for such a long time in biblical scholarship. It would be interesting to examine Levinson's arguments in the light of Van Seters new book. Mastin deals with the question of God's Asherah, inclusive monotheism and the problem of dating. He avers that certain inscriptions testify that allusions to Yahweh's Ashera point to an evolvement from polytheism to monotheism, the commencement of which is unknown. The eighth century BCE marks that period, which exhibits the influence of this development, i.e., a movement away from polytheism towards monotheism in Canaan, north and south alike, prior to the Persian and Hellenistic period. Lambert also presumes the influence, in a pejorative sense, of a certain kind of ideology in the works of P. R. Davies and Lemche who postulate that the historical books of the HB/OT are "literary constructs" encapsulating exiguous historical material. He evaluates the Mesopotamian materials that cast light on the names of Israelite kings and their historicity, showing that writing was widespread in Judah and Israel prior to 587. Lemaire lists the Hebrew and West Semitic inscriptions having the question of pre-exilic Israel in its purview. The endeavour to proffer a different date for some of these inscriptions and therefore to redate them to the Hellenistic era, as suggested concerning the Siloam inscription is "not serious" neither from the perspective of epigraphy nor from that of archaeology. Hebrew inscriptions were not absent in Judah and Israel before 587, any more than other West Semitic inscriptions in other contemporary kingdoms in the Levant. The concluding article is by Fenton, who examines Hebrew poetic structures as grounds for dating proving that the comparison of Hebrew and ancient Canaanite poetic structures corroborates the antiquity of the structures in question and also the historical materials connected to them. "Details of content" display the fact that biblical Hebrew literary tradition commences "at least" from the eleventh century BCE to the Persian era.

The great strength of this volume is that proving a point, in this case the pre-exilic origins of the HB/OT, is not its *Tendenz*. What it manages to achieve is the deployment of serious evidence, which buttress the pre-exilic origins of this complex book in question.

Bálint Károly Zabán,

Queen's University Belfast,
Union Theological College,
Langham Partnership

Martin J. Buss: Biblical Form Criticism in its Context

Jsot Supplement Series, 274. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
512 pages, ISBN 1-85075-876-X

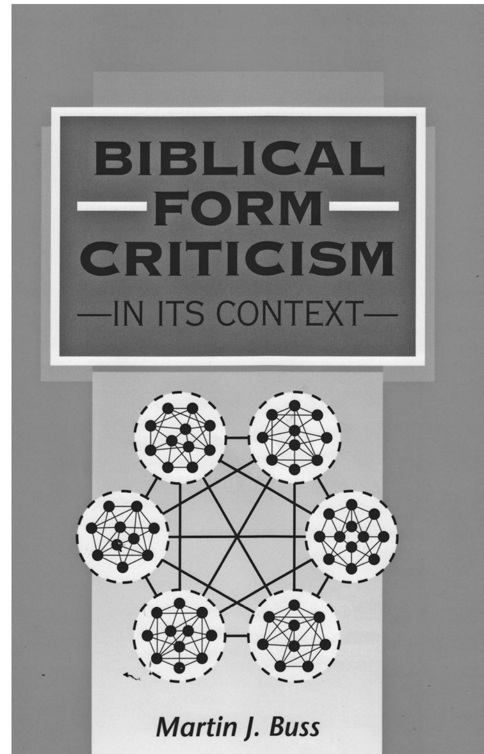
This volume has been fittingly labelled as a "magnum opus," which is not at all an additional catalogue of the form of biblical literature. Moreover, it may be viewed as a "deeply reflected" account of the importance of form itself. Martin J. Buss dilates the topic with his great expertise in Western philosophy and the intricate implication of biblical criticism in philosophical history. In similar fashion, biblical criticism and the development of notions of form are related to various social contexts, either from the side of aristocracy with its propensity towards generality or of the bourgeois with its tendency towards particularity or of an inclusive society opting for a relational view. Buss deems that form criticism is not a mere formal exercise but the observation

of inter-relationships among thoughts and moods, linguistic regularities and the experiences and activities of life.

Following the preface, acknowledgments and abbreviations, the reader encounters fourteen chapters in total. The book concludes with sections on bibliography and indexes.

