

Die Ablehnung der Speisegebote durch Paulus: Zur Frage nach der Stellung des Apostels zum Gesetz, by Christoph Heil. BBB 96. Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1994. Pp. xv + 386. n.p.

This study represents a revision of Heil's 1993 dissertation directed by Helmut Merklein which was completed at the University of Bonn. He notes in the introduction (part one) that an intensive study of the food laws in Paul is timely since E. P. Sanders' massive *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* has led to a "new perspective" on Paul's view of the law and Judaism. One of the virtues of Heil's work is that it is very well organized. In part two he sketches in his methodology. He seeks to combine the historical critical method (focusing especially upon a history of religions approach and literary criticism) with a linguistic-structuralist method. He rightly stresses that one must begin with the assumption that an author is coherent and presents a unified view. The burden of proof lies upon those who claim that an author is incoherent.

Part three comprises a major portion of the study, and here the history of religions element of the study comes to the forefront. The food laws are surveyed in the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism, John the Baptist, and Jesus (with an appendix on pagan authors). Part four contains an exegesis of the Pauline literature. The literary method is worked out in detail through an examination of Gal. 2:11-21, 1 Cor. 8:1-11:1, and Rom. 14:1-15:6. Each pericope is analyzed in terms of its context, text-critical variants, a translation (included in the appendix), the basic structure of the passage, and literary critical questions. Then each text is also interpreted via Heil's linguistic method at both the synchronic and diachronic level. An excursus on 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1 is also inserted in which he defends the thesis that 2

Cor. 6:14-7:1 is inauthentic and inserted into the context of 2 Corinthians by a later hand. A second excursus examines post-Pauline literature and early Christian literature. Part five examines the implications of Heil's study for the Pauline view of the law, and part six usefully summarizes the main conclusions of the study.

The heart of the book is located in parts three and four. Naturally the evidence from the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism receives the most attention in part three. Heil presents the material chronologically in accordance with his understanding of the date of the various writings. He concludes that the food laws of Second Temple Judaism were a development of what was contained in the Torah, although they came to the forefront by virtue of contact and conflict with Hellenistic culture. Thereby Jewish distinctiveness was preserved, and their separation from Hellenistic culture was even remarked upon by pagan authors. Heil emphasizes that the food laws were a central part of Jewish existence, and claims that there is no evidence that the food laws were abolished in Judaism--even though they were sometimes explained allegorically for the sake of Hellenistic onlookers. Jesus himself did not abolish the food laws, and his critique of the food laws was within the contours of Judaism. Nonetheless, he radically relativized the food laws, whereas the Pharisees and the Qumran community heightened their importance. Heil's survey here is useful and well-informed. His conclusion that the food laws were central to Judaism is correct. Certainly one could quarrel over some of the conclusions reached, and I often desired a more detailed explanation of the texts examined or the conclusions offered, but the brevity of the work is understandable given the vast amount of material covered.

There is not space here to relay all of Heil's exegetical and theological judgments

contained in parts four and five, but a small sampling will be given to whet the reader's interest. "Works of law" refers to the Torah as a whole, and the food laws are part of the works demanded by the law. One of the central themes of the book, which is defended in the exegesis of Gal. 2:11-21, 1 Cor. 8:1-11:1 and Rom. 14:1-15:6, is that the death of Christ is foundational for Paul's rejection of food laws (Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 8:11; Rom. 14:15). Observing the food laws would obscure the significance of the death of Christ since it is the means by which all people are reconciled with God. The purpose of the food laws has been realized in the death of Christ, and they are now abolished for the Christian. The abolition of the food laws represents a major departure from the Judaism of Paul's day. Indeed, the Pauline judgment goes a step beyond Jesus since he never abolished the food laws, though it travels in the same direction as Jesus.

Heil argues for the literary unity of 1 Cor. 8:1-11:1, and the weak here are identified as Gentile Christians. He maintains that their reluctance to eat food offered to idols was affected by the food laws of Judaism. Contrary to Räsänen *et al.* Heil says that the Pauline view of the law is consistent, at least in reference to food laws. He insists that it would be completely contrary to the Jewish view for Paul to claim that the law is established as a moral law while abolishing its ceremonial regulations. The entire law was abolished for Paul through the atoning death of Christ and replaced by the law of Christ. Paul did not formulate new *halakot* for his communities (contra Tomson). He focused on preaching the gospel and rendered advice to his churches situationally through the Holy Spirit. Separation from Judaism was not ultimately due to Paul's rejection of the food laws and other purity regulations according to Heil. The "parting of the ways" is due to the Pauline view that the

death of Christ is atoning is decisive for salvation, and as a consequence food laws are relativized.

Many of the judgments Heil reaches are persuasive. For instance, he is correct in concluding that "works of law" refers to the whole law. His sympathetic reading of Paul so that he is read as a coherent thinker is also instructive. Nor can one dissent from his main thesis that the atoning death of Christ was decisive for Paul's reappraisal of the law. My primary complaint, however, is that too many conclusions are set forward without an adequate defense. For example, he asserts often that the death of Christ abolished the food laws, and he offers Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 8:11 and Rom. 14:15 in defense. The only text that comes close to proving his point is Gal. 2:20. Heil wrenches both 1 Cor. 8:11 and Rom. 14:15 out of context in appealing to them in defense of the thesis that food laws are abolished by virtue of the death of Christ. These verses do not argue that food laws are passé now that Christ has died. Instead the strong are exhorted to deal gently with the weak so that the latter do not stumble. The *reason* the strong should refrain from making the weak stumble in both 1 Cor. 8:11 and Rom. 14:15 is that Christ died for them. The death of Christ is *not* introduced to defend the idea that the food laws are abolished in these texts; it is brought forward as a *motivation* for the strong's behavior. Methodologically,

Heil's concluding section is also problematic, for he draws large conclusions regarding the Pauline theology of the law, but not all of these conclusions stem from his previous exegesis. One example will have to suffice. He claims that there is no real place for Pauline *halakot*. He may very well be right (although I doubt it), but a conclusion like this needs to be argued for in some depth. Heil certainly establishes in detail that the food laws

are not in force according to Paul. But much more exegetical work needs to be done to establish the thesis that Paul veers away from all *halakot*. In summary, Heil's study of the texts relating to food laws is an important contribution and his arguments should be carefully considered. In a number of places, however, his own exegetical conclusions fail to convince or further argumentation is needed to substantiate them.

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