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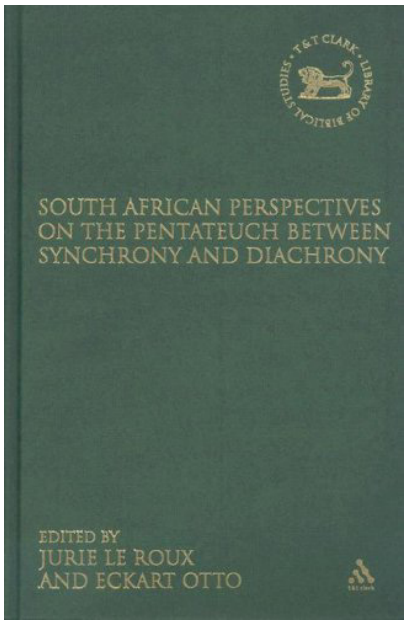

Le Roux, Jurie, and Eckart Otto, eds.

South African Perspectives on the Pentateuch between Synchrony and Diachrony

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This collection of essays arises from the 2005 meeting of "Pro Pent," a project for pentateuchal studies sponsored jointly by the Universities of Pretoria and Munich. The leaders of the project are the joint editors of this volume. Ten of the contributors are from South Africa (five associated with the Department of Old Testament Studies, University of Pretoria; four from the University of South Africa, Pretoria, where Old Testament is coupled with ancient Near Eastern Studies; one from Stellenbosch); the two European participants are Otto and Hans Ulrich Steymans, Fribourg, Switzerland. This volume is a follow-up to the project's earlier volume, *A Critical Study of the Pentateuch: An Encounter Between Europe and Africa* (Münster: LIT, 2005).

Le Roux begins with "Setting the Scene: The Battle of the Signs." He dates to 1971 the start of the, by all reports sometimes heated, debate in South Africa between the exponents of "synchrony" in biblical interpretation, who stress the primacy of an "immanent reading" that begins with "the text as it stands," and the champions of "diachrony," who espouse the traditional analytical historical-critical approach. He previews the dozen contributions with select bibliographies of each of the participants. The essays mark the assimilation of, and response to, currents in scholarship represented in the wider world, in particular between the newer literary approaches stimulated by

Saussurian linguistics and more traditional historical criticism. Therein lies their wider interest and appeal. It is indeed not particularly clear what is distinctive about these (in the main, seemingly Protestant white) South African voices.

The methodological discussion is carried on in this volume especially in the contributions of Gerda de Villiers ("Methodology and Exegesis: The Tools—and What They Are Designed For"), Christo Lombaard ("Old Testament between Diachrony and Synchrony: Two Reasons for Favouring the Former"), and Louis Jonker ("Reading the Pentateuch with Both Eyes Open: On Reading Biblical Texts Multidimensionally"), about, for example, the appropriateness of transferring linguistic theories into the realm of literature, how far the nonreferentiality of "New Criticism" can be an ally in the task of biblical hermeneutics, how far the espousal of "final form" readings by conservatives and Saussurian linguistics is a marriage of convenience. Jaco Gericke's thesis in "Synchrony, Diachrony and Reality: The Anti-realist Ontological Implications of Theological Pluralism in the Pentateuch" that, if the Bible is a work of fiction, then YHWH is strictly speaking a fictional character, seems a particularly radical application of de Saussure's view that meaning is determined by internal collocation of words, not by external reference. Not the least of the problems in attempting to step from Bible to the objective reality of God are the manifold conflicting biblical statements about YHWH, whether viewed synchronically or diachronically.

Some of the essays step somewhat outside the framework of Pentateuch. Alphonso Groenewald ("Changing Paradigms: Old Testament Scholarship between Synchrony and Diachrony"), with notably full bibliography, widens the discussion from the point of view of research into the Psalter as a collection. Pieter Venter's "Synchrony and Diachrony in Apocalyptic Studies," on the second parable in 1 En. 37–71, studies the issues within the parallel framework of apocalyptic: as a parable, it is to be read on a synchronic level, but its historical context and its intertextual relations, for example, with Daniel, raise diachronic issues.

