Mótun menningar
Shaping Culture

AFMÆLISRIT TIL HEIÐURS

GUNNLAUGI A. JÓNSSYNI

SEXTUGUM

A FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF

GUNNLAUGUR A. JÓNSSON

ON HIS SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY

28. 4. 2012

Mótun Menningar / Shaping Culture

RITNEFND / EDITORS

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What Is a Canon of Scriptures?

DURING my first visit in Iceland, in March 2010, the nation was in the middle of its referendum following the Icelandic bank crisis. My next visit occurred shortly after the volcanic ruptures at Eyjafjallajökull had paralysed European air traffic. On both occasions Gunnlaugur Jónsson demonstrated Icelandic witt and hospitality, sharing his home and his mind. It is an honour and a pleasure to greet this Icelandic European on the occasion of his anniversary with an essay on the very theme that first brought me to Iceland: questions of canons and canonicity and how historical biblical scholarship would best deal with the scriptural aspects of biblical literature.

I

Having been thoroughly researched in the nineteenth century,[1] issues of canon and canonicity of Scripture were taken more or less for granted by biblical scholarship in the early twentieth century. Following manuscript finds in the Judean desert, reflections on canon and canonization resurfaced in the 1950s and 1960s[2] and due to the slow publication rate especially of biblical scrolls from Qumran, this perspective is still developing.[3] Perhaps inspired by this research, scholars have argued to see early phases of biblical canonization in light of ancient manuscript technology,[4] or in light of redaction critical and tradition historical indications in the texts.[5] Closely related to this, there is the growing discussion of ancient Jewish scribal habits and culture.[6] Along-

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[1] See for instance Fürst 1868; Overbeck 1880; Reuss 1881; Loisy 1890; Ryle 1892; Budde 1900.

[2] Cf. Greenberg 1956; Jepsen 1959; Lewis 1964; Sundberg 1964.

[3] See for instance Fishbane 1988; Ulrich 1992; Ulrich 1994; Ulrich 1999; Charlesworth 2000; Evans 2001; Flint 2001; Herbert and Tov 2002; David and Lange 2010.

[4] Cf. Talmon 1962; Sarna 1971; Haran 1982; Haran 1984; Haran 1993.

[5] See for instance Sæbø 1988; Steins 1995; Clements 1996; Chapman 2000.

[6] See Lemaire 1981; Davies 1998; Schniedewind 2004; Tov 2004; Carr 2005; Toorn 2007, and cf. entries in Watts 2001.

side these materially and technically oriented approaches one also has re-
fined the classical approaches judging the history of biblical canonization
through citations and other reflections of scriptural use in ancient sources.[7]
Since the 1980s there was also a noticeable interest in renewing explicitly
theological interpretations of biblical canonicity.[8]

As a result of all this, these decades saw a number of sophisticated stud-
ies combining concurrent classical and contemporary tracks of research into
canonicity.[9] Recently several textbooks have emerged on the issue, as has
a joint volume presenting "the canon debate."[10] In short, questions of canon,
canonicity, and canonization of the Hebrew scriptures are re-established as
a major focus in current Hebrew Bible / Old Testament scholarship.

II

Curiously, much biblical scholarship on canon and canonization seems to
have failed to take notice of relevant parallel research initiatives in other
disciplines. In this section I simply list some such initiatives. The follow-
ing section will discuss whether and how such research contributes to ex-
ploring what a canon of scriptures *is* exactly and how biblical scholarship
should relate to it. Upfront, however, let me say that the importance of these
parallel research trajectories lies partly in their providing a wider material
through which biblical scholars' analytical assumptions may be validated.
Partly it lies in providing additional theoretical contexts for reflecting on
the functionality and formation of early scripture. With this in mind, let us
regard a selection of recent research trends.

a) First, there are comparative studies of canons of religious literature,
written and oral. A convenient documentation is found in the year 2000 vol-
ume *Heilige Schriften*.[11] It deals for instance with oral scriptural bodies of

    [7] See notably Leiman 1976; Beckwith 1985; Carson and Williamson 1988; Dimant 1988;
Ellis 1992.
    [8] See the very different Childs 1979; Brueggemann 1982; Childs 1985; Barr 1983;
Sanders 1984; Sanders 1987; Dohmen and Oeming 1992.
    [9] See for instance Sanders 1972; Blenkinsopp 1977; Mulder and Sysling 1988; entries
in Sæbø et al. 1996; Barton 1997; entries in Kooij and Toorn 1998; entries in Auwers and
Jonge 2003.
    [10] McDonald 1988; Vasholz 1990; Miller 1994; Steinmann 1999; McDonald 2007; Mc-
Donald and Sanders 2002.
    [11] Tworuschka 2000.

