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***Der Bibelkanon in der Bibelauslegung:
Methodenreflexionen und Beispielexegesen***

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Daniel R. Driver
University of St Andrews
St Andrews, Scotland

Little regarded in the English-language canon debate is the surge of interest among German-language scholars in the hermeneutics of canon. From about 1980, beginning with Rolf Rendtorff, and followed variously by Manfred Oeming, Norbert Lohfink, Peter Stuhlmacher, Christoph Dohmen, Thomas Söding, Georg Steins, and Bernd Janowski, to name a few notables, the proposals of James Sanders and especially Brevard Childs increasingly received a *Wirkung* on the European Continent. As the editors of the present collection state, “Eine Trendwende ist seit der siebziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts mit der Formulierung eines ‘canonical approach’ und der Forderung eines ‘canonical criticism’ zu verzeichnen. Diese nordamerikanischen Ansätze werden auch im europäischen Kontext zunehmend rezipiert, allem Anschein nach bisher stärker in der alt- als in der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft” (7). Essays by Dohmen and Steins are included, but the volume testifies above all to the interests of a younger generation. *Der Bibelkanon in der Bibelauslegung: Methodenreflexionen und Beispielexegesen* contains twenty-one essays by seventeen scholars, many of whom have yet to attain the distinction of full professorship. Its contents also arise in part from a research group formed at Osnabrück in 2002 and rejoined annually since 2003 under the EABS program banner “Canonical Approaches to the Bible.”

A strength of the book is its proportional balancing of methodological reflection by exegetical praxis. Four contributors give an essay of each type. Co-editor Egbert Ballhorn leads off by contrasting historical (linear, text-genetic) and canonical (corpus as context) approaches. Both paradigms are in many respects complementary, although they should not be synthesized. The biggest difference: “In historischer Betrachtung hört mit der Kanonisierung die Textgeschichte auf. In kanonischer Betrachtung beginnt erst mit diesem Punkt die Textgeschichte” (22). Then in a study of Exod 15, Ballhorn demonstrates the way Moses’ song transforms narrative sequence, figurally opening up the surrounding exodus account to past, present, and future. Moses (cf. Ps 90) and Miriam typify Israel’s praise. Johannes Taschner weighs E. Blum’s claim that a reader-orientated approach leads to unbridled play. Contending that some borders exist, he enlists W. Iser to complexify the function of a text between author and reader. Emphasis falls on potential for “produktive Neulektüre” (39) within—ostensibly contra Childs—the community of faith. Taschner illustrates with Moses’ song in Deut 32. Instead of being out of step with its context, the song anticipates prophetic “Unheil” and by its strategic location forms a canonical bridge between Torah and Nebiim. Beat Weber indicates four problem areas in recent work on the Psalter as “book”: the role of orality in textualization; cognitive science and ideational content; whether focus on (narrative) sequence limits other aspects of the Psalter’s reception, like liturgy; and attrition in “history” at the hands of an implied reader. Weber then elevates Ps 3 alongside Pss 1–2 as a triad introducing the Psalter. A canonical-intertextual reading shows three distinctive themes introduced in sequence: Torah/wisdom, prophecy/kingdom, and prayer. The third is the first psalm typical as a psalm. And against allegations that canonical readings are “unwissenschaftlich,” co-editor Georg Steins defends a pragmatic definition of canon in both historical and systematic terms, then proposes an understanding of biblical theology as anamnesis. Since the canon forms an actualizing structure, biblical theology must be seen “als Reflexion der schriftimmanenten Vergegenwärtigungsmechanismen und -möglichkeiten” (122). Steins then reads the psalms embedded in 1 Sam 2 and 2 Sam 22–23, drawing out three theses: the governing theme is massively theocentric; David’s exemplary function, which mirrors Moses, indicates law beside prophet; and a wisdom impress points further to an “Einheitsbewusstsein,” an innerbiblical consciousness of canon’s function.

