

JAMES A. SANDERS

# Scripture in Its Historical Contexts

Volume I:  
Text, Canon, and Qumran

Edited by  
CRAIG A. EVANS

*Forschungen  
zum Alten Testament*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Forschungen zum Alten Testament

Edited by

Konrad Schmid (Zürich) · Mark S. Smith (Princeton)  
Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen) · Andrew Teeter (Harvard)

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James A. Sanders

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JAMES A. SANDERS, born 1927; sometime professor at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University. Unrolled and published the large Scroll of Psalms from Qumran cave eleven; Professor of Biblical Studies emeritus at Claremont School of Theology in California; founder and long-time president of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center.

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## Prologue

I am deeply grateful to Prof. Craig Evans, the editor of this collection, to the copy-editor, Dr. Lois Dow, and to the outside proof reader, Dr. James Dunkly, for their dedicated work in bringing these essays into a form accessible to current students and future generations of scholars. I very much hope that it will be helpful to see how a (late) first-generation student of the Dead Sea Scrolls perceived the new situation their discovery and study have affected in two areas of critical study of the Bible: (1) the art and practice of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible; and (2) the rise and development of canons of Scripture in the various believing communities, Jewish and Christian, in antiquity.

Interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls (also known as the Judean Desert Scrolls) was piqued for the writer upon the first publication of them in the spring of 1950 when Vanderbilt University School of Religion (now Divinity School) Prof. James Philip Hyatt brought to our advanced Hebrew class Vol. 1 of *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*, edited by Prof. Millar Burrows of Yale University Divinity School, under whom Hyatt had studied. Though Burrows had transcribed the text column by column into modern printed Hebrew, Hyatt opened the volume to the Plate XXXII photograph of the ancient scroll itself, set it in front of the three of us, pointed to the bottom line of the ancient column where Isaiah ch. 40 began, and said, "Read!" I was hooked!

Hyatt later informed me of a new federal-government program instigated by Arkansas Senator William Fulbright that I should apply for. He knew that I taught French in Vanderbilt undergraduate classes and suggested I apply for a year's study in Paris as my third year of seminary. At the Faculté Libre de Théologie Protestante and the École des Hautes Études of the University of Paris I continued study of the DSS in 1950–51 under André Dupont-Sommer and Oscar Cullmann, and thereafter in the doctoral program at the Hebrew Union College during 1951–54 under several scholars there.

During eleven years teaching at Colgate Rochester Divinity School (1954–65) I diligently studied the early publications of the various scrolls as they appeared and published a paper tracing the understandings of Hab 2:4 at Qumran, in the LXX, and in the New Testament, comparing them with current scholarship's understanding of the verse. No two understandings were alike! On the contrary, each clearly functioned to serve the needs of the later communities, religious or scholarly.<sup>1</sup> This was later to be called "reception history," but there was none

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<sup>1</sup> See below, essay 21.



such at the time. It clearly indicated that any understanding of a text largely depends on the reader.

As the studies collected in these volumes indicate, the work continued while I was on the faculties of the Union Theological Seminary/Columbia University (1965–77) and The Claremont School of Theology/Claremont Graduate University (1977–97), and thereafter during “retirement.” While still in Rochester I had the honor of being invited to unroll and publish the large Scroll of Psalms from Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs<sup>a</sup> = 11Q5). The work appeared in two different publications: *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>)* (DJD 4. Clarendon, 1965), and in *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Cornell University Press, 1967). The latter, though intended for a lay readership, included critical responses to reviews and critiques of the earlier publications. Soon after joining the faculties in New York City I was invited to join the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project (HOTTP) in Germany, sponsored by the United Bible Societies of Stuttgart and New York, that continued for me until 1990.

Those two experiences cast me deeply into the discipline of textual criticism of the First Testament (especially of the so-called Hebrew Bible), while critical study of the Psalms Scroll and related psalms fragments caused me to see that the field needed a new sub-discipline of canonical criticism that was woefully lacking. The first, textual criticism, was in need of considerable reconceiving, and the second, canonical criticism, needed launching. Canonical criticism needed to be created in order better to understand how, when, and why the concept of canon, or a group of ancient texts shared by various early believing communities viewed as normative by them, arose and developed. Up to the discovery of the Judean Desert Scrolls the common view was that the concept of “canon” was developed out of the deliberations of the surviving rabbis at Jamnia (Yavneh) around 90 CE, who supposedly decided what would constitute the third section of the Tanak, the Ketuvim or Writings. There was also a search on the part of some scholars for a similar gathering of authoritative leaders that focused on earlier Maccabean/Hasmonean efforts at “canonizing” ancient writings. Careful study of the texts that mention the gathering at Jamnia showed that it had nothing to do with what was in and what was out of a “canon.” Further study of the few texts available concerning the reign of Judas Maccabeus indicated the same misconception.<sup>2</sup> It became more and more clear that the concept of a “canon” arose out of the needs of the communities that found their identity and ethos in certain groups of common texts.

