

**RECONSIDERING THE ISSUE OF CANON.  
THE INTER-RELIGIOUS PLURALITY OF SCRIPTURES IN ASIA AS  
SEEN BY KWOK PUI-LAN AND THE INTRA-RELIGIOUS PLURALITY  
OF PSALTER EDITIONS (MT, LXX, QUMRAN)**

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**Abstract.** New insights on the issue of canon from two different scholarly fields in biblical studies will be presented and brought into dialogue in this article. The Chinese diaspora Scholar Kwok Pui-lan develops a hermeneutical model, which tries to understand the canon of the Christians, the Bible, within the multiscriptural context of Asia. This inter-religious Plurality of scriptures will be highlighted against the backdrop of the intra-religious plurality of Psalter editions such as the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX) and the Psalm scroll 11QPs<sup>a</sup> found in Qumran. Within the process of formation and stabilization of the canon various editions exist. This plurality opens new spaces for interreligious hermeneutics.

The biblical canon is often taken as a stable collection of books universally and from the very beginning fixed. Westerners, obscuring the historical shape of the Bible editions, have for a long time monopolized this understanding of the Bible. Among Jews and Christians, in spite of shared and common traits, different canons were taken as valid. From the fourth century onwards the Christian community used the “expanded” Greek canon. It was only at the Council of Trent (1546) that the Catholic Church stated explicitly that books only available in Greek such as Tobit, Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon were also canonical. The Old Testament of the Protestants has the same content as the Hebrew Bible of the Jews, but differs in the ordering of the books.

The classical distinction between two aspects of the term canon can be helpful in such a discussion: one may distinguish between canon as norm or standard, rule (*norma normans*), and canon as fixed catalog, register, list (*norma normata*).<sup>2</sup>

In Asia, Christian face already an inter-religious plurality of scriptures between religions in Asia: Buddhist<sup>3</sup>, Confucianist, Daoist and Hinduist. The way Kwok Pui-lan a theologian of Chinese origin living in the US<sup>4</sup> deals with this

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. James SANDERS, Art. *Canon*, in: ABD I (1992) 839. Gerald T. SHEPPARD, Art. *Canon*, in: ER 3 (1987), 62–69, 64f distinguishes as well between two uses: canon as rule, ideal, norm and canon as fixed list, listing, register, catalog. Jan ASSMANN labels the first “das heiligende Prinzip” and the second “der geheiligte Bestand” (cf. id., *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München, 1992, 115).

<sup>3</sup> Already within Buddhism there exists an (intra-religious) plurality of important Buddhist writings in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and other Asian languages.

<sup>4</sup> Kwok Pui-lan was born 1952 and grew up in Hong Kong. Since 1984 she lives mostly in the U.S. Just after her graduation in 1989 at Harvard Divinity School in Boston she went back for a short

situation will be examined in a first step. She develops a hermeneutical model which tries to understand the canon of the Christians, the Bible, from within an Asian (diasporic) perspective. From a multiscriptural Asian challenge, it can be useful to look back to the ancient Judaism of the beginning of the first century CE. At that time, scripture was not yet a clearly defined body of holy books and a plurality of different editions of one biblical book existed. Therefore in part two the intra-religious<sup>5</sup> plurality of Psalter editions such as the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX), and the Psalm scroll 11QPs<sup>a</sup> found in Qumran will be investigated. This plurality of Psalter editions in the first century CE will show the historical implications of each one.

Finally the reinterpretation of the intra-religious plurality in the light of the inter-religious plurality and vice versa will clarify the issue of canon in interreligious dialogue as in general hermeneutical discussions

### **1. Reading the Biblical Canon in the midst of an Inter-Religious Plurality of Scriptures in Asia**

“Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World”<sup>6</sup> is the programmatic title of Kwok Pui-lan’s book on hermeneutics. “Non-biblical world” refers to the multireligious contexts in Asia. The Christians are in an absolute minority situation in her homeland of China where they number less than 5% of the population. With regard to the plurality of holy scriptures in Asia and to the long tradition of hermeneutics in Asia, Christians are asked to question their Western conception of truth and hermeneutics. In Buddhist literature the coexistence of conflicting sources and concepts of authority generates a “hermeneutic pluralism.”<sup>7</sup> Truth is not a metaphysical given to which one may refer universally: it becomes for example lucid in the concrete struggle for liberty in (wo)men’s lives.

#### **The Bible as Common and as Asian Heritage**

In an early statement Kwok underlines the ecumenical importance of the Bible: “Those post-Christian feminists who try to move away from the biblical

period to her Alma Mater, the Chinese University in her hometown, Hong Kong. Since then she teaches at the Episcopal Divinity School in Boston/Massachusetts. Cf. Dorothea ERBELE-KÜSTER, *Eine interreligiöse Dekonstruktion des biblischen Kanons. Die Theologin Kwok Pui-lan liest die Bibel im Kontext der Religionen Asiens*, in: “Daß Gott eine große Barmherzigkeit habe”: *Konkrete Theologie in der Verschränkung von Glaube und Leben*, ed. by Doris HILLER / Christine KRESS, Leipzig, 2001, 281–288.

