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Robert P Carroll: Childs and Canon

Some academics will have had the experience of spending a good deal of time in seminars or lectures struggling with the translation and interpretation of a particularly difficult verse in, say, Jeremiah or Job only to have a theologically minded (divinity) student respond 'How would you preach that verse?'. Such an experience can be a salutary shock to the hermeneutic system and illustrates the divergence between what the academic imagines is involved (and practises) in the interpretation of texts and what certain students would expect to get from such a course. That divergence between approach and interests is not untypical of universities where faculties of divinity belong to the university system rather than are theological seminaries independent of the state academic system. Although part of the secular university system such faculties also function as theological colleges for the training of ministers for various churches. Often they may enjoy a strange relationship within such systems because the rest of the university may regard them as seminaries for the indoctrination of the Christian faith, whereas the churches may regard them as secular institutions apparently intent on destroying the faith of their students! The matter becomes even more complicated where the individual academic is both a member of the university and an ordained minister of one of the Christian churches. Such double membership can create problems of determining whether there are any differences in teaching Bible or religion to ordinary students and to theological students, as well as problems of what distinctions there may be between university and seminary teaching. Some of these issues have begun to surface in recent biblical scholarship, especially in discussions about the relationship between Bible and theology as well as in matters concerning the canon of scripture./1/

Apart from the permanent opposition to modern biblical scholarship of conservative and fundamentalistic factions there has been a good deal of dissatisfaction in theological circles with the historical critical approach to the Bible. The method has been subjected to much criticism recently and many scholars would prefer a more theologically satisfactory interpretation of the Bible if one could be found./2/ As a methodology for the study of the Bible the historical critical approach grew out of the late Renaissance period and came to maturity in the time of the Enlightenment with its strong rationalist tendencies./3/ It made the Bible accessible as a book to Jew, Christian and unbeliever by stressing the historical aspects of biblical literature and subjecting its contents to a critical analysis which excluded theological presuppositions and dogmas. In the nineteenth century the historical critical method began to gain ground in the theological schools and by the early twentieth century it had become the new orthodoxy in biblical scholarship. The more scholarship dissected the Bible critically the more alienated its theological features became for academic theology. It became possible to be an expert in biblical studies without being a devout Jew or Christian. The expansion of the universities in Great Britain in the 1960s has seen the development of departments of Religious Studies where the Bible has been studied as part of secular courses on religion. From theological norm to cultural artefact the Bible has steadily lost its special status in society and has become a book like any other book. As such it is studied in the universities. This diminution of its theological or normative status is part of the problem facing theology today. Among those who are convinced that the impasse between academic and theological treatments of the Bible can be resolved or surmounted scholars concerned with the canon of the Bible figure largely. This article then is an attempt to examine some of the elements involved in recent discussions about the canon of scripture, in particular the canon of the Old Testament.

From the historical critical viewpoint the theological leanings of the scholar should not make a significant difference to the interpretation of a text. Yet that is precisely what they do. As Martin Noth observes: "It is strange, and scarcely right, that it will commonly be asked today of a commentary on a book of the Old or the New Testament whether the author adheres to this or that theological or non-theological wing, but not whether or not he is a competent exegete."/4/ Much of the recent concern with canon has included an attempted justification of such theological handling of the biblical text and has also attacked the notion that there could be competent exegesis without theological commitment. In focusing on the canon as framework for biblical

interpretation the advocates of exegesis in the context of the canon are hoping to resolve the academic versus theologian issue in favour of the theologian.

The most active writer on the issue of canon as the means of the theological interpretation of the Bible is Brevard Childs. In a number of articles and books written during the 1960s and 1970s he has discussed at great length ways of resolving the problems created for theology by the historical critical approach to biblical studies./5/ The central concern of his writings may be summarized by a statement taken from the 1964 article (page 438):

" The exegete interprets the single text in the light of the whole Old Testament witness and, vice versa, he understands the whole of the Old Testament in the light of the single text. The circle of exegesis moves from the specific to the general and back again, and in the process one seeks for increased illumination. The exegetical circle is destroyed either if the analysis proceeds only in one direction and arrives at the general by summarizing the specific or, the reverse, if one moves only from the direction of the general and finds its illustration in the specific. "

This variation on the hermeneutic circle /6/ has been the guiding principle for Childs' later exegetical work, though to take it literally would be to produce commentaries beyond the capacity of printing houses to publish them.

In his Biblical Theology in Crisis Childs prefaced his own view of how biblical exegesis should be done with an account of the emergence and disintegration of the Biblical Theology Movement in postwar America. In place of the failed theological aspirations of American biblical theology Childs put the canon as the context for doing biblical theology and saw the primary task to be "the disciplined theological reflection of the Bible in the context of the canon" (page 122). Part of his concern in that book was with recovering an exegetical tradition in which the Bible was read and expounded as devotional literature (pages 139-47). The final section of the book illustrated how Childs would proceed with the exegesis of specific texts in relation to their larger biblical context and their development in the New Testament. Although a lightweight book it does provide evidence for how Childs' thinking was developing and allows for comparisons with the later stages of his thought. It also indicated the sense of concern with the development of biblical studies that a number of theologians had at that time.

In his commentary on Exodus Childs produced his most detailed exposition of the principle of biblical interpretation within the context of the canon. As well as the usual critical, literary and philological considerations of the text he provided sections on the Old Testament context, the New Testament context, the history of exegesis and theological reflections. As a volume in the Old Testament Library series of commentaries its distinctive approach can easily be seen in comparison with other volumes in the series. This is particularly the case when it is compared with Martin Noth's commentary on Exodus which was translated from the German commentary of 1959.^{7/} According to Childs the sections on Old Testament and New Testament contexts and on theological reflection are the heart of the commentary (page xvi). So any critical focus on the commentary should concentrate on those sections. However a commentary of 638 pages hardly permits a comprehensive criticism in anything less than a substantial review. The commentary raises many interesting questions about the nature of commentary writing as well as some fundamental questions about biblical hermeneutic. Throughout it Childs provides a discussion of the nature and role of canon in relation to church and theology. Thus he writes: "...the theological concept of canon is a confession. It is a testimony of the Christian church as a community of faith that God has chosen the vehicle of sacred scripture through which to make himself known to the church and the world, both in the past, present, and future... To take the concept of the canon seriously is to assign to scripture a normative role and to refuse to submit the truth of its testimony to criteria of human reason." (page 300). This approach to exegesis takes the text out of the hands of the exegetes (unless they are also theologians) and puts it firmly in the hands of the theologians. More specifically it hands the text over to Christian theologians because Childs is concerned with the way scripture testifies to "a unique self-disclosure of God in Jesus Christ" (loc. cit.) whereas the interpreter (perhaps a Jew or of another persuasion) may have imagined himself (or herself) to have been examining a Jewish text, i.e. Exodus. So the theological framework of the exegete becomes a fundamental factor in the exegesis and shifts the text from its own historical framework to a later framework. Yet at the same time Childs is concerned to maintain the Jewish exegesis of the text as part of the history of exegesis and as part of the theological concerns of the text. Thus a series of tensions inevitably arises from this kind of biblical interpretation. Tensions which cannot be resolved by appealing to the text in question because extra-textual considerations predominate the discussion. However Childs does allow the Old Testament text to critically correct later views embodied in the New Testament (eg, page 384).

