

## RECENSIONES

### Vetus Testamentum

Eckart OTTO, *Deuteronomium 1,1 – 4,43; 4,44 – 11,32* (HThK.AT, 2 vols.).  
Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 2012. xxii-1072 p. 17 × 23,7

Before beginning work on this, the most ambitious current commentary project on Deuteronomy, O. had published two monographs and a major collection of articles on Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch (*Das Deuteronomium. Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien* [BZAW 284; Berlin 1999]; *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumrahmens* [FAT 30; Tübingen 2000]; *Die Tora. Studien zum Pentateuch. Gesammelte Aufsätze* [BZAR 9; Wiesbaden 2009]). Moreover, he is the founder of the *Zeitschrift für Biblische und Altorientalische Rechtsgeschichte* (19 volumes since 1995) and thus one of the leading scholars on the history of the ancient Near Eastern and biblical law.

This commentary is unique in its scope and intent. It is the first commentary on Deuteronomy to combine systematically two hermeneutical perspectives that had seemed for centuries to be separate and irreconcilable streams of exegesis. O. is deeply rooted in the tradition of German Protestant historical critical exegesis, but he has also embraced new trends in the literary analysis of the canonical form of the text which have precursors in often polemically anti-critical traditions of “orthodox” Jewish and Roman Catholic exegesis. This is also the first commentary to provide an extensive treatment of the history of research into Deuteronomy, from Baruch de Spinoza and Richard Simon up to the present (62-230), as well as a theory of the literary history of Deuteronomy (231-257) and a theory of Deuteronomy’s theology and legal hermeneutics within the Pentateuch (258-282). O.’s knowledge and use of previous research is exhaustive and as comprehensive as a commentary can be (see the general bibliography, 27-61, and the special bibliographies, for example on Deut 5, 651-666).

In his introduction, O. evaluates the history of previous research for the purposes of his own approach to Deuteronomy. He recognises the value of insights from scholars as different in time and approach as Johann Severin Vater (67-69), August Klostermann (97-99), Bernard M. Levinson (175-177) and Jean-Pierre Sonnet (201-206). O. divides his history of research into four major sections: from Richard Simon to Wilhelm

Martin Leberecht de Wette (62-73), from Heinrich Ewald to Gerhard von Rad (73-145), from Norbert Lohfink to the present (146-185) and ‘towards a synchronic interpretation of Deuteronomy’ (186-230). The most programmatic decision in this periodization is that of choosing the great theologian of Deuteronomy Gerhard von Rad (130-133, 137-140, 142-144) rather than his contemporary Martin Noth, with his influential thesis on the Deuteronomistic History (133-137; both had been students of Albrecht Alt, 140-142), as the decisive figure in the interpretation of Deuteronomy in the twentieth century before Norbert Lohfink: ‘G. von Rad hat der Theologie des Deuteronomiums in einer Dichte Sprache verliehen, vor der die diachronen Diskussionen der kommenden Jahrzehnte an Bedeutung verlieren und die noch heute Anspruch an jede Kommentierung des Buches Deuteronomium ist’ (144).

Students who had struggled to understand what O. “really thinks” about the literary history of Deuteronomy from his numerous previous publications on this subject will be delighted to find a concise summary of his theory in this commentary (231-257). O. reconstructs the literary history of Deuteronomy on the basis of its late pre-exilic core, which is seen as an interpretation of the Book of the Covenant (some passages within Deut 12-28, 235-237) primarily as a history of Exilic and post-Exilic redactions (a ‘Horeb-’ and a ‘Moab-redaction’ and those of the Hexateuch and the Pentateuch, 238-257). Three schemes (237, 248, and 256) are particularly helpful to get an initial overview of O.’s theory. A more detailed discussion of the diachronic development is provided in clearly marked small-print sections of the exegesis (e.g. on Deut 1,1-5, 306-311).

What follows is the most innovative section of the introduction: a reflection on the theology and legal hermeneutics of Deuteronomy (258-282). The relationship between the Torah from Sinai and Deuteronomy is a question that particularly needs to be discussed on the level of the canonical Pentateuch (268-274). O. interprets the differences between the Decalogue in Exodus 20 and its rendering by Moses in Deuteronomy 5 as a paradigm of legal interpretation (271). The Pentateuchal narrative setting of legal interpretation in Deuteronomy is also seen as the cradle of Rabbinic interpretation of the Torah (273f.). Moreover, O. emphasizes the prophetic character of Deuteronomy in its final form (274-280). Moses is presented as the prophet par excellence (Deut 34,10, 275); and his prophetic outlook on the future catastrophe of Israel’s Exile (Deut 4,25-31) and return (Deut 30,1-3) is a hermeneutical key for post-exilic addressees who are meant to make the decision between life and death (Deut 30,19, 277f.) and thus are offered the chance to become addressees of the Moab covenant. The prospect of God’s mercy (Deut 4,29-31, 275) and the circumcision of the heart (Deut 30,6, 278) put a prophetic vision of divine grace above the general nomistic orientation of Deuteronomy. O. reads the Song of Moses (Deut 32,1-43) as a summarising prophecy, in which the turn from disaster

to restoration is founded upon God's "compassion" (חַנּוּן, Deut 32,36, 279). Through its manifold intertextual connections, the Song brings Deuteronomy into a hermeneutical dialogue with all major parts of the canon of the Hebrew Bible (280).

