

Interactions in Interpretation

History and Interpretation of the Bible second general conference

May 4–5, 2017

Call for papers

Distinguished colleagues,

the research project *History and Interpretation of the Bible* will reach in 2017 its sixth, penultimate year. In five, largely independent sections, biblical texts and their historical and cultural contexts have been examined, under three main aspects: creation, transmission and interpretation of these texts. Part of our project is also to stimulate “synergy” among different approaches in research. With this goal, a second plenary conference of the project is planned to take place in **May 4–5, 2017 in Prague, at Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University**. The theme of the conference is **Interactions in Interpretation**.

Our previous conference on *Process of Authority* (the monograph published by de Gruyter is due to appear shortly) has shown that authority is closely linked to meaning, i.e. comprehensibility and relevance. Efforts to ameliorate texts in this way are demonstrably present already in their transmission. This is in consonance with our conviction that examining the Bible, even with a historical aspect, is instigated and born by the question about the relevance of its texts and message. The focus of our previous conference was *tradition*, the process of transmission of the biblical and other authoritative texts, which itself has been an important factor in the formation of these texts: they have scarcely been results of a single creative act, but rather they were formed in a process.

However, not only texts were transmitted, but also thought patterns, images, formulations, motifs. The world of biblical texts may be taken as a special case of an environment strongly permeated by *intertextuality*. The concept was originally coined (J. Kristeva) as an instrument in answering the question of how meaning is communicated through texts: language is a medium that enables and also limits communication, as it is only accessible and usable in its particular “incarnations” into a complex of texts, where it exists and can be reached by author and reader.

The world of biblical texts can be also described as a world of a certain language: a complex of ideas, notions, images, idioms, stories, that are shared and referred to. These specific features of the biblical language may be visualised as threads running through the collection of the books that make up the Bible, but – at least sometimes – do not end at the boundary lines of the established canon. The world of the Bible is specifically defined in many ways, but certainly not closed in itself, it communicates with other worlds in both directions. The threads of intertextuality certainly extend wider.

It is around this aspect of intertextuality that we would like to concentrate our second conference. With respect to the feedback and suggestions received from the participants of the project, we have determined three foci of the conference:

(1) **The motif of dream.** Both in the Bible and in the cognate literatures, the motif of dream emerges quite often as a means of communication with God /deity. Dreams feature in the stories of Jacob, Joseph, Gedeon, Daniel – and Jesus (in the rendition of Matthew). Dream is sometimes accepted as a legitimate means of prophetic inspiration (Nu 12:6; Joel 3:1), sometimes rather renounced (Jer 23:28; Eccl 34:1ff). However, a dream-like atmosphere can serve also as a form, in which some narratives are presented (e.g. Joh 6:16–11; visions in Revelation). Are there any threads, running through biblical layers, or interesting links of (re)interpretation that can be followed?

(2) **The text Isa 6:9–10.** The commission of Isaiah “to make the mind of the people dull, stop their ears, and shut their eyes” belongs to the most obscure texts in the Bible. At the same time, it was frequently quoted and referred to by practically all communities that were engaged in interaction with the biblical tradition. What can be discovered from the various dealings with this “difficult passage”?

(3) **Other cases of intertextuality.** In addition to one set motif and one particular text, the third focal theme of the conference remains open to wider variety of topics that can help to elucidate the issue that was described above.

We will appreciate if you find yourself able and willing to contribute to the conference with a paper that would fit into one of the three focal themes. We will await written submissions, indicating a provisional title of your contribution together with an abstract at the e-mail addresses given below, by October 31.

Looking forward to your proposals, with kind greetings,

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