Among the four additional essays dedicated to method, Tobias Nicklas takes up issues of reader-oriented exegesis. Textuality implies intertextuality, and intertextuality a reader, although the inherent polysemy is not radical. Terms such as encyclopedia, with reference especially to U. Eco, serve in a catalogue of seven questions aimed at good interpretative procedure. The list is interspersed with New Testament examples. Marianne Grohmann examines rabbinic sources, finding in Lev. Rab. 14 a kind of canonical-intertextuality that illustrates the reader’s creative role. Leviticus 12:2 and Ps 139 (not just verses 14ff. but the

psalm as a totality) are combined in a meditation on the places of mother, father, and God in human birth. Ilse Müllner considers power from a feminist-theological perspective. Canon exists only in relation to concrete communities, so a matrix of sociological questions arises. "Vielstimmigkeit," she concludes, "ist dann nicht nur ein Prinzip der Schrift, sondern auch eine Lebensform der Kirchen, die sich von dieser Schrift inspirieren lassen" (84). Finally, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr surveys the canonical form of the New Testament, which, together with the Old, in his view, has a "heilsgeschichtliche" structure. Acts 15, for example, contextualizes any conflict between Jerusalem and Antioch, Peter and Paul, or the Catholic and the Pauline Epistles. It models the community of all apostles.

Four more essays attempt canonical exegesis of the Old Testament. For Christoph Dohmen, diachronic and synchronic perspectives can be complementary, although only the latter is mandatory. He addresses Exod 33:7–11 by focusing on the early pericope's future verb tense: here is "etwas Zukünftiges, nichts Vergangenes" (155). Placing the tent of meeting outside the camp is a possibility never realized, thanks to God's mercy. Ulrike Sals suggests that the oracles of Balaam (Num 22–24) should first be set against its co-texts, such as in Numbers, rather than its tradition-historical contexts. Drawing on a wide variety of co-texts throughout the Hebrew Bible, she casts Balaam as a more central and positive figure than usual. Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger reads Ps 1 alongside Jerome, defending the relevance of the church fathers for contemporary exegesis. He finds much to affirm, although the overt christological impress of Jerome's spiritual sense is resisted, since it leans toward anti-Semitism. Still, the ancient scholar anticipates "Kanon," "Mehrdeutigkeit," "Sinnoffenheit," "Intertextualität," and other recent emphases. Matthias Millard begins with rabbinic deliberations about the "Mitte des Psalters" (often between 78:35, 36), outlines the sorts of chiasmic or ring structures to be found in psalm arrangements, and arrives at an important methodological conclusion: "Neben den kanonisch oft hervorgehobenen Anfangs- und Schlusspositionen sollte dabei die Mittelposition Beachtung finden" (260).

Finally, five essays furnish exegetical examples from the New Testament. Sandra Hübenthal expands the horizon of the triumphal entry and temple cleansing in Matt 21:1–17 into four intertextual fields suggested by Matthew's use of the Old Testament. Intertextual reference extends beyond canonical borders, too; she brings early Jewish and Christian liturgy to bear on the key question: Who is this? Silvia Pellegrini contemplates two texts. Mark 12:13–17 is a "surprisingly modern" answer to social and theological doubt about paying taxes, a practice affirmed differently throughout the New Testament. In contrast, 1 Tim 2:13–17 represents a position (salvation through childbirth) at odds with the biblical witness. With both, canonical "Lektüre" transcends mere "Exegese." Kerstin Schiffner, against the view that Luke is unaware of the Torah, argues that the

Evangelist should be understood as giving a “messianische Exoduslektüre” (310). Exodus has a clearly marked beginning, but the deferment of its end—its “Unabgeschlossenheit,” perhaps “bewusst konzipiert” (309)—makes way for later actualizations of the paradigmatic liberation. Margareta Gruber’s model reader is no first-time reader. She recognizes in John 4 (Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well) prospectively 7:37–39 and 19:28–37. Textual marks point to a pre-Easter anticipation of the cross through the sequence thirst, water, spirit, belief, although paradoxically the bidder is the giver and vice versa. Thomas Hieke concludes the volume with a look at Rev 22:6–21. The injunction neither to add nor to take away from the words of the book might be understood locally, as referring to the prophecy of Revelation only, or globally. Yet the balance tips to the entire Christian Bible, from tree to city, in view of the privileged context of canon.