In his latest book Childs has turned to the formal task of producing an introduction to the Old Testament. This genre has tended to be an atomistic approach to each book of the Hebrew Bible with the emphases on literary, historical and critical problems. Childs has attempted something different by treating each individual book in the Old Testament in relation to its canonical context. In effect that means taking the final form of each book as its significant form and developing a dialectical understanding of each book in relation to the whole canon. Less emphasis is put on how each book came to be in its present form and more stress is laid on the final form each book now has. The formal aspects of his Introduction are a bibliographical preface, a brief account of each book's historical critical problems, a discussion of its canonical shape and theological-hermeneutical implications and a very brief bibliography indicating the history of its exegesis. Those brought up on the critical introductions of Robert Pfeiffer or Otto Eissfeldt will find the Childs volume rather different in its approach and emphases. It will certainly appeal to the theologically inclined reader of the Bible and in particular to those who find the more conventional introduction an atomizing and arid product.

A volume of 645 pages is too substantial to provide an adequate review of it in the course of this article but a number of points may be made about it that are germane to this discussion./8/ However much one may disagree with some of the details of the treatment the overall impact of the book is impressive. It is a pellucid and confident handling of many difficult aspects of Old Testament studies and is a very fine presentation of one man's view of how some of those problematic areas of the Bible should be treated in order to yield coherent and theological insights. It is also a fine contribution to the difficult problem of the relation between scripture and theology. Childs' insistence that on occasion the issue under discussion is a theological rather than an exegetical matter lends depth to his canonical context approach to interpretation. It will certainly help to construct one side of the argument in the growing dissatisfaction that many have with the conventional orthodoxy in biblical studies of the historical critical method.

As a preface to his treatment of the individual books of the Old Testament Childs provides a lengthy discussion of some of the issues involved in canonical interpretation and the matter of the canon itself (pages 41-106). Here he sets out his conviction that the problem to be overcome is the long established tension between historical criticism and the canon. A proper view of the canon is the key to overcoming this tension because the nature

of the literature must be correctly related to the community which treasured it as scripture (page 41). For Childs there is a fundamental dialectic at the heart of the canonical process: "It is constitutive of Israel's history that the literature formed the identity of the religious community which in turn shaped the literature" (loc.cit.). In place of the historical critical concern with the political, social and economic factors determining the biblical text Childs would put a proper treatment of the canonical process. He is very much against the modern tendency to stress the historical at the expense of the theological. This tendency usually manifests itself as a concern with separating primary and secondary strands of the text and distinguishing between the text and its afterlife. For him the multiple strands of a text are to be taken together because it is their final combined form which is canonical and therefore theologically significant. Thus he dissents from the technique used in Walther Zimmerli's magisterial commentary on Ezekiel /9/ of separating the Grundtext from the Nachinterpretation and observes: "This bias towards the historical often blocks an understanding of the final canonical form which has consciously introduced theological elements into the text in order to blur the common historical perspective." (page 370). So the text is to be understood synchronically rather than diachronically. The growth of what may be called canon consciousness (Seeligmann's Kanonbewusstsein) can be detected when the words of a prophet (eg, Is. 8:16f.) given on a specific occasion to a particular group came to have an authority apart from their original use. Of this Childs writes: "The heart of the canonical process lay in transmitting and ordering the authoritative tradition in a form which was compatible to function as scripture for a generation which had not participated in the original events of revelation. The ordering of the tradition for this new function involved a profoundly hermeneutical activity, the effects of which are now built into the structure of the canonical text. For this reason an adequate interpretation of the biblical text, both in terms of history and theology, depends on taking the canonical shape with great seriousness." (page 60).

As well as the dialectical relationship between biblical texts and the community which produced them Childs also sees a similar dialectical factor within the canonical process whereby the individual books in the Old Testament have to be interpreted in relation to one another. His practice in the Introduction is very much a modified application of his exegetical circle notion already quoted from his Interpretation article (see above page 3). An example of how the canonical shaping process works for Childs may be seen in his treatment of the book of Job. After a lengthy

discussion of the canonical shape of the book of Job (pages 533-544) he concludes: "The book of Job serves an important canonical function in respect to the larger canon. Above all, it supplies a critical corrective to the reading of the other wisdom books, especially Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Conversely, its proper interpretation depends on seeing Job in the perspective, not only of wisdom traditions, but also of Israel's liturgy and historical traditions. The Hebrew canon functions to preserve the integrity of its authoritative traditions by a restrictive outer boundary, yet it also encourages a creative exchange among its multiple parts." (page 544). The incompleteness of the dialectical analysis can be seen here in that the book of Job does not furnish a perspective for viewing the liturgical or historical traditions nor do Proverbs or Qoheleth provide a critical corrective to Job. In other words, Childs does not carry out a thorough-going dialectical critique of Job but uses it to reinforce a number of positions he takes on the primacy of Tora and the historical narratives in the Bible.

The primacy of Tora and the historical narratives for Childs is clearly to be seen in the statement of his reason for insisting on the final form of scripture as the proper study of the canonical approach. "The shape of the biblical text reflects a history of encounter between God and Israel. The canon serves to describe this peculiar relationship and to define the scope of this history by establishing a beginning and end to the process. It assigns a special quality to this particular segment of human history which became normative for all successive generations of this community of faith. The significance of the final form of the biblical text is that it alone bears witness to the full history of revelation. Within the Old Testament neither the process of the formation of the literature nor the history of its canonization is assigned an independent integrity. This dimension has often been lost or purposely blurred and is therefore dependent on scholarly reconstruction. The fixing of a canon of scripture implies that the witness to Israel's experience with God lies not in recovering such historical processes, but is testified to in the effect on the biblical text itself. Scripture bears witness to God's activity in history on Israel's behalf, but history per se is not a medium of revelation which is commensurate with a canon. It is only in the final form of the biblical text in which the normative history has reached an end that the full effect of this revelatory history can be perceived." (pages 75-6)./10/ This primacy of the normative history is not a dialectical notion at all but an overarching principle which easily distorts other principles and vitiates any possibility of a dialectical understanding of scripture. The wisdom traditions