Critical study of the biblical manuscripts (about a third) among the Judean Desert Scrolls showed the need for a complete revision of the history of the transmission of the text of the Tanak, while study of a number of the biblical scrolls and fragments showed the need to rethink the traditional view of the origins of the concept of a canon of Scripture.

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<sup>2</sup> See now the masterful review of the whole issue in McDonald, *Formation of the Biblical Canon*, vol. 1.

One's understanding of the history of transmission of the text is of necessity the basis of one's work in the art of textual criticism. A new understanding of the history of transmission came about because of the importance of Fr. Dominique Barthélemy's study of the Greek Minor Prophets Scroll, discovered in 1952 in the Wadi Habra (Nahal Hever) not far from the Wadi Qumran, and how it impinged on that history.<sup>3</sup> It caused the field to write a new history of transmission that allowed for the gradual shift from limited fluidity of the text in the early periods of transmission to the markedly stable texts (Aquila and Theodotion) that preceded by centuries the amazingly stable Masoretic Text of the classical, medieval Tiberian codices (Leningradensis, Aleppensis) that had themselves, along with the Samaritan Pentateuch, gradually come to light during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

This new history, with an apparent "Great Divide" at the end of the first century CE<sup>5</sup> between fluidity and stability of text, allowed for the re-dating of a number of ancient witnesses to the text and a new understanding of the value of them for establishing the critically most responsible text of the Hebrew Bible. It also led to a new appreciation of the work of Origen's late second-century CE Hexapla, as well as the need to appreciate the value of "rivulets" of true variant texts alongside the standard Masoretic Text.<sup>6</sup> It also showed that even the very stable medieval Masoretic Texts still had variables in the order of the books in the Ketuvim of the Hebrew Bible (Tanak). It in effect showed that there is no such thing as "a final form" of the text.

The work of collating and publishing the texts and true variants fell on two major text-critical projects, the HOTTP in Europe, and the Hebrew University Bible Project (HUBP) in Jerusalem. The former instigated the current compiling of the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ) using Leningradensis as base text, and the latter the current compiling of the *Hebrew University Bible* (HUB) using Aleppensis as base text. The older view, that permits of an eclectic text of the Hebrew Bible that attempts to reach back to a common origin, is being pursued at the same time in the current compiling of the *Oxford Hebrew Bible* (OHB). All three are still in progress at this writing.<sup>7</sup>

The launching of the sub-discipline of canonical criticism was intended also as an attempt to separate study of the history of the formation of the text from the rise of the idea of a "canon," the sharing of common texts by ancient communities. The earlier view of the rise of a canon of Scripture was that it was in essence the final stage in the history of the formation of the text. Close study of the scrolls indicated that a more reliable view was needed and the new understanding of the history of transmission of the text was instigated that also clarified

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<sup>3</sup> Barthélemy, *Les devanciers d'Aquila*. The full text is published in Tov, *Greek Minor Prophets Scroll*.

<sup>4</sup> See the English translation of Barthélemy's history of the transmission of the text in "Text, Hebrew, History of."

<sup>5</sup> See Talmon, "Textual Study of the Bible."

<sup>6</sup> See Goshen-Gottstein, *Isaiah: Sample Edition*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> See below, essay 2.

the origins of the concept of canons of Scripture. The work was not intended to offer a mode of interpreting Scripture in canonical context, as was that of Brevard Childs. Childs's purpose was to enhance the older Barthian understanding of Scripture as the Word of God over against strictly historical interpretations of Scripture. Mine, on the contrary, was to enhance historical interpretations of Scripture that gave rise to the concept of canons of Scripture in the process of the shift of various biblical texts from the province of editors and schools to the advent of shared Scriptures – the “aim” of textual criticism – within varying ancient communities.