Hinduism, Buddhism, or Taoism. Perhaps more relevant to biblical studies are entries on the Talmud, the Confucian canons, the Koran, the Sikh *Guru Granth Sahib*, Baha'i Scripture, *The Book of Mormon* and others. All these are "strong" canons; fairly fixed and delimited bodies which are claimed to be authoritative. Several of these canons were established under social and technological conditions not too dissimilar from those under which the Hebrew scriptures were formed.

Heilige Schriften is among the more widely oriented examples of this line of research, but it is not alone: such research has been going on for at least half a century.[12] I, for one, have found three volumes to be of particular value. The first is the Wilfred Smith's monograph *What is Scripture?* and the second is Miriam Levering's edited volume *Rethinking Scripture*.[13] Both contribute crucially to understanding the early biblical canon (see next section). Thirdly, suggestive comparisons of ancient and Medieval Confucian and Christian scripture are found in John Henderson's *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary*.[14]

This comparative research seems to have made little impact in theological studies, while Assyriologists have taken such perspectives more seriously. Their discipline now offers several comparative studies on canonization.[15]

b) Secondly, there is a line of sociological research that has potential to be highly relevant to understanding phenomena of canonicity and canonization—even though sociologists often avoid using the term "canon." It might be preferable to offer a brief rationale for the relevancy of this research. One entry could be Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "symbolic capital" and his exemplification of this through a religious mass:

> … the setting up of a ritual exchange, such as a mass, presupposes, among other things, that all the social conditions are in place to ensure the production of appropriate senders and receivers who are therefore agreed among themselves. It is certainly the case that the symbolic efficacy of the religious language is threatened when the set of mechanisms capable of ensuring the

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[12] See for instance Leipoldt and Morenz 1953; Widengren 1969; Hallberg 1984; Denny and Taylor 1985; Hahn 1987; Baehr and O'Brien 1994; Fernhout 1994; Kooij and Toorn 1998; Coward 2000 (cf. Coward 1988); Finkelberg and Stroumsa 2003.

[13] Smith 1993; Levering 1989.

[14] Henderson 1991.

[15] Cf. Lambert 1957; Rochberg-Halton 1984; Civil 1989; Hallo et al. 1990; Hallo 1991; Hoskisson 1991; Keller 1991; Hurowitz 1999.

reproduction of the relationship of recognition, which is the basis of its authority, ceases to function.[16]

A socially negotiated phenomenon like a mass or a scriptural canon is embedded in what Bourdieu would call a discourse: a socially produced and transmitted conglomerate of ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and practices that produce subjects who reinforce embedded world views through their speech and acts. The mass—or a canon—works as symbolic capital because it symbolises this web and its discourse. In a later work Bourdieu explicitly refers to processes of canonization for various cultural symbols in his contemporary world, taking the national educational system as the body that accords consecration to the culture's "classics." (That, by the way is the more frequently preferred term in this setting).[17] In this view, a religious canon is seen as a negotiated body of thought, practice and artefacts that symbolises a given social web and its discourse. In this very wide, generic sense, scholars may refer for instance to the sociological canon, i.e. the works that constitute the required reading for the discipline.[18] One may also refer to canons of literature,[19] of current fashion,[20] to various ethnic canons,[21] and indeed to canonization in any culturally significant phenomenon.[22]

Importantly, this perspective regards a canon as a product of a large ecology of institutions, social formations, technological conditions, and social and political processes. It thereby sharpens the view of the media and of the various agents involved. While Bourdieu has the advantage of working with contemporary, and hence very rich, material, similar questions could also be posted in historical analysis—partly as heuristic models and partly as analytical questions.[23]

c) Thirdly, for the occasion I would point to analyses of canonicity within the framework of cultural memory studies. A main representative would be Jan Assmann, for instance in his 1992 volume *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkul-*

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[16] Bourdieu 1991, p. 72f, cf. p. 72–76 (first published in French in 1982).