In some of the essays, underlying concerns obtrude: the defense of intellectual integrity and freedom, in both academic and ecclesiastical contexts. Thus Izak Spangenberg asks the question, "Will Synchronic Research into the Pentateuch Keep the Scientific Study of the Old Testament Alive in the RSA?" which, in the context of discussing the "paradigm shift" associated with Wellhausen that the Bible is a human document, he answers with a resounding no. The general thrust appears to be that, while some scholars may have attempted to find in synchronic readings common ground with conservative circles, historical issues insistently arise that render diachronic study inescapable.

Eckart Otto's contribution is particularly marked. Opportunity is taken to include not only his paper to the colloquium, "The Pivotal Meaning of Pentateuch Research for a History of Israelite and Jewish Religion and Society" (already the longest in the collection), but also his 2005 lecture at the University of Pretoria marking the two hundredth anniversary of the publication of de Wette's *Dissertatio critico-exegetica* ("A Hidden Truth behind the Text or the Truth of the Text at a Turning Point in Biblical Scholarship Two Hundred Years after de Wette's *Dissertatio critico-exegetica*"). Otto thus provides almost one fifth of the total content of the volume. In addition, several of the other essayists allude to, endorse, or explicitly take issue with his viewpoint. The de Wette lecture provides Otto with the opportunity to articulate an outline of his own theories of the growth of the Pentateuch against the background of historical-critical work on the Pentateuch over the past two centuries and more. The second essay is essentially a summary of his arguments on the formation of the Pentateuch, familiar from his earlier extensive monographs published in German. The publication of these essays is valuable in itself, since access in English to the work of this extremely prolific scholar has up until now been surprisingly limited.

By diachronic analysis, Otto seeks to make a close set of connections between events in the history of Israel and the stages in the literary evolution of the Pentateuch. The following is only a drastically abbreviated account of his argument. Deuteronomy owes its origins to the work of Judean intellectuals in the seventh century B.C.E. In the preexilic text of Deut 13:1–10 (identified as vv. 2a, 3aβbα, 4a, 6aα, 7abα, 9abβ, 10aα), they quote the oath of loyalty that Esarhaddon imposed in 672 B.C.E. on his vassals, including King Manasseh of Judah, in a "subversive" manner in favor of YHWH against the claims of Assyrian royal ideology. The distinctive new "brother and sister ethic" of preexilic Deut 12–25* (prefaced by the Shema in Deut 6:4–5 and concluded by the curses in 28:20–44*) is also their work. It is their response to the disintegration of the traditional social order of blood ties, mirrored in the Covenant Code in Exod 20:24–23:13, that followed Hezekiah's defensive relocation of country people in fortified cities at the time of Sennacherib's invasion. The double Deuteronomistic redaction of Deuteronomy in the exilic period matches the two generations for which the exile lasted: the "Horeb" redaction in the first generation; and the "Moab" redaction in the second. The Horeb redaction defends the validity of preexilic Deuteronomy by relating it to Moses and to Horeb by the addition of a new framework (5; 9–10*; 26* and the blessings in 28:1–14). The Moab redaction adds the narrative of "Israel's" wandering from Horeb to Moab in Deut 1–3 and the covenant in Moab in Deut 29 and links the whole with the Deuteronomistic book of Joshua. The fact that the first generation of the exile had to die out is explained in the Horeb redaction in the account of the rebelliousness of the first generation in the wilderness in the golden calf incident.

> The plot of the deuteronomistic frame of Deuteronomy emphasizes that Israel—on breaking the first commandment of the Decalogue by sacrificing [to?] a molten calf—did not know the Deuteronomic law of Deut 12–26. God, so the plot of the narrative goes, controlled himself and refrained from destroying the people of Israel, following which he renewed the tablets of the Decalogue. Only after this was the Deuteronomic law given and the covenant established. With this plot, the deuteronomistic authors dealt with their readers' concerns about whether a new history after the exile could fail like the pre-exilic history did. (27)