The text critic's “aim” is crucial to his/her understanding of when to establish the critically most responsible text for scholars and translators to use in their work. The older view was/is that the aim for the Torah and the Prophets may for some texts pierce back as far as the exilic period. The newer is that the aim should be whenever the various texts became functionally “canonical” for whole communities (*Gruppentexte*), understanding that up to that point biblical texts were essentially still in formation under the aegis of schools and editors. The Torah became “canonical” at the point that Ezra brought it to Jerusalem from the large Babylonian Jewish community and read it about 445 BCE to the Palestinian Jewish community in the Water Gate (Neh 8) in Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup> For the various prophetic books and some of the Writings it would have been the point at which each would have become *Gruppentexte* sometime during the Persian or later Greco-Roman period.

The following studies are not offered in chronological order of their appearance but rather in an order hopefully helpful to current and future students interested in how these two fields of study have been shaped by critical study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the recovery in the same time period of the classical Tiberian Masoretic codices. Included in the collection (especially volume 2) are also exegetical studies based on the newer understandings of text and canon, including those that explain the recovery of the biblical launching and development of the monotheizing process – the Bible's prime and urgent message for all generations.<sup>9</sup> The essays are reproduced here basically as previously published, though style conventions have been harmonized; however, where it has been felt necessary to add updating, current information has been added inside square brackets. Note that the bibliographies for the essays do not reflect the republication of essays in the current two volumes. For this information, please consult the Tables of Contents.

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<sup>8</sup> See Sanders, *Torah and Canon*.

<sup>9</sup> See Sanders, *Monotheizing Process*.

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## Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABMC	Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center, Claremont, California
ACF	<i>Annuaire du Collège de France</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARNA	<i>Abot de Rabbi Nathan</i> (version A)
ASOR	The American Schools of Oriental Research
AT	Alte Testament or Ancien Testament
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BHK	<i>Biblia Hebraica</i> . Edited by Rudolf Kittel. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905–6.
BHK <sup>3</sup>	<i>BHK</i> , 3rd ed. Completed by Albrecht Alt and Otto Eissfeldt. Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937.
BHQ	<i>Biblica Hebraica Quinta</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983. (= <i>BHK</i> <sup>4</sup> )
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BRev	<i>Bible Review</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CTAT	<i>Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament</i> . Edited by Dominique Barthélemy. 5 vols. OBO 50. Fribourg: Éditions universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982–2016.
CTM	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
CurBS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
DBSup	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément</i> . Edited by Louis Pirot and André Robert. Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1928–.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>

DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls, also referred to as Judean Desert Scrolls
ET	English Translation
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
f. (pl. ff.)	and following page(s)
<i>Folio</i>	<i>The Folio: The Bulletin of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center for Preservation and Research</i>
FOTL	The Forms of Old Testament Literature
⊕	Old Greek First Testament
HB	Hebrew Bible
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HOTTP	United Bible Societies' Hebrew Old Testament Text Project
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
<i>HUB</i>	<i>Hebrew University Bible</i>
HUBP	Hebrew University Bible Project
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible.</i> Edited by George Arthur Buttrick et al. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1951–67.
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.</i> Edited by George A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.
<i>IDBSup</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume.</i> Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IOSOT	The International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.</i> Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–88.
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBR</i>	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSJSup</i>	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>JSNTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSPSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTC</i>	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KKTS	Konfessionskundliche und Kontroverstheologische Studien
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
<i>LQ</i>	<i>Lutheran Quarterly</i>
<i>LTQ</i>	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>
LXX	Septuagint, Greek Old Testament
<i>McCQ</i>	<i>McCormick Quarterly</i>
MS	manuscript (plural MSS)
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NEB	New English Bible
<i>NorTT</i>	<i>Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
<i>NTA</i>	<i>New Testament Abstracts</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
<i>OLZ</i>	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>OstKSt</i>	<i>Ostkirchliche Studien</i>
OT	Old Testament
<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RGG</i>	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> . Edited by Kurt Galling, 3rd ed. 7 vols. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1957–65.
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS	SBL Monograph Series
SBLSS	SBL Symposium Series
SBL SBS	SBL Sources for Biblical Study
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SE</i>	<i>Studia evangelica</i>
SJSJ	Supplements to the <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>Textus</i>	<i>Textus: Annual of the Hebrew University Bible Project</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76.
<i>ThTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TOB	<i>Traduction oecuménique de la Bible</i> . Paris: Éditions Cerf, 1975.
<i>TP</i>	<i>Theology and Philosophy</i>