Each section of the detailed exegetical commentary is clearly divided into bibliography (e.g., on 1,1-5, 198-301), translation with textual notes (302-304), synchronic (305f.) and diachronic analysis (306-311), detailed verse-by-verse exegesis (311-321) and a synchronic evaluation in terms of theology and legal hermeneutics (322-328). This multi-perspective approach generates an amazingly stimulating richness and depth of reflection. For example, O. interprets the famous verse "... in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by everything that comes from the mouth of YHWH" (Deut 8,3), by first showing the difficulties that it involves against the backdrop of previous interpretations (908-910), then convincingly explaining the meaning of "everything that comes from the mouth of YHWH" in the immediate context as referring to God's commandments (910) and finally opening up a perspective on important ancient Near Eastern and inner-biblical parallels (911f.).

Despite the awe-inspiring dimensions and qualities of this commentary, readers will not be inhibited from discussing and criticizing the views presented. On the contrary, O.'s fresh and courageous approach, which does not hesitate to propose new and creative interpretations, even encourages critical engagement and response. Just one particularly interesting example may suffice to illustrate this. In his interpretation of the theologically crucial parenthesis in Deut 4,1-40, O. attributes an important function to the change from a plural to singular form of address (Deuteronomy's notorious 'Numeruswechsel') in 4,29. While the presentation of Israel's future idolatry and subsequent exile is worded in the singular (4,26-28), the following verse marks a transition: "From there you will seek (plural) YHWH your God, and you will find (singular) him if you search after him with all your heart and soul" (4,29). The following two verses build on this positive transition and are also worded in the singular. Thus, O. shows the formal device of the 'Numeruswechsel', which had been seen by many scholars as a criterion for attributing the two parts to diachronically different layers, functioning as a stylistic marker of the turning point from disaster to restoration (526f. and 573f.).

Creative, innovative and important though this observation is, the structural consequence that O. draws from it is not convincing in my view. O. claims that 4,29\*-40 is continuously worded in the singular (526) and sees two structural parts of this speech in 4,23-29\*, 29\*-39. Firstly, for the sake of precision, one has to note that 4,34 contains two forms of address in the plural. Secondly, and more importantly, G. Braulik had shown in his seminal study of Deuteronomy 4, on the basis of a great variety of criteria, that this passage is clearly divided into Deut 4,23-31 and 4,32-40

(cf. G. Braulik, *Die Mittel deuteronomischer Rhetorik* [AnBib 68; Rome 1978] 48-76 and, with important observations on 4,32-40, idem, *Geschichtserinnerung und Gotteserkenntnis. Zu zwei Kleinformen im Buch Deuteronomium*, in idem, *Studien zu den Methoden der Deuteronomiumsexegese* [SBAB 42; Stuttgart 2006] 165-183). Although O.'s observation is indeed important regarding the rhetorical dynamics of Deuteronomy 4, his structural interpretation is disputable.

It may be the greatest flaw of this commentary that its scholarly language is demanding — even for native speakers. It will be the more challenging for readers who have only a working knowledge of German. Yet it is worth the effort. This work exemplarily shows that German will remain an indispensable language in biblical scholarship for the coming decades. No serious work on Deuteronomy can leave this commentary unconsulted.

O. introduces his preface with a quotation from Thomas Aquinas: 'Deus autem sibi ipsi est lex.' This — perhaps surprising — motto reveals the double focus that lies at the heart of O.'s interpretation: both the theological and the legal dimensions of Deuteronomy. One cannot overestimate the amount of passion, dedication and work that are prerequisite for a commentary of this calibre — a rare breed in the history of exegesis. Readers will, whatever they criticize, be grateful for what they learn from it and for the creative discussions that it has already started to inspire. For the time being, we await in suspense the completion of O.'s magnum opus.

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Dominik MARKL, *Gottes Volk im Deuteronomium* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 18). Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012. xiii-363 p. 17,5 × 24,5

“Gottes Volk im Deuteronomium” ist die überarbeitete Fassung der Habilitationsschrift Dominik Markls, die 2011 von der Universität Innsbruck angenommen wurde. In mancher Hinsicht stellt sie eine Weiterführung seiner Dissertation “Dekalog als Verfassung des Gottesvolkes” (HBS 49) dar: Markl leistet wiederum einen wesentlichen Beitrag zur Deutung des Pentateuchs auf der Basis des Endtextes und stellt ihn erneut unter das Thema des Gottesvolkes. Die intensive Analyse des dtn Buchschlusses füllt eine Forschungslücke, da zu Dtn 29–34 zwar Einzeluntersuchungen vorliegen, kaum jedoch eine Gesamtdeutung. Auch die wichtigsten neueren Kommentare sind bisher nicht bis zum Buchende fortgeschritten.

Einleitend stellt Markl den Bezug des Titels zur Dissertation Gerhard von Rads “Das Gottesvolk im Deuteronomium” her, die ihm in doppelter