do not know an encounter between God and Israel so in order to use them dialectically in the context of the canon their negative view of such an encounter must be allowed to modify or call in question the views of Tora and the sacred history. Otherwise the incorporation of the wisdom traditions into the canon distorts them and subsumes them under the control of canonic Tora. This distortion may have been intended by the canonical process but it is certainly not a dialectical process. The problem here is that Childs wants to make the encounter between God and Israel (an echo of Heilsgeschichte?) the central theme of the Old Testament but also wants to use the canonical approach as a dialectical tool. He cannot have both because the dialectical approach severely curtails the other. For example, Tora and the historical narratives are quite clear about the encounter between God and Israel; Second Isaiah is convinced that in his time Yahweh is going to do a new thing, is going to engineer a new exodus from Babylon. But Qoheleth is equally convinced that man is incapable of understanding the work of God and the other wisdom traditions have no place for the historical and national encounter between God and Israel. How are we to relate these two diametrically opposed positions to one another? Their dialectical resolution is far from apparent. Indeed they may be straightforward contradictions! To support Childs at this point entails the surrendering of the dialectical principle and that seems to be what Childs actually does in practice. His position is close to that of the 'canon within the canon' position which he rejects in Luther and others (page 44)./11/ There is an interesting account yet to be constructed of how the various books in the Old Testament relate dialectically to one another but such an account can hardly have a normative status for any religious community.

Throughout his Introduction Childs acknowledges the diversity of views to be found in the canon of the Old Testament and even can write of the "canonical tolerance of diversity" allowing "the material to function freely on several levels" (with reference to the diverse material in Numbers, page 200). He also recognises that the canonical shaping of material can be a subtle thing and so "requires careful exegesis and strenuous reflection" (with reference to the book of Exodus, page 177). The implication he draws from this is "the subsequent religious use of the material by the community could tolerate a certain level of literary friction within its scripture." (page 171). Thus the variety of diversities in the Bible uncovered by the historical critical approach will also have a part to play in the canonical approach to the interpretation of scripture. Where Childs would differ from the conventional historical critical approach is in his attempt to produce a holistic interpretation of the text which

uses as its guiding principles whatever can be discerned of the editors' or canonizers' intentions as presented by the text. He is convinced that their intentions can be determined by the text and notes that the present form of Job "shows signs of intentional shaping for the purpose of instructing the reader in the true role of wisdom" (page 543). It must be said however that it is far from clear that the substitution of the editor's (or the canonizers') intention in presenting an individual book of the Bible in its current form for the writer's intention or the author's original intention resolves any of the really difficult hermeneutical issues in biblical interpretation./12/ It is more likely to be a case of explaining the obscure by the still more obscure ('obscurum per obscurius').

The overall performance of controlled comment on every book of the Old Testament in the Introduction is impressive and the deep concern with rescuing the Bible for Christian theology is very evident. Yet in spite of the theological handling of the text Childs only occasionally breaches some of the most important issues in the theological approach to the Bible. On two separate occasions (pages 513,556) he notes, with reference to Psalms and Proverbs respectively, how the words of men have become the word of God but he does not focus on this phenomenon nor does he try to develop it any further. Yet such a transformation of the words of men into the word of God for the later communities is one of the most important features of the canonical process. It is central to the notion of canon and underwrites the normative status of canon for the community. It also requires a good deal of explanation and exposition in any major modern work on the normative status of canon. It is a very strange phenomenon how what started out as the farewell sermon of a great man to his people or the prayers of anguished worshippers reacting to a serious crisis in the life of the community or the sayings of the wise or the love songs of bawdy youths or the letters of Paul with the passage of time should have become the veritable word of God binding on the later community for all time. Traditional doctrines of inspiration and revelation have avoided facing up to the essentially human features of the biblical text and have often voided the text of any connection with real historical communities. Whether a new and more adequate doctrine of inspiration is required /13/ or a more painstaking account of the stages whereby the essentially human was transformed by theological reflection into the divine needs to be undertaken is for the theologians to determine. Childs maintains that "the community did not create scripture from its own experience" (page 663) but that "its response was to the authority of the divine Word which became incorporated into the message itself,

testifying to the continuing divine initiative within the tradition". However theologically correct that assessment may be it completely ignores the role of the community's experience in producing scripture. It also uses categories at home in the prophetic tradition but foreign to the wisdom tradition. It is therefore a partial statement and yields an unbalanced view of the whole Old Testament. Hokma is made subservient to Tora as was the canonizers' intention but as their intention was a distorting one the distortion is continued in the theological handling of the Bible. Canon as distortion is not an element often considered by writers on the canon but if a true picture of the canonic process is to be obtained it is an element which needs to be taken into account. The problem of the human element remains as an unassimilated factor in the production of the Bible and if its integrity is not to be denied then some account must be given of the fact that many of the biblical statements began life as simple observations and experiences of people rather than as religious dogmas. This may be to advocate a phenomenology of tradition approach to the Bible (an approach regarded by Childs as historically and theologically indefensible page 669) but the canonical context stance appears to be grossly defective here.

As the title indicates Childs' concern is with the Old Testament as scripture and that title declares a Christian approach to the Hebrew Bible. Apart from a couple of brief comments (pages 186-8 and 338) recognising the complexity of the issue involved in the problem of the later appropriation of the Old Testament by the Christian church Childs does not engage with this crucially important matter. There is some desultory discussion of some of the theological factors involved in Jewish and Christian views of the canon in the final section on 'The Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Bible' (pages 659-71) but the grounds for the legitimate appropriation and subsequent hermeneutical treatments of the Hebrew Bible are never examined. Space may not have permitted such an important discussion but its absence suggests further defects in the canonical context approach to biblical interpretation. If the text as it stands in conjunction with its canonizers' intentions is the proper subject of study how are we to deal with the radical transformations produced by the incorporation of the Hebrew Bible into the Christian Bible? The way the New Testament handles the Hebrew Bible may be a fairly legitimate extrapolation of certain elements already at work in the prophetic traditions but it can hardly be consonant with the intentions of the canonizers. If the contents of the canonical text were normative and therefore binding on the community what grounds were there for the early Christian communities to change

radically the binding laws of the canon? Whatever grounds may be found for the changes in Christian theology they constitute extra-canonical justification and that tends to rob Childs' advocacy of canonical context interpretation of a good deal of its force. Childs notes the problem when dealing with the book of Leviticus that there is no warrant for treating its rulings as temporary or subject to change yet both Judaism and Christianity have reinterpreted the levitical legislation. He admits that these changes did not rest on the canonical shape of Leviticus but "both communities appealed to a larger canonical interpretation by which to justify a unique appropriation of the sacred tradition" (page 188). The issue remains a theological problem rather than a canonical one though Childs would relate it to the question of canon. It certainly looks as though neither the Jewish nor the Christian communities felt bound by the canon to such an extent that canon alone shaped their belief and practice. So why should modern scholarship be so bound by canonical considerations?