<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UBS	United Bible Societies
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
UUA	Uppsala Universitetsårskrift
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
YJS	Yale Judaica Series
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## Permissions and Publication History

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## Part 1: Text and Canon



## Hebrew Bible *and* Old Testament: Textual Criticism in Service of Biblical Studies

The title of this book, *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament?*, presents us starkly with the basic problem of what we study. The thinking world at large seems to be settling on the expression “Hebrew Bible” (*Biblia Hebraica*). One sees it now in Christian seminary catalogs. Yet Jews among themselves simply say “Bible” or use the acronym *Tanak*. Christians have become uncomfortable with “Old Testament,” largely because we think Jews are uncomfortable with it, but also because some Christian scholars are reaching for a hermeneutic other than the traditional ones of Christocentrism or promise-fulfillment. A few Christian scholars and even a few Jewish scholars have recently focused exclusively on a theology of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>1</sup> And yet Jacob Neusner has persuaded not a few other scholars that the real canon of Judaism is in the rabbinic corpus of formative Judaism and not in the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

The board of editors of the *Biblical Theology Bulletin* decided a few years ago to experiment with the expressions “First Testament” and “Second Testament,” noting that the solution is not without its own problems, but that it might offer a viable alternative.<sup>3</sup> After all, while Hebrew Bible may vaguely suffice as reference to the First or Old Testament of Protestants and to the Bible of Jews, it is inadequate for Catholics and Orthodox Christians. And those whose work includes focus on the Septuagint cannot use the expression “Hebrew Bible” everywhere they used to say “Old Testament.” And we all feel a little discomfort when we ignore the Aramaic portions of the thing!

Emanuel Tov recently remarked that we work in a field that has no database. He, Johann Cook, and the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center have begun to rectify the situation by constructing computerized databases of the Judean Desert Scrolls.<sup>4</sup> And that is in large measure the reason for the establishment of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center, to provide at least a raw but highly accessible data base on which we can all work and no longer be dependent, as Barbara

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\* First published 1990.

<sup>1</sup> See Knierim, “Task of OT Theology”; the responses by Harrelson, “Limited Task”; Townner, “Is OT Theology Equal”; and Murphy, “A Response”; and Knierim’s response to them, “On the Task.” See also Rendtorff, “Biblical Theology,” 40–43; and Tsevat, “Theology of the OT.” See as well Levenson, “Why Jews Are Not Interested.”

<sup>2</sup> See Neusner, *Formative Judaism*. Orthodox Jews probably take the Responsa as functionally canonical and Reform Jews only the Bible.

<sup>3</sup> Sanders, “First Testament and Second.”

<sup>4</sup> Tov and Cook, “Computerized Database”; Tov, “Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts.”



Aland of the Hermann Kunst Stiftung recently wrote, on “chance knowledge” of manuscripts.<sup>5</sup> This is a point to which we shall return, but one might well ask: How does the question of what to call the very elastic book we study relate to issues of textual criticism?

A beginning to an answer lies in the observation that even if we should someday attain something like a complete raw database in our field, with films of all extant biblical manuscripts available at Münster (in the case of the Second Testament) or at Claremont (in the case of both Testaments), we shall still have only apographs with which to work. There is no such thing as a monograph, or an Ur-text, of any biblical literature, a point underscored by the sensationalism attached to the Greek papyri found in Qumran Cave 7.<sup>6</sup> This observation obtains whether the reference is to texts or versions.

I suggest this as a starting point for what to call pre-Christian Scripture, in part because that was where Martin Luther found himself when in 1523 he began his program of translation of the Old Testament. It is very interesting to start with Luther because the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marked the beginnings of biblical criticism in which there was still some dialogue, or at least open disputation, between Protestants and Catholics and a few Jews – a situation that would not return until a century ago. Luther’s principle of *sola Scriptura* began almost immediately to become problematic for him.<sup>7</sup> Without the magisterium and traditions of the church to fall back on, following Jerome’s principle of *Hebraica veritas* forced him to elaborate a hermeneutic of textual criticism and translation that, it would appear, he had not yet thought necessary. The hermeneutic, which he called *res et argumentum*, would provide for him the key both to choice of words, in the case of variants, and to choice of meaning of crucial words.<sup>8</sup> Words, he insisted, must be in service of meaning, not meaning in service of words. *Res* for Luther was the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Argumentum* included three themes: *oeconomia*, *politia*, and *ecclesia*. If a passage did not accord with *ecclesia*, or the gospel, then one dealt with it in terms of the political or economic systems of antiquity. Luther had great respect for Hebrew grammar and the great Jewish grammarians through the work of Elias Levita, but if a word in the text was multivalent, then the meaning that accorded with the *res* of the gospel was to be chosen. If the Jewish grammarians and commentators gave the word a meaning not in accord with the gospel, the Christian interpreter and translator was to reject it and work with the grammar, altering vowel points where necessary, to make it do so.

