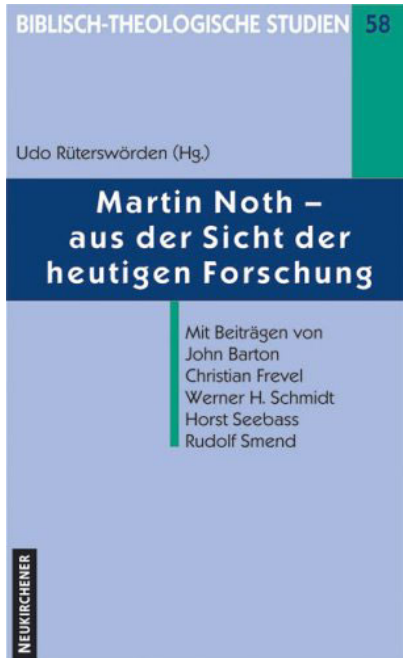


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***Martin Noth—aus der Sicht der heutigen Forschung***

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This small volume is a collection of four papers presented on 2 November 2002 at a commemoration of Martin Noth's one hundredth birthday held at the Evangelisch-Theologisch faculty of the Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Bonn, where Noth once served.

The first essay, by Rudolf Smend, is entitled, "Martin Noth (1902–1968): Person und Werk." The essay contains three parts: a biographical sketch of Noth; a discussion of the personal and professional relationship between Noth, Albrecht Alt, and Gerhard von Rad; and an overview of Noth's bibliography and major contributions to Old Testament studies. The essay makes for enjoyable reading, not least because of several anecdotes that *Alttestamentler* will find delightful. These concern, above all, the relationship of mutual admiration and respect between the three giants, Alt, Noth, and von Rad. Smend recounts one such anecdote illustrating Noth's exuberance over his first trip to Palestine in 1925. A cousin who saw Noth come bounding up the stairs of one of the buildings of the University of Leipzig remarked that he must just have become engaged. "Much better!" Noth replied. "I'm going with Alt to Palestine."

The second entry in the volume, by Horst Seebass, treats the heritage of Noth for the study of the Pentateuch and Hexateuch. Recognizing that the trend in present-day scholarship (at least in the German-speaking sphere) is away from Noth's model of a Tetrateuch + Deuteronomistic History back to that of a Pentateuch or Hexateuch, Seebass sketches what he sees as Noth's most important contributions to subsequent study. First, Noth adopted certain principles for further development of Wellhausen's theory: abandon the attempt at further division of J into its sources; regard language as an ineffective tool for separating J and E; and understand P's reworking of J and E as the basis for further redaction of the Pentateuch. Second, Noth jettisoned the Hexateuch model. Third, Noth's main interest in his *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* was the use of Syro-Palestinian geography to reconstruct preliterate traditions. Fourth, Noth determined that the works of J and E were combined with P before the annexation of Deuteronomy.

Seebass then focuses on the book of Numbers, trying to show what features of Noth's pentateuchal theory may still be relevant. Numbers shows signs of being a distinct unit in its own right. It has its own frame, within which it infuses more recent legal materials into older narratives. Noth was correct, Seebass contends, to distinguish Deuteronomy from Numbers and the previous pentateuchal books. Noth's "fragmentary" model might be applied to the process of bringing together individual books into the Pentateuch rather than to his original idea of diverse traditions underlying the pentateuchal sources. The place of the book of Joshua remains an open question, but Noth's observation that there is no P foundation to Joshua, as there is to the books in the Tetrateuch, is still a valid reason not to incorporate it into a Hexateuch. Seebass regards Noth's tradition-historical approach as the next great phase in Old Testament study following Wellhausen and his interest in linking study of the text with that of geography and history as paradigmatic.

Christian Frevel's essay on "Deuteronomistic History or Histories? The Thesis of Martin Noth between Tetrateuch, Hexateuch, and Enneateuch" follows next. This article contains a description of Noth's Deuteronomistic History hypothesis and then a critical synthesis of its reception to the present. Frevel observes that in *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* Noth sought to solve the problem created in his Joshua commentary by his conclusion that the latter book did not contain the pentateuchal sources but that Deuteronomistic elements formed its basic structure. The question raised by Noth about the end of the pentateuchal sources in relation to the "conquest" remains a major crux today. Frevel notes that a corollary of Noth's theory involved the concept of Dtr as an author, by which he meant not a writer who created without the benefit of any source material but rather one who used sources yet was more than a mere collector.