The focus of this discussion has concentrated on Childs' most recent volume because it is the most comprehensive application of his principle of canonical context interpretation and also because it raises the most important questions about his theory and method. The analysis has been brief and selective because of the sheer amount of material available. The commentary and the introduction amount to about 1300 pages of text and include a good deal of detailed exegesis as well as a wide ranging command of bibliographical sources. By any standards Childs' contribution to biblical studies in the 1970s is a formidable one and it is difficult to think of another scholar, outside the German group, whose contribution is comparable. However much one may disagree with his position or dispute details of his work there can be no denying the excellence of his Introduction or the stimulation of his arguments. The presentation of his views will generate much discussion and should contribute greatly to the formulation of more satisfactory hermeneutical principles in biblical studies. The inclusion of critical assessments in the above analysis of his work is not intended to detract from the excellence of that work but to help focus on some of the issues germane to biblical hermeneutic. The books are too large to be restated by way of analysis so summary treatment has to include a selection of those aspects most open to discussion and a concentration on the notion of canon.

The work of Childs on canon needs to be placed in the context of the study of the canon being done by other scholars at the present time. For there is a movement in contemporary biblical

studies which has begun to focus on the canon as an important object of study. This movement (if it may be called such) is sometimes described by the phrase 'canonical criticism' /14/, though Childs himself is unhappy with the term (Introduction,82). Apart from Childs the other most significant figure in the focus on canon is James Sanders./15/ Sanders takes a different approach to canon in that he stresses the existential factors rather than the theological ones. The essential point of his book Torah and Canon is that "to speak of canon is first to speak of Torah" (page x) and that Torah is story. As it now stands the Torah (Genesis - Deuteronomy) is a narrative of the nation's life rather than a code of laws. Behind this canon lie questions of identity, authority, stability and adaptability. Canon is concerned with answering the community's question: "How shall we live?" (Ez.33:10)./16/ The canonization of scripture provided the community with its stable identity and the continual reinterpretation of scripture within the community permitted adaptive changes to be made in response to changing situations. The stress Sanders puts on canon as story may be seen in his most recent publication, a collection of sermons devoted to reapplying biblical passages to contemporary situations entitled God Has A Story Too. This emphasis on story is in keeping with other recent trends in biblical studies which have focused on the notion of story as a category for biblical analysis./17/ Although existential in emphasis Sanders' work is not without a strong theological aspect and he makes much play of the notion that God is radically and ultimately free. The importance he attaches to this notion is such that at one point in Torah and Canon he writes: "God's freedom from and sovereignty over any creed or doctrine; indeed, over any effort whatever of syntaxing in any manner what God's word to this or that generation might be" (page 115). This is a strange sentiment to find in a work on canon! But it is characteristic of a number of biblical theologians (eg, Walther Zimmerli, Hans Walter Wolff, James Sanders) that they should absolutize the motif of God's sovereign freedom and yet insist on treating the Bible as the word of God in such a way as to empty that freedom of substance. However the defects of theological argument should not be permitted to obscure the approach to canon taken by Sanders. The extent to which Sanders and Childs are in agreement or disagreement with one another on the subject of canon must remain open to debate, though Childs has expressed his disagreement with him on a number of important points (Introduction,56-9). What is commendable in Sanders is the stress on the community aspect of canon, the reinterpretative factors at work in the canonization process and the importance of hermeneutic. It remains to be seen how Sanders will develop his approach to give it the hermeneutic sophistication it needs.

Among the many recent studies on canon space permits only one other important work to be considered and that is Joseph Blenkinsopp's Prophecy and Canon./18/ The strength of this book is its presentation of the tensions between Tora and prophecy in such a way as to bring out the dialectical relationship between the first two parts of the biblical canon. In many ways this study provides a much more dialectical account of the matter than Childs does. For Blenkinsopp "canonicity happens within the history and interpretation of the tradition and...out of conflicting claims to mediate it." (page 14). The first major stage of the canonization process is Deuteronomy and that book (including the movement that gave rise to it) had a profound effect on prophecy by attempting to control the prophets. Thus he writes:"Deuteronomy produced a situation in which prophecy could not continue to exist without undergoing profound transformations, and the Deuteronomic history put its seal on this achievement...by "canonizing" the prophets as belonging to a past dispensation." (page 39). So although the entire canon can be said to be prophetic it is only prophetic in the sense of radically transformed prophecy (pages 81-2). The Tora-canon was a resolution of the conflicting authority claims made by the different groups of prophets. Throughout his book Blenkinsopp makes it clear that "the idea of a canon as generally understood is incompatible with the phenomenon of prophecy. Indeed, the emergence of a first canon with the book of Deuteronomy contributed greatly to the eclipse of prophecy." (page 147)./19/ But a compromise was effected between Tora and prophecy by placing the prophetic canon alongside Tora as a balance between law and prophecy, institution and charisma. "It is the fate of prophecy to be always necessary and never sufficient." (page 116).

This treatment of canon as being "intelligible only in the context of conflicting claims to control the redemptive media and, in particular, to mediate and interpret authoritatively the common tradition" (page 96) is, in spite of its brevity (152 pages of text and 35 pages of discursive notes), probably the best treatment of certain aspects of the canonic process to date. It lacks the grand scale, magisterial treatment of Childs but it focuses more adequately on a number of points skated over by Childs. In his account the "infinite interpretability"/20/ of a fixed tradition may be maintained by a due awareness of the creative tension constituted by the poles of law and prophecy and the need to maintain an equilibrium between the charismatic impulse which tends towards division and sectarianism and the account of the founding events which tends towards bureaucratic paralysis (pages 94-5). To quote from his conclusion:"The canon, then, does not lend itself to a definitive solution of the problem

of religious authority. The juxtaposition in it of law and prophecy suggests rather an unresolved tension, an unstable equilibrium, between rational order and the unpredictable and disruptive, between the claims of the past and those of the present and future. When emphasis is placed too much on the former the outcome is likely to be the conferring of absolute validity on present structures, bureaucratic paralysis and a drift to cultural assimilation. When rational order is neglected in favor of the charismatic, the tendency will be towards disunity, disequilibrium and ultimately sectarianism. Prophecy is necessary if only to show up the precarious nature of all fixed orders and the claims to legitimacy which sustain them, but prophecy alone cannot build a lasting community. The canon does not contain its own self-justification but rather directs our attention to the tradition which it mediates. For to say the least which has to be said, without the tradition there is no shared memory and therefore no community. Our study of the canon has led to the conclusion that no one interpretation of the tradition can be accorded final and definitive status. The presence of prophecy as an essential part of the canon means that it will always be possible and necessary to remold the tradition as a source of life-giving power." (pages 151-2). This treatment of canon holds more promise for the analysis of the problematic rise of Christianity out of Judaism in that it constructs an account of Jewish origins which takes seriously the polemical and dialectical elements involved in the construction of a universe of meaning./21/ "A canon represents an attempt to construct and maintain one world of meaning by a dominant religious and intellectual elite. It can only do so by embodying a prophetic claim to legitimation, but it cannot prevent the original prophetic impetus, given the appropriate circumstances, from showing up the impermanence of that world and the structures of meaning on which it is based." (page 150).