The very first chapter is concerned with the issue of recognizing forms, within which Buss tackles the notion of speech forms, subconscious and reflective awareness of forms and reflexive awareness. The examination of literary forms, also encapsulating oral forms, or form criticism may be defined as the study of patterns of speech. In Hermann Gunkel's view, literary types are made up by a complex of: 1. Thoughts and moods, 2. Linguistic forms (sounds or written symbols), and 3. a normal connection with life. Buss, following on from this premise, notes that the form-critical idea of a correlation between life, thought and verbal expression will be confirmed for the process of form criticism itself, in that social life, theoretical assumptions and specific interpretations are linked. Therefore, the correlation between scholarship and its context is not rigid, just as the correlation between the three features of literary form is not rigid but probabilistic.

Chapter two is concerned with biblical patterns of form, through an examination of the implicit philosophy of reality and speech and of the implicit recognition of forms and speech. What is asserted through this examination is that biblical literature encapsulates an implicit recognition of speech patterns and uses them as an organizing principle. Jewish and Christian interpreters applied literary analysis consciously, under the prepossession of the Graeco-Roman writings. This application was more than feasible, since societies or cultures may learn from one another when they have a resembling range of concerns



but have not developed them equally. The Bible encapsulates very little theoretical reflection about language or any other issue because its purpose is not to evaluate any phenomena in a conceptual manner. This may be explained by the fact that its kernel is more religious than philosophical. Despite the fact that biblical writers did not address philosophical questions in the formal way for which Greeks received their fame, one can still deduce their opinion in relation to ontological issues from statements in which they are tackled with implicitly. The varying emphases that appear in the Bible, just as in the Graeco-Roman tradition, constitute a complex pattern. This complex pattern involves a combination of concerns with the general and with the particular, one that may be encountered throughout the Bible. Par excellence, God is spoken of in the Hebrew Bible sometimes in general terms as "Elohim," whereas on other occasions

with the employment of an individual name, that is YHWH. Furthermore, prophetic speech in the Bible is predominantly particular. However, the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible have a fairly general application as well, since they tackle human life at a very basic level (e.g. oppression). Wisdom literature has frequently been viewed as general or rational rather than particular in its outlook. The veracity of this view stands when one considers that wisdom literature has little concern for Israel as an entity. Nevertheless, royal chronicles, which are particular in nature, were "cultivated" by courtiers who viewed themselves as "wise" persons. In short, a duality of general/reasonable and the particular/arbitrary may be detected through much of biblical literature, Old and New Testament alike.

Buss claims that the idea of relations "integrally" combines these two dimensions. Communication, especially speech, which is a special form of relation, receives special attention in the Bible. Speech in the Bible has two major types: a divine form and a human form. Divine speech constitutes an important part of sacerdotal and prophetic traditions in Israel. The majority of instructions conveyed by priests are asserted to emanate from God. Promises, threats, and related forms of speech articulated by prophets were by and large ascribed to the same source. In accordance with ancient ideas of the power of blessings and curses, mirroring in part the remark that speech has social effects, Israelites believed in the creative and redemptive power of divine utterances (Gen 1,3; Isa 55,11), whereas in the New Testament Christians identified God's word with Jesus.

In terms of human speech, it has to be said that it is an essential topic of what Israelites called "wisdom," which represents the humanly active and reflective side of life. The Israelite wisdom tradition, which encapsulates the books of Proverbs, Qoheleth, Job and some of the Psalms, cultivated the usage of a distinct terminology, represented by the constant reiteration of such words as "mouth," "tongue," "lip," and "word." These terms are employed with reference to human speech, whereas in non-wisdom books these words are predominantly used in a figurative sense, applied to God, swords, fire etc. As far as the New Testament is concerned, exhortations about ordinary speaking, which vary from non-rational tongues, appear especially in contexts clearly connected to wisdom (Col 4,6; James 3,1–12). The concern with human speech in wisdom mingles an illuminated self-interest with an orientation to the social good (e.g. Prov 10,21; 18,13). Qoheleth 12,10 explicitly talks about the enjoyable character of what is uttered: "The assembly speaker sought to find pleasurable words."[1] The delight, or pleasure, that is declared here, seems to be predominantly, although not exclusively, that of content, so that content and aesthetic form, were not at all segregated.