By 1541 Luther had come to view some texts as corrupt.<sup>9</sup> Luther thus came to a basic hermeneutic of suspicion with regard to the Hebrew text as received

<sup>5</sup> Aland, “New Instrument and Method.”

<sup>6</sup> See Fitzmyer, “New Testament at Qumran,” 119–23.

<sup>7</sup> Apparently first stated clearly in the preface to the 1522 publication of his translation of the New Testament. See Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Deutsche Bibel 1522–1546*, 2–11.

<sup>8</sup> See Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:\*4–\*9. An English translation of the first five volumes of OBO (50/1–5), including *Critique textuelle* (vol. 1), is in process [Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*].

<sup>9</sup> See Luther, “Vom Schem Hamphoras,” 646–48; and Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:\*5.

and transmitted in Judaism. His suspicion of the work of the Masoretes he also learned in part from Levita.<sup>10</sup> He finally advised that Christian students of the text should modify vowel points, accents, conjugations, constructions, and meanings – in fact, anything outside Hebrew grammar itself – and turn it from Jewish interpretations toward accord with the gospel. It became his view that Jews had for fifteen hundred years turned the Bible away from witness to “our Messiah and our faith.”<sup>11</sup> While he allowed for textual corruptions due to the incompetence of scribes and to the deformity of letters, as some earlier Christians had said, his suspicions of the history of transmission of the text since the first century deepened.

A much more moderate hermeneutic of suspicion had been evident already in medieval Jewish exegesis. As early as the ninth century Ismail al-Ukbari (ca. 840) suggested that there was a scribal error at Gen 46:15.<sup>12</sup> While Ibn Ezra appeared scandalized at the suggestion of an earlier grammarian that there were more than one hundred places in Scripture where a word should be replaced by another, he himself cited six of the same hundred. By the time of Yefet ben Ely, and certainly by the time of Judah Hayyug and David Qimḥi, the principle of substitution of one word for another was accepted practice where the text seemed otherwise to be incomprehensible.<sup>13</sup> Sanctes Pagnini, toward the beginning of Luther’s program of translation (1526–29), published a grammar and a thesaurus refining the method. These were the great grammarians whom Luther and other Christians respected, to the degree that they respected the Hebrew grammar they had analyzed. The next two centuries would see almost complete denigration among Christians of the work of the Masoretes, especially the vowel points and the accents (טעמים). But among serious students of the text, Hebrew grammar, based precisely upon the transmitted text, was held in high regard. As Richard Simon went to pains to point out, the rabbinic and Qaraite grammarians had learned their art from their Arab neighbors; indeed, the greatest ones wrote their grammars and discourses in Judeo-Arabic.<sup>14</sup>

## The Seventeenth Century

J. Buxtorf Sr., in 1620, challenged Levita’s thesis that the work of the Tiberian Masoretes, especially in regard to the vowel points, had little historical value and was not authoritative.<sup>15</sup> He blamed the 1539 translation of Levita for Luther’s attitude toward the vowel points. Buxtorf defended the Masoretes, claiming that while the vowel points did not have divine or prophetic authority, they were

<sup>10</sup> Simon, *Histoire*, 132.

<sup>11</sup> Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:\*5–\*7. See Greenspahn, “Biblical Scholars.”

<sup>12</sup> Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:\*2; Simon, *Histoire*, 166.

<sup>13</sup> Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:\*2–\*3; Simon, *Histoire*, 167–69.

<sup>14</sup> Simon, *Histoire*, 166 ff. Aspiring students of First Testament textual criticism would be well advised to learn Judeo-Arabic in depth.

<sup>15</sup> Simon, *Histoire*, 6, 136 ff.

received by tradition from high antiquity and should be respected lest Scripture become as malleable as wax.<sup>16</sup>

Louis Cappel, in his *Critica Sacra* of 1634, responded that the points had been invented five hundred years after Christ, and that the danger in ignoring them would be limited by literary context. J. Buxtorf Jr. then took up where his father had left off and in his *Anticritica* of 1653 further defended the Masoretes as traditionalists of the first order.