[17] Bourdieu 1993, p. 107.

[18] Baehr and O'Brien 1994.

[19] Cf. the debate in Bloom 1994.

[20] See for example Craik 2003.

[21] Palumbo-Liu 1995.

[22] See Hjort 1992; Bourdieu 1996.

[23] See for instance Lightstone 1988; Davies and Wollaston 1993; Heydebrand 1996.

turen.[24] Throughout his work, Assmann has a truly comparative view, drawing from his extensive Egyptological knowledge, but also referring to other ancient canon formations in the Near and Far East. In the volume mentioned above, Assmann explores links between scripture and cultural identity. Through a body of canonized scriptures, a given society objectifies and remembers the past so as to promote current group identity (ethnic, national, imperial, etc.). They sanction and sanctify certain cultural conventions and formations. Through such sanctification and ritualisation, the canon promotes social cohesion by assisting the individual's appropriation of group values, memory, and identity.[25] In this perspective, the most important thing about a canon is again outside of it: the cultural or ethnic identity it is thought to promote. Within this paradigm Jan Assmann and his colleagues have provided rich analyses of the minutes of the formation and function of a number of canons.

Another issue, especially in Jan Assmann's later works, is the link between canonization and anthropological development. He argues to see what he calls secondary canonization as precondition for cognitive development leading to a cultural leap. Secondary canonization occurs where long since canonical scriptures are written in a dead language: cast in oblivious genres, expressing non-familiar thoughts. These kinds of "strange" sacred items require elaborate cultural competences in their readers, which results in the development of a scriptural guild forming hermeneutical procedures and institutions to secure the continued success of the canon, which in turn results in a very complicated process of cultural identity formation. Assmann argues that such secondary canons require a new sense of difference between present and past, and that human reflection on history proper arose under such conditions.[26] In this perspective, canons and canonizations are not only fundamentally human, they are also instrumentally important in the development of the human species through its ability to form its own environment and then develop cognitively in accordance with that.

d) In a small 2004 volume social anthropologist Brian Malley offered one noticeable contribution in the borderland between phenomenological

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[24] Assmann 1992 and cf. Assmann 2006.

[25] Assmann 1992, esp. p. 138–44.

[26] Jan Assmann, "Tradition, Writing, and Canonization: Structural Changes of Cultural Memory" in Stordalen and Naguib (eds), *The Formative Past and the Formation of the Future* [forthcoming].

and anthropological research on canonicity and canonization.[27] Interviewing present-day users of the American Evangelical canon, he detected how actual use of the Bible often does not refer to its contents: the Bible has an agency also as a printed artefact. For example, Evangelicals teach children at Sunday school to "pat the Bible" and in this setting they would potentially use any book that looks like the Bible (41–48). Malley finds that in such cases, it is the interpretive tradition that defines the content of scripture; not the wording of the scriptures (118f). The canon occurs not as a source of information, but rather as an icon of a much larger, historically and socially negotiated complex. Similar perspectives are developed in a recent volume edited by Evans and Zacharias.[28] Marianne Schleicher, a Danish contributor to this volume, develops the distinction between a hermeneutical and an artefactual use of scripture. In the latter, scripture's non-semantic, formal, and institutional aspects come to the fore. Through the work of Graham and others, it would seem evident that even oral scriptures would potentially develop corresponding functions.[29] To rephrase this in the language of Bourdieu, one could say not only the canonization, but also the canonicity, of any scripture relies on social discourse. This may involve practices with dynamics very different from those of reading written language.

III

This section reviews some challenges from the above to historical discussion of biblical canonicity and canonization. Again, it is not my intention to give a comprehensive review of recent scholarship and possible challenges. Rather, I hope to identify some avenues ahead for biblical scholarship.

a) As an entry point, let us go to a couple of recent mainstream short definitions of the concept of canon. First, there is the editorial heading introducing the two articles on "canon" (Hebrew Bible and New Testament respectively) in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*:

> The word 'canon' … has come to be used with reference to the corpus of scriptural writings that is considered authoritative and standard for defining and determining 'orthodox' religious beliefs and practices. Books not considered authoritative or standard are often called 'noncanonical' or 'extracanonical'.