This brief survey of some recent studies of canon and in particular the work of Brevard Childs would be incomplete without a consideration of some of the criticisms that can be made of Childs' work. James Smart has recently attacked Childs' notion that there was a discernible movement in American biblical studies during the 1940s-1960s period that could be called the Biblical Theology Movement./22/ He also rejects the analysis of theology in Childs' Biblical Theology in Crisis in favour of a much more comprehensive notion of theology which includes the work of the dialectical theologians Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. Much of the argument here is over semantic points and substituting theology for biblical theology does not help the discussion, especially when Smart himself wants to keep some such distinction (cf. pages 18-22). Whether there was a distinctive

movement which could be called Biblical Theology (associated with the work of Ernest Wright and others) or only a stance centring on biblical theology as recital which gave the work of certain biblical scholars a family resemblance to one another is a moot point now./23/ In his comments on canonical exegesis (pages 148-52) Smart welcomes Childs' approach as a breaking free from a fragmentizing exegesis which fixes the meaning of a text by determining the intention of the original author. For him the Christian exegete must refuse to limit his exegesis to original meanings and "boldly search out the ultimate Christian meaning of his text" (pages 151-2). He is, however, critical of the tendency in Childs to set a divine approval upon the final editing of each book because, for example, this entails a divine validation of such clumsy errors as the insertion of Cyrus' name in Second Isaiah. He is also critical of the general hostility shown by Childs towards the earlier period of historical criticism. "A canonical exegesis that tries to bypass the problems and the tasks of historical criticism would turn out to be one more form of reversion to the past rather than the way into a better future for the Bible in the church." (page 152). It is not always clear in Smart's book whether he is arguing that the present problems in biblical interpretation are caused by the failure of the historical critical method to take seriously the theological dimension of the Bible or have been caused by those twentieth century movements which did take seriously that aspect of the Bible. However he and Childs are agreed that the way to resolve the problem is by theological means. Smart is quite right to see part of the problem in the existence of so many diverse viewpoints and the number of disagreeing experts (page 69) but there is no way to resolve this problem of multitudinous opinions in the interpretation of the Bible. That is the essential problem for the theological handling of the Bible and whatever method is used to interpret the text diversity of opinion is inevitable. Canonical exegesis or theological focus will not resolve that problem.

Both Smart and Childs are also agreed that exegesis should not be limited to the original meaning of the text but should extend to include the history of exegesis and the making relevant of the text for the needs of contemporary religious communities. If however the diversity and multiplicity of interpretations of the biblical text are part of the problem how much more so will any inclusion of the history of interpretation add to the problematics of exegesis. Horace's observation 'the doctors are divided' (doctores scinduntur) should be the motto of any group devoted to hermeneutic activity and it applies even more to the history of interpretation. It is therefore difficult to see how

including the history of exegesis as part of the meaning of texts will clarify the task of interpretation. The history of exegesis is an important element in the history of ideas and also an interesting aspect of looking at the ways in which texts have been interpreted over a period of time. But to make it part of the meaning of texts is to confuse meaning with something else. In medieval hermeneutics that aspect of exegesis which drew from texts significance for daily life and practice was known as the application (applicatio) of scripture. Meaning and application were not the same thing, though they were not entirely separated. The important distinction between the two things may be made by using the terms meaning and significance /24/ or, to use a more philosophical approach, by taking up Gottlob Frege's distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung. /25/ Although there are serious difficulties involved in the philosophical aspects of hermeneutic some such distinctions have to be made in order to preserve the historicalness and specificity of language. If linguistic units and sentences can mean anything then language loses its force and its context ceases to have any function. The meaning of specific linguistic uses is determined by context and the sense of the language as used in its time. /26/ To destroy its context and evacuate its historicalness of significance in order to justify incorporating all subsequent developments and application is to advocate intellectual vandalism and to reduce language to being a formless bearer of any meaning that can be put upon it. It is also unnecessary because the history of its interpretation can be undertaken without confusing that history with original meaning. The theological concern with the history of exegesis as the meaning of texts is a confused and confusing enterprise. In order to protect itself from any meaning being derived from a specific text (a danger it has created for itself by adopting such a stance in the first place) it has to import a canonical control to limit the number of meanings available for any text. Different frameworks will make the same text mean different things (whatever canonical similarity may be operative). The only way to protect the meaning of the text is to insist on the integrity of its historical language. Original language and original meaning do not necessarily rule out ambiguity, obscurity, abstruseness and possible incomprehension. But to sidestep such difficulties by importing later (and therefore unhistorical) meanings is to abandon the scholar's task and to defeat the hermeneutic enterprise altogether.

Neither the application of texts nor the discernment of subtle or radical transformations of meaning going on within texts is ruled out by this insistence on seeking the original meaning of the text. Texts do have significances and applications which go

well beyond their original meanings. Canons, communities and traditions operate with such functions but these functions need to be kept separate from original meaning however much there may be an overlap between meaning and function. Such a distinction between meaning and function (significance) may be tacit or explicit for the hermeneutic activity but it has to be recognised as operative even among those who denounce the search for the original meaning. Few teachers of Bible can have avoided the inevitable encounter with a student or a caller at the door who wishes to impose an absurd meaning on a biblical text as the justification for their weird belief system. In rejecting such an absurd interpretation there is an implicit belief that some meanings applied to texts are wrong. What controls that belief? Is it merely an egotistical belief in one's own rightness? Is it due to relativizing frameworks of belief? If original meaning is ruled out of court what justifies the selection or rejection of different meanings? What justifies the rejection of the view that the reference to "adversary" and "lion" in Amos 3:11,12 is not, in the light of 1 Peter 5:8, a reference to the devil? The steps by which that interpretation is shown to be invalid are part of a theory (implicit or otherwise) of validation in interpretation. Although the example used is a fairly trivial one it is one that has bearing on the notion of canonical context exegesis because it is based not only on an actual example but on the fact that the larger canon of the Christian Bible contains a much more developed reference field for the terms used in Amos. If the scholars and theologians who reject original meaning and demand history of exegesis meanings indiscriminately accepted any and every meaning offered in the history of interpretation then the demand for validity in interpretation would be pointless. However because they also recognise legitimate and illegitimate meanings it is necessary to ask for an articulation of the procedures for validating such choices.

