book, she has demonstrated that it was more
than a repetition of positions inherited from
the Enlightenment. W

IN SEARCH OF HISTORY:
HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE
ANCIENT WORLD AND THE
ORIGINS OF BIBLICAL HISTORY
by John Van Seters
(Yale University Press: xiii + 399 pp.: $30.00)

Tamara M. Green

Every man, no matter what his philosophi-
cal or theological inclinations, tries to un-
derstand the nature of his world and his
place in it, not only at the particular moment
in which he lives but, just as important, in
the much larger framework of the contin-
uing process of history. Sainte-Beuve re-
marked that "history seen from a distance
undergoes a strange metamorphosis; it pro-
duces the illusion most dangerous of all-
that it is rational." To write good history,
then, is to try to understand the present as
well as the past—an attempt to make sense
of the process of history in order to make
the past and the present and even the future
seem comprehensible.

How to make rational the history con-
tained within the Old Testament is a prob-
lem that has occupied biblical scholars for
generations, but so complex are the puzzles
of Israelite historiography that solutions
seem at times unattainable. Even armed with
the intellectual weapons of textual analy-
sis, anthropological and sociological theory,
philology, comparative linguistics, and ar-
chaeology, the critic who would wade into
battle must first struggle with the armies of
scholars that have preceded him. The re-
sulting confrontations range from the petty
skirmishes of etymology to the major en-
gagements of source criticism to the Ar-
mageddon of methodology.

From the beginnings of modern biblical
scholarship, fierce wars have been waged
over the issue of how best to approach the
process of historical analysis, and the dif-
ficulties of establishing a methodology have
been complicated for the Jewish or Chris-
tian critic by the theological implications of
the message of the text itself. Traditionally,
students of biblical historiography have be-
gun by positing a dichotomy between the
Israelite view of history and that of other
contemporary ancient cultures. This posi-
tion maintains that Old Testament history,
unlike any other, is teleological and even
eschatological in intent and therefore must
be considered separately from other histo-
riographical traditions. But, as John Van
Seters, James A. Gray Professor of Biblical
Literature at the University of North Car-
olina, rightly points out in this, his most
recent book, such a dichotomy is not very
helpful and, in fact, in many ways incorrect.

Professor Van Seters declares that "the
primary concern of this book is to under-
stand the origins and nature of history writ-
ing in ancient Israel...against the background
of the Near Eastern and classical world." To
that end, he has made an elaborate sur-
vey of the nature of historical documents
and writing in classical Greece (primarily
Herodotus), Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Lev-
ant, and among the Hittites, providing the
reader with both genre analysis and literary
history, as well as a critique of previous
scholarship in each particular area. Having
scrutinized these comparative materials, he is
then ready to investigate his major con-
cern: historiography in the Old Testament.
More specifically, Van Seters is intent on
uncovering the first Israelite historian and,
"by implication, the first in the intellectual
tradition of the west."

This sixth-century B.C. writer, whom the
author calls the Deuteronomistic histori-
ographer (Dtr), was the first to collect, or-
itize, and utilize critically the materials that form the
historical continuum of Deuteronomy to 2
Kings. What Dtr was attempting was "not
merely a chronicle of events. Dtr's purpose,
above all, is to communicate through this
story of the people's past a sense of their
identity—and that is the sine qua non of
history writing." In order to establish the
reality of Dtr as a conscious historian, Van
Seters has to prove the thematic, literary,
and theological unity of the text; and the
reader must decide whether he does so con-
vincingly.

The traditional view, with various modi-
fications, has been that the earliest attempt
at historical composition in the Old Tes-
tament was that of the author called J (the
Yahwist), who constructed the core of the
narrative that begins with the second chap-
ter of Genesis and continues through 1 Kings
4:25 and the reign of Solomon. The Yahwist
lived during or shortly after the reign of
Solomon, that is, during the tenth century
B.C., and it is into his account that later
authors redacted other materials. In addi-
tion, combined with perhaps contempor-
ary with J is E (Eljahim). Several centuries
later, another author or authors continued
the story of Israel down to the fall of the
monarchy and the exile, incorporating not
only J and E but other independent sources,
including historical records from the court

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27
This author or authors is called collectively the Deuteronomist. The final redaction came during the postexilic period with the Priestly History (P), which was interpolated into the texts of J, E, and the Deuteronomist historian.