[27] Malley 2004.
[28] Evans and Zacharias 2009.
[29] Cf. Graham 1987, p. 94f.

> Generally speaking, the corpus of authoritative books is called the 'Bible,' although obviously the Christian Bible (or canon) differs from that of Judaism.[30]

Under this umbrella follow two articles by James Sanders (Hebrew Bible) and Harry Gamble (New Testament). The dictionary arrangement suggests the definition should apply to each of the two articles. None of them explicitly define "canon." The article on the New Testament does in fact imply that the umbrella definition is overstated at least at one point, since the NT corpus is too inconsistent to determine "orthodox" belief (859). The article on the Hebrew Bible canon also implicitly questions the term "canon" by listing alternative terms actually used in the sources: "the books," "holy writings," "Law and Prophets," etc. These designations consistently point to less defined and perhaps differently understood collections of religiously authoritative material (oral as well as written).[31] As such they undermine the emphasis of the umbrella definition on a closed corpus distinct from extra canonical literature. Sanders (or perhaps the dictionary editor?) nevertheless refers to various scriptural collections and their shapes as "canon." (Roger Beckwith, who gave the first total review of these designations a few years earlier, did the same.)[32]

Our second item is the article in the book on the canon debate giving the notion and definition of canon. After a learned reflection on earlier attempts to define the term, Eugene Ulrich says:

> […] canon is the definitive list of inspired, authoritative books which constitute the recognized and accepted body of sacred scripture of a major religious group, that definitive list being the result of inclusive and exclusive decisions after serious deliberation.[33]

Providing depth to this definition he argues to distinguish between "canon" and, say, "book of scripture," "collection of authoritative scriptures," etc. "Canon" should properly designate only "the final, fixed, and closed list of the books of scripture that are officially and permanently accepted" (p. 31) as the result of "a conscious, retrospective, official judgement" (p. 32). This verdict is inspired by Gerald Sheppard's distinction between "canon 1" and "canon 2." Ulrich would not confuse canonicity in the weaker sense ("canon

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[30] Sanders 1992, I:837.
[31] Sanders 1992, I:838f.
[32] Beckwith 1985, p. 105–109.
[33] Ulrich 2002, p. 29.

1") with canon proper ("canon 2").[34] Consequently, a not yet closed body of scriptures would not qualify as a canon. Apparently, his motivation for defining the term in this strict way is to help biblical scholarship contributing to the century-long theological debate on the issue.

Simultaneously, Ulrich characterises the definition of canon as "a relatively minor matter" (33) and sees the analysis of the canonical process as more important (33, cf. 30). At this point, Ulrich and the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* actually reach a similar position: both maintain fairly traditional definitions of canon and both imply that these definitions do not easily apply in historical analysis of that period to which biblical scholarship is conventionally dedicated. One must ask, therefore, what would be Ulrich's concept of a scriptural body in the phase when it was still emerging? The article offers only a few implicit suggestions. At one point, he renders an earlier assumption that in the formative period of the biblical canon "the community handed down sacred writings that increasingly functioned as authoritative books" (32). To my mind, this looks rather more like a prolongation of his "strong" definition of the canon back into the period in which it should not apply.[35] The assumption echoes the view of a (presumably "major") religious group regarding a given body of written material as authoritative, while still in the process of establishing the precise limitation and final authority of this material. The only matter lacking are, so to speak, the final verdicts: the dynamics are in place already. From the comparative and other perspectives outlined above, a number of challenges arise, to which we now turn:

b) First, it could not simply be assumed that all Jewish scriptural traditions developed ("weak") canonicity in written forms only. Much speaks for the possibility that orality and aurality were important to the canonizing process. Comparative analyses of Indian canons indicate that stable, authoritative compositions could well be oral. Strikingly, the *Quran* could in some ways be conceived of as "Spoken Word," and not only because of its name. Oral/aural and performative dimensions of Scripture are important also for instance in the Jewish *Miqra'* and in the Lutheran *viva vox evangelii*.[36]

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[34] See especially his discussion with McDonald. Ulrich, ibid., p. 34

[35] Ulrich specifically argues to avoid that movement, and says there was no canon in the formative period of biblical literature. It seems to me, that while refusing to use the term for earlier periods, he is in fact applying vital aspects of the concept.

