

HERMENEUTICS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC

- “The Old Testament” – the main problem of the Christian theology (?)
- The Hebrew Bible was the first focus of the criticism (Moses’ authorship)

1.2 CRITICISM AND FAITH

- We don’t know whether the critics had any true faith
- Julius Wellhausen → Brevard Childs → Walter Brueggemann

[Friedrich DELITZSCH] Jeder Mensch hat seine besondere Lebensführung. Ich hörte als junger Student bei einem gefeierten liberalen alttestamentlichen Theologen das Kolleg „Alttestamentliche Einleitung“ und lernte dort eines Tags, daß das sog. **5. Buch Mosis, das Deuteronomium, gar nicht von Moses verfaßt sei**, obwohl es sich durchweg als von Moses selbst gesprochen, ja sogar niedergeschrieben bezeugt, daß es vielmehr erst sieben Jahrhunderte später zu einem ganz bestimmten Zwecke verfaßt worden sei. Aus einer streng rechtgläubigen lutherischen Familie hervorgegangen, war ich durch das Gehörte, gerade weil es mich überzeugte, tief bewegt, und besuchte deshalb noch am gleichen Tage meinen Lehrer in dessen Sprechstunde, wobei mir mit Bezug auf den Ursprung des Deuteronomiums das Wort entschlüpfte: Da ist also das 5. Buch Mosis, **was man eine Fälschung nennt?** Die Antwort lautete: „**Um Gottes willen !** Das wird wohl wahr sein, **aber so etwas darf man nicht sagen!**“ Dieses Wort, sonderlich sein „Um Gottes willen !“ klingt in meinen Ohren fort bis auf den heutigen Tag und wurde deshalb, obschon mit tieferer Bedeutung, als Motto dieser Schrift vorgesetzt. **Denn ich habe nie begriffen, warum man in solchen ernsten Dingen dasjenige, was wahr ist, nicht auch aussprechen soll.**¹

- Delitzsch was a son of a well-known theologian and he writes here about the “Babel und Bibel” issue – he writes about his own experience with the critical theology when he asked his professor about the “fraud” of the Bible after having heard that the authorship of some of the books of the OT is questionable

1.3 ATTITUDE TOWARDS CRITICAL THEOLOGY

- There will always be a question people will ask: “How much of what we read can be believed?”
- We need to first of all examine our attitude – Do I want to be scientific and to be accepted by the scholars? Or on the other hand – Do I want to throw away the reason and not to ask any questions? These are the two extremes. It’s clear we won’t ever be able to understand all the Bible, but we need to study and ask and believe.

¹ DELITZSCH, FRIEDRICH. *Die grosse Täuschung*, s. 5-6

WHAT IS THE “OLD TESTAMENT”?

- This is a very important question to answer
- The NT gives this title only to the Moses' law
- *2 Cor 3:14* ...for to this day the same veil remains when *the old covenant* is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.
- *Jer 31:31-32* “The time is coming”, declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah. It will not be like *the covenant* I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.
- The “old testament/covenant” refers to the covenant with the Jewish people after coming out of Egypt (it doesn't refer to the covenant made with Abraham)
- A better name for the 39 books of TANACH (heb.the law, the prophets and the scrolls) is the Hebrew Bible

HERMENEUTICAL PARADIGMS

1. Judaistic paradigm
 - Pharisees
 - Matt 23:25 – Talmud/formal observance of God's law
2. Historical paradigm
 - Theology of the OT as a school subject
 - Since the end of the 18th century: historical exegesis separated from dogmatic theology
 - Trying to understand a Hebrew person in every place – understand the history of Jewish belief (different motives from ours: God's promise about land and offspring)
 - Abraham's covenant has not been canceled
3. The New Testament exegesis/dogmatic interpretation
 - The NT is the inspired scripture and it can't be reproduced
 - This exegesis might not be 100 percent scientifically based BUT the most important thing is what God says
 - The NT has its own authority – we will never have this kind of inspiration
 - Christian's attitude: Wesley – read the Bible with intention to know God's will and to live it, *analogia fidei*: the Bible interpreting the Bible + holiness + prayer = we can't approach the Bible with an attitude of “knowing = dominating”
 - Key passages to the NT understanding of the OT:

Matt 5-7: Ten Commandments are “edited” by Jesus

Matt 12:1-7 and 19:3-9: creation and Moses' law – hard hearts

Mark 7:1-23: clean and unclean

Acts 2, 7 (Stephen's preaching), 13:17-40, 15 (the circumcision issue)

Rom 9-11: theology of history, 5: the history of humanity

2Cor 3: the OT as a notion and the difference between the OT and the NT

Gal, mainly chapter 3: Abraham's covenant still valid

(the OT – the shadow of the new things)

- God has offered a new testament and we need to do the hermeneutics of the Hebrew Bible in the way God has ordained: only through the view of the NT – we need to absorb the spirit of the NT (to be able to distinguish the way the NT perceives the OT : as determining about submitted to the NT)

EXEGETICAL “WORLDS”

= an exegetical approach of looking at the hermeneutics through four areas of the Hebrew Bible: text, author, theology and people (psychology and spirituality)

The interpreters often get stuck in one of these “worlds” and forget about the other ones

! One of the most important things is to admit that I don't understand something (if you listen to a Bible interpreter and he/she never admits they don't understand something, be careful)

We need to be careful not to get sucked up by any of these “worlds”

1. TEXT

= Language

+ History (not according to our modern expectations)

+ Literary style (different word games, symmetries etc. – we need to learn how to read them)

+ Genre, structure

- Need of humility when reading the HB

2. THEOLOGY

= the word field (need to study and learn to understand)

3. AUTHOR

= information about etc.

4. PSYCHOLOGY

= psychological exegesis (Schleiermacher) – of the characters, the authors

- Need to empathize with the people of the Bible (pain, joy, fears etc.)
- “Give me, my son, your heart.” = we need to be fully

COMPARISON OF THE MAIN MOTIVES OF THE HB AND THE NT

The main topics:

NT/HB: Jesus/Jahve (the God of the covenant), church/Israel, second birth/temple, eternal life/blessing on this earth (land, offspring etc.), the Holy Spirit/wisdom and law

Common topics: God, grace, worship, promise, Immanuel

We can't read the OT like the NT text – yes, God can speak to me through the OT but I still need to be careful about the NT interpretation (e.g. the authors of the OT were not a part of any church since the church didn't exist)

EXAMPLES:

Matt 21:42 – the NT has a new authority = the Pharisees didn't realize this passage from the OT talks about Jesus

Matt 19:1-12 – development of the revelation of the theology of the covenants = at the beginning of the creation God intended for a man and a woman to be one, after the fall He allowed divorce (the Moses' law)

Matt 12:3 – Sabbath: hierarchy of the values (Jesus shows that what David did was acceptable – God allowed it/He didn't punish David)