A few broader remarks are in order. First, some will wonder whether the central term “canon” itself is not anachronistic and therefore an inappropriate masthead for these exegetical undertakings. Only one author (Steins) directly addresses the challenge, but it is voiced often enough today to justify quoting his reply. The

von Hubert Frankemölle ständig wiederholte Argument ist wenig überzeugend, eigentlich sogar unwissenschaftlich [!], weil es den Status von “Kanon” als Reflexionsbegriff ignoriert. Mit dem gleichen Argument müsste man den anachronistischen Begriff “Theologie” mit Bezug auf das Neue Testament streichen; denn weder kommt dieser Terminus im Neuen Testament vor, noch wird er heute in der gleichen Weise gebraucht wie etwa in der profanen oder christlichen Antike. Die auch bei Frankemölle zu Recht weiterhin verwendete gewohnte exegetische Fachterminologie hat ebenfalls keinen Anhalt in den zu untersuchenden Texten; aber das ist auch wissenschaftlich überhaupt kein Problem. Mit der unverzichtbaren Differenzierung von *vox* und *res* und der Einsicht in die Wandelbarkeit von Begriffen entspannt sich die Situation und verlieren auch die Vorbehalte gegenüber einer Reihe gängiger exegetischer Begriffe ihren Grund. (115)

In the English-speaking world as well one finds the will to ban discourse of canon in the “biblical” period. Lee Martin McDonald and James Sanders, for instance, introducing their own co-edited collection of essays on canon, write: “With such a long delay in the church’s use of the term ‘canon’ to describe a closed body of Christian scriptures, one may well ask why there was an emergence of a ‘canon consciousness’ in the church of the fourth century C.E. and little evidence of it before?” (*The Canon Debate* [2002], 13). It is a truly remarkable feature of the volume under review that *nowhere* is the Frankemölle/McDonald/Sanders line upheld. Rather, with Steins, each writer who touches on the matter (and several do) takes for granted that the formation of biblical literature testifies

to a growing consciousness of canon, even while recognizing that many texts have been caught up in the canonizing process without regard for a putative original intent. At the same time, the diversity of canons past and present is still frequently affirmed, even celebrated. Typically, the combination is achieved by keeping the sense of the word sufficiently general. According to one suggestion, “canon” intones the concept, “Bible” its many concrete expressions (341).

Category errors remain a danger, though, however salutary the broadening of definitions may be. On at least three occasions (188, 311, 342) an early three-part Tanak is supposed, twice in connection with the so-called Septuagint. Hieke fares better than the others in enumerating some of the difficulties. He is the only one to interact with Stephen Chapman’s important work, although it is still not clear whether he fully appreciates its import.

Second, if “kanon” is the most pivotal concept (the word occurs 1,139 times), surely the “reader” makes a strong bid for second place (“lese-,” 769 times; “Lektüre,” 268 times). Possibly the two most-cited authors are Eco, whose model reader is known across disciplines, and Steins, whose 1999 proposal for “kanonisch-intertextuelle Lektüre” seems to galvanize much of the work in *Bibelkanon*. Indeed, only three of seventeen contributors cite neither. In contrast to Childs’s canonical approach, nearly all hermeneutical reflections build on reader-response instead of reception history. The odd footnote aside, accounts of traditional Jewish and Christian exegeses by Grohmann and Schwienhorst-Schönberger, respectively, are the lone exceptions. Two points follow. (1) Weber’s worry about history, perhaps refracted elsewhere in concerns to defend reception-centered hermeneutics as “wissenschaftlich,” abates significantly when the Bible’s historical readership becomes a control. (2) The reluctance of intertextual readings to cross from the Old to the New Testament, and not just the reverse, calls for explanation—Jerome is the only person here to make this move, and he does not hesitate in the least.

Nonetheless, these essays underscore a point once made by Peter Stuhlmacher: “Bei der Bibelauslegung kann man am Kanon nicht vorübergehen” (cited 128). Participants in the canon debate who doubt that claim must now revisit it, for we are confronted with numerous examples, often fresh, of what it might mean in practice.