[36] For all this and the following, see Graham 1987, Parts II and III.

Turning to literature of the Second Temple period, Deuteronomic literature portrays itself as a written testimony "sandwiched" between the speech of God on the one hand and that of Moses on the other. The narrated audiences mostly *hear* scripture; they do not read it.[37] This code also calls for what could be seen as recitative practices in the believers, for instance in Deut 6:7f; 11:19. Later on, Qumran literature reflects the existence of a certain *sefer hagah*— potentially translated: "book of recitation"—which had to be read by trained experts.[38] Evidently, the singing and intonation of Scripture was an important aspect of late Antique Masoretic practices.[39] For comparative as well as historical reasons, therefore, it must be considered whether orality and aurality were factors in the early canonization of Hebrew scriptures.

c) This leads to a second point, inspired by the perspective of Bourdieu: who, precisely, was the "community" that "handed down" the Hebrew scriptures? Neither Sanders nor Ulrich pose that question in any radical way. To the extent that recent scholars reflect on the issue, the answer has been that the group in question were the scribes responsible for copying and maintaining the Hebrew scriptures.[40] We know very little about this group, but they must have been a small elite, connected to political power and leadership through their education as specialists and their social power to obtain such education. The implication would be that early Hebrew scriptures were the canon of the elite. Pointedly put elite groups inscribed their values in the Hebrew scriptures and used them to promote their own position.[41] If, however, orality and aurality were indeed factors in the canonizing process, the picture might look a little different. Still, it would be far from clear that such a canon could be seen as relevant for any "major religion" (Ulrich).

Bourdieu's theory provides further clues on how to interpret the social discourse around the early Hebrew scriptures. A vital dynamic in the cultural field is what he calls "the power to convince." This power emerges because "the objective structures of the field of production give rise to categories of perception which structure the perception and appreciation of its prod-

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[37] Stordalen 2008, p. 678–80.

[38] For references and further argumentation, see Terje Stordalen, "Ancient Hebrew Meditative Recitation" in Eifring, Davanger and Stordalen (eds.), *Cultural Histories of Meditation: Western Traditions* [forthcoming].

[39] Weil 1995.

[40] See for instance Davies 1997; Davies 1998 (and several later works); Carr 2005; Toorn 2007.

[41] Programmatically in Davies 1998.

ucts."[42] Bourdieu sees the field of cultural production as an area of clash between the dominant fractions of the dominant class (and their "producers") on the one hand, and the dominated classes that play some part also in the production of the symbolic capital and of the categories of reception ruling the field on the other.[43] I would add, with Michel de Certeau, that the dominated groups also had power as "consumers" of the cultural product: they decided what to *do* with the scriptural artefact.[44]

In order to apply such perspectives to the study of the canonization of biblical Hebrew literature, one would not only need to consider specific forms, media, producers, and consumers of the scriptures in specific situations. It would also be necessary to locate the field of scripture in the larger web of religion and society, and to calibrate the function of the scribal class and their products in this larger web. Players in the field would have both common and conflicting interests. Theoretically, the scribes—producers for the dominant classes—would give form both to common opinions in the field and to interest aiming to monopolise these opinions. Their product, the scriptures, would take part in social discourse also as artefacts and icons for canons of practices, etc. (cf. Schleicher). Obviously, it is not going to be possible to form well-founded opinions on all these matters. That, however, is hardly an excuse for simply ignoring such factors in future research on biblical canonization.

On comparative grounds, I have previously argued that the role of ancient Hebrew scribes was more related to creating legitimacy of the Hebrew canon and less to the authorisation of scripture. Comparative data also suggest that influence from the users of the canon was greater in the Hebrew case than, for instance, in the Confucian case.[45] These views may still be valid, but they need a "thicker" social and historical foundation than has been offered this far. This is a point where research on collective memory and cultural identity could prove important. Theoretically, it is possible to map the kind of shared knowledge and collective identities reflected in various strands of biblical literature and use them as indicators for the social process behind the literature.[46] As but one initial attempt, my analysis of

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[42] Bourdieu 1993, p. 95.

[43] Bourdieu, ibid., p.105. See note 37.