Jean Morin, in a letter of 1653, in turn defended Cappel, not for being the Protestant heretic that he clearly was, but because his work showed precisely the importance of the church's magisterium and the falsehood of Luther's principle of *sola Scriptura*.<sup>17</sup> Morin's hermeneutic, stated in his *Exercitationum*, would put Hebrew manuscripts at the service of the church's translations in order to clarify text and meaning but not to dominate or obfuscate their clear meaning. Hence, traditional versions should not be corrected on the basis of the Masoretic Text since the Masoretic Text may have become corrupt (after all, the Septuagint is much older), and the defects of the texts on which the traditional versions were made have since been authenticated by church usage. *Errore hominum providentia divina*, indeed!

Cappel, on the Protestant side, was consistent in stressing the importance of literary context. Not only would this not leave the unpointed consonantal text mere wax; contextual reading, on the contrary, should be the final arbiter of meaning of obscure words and passages. Whatever rendered "the most appropriate and useful sense" would always be the preferred variant to choose. Warnings even from fellow Protestants that criticism had always followed the principle of *lectio difficilior* went unheeded. Cappel's principle of facilitating readings, it may be said, has been a mainstay of textual criticism until recently. While one may not finally agree with the younger Buxtorf, he needs to be heard, even today, in his challenge to Cappel:

One would eventually come to the point that when a certain passage will not appear clear enough to a translator, to a professor, or to some critic, the latter will start to look about him to see if he could not find something whatever more appropriate, whether in the versions or in his own mind and capacity to invent conjectures. And thus will one become further removed from the traditional Hebrew reading for no matter what motive, or even without the least motive.<sup>18</sup>

Cappel followed the very carefully wrought arguments in the second part of Buxtorf Jr.'s *Anticritica*, as seen in his posthumously published *Notae Criticae*, and he was sometimes convinced by them. The remarkable thing is that much textual criticism, at least until quite recently, has not followed them. One need not agree with some of Buxtorf's basic suppositions and principles, as Simon indeed did not;<sup>19</sup> but one must agree that his warning to Cappel rings true as a prediction of what was to follow in much text-critical work for three centuries to come.

<sup>16</sup> Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:\*10 ff.; Simon, *Histoire*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:\*17–\*20.

<sup>18</sup> Buxtorf Jr., *Anticritica*, 258; Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:\*22.

<sup>19</sup> Simon, *Histoire*, 9 and passim.

It might be noted that while Catholics on the whole felt secure in their second ground of truth, the church and its magisterium, over against the Protestants' focus on Scripture, it is difficult to draw clear lines in all these debates between individual Protestant and Catholic scholars. What George Lindbeck has recently called the classic hermeneutics – what prevailed in the premodern period before the advent of rationalism and empiricist literalism – bound all Christians together. Scripture was constitutive of Christian communities by a kind of *sensus fidelium*. They read Scripture “as a Christ-centered narrationally and typologically unified whole in conformity to a trinitarian rule of faith.”<sup>20</sup> But, according to Lindbeck, the Reformed churches after Calvin so focused on finding “a single, all-embracing, and unchanging system of doctrine in the Bible,” that they became ritually impoverished over against not only Catholics but also Lutherans. Their disciplined reading and study of Scripture, and skill in its uses, probably made them the most influential single group in shaping what Lindbeck calls modernity.<sup>21</sup>

What emerges then out of the seventeenth-century debates is a more or less clear distinction between Lutherans and Calvinists, or those of the Reformed faith. The Reformed churches of Zurich, Basel, Bern, and Geneva published in 1675 the *Formula Consensus Ecclesiarum Helveticarum Reformatarum*, directed specifically, apparently, at Cappel's school at Saumur. In it the vowel points were said to be included also in the inspiration of Holy Scripture. What God gave Moses and the prophets to write, God guarded over with paternal affection, consonants and vowels, to the very hour of the creation of the *Formula Consensus*. While they had eventually to back down from such a rigid stance, it should be noted that Lutherans, following Luther's own differentiated views of the various portions of Scripture, never approached such rigidity in defense of Luther's own principle of *sola Scriptura*.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, critics and anticritics alike had agreed that, if the autographs of Moses and the prophets were available, they would be the norm, or true canon, for the text of the Hebrew Bible, indeed, of the Old Testament as well. The anticritics held that by a special divine assistance the Masoretic Text had been preserved identical, or nearly so, to the autographs. The critics maintained that the available apographs contained serious errors and corruptions in a number of readings; some also held that there was evidence of different *Vorlagen* behind the Masoretic Text and Septuagint traditions.