The history of exegesis approach also involves the rather impractical task of collating all the views taken of a text. Given the substantial amount of exegetical activity that has been focused on the Bible in Jewish, Christian, academic and literary circles over nearly two thousand years that is an impossible task to undertake. Clearly such a demand has either a very selective view in mind or is essentially elitist in its view of the matter. That is, interpretation is to be limited to Jewish or Christian exegetes or certain exegetes are universally agreed to be significant (eg, Augustine, Qimhi, Calvin, Barth etc.). If a history of exegesis approach is to be taken seriously it must be a proper history of interpretation. It must take into account the radical traditions of Samuel Fisher and Thomas Paine as well

as the minor pamphleteers of obscure denominations; the sermons of the famous (eg, John Donne) and the wayside pulpits of late Victorian religiosity. The task is endless and quickly conforms to the law of diminishing returns. It should not, however, be permitted to stop there but must extend its inquiry to take into account the less religious manifestations of biblical exegesis. Novels provide a further example of the history of interpretation and a biblical hermeneutic programme which failed to take cognizance of Thomas Mann's Joseph and His Brothers, Stefan Heym's The King David Report or Dan Jacobson's The Rape of Tamar (to mention but three) would be defective. If the Protestant obsession with the written word could be overcome there would be a strong case for extending the research to include the iconic world of art and painting with its great devotion to depicting biblical scenes, to the world of music which sought to express the response of the believing community to the biblical stories, and also to the world of the cinema where many fine directors and writers have produced their versions of the Bible. Where would it end? Yet I am not trying to reduce the history of exegesis quest to an absurd level. It is the enormity of the task that prompts me to indicate what might be involved in it and to ask if this really is the way to resolve the problem of the original meaning of texts. Childs does acknowledge the difficulty of one man trying to control equally the wide range of fields involved in such a task (but even he does not touch on the categories I have outlined) but feels "Still the effort has to be made to sketch the true parameters of the discipline of biblical interpretation, even if there are gaps and deficiencies in one man's attempt." (Exodus, x). Quite, but will it, if actually carried out, really resolve the confused state of modern biblical interpretation and will it really clarify the difficulties of understanding scripture in the twentieth century? In doubting that it will no denigration of Childs is intended.

Although Childs keeps the diversity of opinions within the Bible constantly in view the tendency of canonical exegesis is to reduce the variety of biblical traditions to a much narrower theological (Tora orientated) tradition. Thus Qoheleth is rather reduced by being corrected by Job. The Song of Solomon becomes almost a paean to bourgeois marriage by being brought "within the institution of marriage" (Introduction, 575)./27/ Canon may incorporate a wide diversity of material but it tends to reduce that variety by subjecting it to a small number of theological controls. The history of the interpretation of the Song of Solomon is ample evidence of that point. As the demand for canonical context exegesis has come from theologians concerned to maintain specific theological traditions it is hardly surprising

that there should be a narrowing down of the rich variety of multiple meanings and traditions in the Bible. Such a diminution of hermeneutical richness may be acceptable within a theological tradition in order to safeguard ecclesiastical structures but it would have no standing in academic or intellectual circles. At this point canonical exegesis returns the Bible to the keeping of the religious communities where it has normative status and the division between religious and noetic traditions is once more confirmed. This move will not solve the problems created for theology by the historical critical movement but it might allow them to be ignored. The steady negation of biblical religion within communities holding the Bible as authoritative will continue because the agent of negation is the Bible itself. It is for that reason that the disintegration of the position of the Bible in the community has been most rapid in reformed circles where the principle sola scriptura has been dominant. From Luther to Hegel the real thrust of the Bible, namely the desacralization (Entzauberung) of the world, has been active in Christian civilization./28/ The historical critical method has only been one of the ways that disenchantment worked its way through culture. So the return to the canon may well be a fruitless return to the past - whether it proves to be a cul-de-sac remains to be seen.

One fundamental difficulty with Childs' position is the problem of the Christian canon. Not the two testaments canon but the Greek canon of the Old Testament. Childs takes the Hebrew canon as the object of study and the Masoretic Text as the version of that canon which constitutes "the vehicle both for recovering and for understanding the canonical text of the Old Testament" (Introduction, 97). The reasons set out for choosing the Jewish canon rather than the favoured Septuagint of Christian usage (pages 97-9) are less than convincing. Although Childs would side with Jerome against Augustine on this point /29/, for many centuries the Christian church took the Septuagint as the canon until at the reformation the reformers opted for the Hebrew canon. The differences between these two Old Testament canons are often substantial and in many cases it is the Greek canon which carries the more explicit Christian element (eg, order of books) and is already part of that hermeneutic transformation which elsewhere Childs wishes to incorporate into his motif of canonical exegesis. The differences between the Hebrew and Greek versions of Jeremiah are significant and bear on the argument here. The Greek edition and order may well represent an earlier stage of Jeremiah but this possibility does not justify Childs treating the Masoretic edition as superior because later for that would equally justify his using the rest of the Greek canon

because or wherever it is later than the Hebrew. Childs sees no problem here because the same theology is implied in the Greek tradition as the Hebrew (Introduction, 352-3). However the issue of the two editions of Jeremiah is more problematic than that and canonical exegesis needs to focus on it as one way of testing and refining the method and its advocacy.

Space does not permit a thoroughgoing critique of Childs' work which is both stimulating and substantial. More could be made of his dismissal of misunderstandings incorporated into the Bible because such a factor would militate against his understanding of canonical interpretation. Yet might not such a misunderstanding account for the presence of the book of Jonah in the prophetic traditions? Is it not possibly also the case that marginalia (eg, the Aramaic verse in Jer. 10:11) were not incorporated into the text as a deliberate theological policy of the canonizers but came into the manuscripts by accident or as private notes and the copies with such marginalia were passed on and became canonic? Throughout his commentary and his introduction Childs attacks positions which import categories into the Bible for describing the biblical traditions. Yet can this really be avoided? Is not the writing of commentaries and introductions the application of external categories to biblical material? Childs acknowledges that the use of the term canon to describe the scriptures is of Christian rather than Jewish origin (Introduction, 50) so it is essentially a category external to the Old Testament! So many categories used in theological circles are not biblical that to desist from using such categories would render the doing of theology impossible. However enough has been said by way of criticising Childs on canon to indicate some of the areas where the most discussion will focus.

