

c. Canon Criticism

There are two important names associated with this movement: J.A. Sanders and Brevard Childs. The approaches of these two men are somewhat different even though they are often grouped together. The article by D.A. Carson ("Hermeneutics") gives a brief assessment of Sanders, parts of which we quote here:

"Essentially, this [canon criticism] is the study of the means whereby early authoritative traditions were utilized by Israel (in the Old Testament) and the Church (in the New Testament) to span the gaps of time and culture to be re-formed according to the needs of the new believing communities." (p. 16)

Sanders tends to focus less on the text itself than on the ways in which the traditions have been transformed through history. The contexts in which the traditions were used are certainly important, as Carson points out, but the authority lies not with the context but the *text*.

The term "canon criticism" is also frequently applied to the approach of Brevard Childs (Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, [Fortress, 1979]). While there are points of contact between Sanders and Childs, the latter refuses the term canonical criticism as applied to his approach. Childs focuses more on the final form of the text than does Sanders. He sees his method not just as one more critical tool. Instead, he is concerned with the question, "How in the light of critical approaches to the Bible, can the canonical literature still function as Scripture?" The result is that Childs presents us with a more Barthian approach to the Bible: the hermeneutic is basically conservative and there is much in Childs' work that is helpful.

d. Structuralism

Here is another highly complicated and esoteric field. See the useful discussion by Carson. This movement is the only major critical school which does not have its roots in Germany--here we must look to France.

Structuralism may be considered from two main directions: 1) the concern for literary structure and 2) the search for "deep structure," those structures of the mind that are fundamental to man as man. These structures are not found simply by analyzing what the author of a text meant. Says Daniel Patte (What is Structural Exegesis?, [Fortress, 1976], p. 14): "A first striking characteristic of a structural exegesis is the absence of the traditional semantic concern: the exegesis no longer aims at what the author meant." The structuralist believes that not only does man *intend* meaning by his words, but meaning is also *imposed upon him*. It is this latter aspect that interests the structuralists.