### *Benedict de Spinoza*

A major contribution of the seventeenth century had been that of Benedict de Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670).<sup>22</sup> His was a free spirit indeed, condemned both by synagogue and church. In the background of his thinking

<sup>20</sup> Lindbeck, “Scripture, Consensus, and Community,” see esp. 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 1:40–46.

were Thomas Hobbes and Isaac de La Peyrère. While Hobbes focused on what of the Pentateuch Moses actually contributed, de La Peyrère, a Calvinist who converted to Catholicism and knew Simon at the Oratoire, dismissed any hope of finding biblical autographs and stressed that critics must be content with copies of copies of literature that represented but abstracts and abbreviations of originals in the first place. De La Peyrère clearly wanted to diminish the authority of Scripture in order to put the Messiah and the salvation of the church in bold relief. In this he followed Jean Morin's hermeneutic, and searched for prooftexts to support his messianic and christological views.

Spinoza reacted not only to de La Peyrère but to all theologians who, according to Spinoza, for the most part extorted from Scripture what passed through their heads. He insisted that true critics must liberate themselves from theological prejudices and develop a valid method for expositing Scripture, and that required elaborating an exact history of the formation of the text so that the thoughts of the original authors within their ancient contexts could be discerned. Spinoza was not the first to focus on original authorial intentionality, but he did so in such a way that his influence has been felt ever since. Out of those individual authors' ideas could be extrapolated those doctrines and teachings on which they all agreed. Authority, for Spinoza, clearly rested in the intentions of the authors, much of which was lost in obscurity. Only what is intelligible remains authoritative, but this must be deemed sufficient for the salvation, or repose, of the soul. The rest is not worth the bother. Until such a history could be written, and he seriously doubted if one would ever be complete, Spinoza deemed the double commandment of love of God and love of neighbor to be the true Torah of God, and to be the common religion of all humankind. That was what was incorruptible, not some books called holy.

### *Richard Simon*

Richard Simon took Spinoza seriously and wrote the *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, published in Paris in 1678. Though Simon mentions Spinoza's name only a few times in the "Préface de l'auteur," it is clear from the first ten or so chapters that Simon was addressing issues that Spinoza had raised. Simon had access to all the efforts that had gone before and to the rich resources of the Oratoire and of the royal library. His was the mind needed at the end of the seventeenth century to make sense of all that had gone before in the abrupt starts and stops of attempts to establish biblical criticism as a fine art and a science. Spinoza's call for a critical history of the formation of the text was heeded by the man who could do the most about it at the time. I disagree with Henri Margival that Simon was the father of biblical criticism.<sup>23</sup> He could have been, but he was not, simply because some of his major points were lost in the battles he had to fight with Bishop Bossuet and against the rationalist optimism of the eighteenth century. We cannot today agree with all his principles, but we can regret that some

<sup>23</sup> Margival, *Essai sur Richard Simon*, viii, passim. See Auvray, *Richard Simon*.

of the major ones have been largely overlooked in the three centuries since he wrote. Johann David Michaelis might rather be seen as the father of the kind of biblical criticism that has been practiced until quite recently.<sup>24</sup>

Simon responded to Spinoza's pessimism about recovering the history of the formation of the Bible with a two-fold hermeneutic. First, authority lies not in the intention of the individual authors, which one might then appropriate through a harmonizing reductionism, but in the inspiration of Scripture by God's Holy Spirit continuing from the very beginnings of the creations of Scripture in all its parts, through to the closure and fixation of text. Second, while the Holy Spirit used the imagination and the intention of the prophets in their original settings, there were second and further meanings available for later times. These two points in his hermeneutic require considerable unpacking.<sup>25</sup>

Simon expressly did not agree with the Calvinists and anticritics that the Holy Spirit guarded with parental providence what the autographs had contained. His point was totally other. Simon spoke of the inspiration of "public scribes" who contributed to the texts in the process of their transmission; theirs was a prophetic authority equal to the original authors' authority.<sup>26</sup> The Spirit can valorize the ignorance of original authors beyond their limited intentions. (If some of this sounds like postmodern literary criticism, it is, nonetheless, from Simon and from the late seventeenth century.)<sup>27</sup> Two senses of a passage may be discerned, the literal/historical and the spiritual, a further meaning. Some of this is recognizable in the concept of the *sensus plenior* of Scripture. A psalm was intended for an original *Sitz im Leben*, but it was valid for totally different situations in later times. In canonical criticism this is called the resignification of a passage; and while Simon often wrote of the possibility of two senses of a passage, there were other, further meanings beyond authorial intentionality that were made valid in believing communities.