According to some philosophers of science an important aspect of any scientific research must be the generating of critical research programmes./30/ Perhaps biblical studies might follow suit and see promising work as that which generates critical (ie, discriminating) research programmes for others to work on by way of elucidating the work already done, testing it and refuting or confirming it. Along such lines Childs' notion of canonical exegesis may well produce promising research work programmes. The notion and structure of canon still require sophisticated investigation as does its history and the process that gave rise to it. Notions such as 'nascent canon' /31/ and legal rulings as proto-canons or canonical type decisions also need to be researched. The community aspects of the canon such as the needs which gave rise to a canon or the control over the community imposed by canonical structures are important features

that require investigation. Childs may not like the sociological approach to canon (cf. Introduction, 78) but the factors giving rise to texts are fundamentally important for the hermeneutic task./32/ The relationship between the canons of the Old and the New Testaments and the relation between the Hebrew and the Christian Bibles also need to be examined. One of Childs' main concerns from his Interpretation article period up to the latest work has been the Jewish side of canon and exegesis. The problem of the integrity of Judaism and its survival as a community in its own right with its own scriptures for Christianity has yet to be fully discussed. Canonical studies provide an opportunity for making good that defect of Christian history. There are also many other important issues raised by canonical studies: eg, the relation of the Bible to theology, the justification of retaining a normative canon of scripture for religious communities today, the whole hermeneutic process of understanding the Bible as having any normative status in modern society as well as the continuing task of developing proper hermeneutical principles for the study of the Bible. A further important issue touched on by canonical studies is the relation between the theological and the academic study of the Bible: the different approaches of studying the Bible as the word of God and as a cultural entity in western society. Many of these possible research programmes are not simply noetic activities but have direct bearing on the way community structures are and should be constructed. If in the course of this article I have tended to side with the noetic, the academic and the hermeneutic approach to the Bible rather than with the theological, the confessional and the ecclesiastical approach it is because in the long run I believe hermeneutic (the study of human artefacts) to be more important than theological commitment because what we have in common is our humanity rather than our ideological commitment. I suspect the canonical study approach is a more exclusivizing technique where commitment counts more than humanity and the defence of certain theological positions is more important than the diversity of human beliefs.

This polarization of hermeneutic and canon may not be a factor necessary to the debate but reading between the lines (as well as what is explicit in Smart) I get the impression that canonical study is an apologetic movement from within theological circles intent on reclaiming the Bible as their own and as such that means hermeneutic is in opposition./33/ Canonical study is not a way out of the wood only a focusing on another part of the wood. The focus is on different issues and aspects of biblical studies but, apart from its possible greater degree of theological reflection, it is hard to resist placing it alongside such recent moves as rhetorical criticism, structuralism and the Bible as

literature as ways of understanding biblical traditions in a post-critical and post-Christian era. Childs would reject this association of canonical study with these other categories of approach (Introduction,82) but I doubt if it will significantly add to the resolution of the problems created by the historical critical approach./34/ It will assist those who wish for a more theological approach to the Bible but whether that is what the quest of understanding is about is a matter for serious debate. Richard McKeon, the Aristotelian philosopher, was regarded by the neo-Thomists at the University of Chicago in the 1930s as the Anti-Christ because by making better sense of the texts he cooled off prospective converts./35/ That is what the hermeneutic enterprise is about - the proper understanding of texts rather than the function of texts in the maintenance of ideological systems./36/ Canon is about function, hermeneutic is about meaning. That is why conflict is inevitable between the canonic process elevated to a theological apologetic and the more fundamental task of understanding the meaning of texts. Childs' contribution to this conflict is to have set out some of the lines of battle where engagement must take place between theology and hermeneutic. As a mustering of the troops it is quite an impressive performance but how it will contribute to the outcome of the battle remains to be seen.

NOTES

- 1 On this see D.H.Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology (Philadelphia 1975); J.Barr, Does Biblical Study Still Belong to Theology? (Oxford 1978).
- 2 The plethora of writings on this subject makes the point self evident but see in particular W.Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study (Philadelphia 1973); G.Maier, The End of the Historical-Critical Method (St. Louis 1977); and the voluminous writings of Jacques Ellul.
- 3 See Cambridge History of the Bible 3, 238-338; P.Hazard, The European Mind 1680-1715 (London 1973 ed.); E.Krentz, The Historical-Critical Method (London 1975), 6-32. A classic example of the rationalist approach to the Bible is Baruch Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (Hamburg 1670; London 1868 ed.).
- 4 Developing Lines of Theological Thought in Germany (Virginia 1963), 5.
- 5 In particular see 'Interpretation in Faith. The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary', Interpretation 18 (1964), 432-49; Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia 1970);

- 'The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church', Concordia Theological Monthly 43 (1972), 709-22; Exodus: A Commentary (London 1974); 'Sensus Literalis: An Ancient and Modern Problem', Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie (FS Zimmerli: Göttingen 1976); Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (London 1979).
- 6 On the hermeneutic circle ('the whole must be understood in terms of its individual parts, individual parts in terms of the whole') see F. Schleiermacher, Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts ed. H. Kimmeler (Missoula 1977), 8121, 59; 20.1, 113; W. Dilthey, 'Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik', Gesammelte Schriften 5, 317-37 (an English translation of this essay is available in W. Dilthey: Selected Writings ed. H. P. Rickman (Cambridge 1976), 247-63); H.-G. Gadamer, Truth and Method (London 1975), 235-45. The formulation by Childs is not equivalent to the hermeneutic circle but analogous to it because the Bible is not the canon of one man's work. It is more like the history of English literature from Beowulf to Dickens.
 - 7 Das zweite Buch Mose, Exodus (Das Alte Testament Deutsch 5: Göttingen 1959); Exodus: A Commentary (OTL: London 1962). Childs' commentary has now replaced Noth's in the OTL series.
 - 8 Cf. my review of it in Scottish Journal of Theology 33 (1980), 285-91; also C. S. Rodd, 'Talking Points from Books', The Expository Times 91 (1980), 129-31.
 - 9 Ezechiel (BKAT XIII: Neukirchen-Vluyn 1962ff); see now Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 1-24 (Hermeneia: Philadelphia 1979).
 - 10 Cf. the similar remarks in his Exodus, 299-302 which constitute a fair statement of his general position.
 - 11 For this principle in recent American biblical theology see G. E. Wright, 'The Canon as Theological Problem', The Old Testament and Theology (New York 1969), 166-85.
 - 12 On author's intention see E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven & London 1967), 1-23.
 - 13 On this point see the writings of Peter Stuhlmacher, esp. his Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Toward a Hermeneutics of Consent (London 1979).
 - 14 See J. A. Sanders, Torah and Canon (Philadelphia 1972), ix-xx; cf. Carroll, 'Canonical criticism: a recent trend in biblical studies?' The Expository Times (forthcoming).
 - 15 Apart from his Torah and Canon see his many articles: eg, 'Adaptable for Life: the Nature and Function of the Canon',

- Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God ed. F. M. Cross, W. F. Lenke & P. D. Miller (FS Wright: Garden City 1976), 531-60; 'Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon', Union Seminary Quarterly Review 32 (1977), 157-65; 'Text and Canon: Concepts and Method', JBL 98 (1979), 5-29; God Has A Story Too: Sermons in Context (Philadelphia 1979).
- 16 Torah and Canon, 53, 106. For the sense of the phrase 'ek nihyeh cf. Is. 20:6. Sanders' treatment of it in relation to canon is more homiletic than in line with its original sense.
- 17 Cf. B. Wicker, The Story-Shaped World (London 1975), 1-113; J. Barr, 'Story and History in Biblical Theology', Journal of Religion 16 (1976), 1-17; J. Navone, Towards a Theology of Story (Clough 1977). Long before this recent trend of associating religion with story Leo Baeck, in a devastating attack on Christianity as a romantic religion, characterised the reduction of religion to story as one of differentiation between classical religion which knows living history and romantic religion which knows only a finished story; see his essay 'Romantic Religion' in Judaism and Christianity: Essays by Leo Baeck ed. W. Kaufmann (New York 1970), 218f. Proponents of the story approach to religion (rather than myth or dogma as the approach) should read (again) Baeck's arguments.
- 18 Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins (University of Notre Dame Center for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity 3: Notre Dame & London 1977). The list of recent writings on canon is too lengthy for a footnote but see esp. S. Z. Leiman, The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence (Hartford, Connecticut 1976); P. R. Ackroyd, 'Original Text and Canonical Text', Union Seminary Quarterly Review 32, 166-73; and the articles on canon in the Wright Festschrift (note 15 above); Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology ed. G. W. Coats & B. O. Long (Philadelphia 1977); Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament ed. B. A. Knight (London 1977).
- 19 The point is also made on pages 94, 99. For a similar view of the controlling of prophecy by Deuteronomy and the priesthood see E. Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History: A Radical New Interpretation (New York 1971), 3-41.
- 20 Blenkinsopp (page 94) takes the phrase from Gershom Scholem's observation "God's word is infinitely interpretable; indeed, it is the object of interpretation par excellence." In his essay 'Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism' in The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality (London 1971), 295.

- 21 Blenkinsopp makes good use of the writings of Max Weber, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, esp. the sociology of knowledge approach to social structures as set out in P.L. Berger & T. Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (London 1967). Childs rejects such approaches (cf. Introduction, 78) and also has no place in his account of canon for the strongly polemical forces which created the traditions. A better approach here is that of Morton Smith, Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament (New York & London 1971). The point is well made by Antonius Gunneweg (Understanding the Old Testament (London 1978), 10) "The Hebrew canon is itself a piece of polemic against all Hellenistic and apocalyptic innovations, and at the same time a polemic against the 'sect' of the church with its proclamation of Christ." Childs regards such factors as belonging to the realm of hypothesis (Introduction, 66).
- 22 The Past, Present, and Future of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia 1979), 9-30. Smart's own contributions to biblical theology are many, see esp. The Interpretation of Scripture (London 1961); and the much more minor works The Old Testament in Dialogue with Modern Man (London 1965); The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church (London 1970). For how his theological approach works as commentary on the text see History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40-66 (London 1965). There is a useful survey of biblical theology in his book The Interpretation of Scripture, 232-307.
- 23 Those who were students of Semitics or biblical studies in the late 1950s &/or the early 1960s will probably remember that in that period there was a discernible 'movement' known as biblical theology that was associated with the work of Ernest Wright and John Bright. It may only have been an impression but it was an impression of something distinctive. Whatever it was about survives in some sense (and still with American overtones) in movements which stress the importance of the archaeological approach to the Bible.
- 24 For this distinction see Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation, 8.
- 25 Frege's article 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung' was first published in Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik 100 (1892), 25-50. For an English translation see 'On Sense and Reference' in Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege ed. P. Geach & M. Black (Oxford 1970), 56-78. This use of Frege's distinction is only the first stage in the development of a hermeneutic of meaning in language. For a treatment of it see A. Nygren, Meaning and Method: Prolegomena to

- a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology (London 1972), 229-37.
- 26 These aspects are central features of hermeneutic theory as developed by Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Gadamer. On the theory see R.E. Palmer, Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer (Evanston 1969); also see E.V. McKnight, Meaning in Texts: The Historical Shaping of a Narrative Hermeneutics (Philadelphia 1978), 7-64.
- 27 Cf. the much more open, ie not restricted to marriage, approach to human sexuality in his treatment of the Song of Solomon in Biblical Theology in Crisis, 190-8 esp. 193.
- 28 On this cf. P.L. Berger, The Social Reality of Religion (London 1969), 111-30; on Hegel's part in this see K. Löwith, From Hegel to Nietzsche: the revolution in nineteenth-century thought (London 1965), esp. 327-33.
- 29 Introduction, 666; cf. Biblical Theology in Crisis, 108. On some of the elements involved in the Augustine-Jerome debate see W. Schwarz, Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation: Some Reformation Controversies and their Background (Cambridge 1955), 17-44. On the Greek OT see A.C. Sundberg, The Old Testament of the Early Church (Harvard Theological Studies 20: Cambridge, Mass. & London 1964).
- 30 See the Kuhn-Popper debate in philosophy of science and in particular the writings of Imre Lakatos: eg, his 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes' in Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge ed. I. Lakatos & A. Musgrave (Cambridge 1970), 91-196.
- 31 Cf. R.E. Clements, Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach (London 1978), 161, 164f.; Leiman, op. cit., 16-26; also Childs, Introduction, 55f.
- 32 Cf. Gadamer, Truth and Method, esp. 333-41; also M. Smith, op. cit.
- 33 The object of hermeneutic is the understanding of what Dilthey calls Geisteswissenschaften 'human sciences'. Cf. W. Herberg, 'Hermeneutics: The Mode of Interpretation' in Faith Enacted as History: Essays in Biblical Theology ed. B.W. Anderson (Philadelphia 1976), 102-11.
- 34 Cf. Barr's view in IDB Supplementary Volume, 110f.
- 35 Cf. P. Goodman, Little Prayers and Finite Experience (London 1973), 105.
- 36 ie, hermeneutic as understanding texts as best we can (Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons') rather than as better than the author did (Schleiermacher) or rethinking his thoughts (Dilthey).