In the meantime, concurrently during the exilic period, P was under development. A break occurred after 587/6 B.C.E. between the Aaronides (from whom P emanates) and the Zadokites (from whom D emanates). The Aaronides sought a new legitimation, "no longer by means of the Davidic dynasty and the temple … but by means of the fiction of Aaron as brother of Moses" (44). They composed the first section of P beginning in Gen 1 and ending in Exod 29:46 (from creation to the tent of meeting) as a "counter-programme" to the Horeb redaction of Deuteronomy (the P material in Exod 30–Lev 9 is a postexilic addition to P). "[A] critical discourse [took] place between D and P during the exile. Post-exilic Jewish scribes mediated [between?] these two different exilic programmes and created the Pentateuch as the result of inner-biblical scribal exegesis of D and P" (21–22). Those responsible for the Hexateuch redaction (in the time of Nehemiah, mid-fifth century, but opposed to his narrow definition of Israel as "Yehud") regarded YHWH's greatest gift to his people as the land; those responsible for the Pentateuch (at the time of Ezra's mission, dated to the turn of the fifth to the fourth centuries) regarded the Torah as the still greater gift. The Pentateuch redactors were also responsible for integrating the Decalogue and Covenant Code in Exod 20–23 and for creating H in Leviticus.

Otto makes many sharp and shrewd comments (e.g., his strictures on two millennia of Christian dogmatics [47 n. 49]). He presents an undeniably impressive analysis and combination of data and a powerful interpretation of, for example, "the secularization of the state" and "the theologization of ethics" reflected in D (38). Part of Otto's motivation is to deliver European scholarship theologically fruitfully into the worldwide community. One wonders whether this commendable desire will be frustrated by the unwieldy baggage his reconstruction requires interpreters to carry. In the opinion of this reviewer, the essential point is the debate between D and P. The stretching of the biblical material to relate in specific terms to a wide variety of historical events and factors (e.g., "On a societal-institutional level, the formation of the Hexateuch and Pentateuch was the result of the post-exilic integration of Aaronides and Zadokites" [48]; no doubt many more such events might be included: de Wette's use of Josiah, for instance, is dismissed) results in the piling up of hypotheses. The fragility of these reconstructions is clear almost in the

stating of them, and the more such reconstructions are piled on top of one another, the more fragile the whole edifice becomes. In the post-Albright age, the prioritizing of "external evidence" arouses hesitancy (cf. *ZAR*, the abbreviation for his journal, where the biblical is subsumed under the ancient Near Eastern). It is somewhat strange that Manasseh's oath of loyalty, a fact that DtrH totally ignores in 2 Kgs 21, should provide the baseline for the criticism of D; the precision of the reference, too, is untypical of the Pentateuch. His historicist-realist interpretation seems on occasion to overpress the literary and the figurative: for example, the tent of meeting was "made out of wood and linen to make it transportable and suitable to accompany Israel wherever they went in exile and diaspora" (45); or, on the quite theoretical geography in Ezek 40–48, "Members of the diaspora demanded a new distribution of the land in case they were to go back" (50).

Individual passages are made to bear a heavy weight of reconstruction (see already Otto's proposed analysis of Deut 13:1-10, above). The verb *b'r* "to explain" in Deut 1:5 is specified as an "exegetical explanation" of the Covenant Code of Exod 20:24–23:13 (26), which then becomes "a sophisticated revision" of it (27) and "a reform programme" (37). The specific example given is Exod 20:24–26, referred to yet again as the "altar law" (27; quite inaccurately in my view; see VTSup 113, 2007, 207–22). There is a case to be made that Exod 20:24b refers to invocation of the name of YHWH in the land (as in Exod 23:20–21 where "the place," meaning "the land," is again in association with "the name"; cf. "the place" = "the land" in Deut 11:24, a passage cited in Otto, 25). The more notable feature of CC and D is their complementarity. In any case, can there be a critical edition in D of a free-floating CC, unless it were already present in Exodus?