In chapter three, Buss proffers a detailed presentation of the various Graeco-Roman theories of form. He makes a plausible point by commencing his treatment with the fact that Greek philosophy, that is literally "love of wisdom," developed in close analogy to, and in contact with, the Near Eastern, encapsulating Egyptian, educational tradition.[2] The term σοφία even retains a range of meaning virtually the same with

[1] The MT of Qoh 12,10 reads: בִּקֵּשׁ קֹהֶלֶת לִמְצֹא דִּבְרֵי־חֵפֶץ וְכָתוּב יֹשֶׁר דִּבְרֵי אֱמֶת.

[2] In my opinion in this matter it is important to consult Hilaire Duesberg's introduction to the same issue in Hilaire Duesberg, *Les Scribes Inspirés: Introduction aux Livres Sapientiaux de la Bible. Le Livre des Proverbes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938), 21–78.

that of the Hebrew חָכְמָה , “wisdom,” in that it depicts skill, especially a mental one. The Greek sophists of classical and imperial times were in many ways counterparts of the “wise” in Israel (חֲ כמִים/ܚܟܝܡܐ/σοφοὺς/חַכִּימִין), the educators, speakers, thinkers and advisers. It is purported that Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian traditions did not exist in segregated compartments. Moreover, since these traditions were varying internally, in Buss’s opinion, it would be mistaken to view them as having each a differentiating “essence.”[3] Their variations, and the differences between these and other traditions, are relative rather than absolute. However, it is plausible to maintain that the Graeco-Roman contribution was especially strong in the born of reflection, while the significance of the Bible lay in faith.

In chapter four a presentation of early and mediaeval analyses is to be encountered, with a focus on early biblical interpretation, mediaeval and renaissance Jewish interpretation (c. 900–1600 C. E.) and literary patterns in mediaeval Christian exegesis. It is assumed that Jewish and Christian exegetes learned extensively form established rhetorical and poetic theory. However, they rarely did this slavishly. Whenever it appeared to be needful or appropriate, they attempted to create special categories for biblical material. In hindsight, neither the borrowing nor the originating of concepts seems to have been a fitting one in all cases. Buss rightly remarks that it is not otherwise in modern scholarship. The main point is that many of the ancient interpreters understood the necessity for recognizing forms of speech, and regarded both similarities and differences in comparison with other traditions.

Chapter five is a detailed presentation of postmediaeval examinations of form, involving the review of Jewish, Protestant and Catholic works. Buss makes a good case by focusing on the question of reconstruction in poetics and rhetoric, extending the examination of the chapter to the idea of form in professional biblical exegesis (circa 1575–1775). The era from roughly 1475 and roughly 1700 may be viewed as that of early modernity, although the modern way of nominalism had been articulated already before then by Ockham and other scholars. In the realm of philosophy, particularist perspectives became prominent, especially, although not necessarily in Protestant circles. In the light of these developments, Buss provides a thorough presentation of various examinations of form, focusing on such scholars as Erasmus, Luther, Melanchton, Zwingli, Bullinger, Calvin, Flacius etc. In the subsection concerned with poetics and rhetoric, such important stylistic works are concerned here as that of Boileau entitled *The Sublime* and Lowth’s lectures on the “sacred poetry of the Hebrews.” The chapter concludes with women’s hermeneutical contributions to the understanding and definition of form.

Accordingly, chapter six is concerned with formal analysis during the reign of historiography (circa 1775–1875). The eighteenth century marked the victory of an interest in particularity, alongside with a stress on personal liberty. Following an examination of particularist modernity and

[3] Martin J. Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism in its Context* (JSOTSup 274; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 47 n. 45. Some scholars suggest a denial of continuity, which is typically founded on an essentialism which envisages varying “essences” of each tradition. However, essentialism, is, if anything, more Greek, specifically Aristotelian, than biblical. Therefore, Buss concludes, that this type of abrupt contrast, apart from being incorrect, is also inconsistent for anyone valuing the latter that is biblical tradition.

its implication on politics and philosophy and various other issues, the chapter enfolds with an actual analysis of biblical literature, focusing on individual kinds or bodies of literature, such as myth, poetry, etc. A very prominent view during the reign of historiography, in biblical as well as in other studies, was that the highest aim of interpretation is not to comprehend the text but to understand the person who produced it. Par excellence, F. A. Krummacher, who opted for this position, asserted that prominent writers express high originality, in order that they produce from "within themselves," without a formal law.