Simon stressed that it is impossible fully to understand Christianity without a knowledge of Judaism and its history. In addressing the issue of the value of consulting Jewish understandings of Scripture, Simon boldly stated that the authority God had given the Hebrew Republic through Moses and the eighteen judges had never been withdrawn. In one stroke Simon dealt with the problem of supersessionism, and of the need of comparative Midrash. Comparative Midrash is the exercise whereby one may discern the latitude early believing communities allowed themselves in understanding or resignifying a figure or passage of Scripture and the hermeneutics whereby they did so. When then one reaches the Sec-

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<sup>24</sup> I am very much tempted to nominate Simon as the godfather of canonical criticism (as I understand it).

<sup>25</sup> Simon, *Histoire*, "Préface de l'auteur," and passim.

<sup>26</sup> Adumbrating the important statement about biblical scribal activity as a part of the canonical text in Talmon, "Textual Study of the Bible," as well as the view of canonical criticism held by the present writer (see Sanders, *Canon and Community*; Sanders, "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism"). See also Talmon, "Heiliges Schrifttum."

<sup>27</sup> See, e. g., Fowler, "Post-Modern Biblical Criticism," 8. And see Lindbeck, "Scripture, Consensus, and Community."

ond Testament and how Scripture, Septuagint or Hebrew, functioned there, one has already a perspective on the function of that passage in Jewish believing communities up to that point. One can then truly discern so-called similarities and dissimilarities because one has built a database of function of that passage up to its appearance in the New Testament. Simon's emphases on the continuing work of the Holy Spirit all along that path, and on the continuing authority within the Hebrew Republic, provide the base for the hermeneutic of canonical criticism when it focuses on canon as *norma normans* and not only as *norma normata*.

We must know, he wrote, both the literal and the developed meanings within Judaism and then within Christianity. When faced with the question of whether the Sanhedrin had divine authority to condemn Jesus, his response was that God can indeed use what we call corruption. Once more, *errore hominum providentia divina*, but this time much more fully thought through than by Morin. In the monotheizing hermeneutic of canonical criticism (as I understand it), Simon's point would be understood as perceiving that God is the God of life and death, risings and fallings, victories and defeats, protagonists and antagonists.<sup>28</sup>

While I would disagree that it is "inutile de rechercher qui ont été les auteurs," canonical criticism (as I understand it) would applaud this significant challenge to Spinoza's idea of resting authority solely in the intentionality of the original individual authors. Simon's understanding of the further authority of the public scribes, who also contributed to the text and adapted it in some measure to their later situations, is also our understanding of the need to see canon and community in the same light and as inseparable.<sup>29</sup> The variants functioned in some believing communities though not in others, and it is important to know as many as there were, if possible, and to understand them in their textual contexts – another point that canonical criticism stresses, the need to appreciate the integrity of each manuscript or family of manuscripts before pillaging it or them to correct what appears to be a corruption or error in another. Thus Simon's respect of the Septuagint witness brought him to criticize even Jerome: "Je n'ex-cuse pas même Saint Jérôme, qui n'a pas rendu aux Septante toute la justice qu'il leur devoit."<sup>30</sup>

Finally, Simon disagreed with Spinoza's distinction between reason and enthusiasm. Spinoza viewed prophetic authority, that is genuine authority, as practically devoid of reason. Whereas Spinoza minimized the contribution of individual reason and imagination, Simon stressed how the Holy Spirit used such gifts first in the so-called original contributors and then all along the path of the formation of the Bible, and, to be sure, all along the church's understanding of Scripture in the magisterium since canonization. This was the reason he agreed with Spinoza that a critical history of the formation of the biblical texts had to be attempted. While canonical criticism must disagree with Simon's understand-

<sup>28</sup> See Sanders, "Canon, Hebrew Bible," and Sanders, "Deuteronomy."

<sup>29</sup> See Talmon, "Textual Study of the Bible"; Sanders, *Canon and Community*; Sanders, "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism."

<sup>30</sup> Simon, *Histoire*, 232.



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