[44] De Certeau 1984, p. xii–xxiv.

[45] Stordalen 2007, p. 17f; p. 19f.

[46] See Kåre Berge's contribution in this volume, and further his article "Literacy, Utopia and Memory: Is There a Public Teaching in Deuteronomy?" [forthcoming in *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*].

the use of non-inscribed memory in the highly elite *Book of Job* would seem to suggest that interaction between elite reflection and ways of thinking originating from peasant life could well occur in early Hebrew scriptural discourse.[47]

All of this questions the importance conventionally ascribed to formal deliberations and decisions on the shape and content of the canon (cf. Ulrich's definition). To the extent that such decisions can be documented, they tend to reflect the preferences of the religious leadership, filtered through their writings and archives—their memory. In Bourdieu's perspective, such decisions would be little more than one particular bid in the ongoing and much larger discourse of Scripture: echoes of the positions of "dominant fractions of the dominant classes." It would be untenable to take such decision as sole indicator of the actual standing and use of scripture in a larger population at a given point.

d) Comparative studies alert us to the, often unqualified, analytical use of categories like authority or orthodoxy in scholarship on canonization. The complication goes beyond the simple question of whose perception of authority one would be referring to. There is also the question of the quality, or mode, of authority. Miriam Levering indicated four different ways of receiving a canonical tradition: informative, transformative, transactional, and symbolic.[48] In the same volume, Kendall Folkert distinguished between vectorizing canons (canons that set the symbolic and social vectors of a group) and vectorised canons (canons that become authoritative because they comply to already established social and symbolic vectors).[49] Furthermore, canons belong in different social fields and fulfil different functions: they may be ritual, magical, educational, philosophical, etc.[50]

One could not simply assume that all proto-canonical Hebrew scriptures had the same kind of authority or that all ancient readers used them similarly. It seems quite possible that parts of the Hebrew scriptures (say, sapiential literature) would have served educational and transformative purposes, while the use of other parts perhaps was more informative (legal, narrative), symbolic (poetry), or even transactional (prophecy). Finally, to the extent that early scriptures did have authority, one could not take for

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[47] Stordalen 2012.

[48] Levering 1989, p. 13–14 and 17.

[49] Folkert 1989.

[50] Stordalen 2007, p. 6, relying on works of Wilfred Smith, Moshe Halbertal, and John Henderson.

granted that such authority derived from their perceived uniqueness or inspiration. It seems probable that the authority of laws and poems could derive from the fact that they rendered already established practices and traditions. These would be part of a vectorized canon. In short, unspecified references to "the authority" of the Hebrew scriptures can no longer convince in the setting of historical studies of biblical canonicity.

e) The facts of a closed collection and a fixed text have traditionally been important criteria for canonicity. Historically, rigidly fixed scriptural canons represent only one end of a large spectre. The Arabic *Quran*, the Sikh *Guru Grant Sahib*, and the Hebrew *Tanak* are the strongest examples—in that logical sequence. At the other end of the spectre are for instance, Hindu or Taoist canons. Versions of the Medieval Christian Bible posit themselves between these two extremes, with varying versions of the *Glossa ordinaria* printed on the *pagina sacra* and bound in the same codex. Something similar applies to traditional Medieval Talmud, rendering glosses and commentaries around the Tanak.

Manuscript studies from Qumran and later Jewish and Christian sources indicate that at least one trajectory of Hebrew scriptures reached a fairly stable form early on and that this textual trajectory may have been preferred by scribes such as those in Qumran. The finds, however, also document simultaneous alternative text trajectories. And it would seem that a universally accepted frozen text and book sequence did in fact not develop until the advent of book printing technology in Europe.[51] There are therefore good reasons to ask whether indeed the kind of practices that eventually generated a *fixed* Hebrew scriptural body would in fact have been the factors that gave the corpus its canonical status in the first place. Would it not be equally reasonable to say that the development of meticulous scribal procedures of textual maintenance came as a *consequence* of the canonicity of the scriptures? If so, the dynamics of canonization would better be sought outside of ancient scriptoria and the sources would be earlier than scribal manuscripts could reflect.