Chapter seven considers treatments of form after 1875, focusing more on examinations that are not necessarily constituent parts of biblical studies. It is concluded that Gunkel's tripartite definition of genres was significant enough to influence and inspire key figures in a number of disciplines, such as anthropology (B. Malinowski), text linguistics (Zellig Harris), literary studies (the N. Bakhtin circle) and, according to Buss, quite likely philosophy (especially, L. Wittgenstein).

Chapter eight examines Jewish analyses of form (circa 1875–1965). Since 1875, Jewish interpreters have combined particular with general aspects in their interpretations, which fact has been typical of Jewish works from the outset. Nevertheless, the innovative aspect in this period was the combination of particular and general perspectives in a way in which, they were mingled in twentieth-century relationism. Such Jewish writers as H. Cohen, F. Rosenzweig, M. Buber, A. Heschel etc., were prominent figures in the development of relational theory.

Chapter nine considers Catholic views of literary form (circa 1875–1965). In terms of Catholic analyses of form in the relevant period, one may witness on the whole a movement from essentialism towards relational thought (e.g. A. Bea, Alonso Schökel).

Chapter ten explores the Protestant analyses of form, mainly by or for non-specialists (circa 1875–1965). The views of such scholars are considered as M. Arnold, R. G. Moulton, W. R. Harper, Ch. Briggs, with a particular focus on the *Bible as Literature* movement. This movement, particularly with its older studies, because of the breadth of perspectives that it maintained in its purview in terms of the various features of literature and life, appears to be humanly superior to several later works in their thoughtful attention to the interplay between linguistics form, content and life. Nevertheless, the *Bible as Literature* movement was devoid of the questionable assumptions that were introduced by Gunkel. Therefore, they pursued relational principles better than did scholarly traditions which stemmed from Gunkel. Buss concludes that in spite of the technical simplicity that they retain, they represent a more truly sophisticated form criticism than others to which the name is usually applied.

Following, these detailed and well-balanced examinations, chapter eleven proceeds to examine Gunkel's work in its context. The treatment centres on such matters as the intellectual and social framework, aesthetics and religion, outreach and social concern, and more importantly Gunkel's form-critical programme. This later subsection is further divided into an examination of the two-dimensional literary history as a history of genres and the steps in the development of Gunkel's concept of *Sitz im Leben*. This latter concept is further dilated in terms of its background in a separate section, focusing on the realm of biblical studies, Germanics, studies of the ancient Near East, classics, Indology and folklore. Gunkel's life and opus

subsumed both a wide perspective, although it retained its own limitations, and a personal independence that permitted and impelled him to go against what was considered normal and established in his immediate surrounding. These two features are not at all contradictory but rather buttress each other, for the wider one's vision is the more readily one can be independent in relation to one's immediate setting, and the other way round. This point underscores that individuality is not opposed to interaction.

Chapter twelve examines form in Protestant New Testament (but not strictly New Testament) scholarship (circa 1875–1965). The treatment includes such scholars as K. Barth, W. Temple, and the students of Gunkel, namely M. Dibelius, K. L. Schmidt, R. Bultmann, E. Staufer etc. A good number of Protestant scholars in the realm of the New Testament, with their pursuit to go beyond individualism in an emphasis on the Church, moved in the direction of Catholicism, just as Catholics became more open in terms of adopting a particularist historical criticism, which in turn had been fostered especially by Protestants. Other scholars even opted for a clear interaction with the human sciences. Therefore, somewhat like Gunkel, they aimed not only for a connection between past and present but also between themselves and non-Christians.