The interpretation of Deut 5:31 is crucial. According to Otto, it is only in the Horeb redaction of Deuteronomy that Moses in the second period of forty days and nights on Horeb received the renewed tablets of the Decalogue and the stipulations of Deut 12–25 (40). But Deut 5:31 does not refer forward to the code in Deuteronomy; it is the concluding verse of Moses' reminiscence of what happened on the original occasion at Horeb, when YHWH revealed the Decalogue in the hearing (but not the comprehension) of the people and gave Moses the further stipulations of the Book of the Covenant. The reassurance that YHWH in his grace remakes the covenant with his people on the same terms even after the golden calf incident is already part of the plot of non-P Exodus (in my view, non-P is pre-P).

Some of the most successful essays in the collection relate to specific passages. The *Problematik* of the discussion is dispassionately set out in the essay of Hans Ulrich Steymans: "The Blessings in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33: Awareness of Intertextuality." He begins from practical examples: the blessings in Gen 49 and Deut 33.

While diachronic study is concerned with tracing the history of the creation of the text from oral to written form, and synchronic with "its artistic qualities and … the aesthetics of its reception," the existence of two related texts reminds the interpreter of the contribution of intertextuality to the discussion. Intertextuality involves the interplay of three points of view: those of author, text, and reader. The latter two imply a synchronic approach and are illustrated from the diverging receptions of the texts in question in Septuagint and Vulgate that reflect the translators' preconceptions. The interest in the author raises diachronic questions. The endlessly diverging reconstructions precipitated by the historical approach ("hypotheses of the second degree") are illustrated by the work of five scholars (including that of Eckart Otto himself), on which Steymans comments: "none of the diachronic hypotheses established for the setting of Gen 49 and Deut 33 satisfies or convinces."[1]

Eben Scheffler's well-worked piece ("Criticism of Government: Deuteronomy 17:14–20 between (and beyond) Synchrony and Diachrony") focuses on the law on the king in Deut 17:14–20. Though this law "lends itself to a synchronic reading" (i.e., to the appreciation of its "structural and narratological aspects"), it "can only be comprehensively understood after historical questions have been asked," since, narratologically, it leads into the ensuing history of the Israel that includes precisely the period of the kings, conspicuously the reign of Solomon. Further, this law is significant hermeneutically, since it deals with issues of lively concern today: "the possibility, limitations and criticism of government" in a world "still haunted by oppressive politics and war, oppressive sexuality and poverty" (134). Scheffler's essay perhaps achieves most successfully the goal of the Pro Pent project of all the contributions in this collection: the promotion of the critical study of the Pentateuch in combination with ethical application.

Frances Klopper's essay on evidence of astral worship in seventh- and sixth-century Judah ("Iconographical Evidence for a Theory on Astral Worship in Seventh and Sixth Century Judah"), seeks to confirm iconographically Otto's thesis of Deuteronomy as "resistance literature." The debt to Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger's *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (1998), tracing religious history on the

1. Steymans makes (81 n. 31) a telling quotation from Erich Zenger's *Einleitung*: "All models [of the history of the redaction of the Pentateuch] share the same feature: they explain the various units of tradition or text complexes that they reconstruct as responses to epoch-making events of the history of Israel between the tenth and the fourth centuries BC. Since the pentateuchal texts themselves do not name these events…, these connections to temporal history can only be inferred indirectly. That is the great methodological problem that attends the attempt to define more closely the historical situation at the time of the origin of the reconstructed text complexes *and* their literary form that is closely associated therewith. That is also one of the causes for the divergences in the proposals made by research" (my translation).

basis of Iron Age seal impressions, is acknowledged. Deuteronomy, in particular Deut 4:19, is interpreted as response to the introduction of astral and lunar motifs (in addition to indigenous solar) under the influence of Assyrian imperial expansion. The data, however, covering the crucial seventh to sixth centuries hardly match the precision of Otto's dating of the various materials and editions of Deuteronomy. Otto himself regards Deut 4 as "a post-exilic and post-deuteronomistic chapter" (39 n. 28, as indeed Klopper acknowledges, 172 n. 16).

While not containing much that is particularly new, this well-planned work encourages discussion, debate, and dissent, elements essential to the health of the discipline. One wishes Pro Pent well.