpret their basic sense. Chapter 5 deals at length with the commandments as they appear in the NT, followed by an equally long chapter on the use of the commandments in Christian literature. (Together these chapters are more than a third of the book.) Chapter 7 deals with the various modern Christian theological treatments of the commandments. At the end of the book, Müller offers seven summary hypotheses, which offer a very helpful summary of the material as understood historically. This is followed by systematic theological exposition of the understanding of these commandments in Luther and their relevance for modern Christians. As would be expected from a book that started as a German dissertation, it has a very complete index of primary and secondary literature.

The theses advanced by the book are the following: (1) the sources of the seven Noahide commandments lie in rabbinic traditions of the second century, just as they appear in that layer of rabbinic literature; (2) the formulation of the commandments is post-Hadrianic—i.e., after the natio
state is destroyed; (3) this formulation represents a universalization
God's revelation of law at Sinai; (4) the text of the Noahide Comman
ments is subsequently to be found in the legal code of Maimonides and
often discussed both in Judaism and Christianity as a way of dealing wit
the other; (5) the NT shares in the discussion during early rabbinic time
because of the concerns of Jewish Christians, who also had to deal with th
issue of the freedom of non-Jews from Torah observance. Contemporar
with the seven Noahide Commandments is the list of the cardinal sin
which comes as an ethical concomitant to the catalogue of vice of Paul, th
Apocalypse of John, and the apostolic decree in the so-called Western Tex
(6) apart from the ancient traditions, most of the Christian history of th
Noahide Commandments consists of a network of inattention, realizatio
functionalization, and misunderstanding. With the Enlightenment, the co
cept of the Noahide law more and more came into the discussion of natur
law, however not entirely without objection; (7) Christian systematic theo
ogy answered rabbinic Torah either in the context of natural theology (C. I
Dodd), as an antithesis to law and gospel (H. Thielicke), or even as a contr
bution to the thought of a Jewish-Christian common society in the peop
of God (F. W. Marquardt), in which the Noahide Commandments could b
appreciated as an important and decisive milestone.

Müller is clearly correct in saying that the present rabbinic doctrine
a second-century formulation; no explicit rabbinic tradition can be trace
before the end of the second century. As he says: "Daraus ergibt sich u
mittelbar, dass zur der Noahtora noch nicht vorgelegen hat und daher
den kanonischen Schriften des Christentums keinen Widerhall hat finde
können" (p. 137). On the other hand, I doubt whether the stronger stat
ment of D. Flusser and S. Safrai, that there is no relationship between th
Christian traditions and the Noahide commandments (*Das Aposteldecret u
die noachiditischen Gebote*, pp. 179–80) can be maintained. Müller also thinl
not. He shows that the Christian discussion is closely associated with th
development of the tradition of the primary sins of the Gentiles, the dead
sins. I would point, as well, to a variety of other traditions. First, I note th
use of a concept of Noahide law in *Jubilees*, where legislation of the "natur
law" type is attached to the story of Noah, just as the rabbis did. None
this is implicit from the Bible text itself. But the *Jubilees* text is hardly th
same doctrine as the rabbis, since it is looking for adequate legal groun
for condemning all the Gentiles. Nevertheless, it shows that the concept
Noahide legislation incumbent upon all Gentiles is already present by th
first century. Furthermore, it is clear from the rabbis and other materia
that the Jewish discussion of the role of the Gentiles was attached to tw
different scriptural locations—one the Noahide Commandments and th
other the laws encumbent upon the sojourner.

The Apostolic Decree seems to me to partake of this tradition in sever
ways. It does not exactly parallel any other treatment of these issues in th