The thirteenth chapter furnishes an examination of form in specialist Protestant studies of the Hebrew Bible (circa 1915–1965). This lengthy chapter builds on such pervious works as that of O. Eißfeld (1965), G. Fohrer (1965) and J. Hayes. Nevertheless, Buss concentrates not so much on the many substantive observations made in these aforementioned works, but on the principles that were inherent in them and also on their intellectual context. After considering and examining the works of a whole array of scholars, ranging from G. E. Wright to C. Westermann and W. Zimmerli, Buss concludes that if "form" is viewed as a system of relationships and form-criticism is, then accordingly understood as a study of the relations between life, thought and word, much work, even at the present moment, still is situated ahead for this worthy endeavour. However, it may be fitting to say that a significant commencement has been made in this matter.

The final chapter of the book is a prime example of Buss's expertise in the area tackled, since he provides fresh and new avenues not only for biblical studies in terms of the understanding of the history of biblical interpretation, especially form criticism but also in terms of new directions towards which this discipline may veer to in the future.

In conclusion, Buss deems, that form criticism, as it was defined in his work, observes interrelationships between thoughts and moods, linguistic forms, and the experiences and activities of life on the grounds of providing awareness in terms of more that one text. Ideally, this would also entail knowledge of more than than one culture. A relational comprehension of form does not envisage that links are rigid and thus universal in a monistic way but rather sees and values variety. However, it also holds the view that phenomena are not entirely arbitrary but reflect shared, although contingent processes. In this way, it pursues the appropriation of an insight into form that looks for a moderate likelihood rather than for either necessity or "pure randomness."

I think the reader has a lot to look forward to, not only in terms of the enjoyment that one may experience in the reading of this volume and the new insights that the reader may gain from it, but also in

terms of the most recent work published by Buss on the same topic.[4] On the whole, I think the reading of this book, would certainly benefit Hungarian theological scholarship in appraising more positively or negatively and probably more objectively form-criticism, past and present.

Bálint Károly Zabán,
Queen's University Belfast,
Union Theological College,
Langham Partnership

Stuart Weeks: Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1–9

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007,
xii + 260 pages , ISBN 0-19-929154-3 978-0-19-929154-0

As the title indicates this book is concerned with the first major section of the book of Proverbs that is Prov 1–9. Its main aim is to explore Prov 1–9 in terms of its genre and sophisticated employment of imagery. By this S. Weeks rebuts those views according to which Prov 1–9 is a mere anthology or accretion of various editorial layers. Weeks surmises that Prov 1–9 may be viewed as a unified composition. The setting characteristic of the ancient and prestigious instruction *Gattung* is employed by a sequence of "stylistically ambitious" poems, which also expand the conventions of this *Gattung* in order to produce an "inter-play" of figurative characters and speeches. The characters in question encapsulate personified Wisdom and her perilous counterparts, the seductive Strange Woman and Woman Folly. Through these characters and through an allusive employment of words and motifs, the ancient readers were admonished to internalize the Jewish Law in order to be able to decline the dangerous and threatening alternatives and obtain wisdom. This presentation of the character of the work is performed in light of a preceding elucidation of Egyptian instructions. Nevertheless, it is positioned in a Jewish religious context, so that Weeks claims that its later prepossession betrays not reinterpretation but an accurate comprehension of the original message. This, as it has been rightly pointed out, retains important implications for the understanding of the ways in which wisdom and Law were perceived in post-exilic Israel.

The treatment offered by Weeks is divided into six chapters and an additional annotated translation of the MT of Prov 1–9.

The first chapter tackles the question of the instruction *Gattung* in the ancient Near East. Hebrew literature did not come into existence and then develop in a "cultural or literary vacuum." Therefore, scholars concur about the fact that certain genres, such as the wisdom literature of which Proverbs is a constituent part, drew on forms and conventions borrowed from neighbouring cultures. There is an ongoing discussion amongst scholars as to the degree of this borrowing. In relation to this, Weeks deems that much of Proverbs does reflect the compositional traditions that are to be found in the literatures of the ancient Near East. One of the most prominent of these is the instruction *Gattung*, which was especially widespread in Egypt. The bulk of commentators have associated Prov 1–9 with that genre. Weeks concludes this chapter by asserting that despite the universal character of the instruction genre

[4] Martin J. Buss, *The Concept of Form in the Twentieth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008).