Frevel critiques Noth's thesis in five areas. (1) He suggests that the idea of Dtr as a single author isolated (in Mizpah) from any cultic or institutional context reflected Noth's own situation in Königsberg. Scholarship on the authorship of the DtrH since Noth, above all the so-called "Smend" and "Cross" schools, indicates that the redactional situation within the DtrH is more complex than Noth admitted. (2) Noth's view of the "kerygma" or purpose of the DtrH as completely negative with no hope for the future was also reflective of Noth's own time. Subsequent research, beginning with von Rad and Wolff, questioned this notion and found indications of a positive outlook in the DtrH. These differing conclusions suggest the presence of different perspectives within the DtrH, again a more complex situation than Noth advocated. (3) But to give up the unity of the DtrH is really to give up its existence, and that is the step taken recently by an increasing number of scholars who argue for the existence of distinct books linked together in a developing corpus or the like. This is essentially a return to the situation in scholarship before Noth. Noth's observations about the role of Deuteronomistic texts and commonality of authorship are accommodated by positing a late level of Deuteronomistic editing that bound the originally separate books together. (4) The Hexateuch theory, thus, is a "thorn in the flesh" of the DtrH hypothesis. Newer hexateuchal models are not the same as those before Noth, because he proved that J and P do not continue in Joshua. However, in addition to the question of the conclusion to the narrative thread of the Pentateuch and the possession of the land, there is the matter of how to understand Josh 24, on which Noth himself vacillated. Recent scholarship has produced the "Jehovist" hypothesis, which espouses a pre-Dtr narrative thread in Joshua that stands in continuity with the Tetrateuch, to try to explain these problems. Frevel thinks that Josh 24 may be the conclusion of this thread and may come from J. He also sees Josh 13–21 as closely affiliated with Num 26–36 and thus intended to be understood in a hexateuchal context. (5) At the same time, the book of Deuteronomy is hardly suitable as the beginning of a work of history. Deuteronomy 1–3 fit best within a hexateuchal context, as they presuppose the tetrateuchal narrative and continue it with a review of the law on the plains of Moab—which makes perfect sense within a Hexateuch. Frevel favors Otto's theory (based on Lohfink) of an original "DtrL" source for this material running from Deut 1 to Josh 24, which was then combined with P into a Hexateuch.

Frevel summarizes: Noth's Deuteronomistic History hypothesis was a brilliant stroke; it lasted a long time and inspired much important scholarship. However, it has now become questionable for several reasons. Most of all, it does not explain the complexity of the evidence, especially outside of Kings, and it is no longer dominant, at least in the German-speaking sphere. The renewed Hexateuch theory poses a strong challenge to Noth's DtrH hypothesis. Still, the recent criticisms of Noth's theory are stronger than alternative syntheses proposed by the critics. There is no consensus explanation among

recent critics for the overarching Dtr redaction in Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets nor for the development of the Pentateuch, which Noth's theory explained, albeit simplistically.

The final contribution, by W. H. Schmidt, is quite brief and focuses on Noth's role in founding the *Biblische Kommentar* series in 1950, also published by Neukirchener. Schmidt lauds Noth's ability to bring a variety of evidence—archaeological, topographical, historical, exegetical, and comparative—to bear on the biblical text and his insistence on that text as the source of theology rather than the reverse. At the same time, Schmidt suggests that Noth perceived Israel's uniqueness.

This volume is a worthy tribute to a scholar who has had a significant impact on the study of the Hebrew Bible. The essays by Seebass and Frevel are especially useful as indicators of the status quo in German-speaking circles of the field. Their perspectives are varied. Seebass is much more skeptical of recent trends toward a return to the Hexateuch. Frevel is clearly the youngest of the four and the only one who did not study with Noth or know him personally. Still, his respect for Noth and his work are well placed. Indeed, Frevel well recognizes the greatness and foresight of Noth when he closes his piece with Noth's own words acknowledging the need for constant reexamination of scholarly theories: "Denn wissenschaftliche Thesen, auch wenn sie weit verbreitet sind und mehr oder weniger einleuchtend zu sein scheinen, müssen immer wieder in Frage gestellt und an der Überlieferung überprüft werden." Of course, such a reexamination may just as well lead back to the theory with which it began, so that Seebass's reluctance to sign the Deuteronomistic Historian's epitaph may be well considered.