What Van Seters argues, however, is the opposite of this traditional view: "The Court History made use of, and supplemented, the Dtr history, and not vice versa... the notion of an eye-witness account of events (of the reigns of Kings David and Solomon) has to be abandoned and with it the standard reconstruction of history writing in Israel." In other words, J does not exist as an eye-witness document of the tenth century, and to the proof of such a thesis Van Seters marshals a variety of arguments, both internal and comparative. Arguing from the unity of both style and outlook, Van Seters posits the Dtr historian as the first Israelite historian, who "attempted such a wide-ranging integration of forms in order to set forth within one work the whole foundation of Israelite society." He sees in Dtr's methodology evidence of the use of materials parallel to those found in other Near Eastern civilizations, such as king lists, inscriptions, chronicles, memorial texts, etc., and he attempts to establish parallels in styles and composition as well.

Van Seters's thesis is an intriguing one and sure to provoke controversy. How well, then, does he establish his case? In the end, I think, the results are mixed. Certainly, Van Seters is absolutely correct when he states that it is much more productive to look at the text as a whole rather than break it down into discrete units; and in his close analysis of the biblical text he is persuasive in his argument for the unity of outlook and style. He is right to argue that to date a narrative unit by its form alone is a "dubious procedure," and his critique of the traditional-historical approach is, in many ways, long overdue. In his discussion of Herodotus, he rightly notes that classical scholars no longer view the historian as a mere collector of stories but, rather, as a skilled author who utilized his sources consciously and critically; and he skillfully applies the same type of analysis to the biblical text.

Nevertheless, serious problems arise in regard to Van Seters's own approach to the comparative materials. Because of the non-existence of the Israelite historical documents on which Dtr may have based his narrative, Van Seters's argument is built on a series of conjectures that he admits are all too shaky. For example, in discussing the Egyptian "historical novel," he says: "To what extent such techniques, or the particular motifs themselves, were transmitted from one region to another is a question that perhaps will never be satisfactorily answered"; and elsewhere, in a discussion of Levantine memorial texts, he says that "such texts were probably not unknown in Israel and Judah, even if none has yet been found," Such examples are so numerous as to seriously undermine at least this part of Van Seters's argument.

There is also, at least for this reader, a methodological difficulty inherent in the structure of this book: Because the text is divided into geographical units, there is no sense at all of comparative chronology; and within the individual chapters themselves, the author often gets so entangled in the details of the historical documents under consideration that he loses sight of his argument. In addition, he seems at times to be more intent on offering a critique of previous theories than on stating his own case; his discussions of other scholarship often border on the polemic.

Nevertheless, In Search of History is a stimulating and welcome, if not totally convincing, contribution to the difficult questions of ancient historiography and biblical criticism.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA AND THE SOVIET UNION
edited by Gregory Guroff and Fred V. Carstensen
(Princeton University Press, x + 372 pp.; $12.95 $40.00)
Thomas Mangold

This book is the product of a symposium funded by the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. It contains essays by fifteen American scholars, some of them distinguished, and by one Soviet academician, Boris V. Anan'ich, a member of the USSR Academy of Science Institute of History in Leningrad. In attempting to illuminate economic development in Russian and Soviet society, these essays look at entrepreneurship in different historical periods as well as under a random assortment of rubrics.

Cyril Black attempts to give entrepreneurship its proper definition. Uncertainty and risk-taking, he notes, are basic to a broad definition, while innovation is the key to a much narrower definition. Black favors a concept "that includes functions not only of innovation but also leadership, management, the mobilization and allocation of resources for particular ends, risk taking, marketing, and certainly cost control." This, unfortunately, is a semantic smorgasbord, not a definition. Indeed, the same sort of confusion permeates most of the volume. Lack of clarity and consensus among the many authors about the very term that is at the heart of the whole enterprise is a serious, if not fatal, flaw.

There are other problems. Is entrepreneurship in Imperial and Soviet Russia continuous or discontinuous? Evidence for both can be cited, but which pattern predominates? Black asserts at the beginning of the book that "the evolution toward a planned economy in the Soviet Union continued imperial policies, although to be sure in a much more intense form, rather than departing radically from them." Similarly, Carstensen and Guroff, in their concluding chapter, state that "fundamentally, these chapters challenge the periodization of Russian history that takes the Revolution of