Logically connected to this is the issue of formal and informal canons. Comparative material suggests that while some canons were formally recognised by some official body, others were simply *de facto* canons by virtue of social habits or some sort of social contract. In Bourdieu's perspective, the latter would be the expected form for socially negotiated standards. Per-

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[51] See the articles by Sanders and Ulrich discussed above, and cf. Smith 1993, p. 45–91.

haps more importantly, both formal and informal canons are surrounded by standards and rules on how the canon should be used (or practiced—as in the case of Malley above). John Henderson documented how the Confucian canon produced a large body of commentary—some of which eventually became canonical themselves.[52] I have tried to argue that the same was the case for the early Hebrew scriptures and the later Christian Bible.[53] Evidently, such canonical commentaries often exercise more authority than the formal canon in questions of daily life (cf. the influence of oral law over against Tanak in Jewish life patterns). One could say that that canonical commentary is the less formalised half of a *canonical ecology*, although only the more formal canon proper is recognised as canonical. In short, when discussing canonization and canonicity in a historical perspective, it would be hard to defend why *de facto* canons and canonicity should be disregarded either by definition, by analytical concepts, or by material.

Rounding off, I note that adopting perspectives like those of Bourdieu above, could serve to locate biblical scholarship in the middle of central contemporary academic discussion—which seems not to be the regular case these days. Orienting itself along such lines, analyses of biblical canon, canonization, and canonicity would not need to occur as explorations of a past phenomenon of limited current relevance. Exploration of this particular phenomenon could be configured as yet another contribution to the larger discussion on humankind and society—and favourably so because it involves an unusually rich history and very explicit and, in certain parts, well documented material. The same applies even more if adopting the cognitive-cultural approach of Jan Assmann, above. Perhaps the exploration of biblical canonicity is one area where loosening analytical ties to the century-long theological debate would in fact be a contribution to the renewal of academic theology? If so, it would seem to concur with one noticeable intention in the work of Professor Gunnlaugur Jónsson.

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[52] Henderson 1991.

[53] Terje Stordalen, „Canon and Canonical Commentary: Comparative Perspectives on Canonical Systems" in Stordalen and Naguib (eds.), *The Formative Past and the Formation of the Future* [forthcoming].

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ÍSLENSKUR ÚTDRÁTTUR

Í þessari grein víkur höfundur fyrst að núverandi stöðu rannsókna í gamlatestamentisfræðum á hugmyndinni um regluritasafn (kanón) og á því hvað felist í því að rit tilheyri slíku safni (e. *canonicity*). Því næst er litið til þess hvernig notast megi við innsýn frá öðrum fræðigreinum þegar hugað er að þessu viðfangsefni, t.a.m. frá almennum trúarbragðafræðum, félagsfræði, menningarfræðum (e. *historical cultural studies*) og mannfræði. Af þeim dæmum sem reifuð eru í greininni má ráða að biblíufræðingar virðast ekki hafa nýtt sér aðrar fræðigreinar þegar kemur að því að skilgreina kanón og skyldar hugmyndir. Jafnframt bendir höfundur á að sennilega þurfi að endurskoða ýmsar viðteknar hugmyndir meðal biblíufræðinga á þessu sviði þegar kastljósi annarra fræðigreina er beint að þeim. Spurningum er varpað fram og vöngum velt: Hvaða máli skiptir sú staðreynd fyrir þessa umræðu að efni gyðinglegra rita var borið áfram munnlega til áheyrendahóps sem hlustaði en las þau ekki? Frá sjónarhóli félagsfræðinnar skiptir máli að tilgreina nákvæmlega hverjir það voru sem tilheyrðu þeim áheyrendahópi. Hvað eiga fræðimenn við þegar þeir vísa til „áhrifavalds" (e. *authority*) ritninganna: í augum hverra var hér um áhrifavald að ræða, í hvaða aðstæðum og hver var tilgangurinn? Hvað þýddi það raunverulega þegar rit var fellt inn í tiltekið regluritasafn? Og þegar horft er til Biblíunnar: Hvers vegna er svo mikilvægt að halda því tiltekna regluritasafni lokuðu og óbreytanlegu þegar heimildir benda til þess að slíkar kröfur voru ekki gerðar fyrr en tiltölulega seint í mótunarferli þess og eru alls ekki algildar þegar horft er til annarra sambærilegra safna?