<sup>5</sup> My focus will be on a certain historical time period among the Jewish traditions from about 150 BCE till the first century CE, thus a time of intra-religious plurality. However, the early Christian communities descending from Jewish background have had to face this phenomenon as well.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. KWOK Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, Maryknoll / New York, 1995. Ten years later with her book *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, Louisville / Kentucky, 2005 a shift is marked. Whereas first her stress was on dealing with the intra-Asian plurality of scriptures as a Chinese Christian, Kwok is now more preoccupied with the postcolonial reading of the Bible in her Diaspora situation.

<sup>7</sup> Luis O. GOMEZ, Art. *Buddhist Literature: Exegesis and Hermeneutics*, in: ER 2 (1987) 529–540, 529, 533.

religion [...] tend to alienate themselves from global sisterhood because the Bible is an important part of our common “heritage” and “language” cutting across cultural and socio-political diversities.”<sup>8</sup>

The Bible is a common tradition which (wo)men from different contexts share with each other and which makes dialogue or community possible. Even though some texts are oppressive, Kwok does not abandon or reject the Bible generally due to its patriarchal character. At the same time she claims the Bible as Asian heritage: “In particular, I cannot believe that truth is only revealed in a book written almost two thousands years ago, and that the Chinese have no way to participate in its inception”<sup>9</sup>.

This quotation from Kwok Pui-lan confronts us with our view of the Bible rooted in Western culture and history.

### **Postcolonial Reading of the Bible**

Nevertheless the aim of Kwok’s postcolonial reading is to discover the Bible with Asian eyes beyond the Western perspective. In her interpretation of the Syro-phoenician women in Matthew 15:2-28 and Mark 7:24-30 she unmasks the misuse of these texts. According to an antijudaistic salvation history model the text served in mission history often as model for submissive conversion. For Kwok the Asian, the way the Gentile women addresses Jesus and vice versa is of utmost interest.<sup>10</sup> In the story the pagan woman begs Jesus to cast out the demon of her daughter. The narrative consists of a web of differences like: Jewish homeland/foreign land, inside/outside, Jewish/Gentiles, women/disciples. Otherness is highlighted in multiple ways: the other as woman, as pagan. Instead of assuming that the Syro-phoenician woman became a Christian, Kwok states that in the Gospel the cultural and religious identity of the woman is respected. Her re-reading gives insight for multifaith hermeneutics and facilitates interreligious dialogue. Thus Bible studies have to discover the complex interactions between cultures in the Bible itself.<sup>11</sup>

### **Biblical interpretation as dialogical imagination**

As an Asian Christian theologian Kwok tries to bring into dialogue two different stories, the Biblical story and the Asian story.<sup>12</sup> Hence two acts of imagination have to be undertaken by the reader: First imagining how the ancient/biblical world was and second how the Bible potentially addresses the

<sup>8</sup> KWOK Pui-lan, *The Feminist Hermeneutics of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: An Asian Feminist Response* (EAJT 3) 1985, 147–153, 148.

<sup>9</sup> KWOK, *Mothers and Daughters. Writers and Fighters*, in: *Inheriting our Mother’s Gardens. Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective*, ed. by Letty M. RUSSELL et al., Philadelphia, 1988, 21–34, 29f.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 71–83.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 91.94.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 12. As the title of her recent book *Postcolonial Imagination* indicates, the latter is now the umbrella term, which encompasses historical, dialogical and diasporic imagination (29–51).

questions of contemporary Asia. Thus Kwok interrogates the biblical stories and asks whether they shed light for example on the massacre of the Chinese students. On the 5 of June 1989 thousands of them lost their lives in the struggle for freedom and democracy. But not only the Bible interprets the Asian history, it is as well the other way round: The courage of the young people in the resistance movement reveals the reality of resurrection. The theologian wants to “re-write the script and re-cast the biblical drama, giving women more active roles”<sup>13</sup>.

In this process of re-writing and re-telling the biblical salvation history, both the Asian myths and stories and the biblical stories get intertwined. Kwok's aim is not to maintain a hierarchical distinction between text and context, or between the biblical text and other texts. Consequently scripture is not a silent book, but a “talking book”<sup>14</sup>, underlining the revelatory power. This dialogical model of interpretation presupposes that the Bible is endowed with a plurality of meanings and of voices.

### **Oral Hermeneutics of Asian (Wo)men**

In the process of dialogical imagination the oral tradition is taken seriously. Kwok's method of dialogical interpretation is inspired by the way scriptures are dealt with in the Asian context she grew up in.<sup>15</sup> The Vedas of the Hindu tradition have been transmitted long time orally. Buddhist sutras give an account of the words spoken by Buddha. Confucius' Analects of conversations with his pupils were later collected and written down. Just like in the early beginnings of the New Testament the written text was not the starting point, but the preached Gospel.

Kwok strives to go beyond relating the oral to the written tradition. She tries hence to proclaim a new model of scripture including non-written forms as well. Although the interpretation process of these texts was often dominated by males, Kwok takes Asian myths and stories told by women to interpret the Bible.<sup>16</sup>

### **From Indigenization towards Multifaith Hermeneutics**

Indigenization seems for Kwok to be obsolete, since it was often misused in mission history.<sup>17</sup> Indigenization takes a universal kernel or truth for granted, which could be wrapped in different cultural fashions,<sup>18</sup> whereas Kwok opts for a dialogical model, in which text and context are interchangeable and equivalent.

<sup>13</sup> KWOK, *Reflection on Women's Sacred Scriptures*, in: Conc (1998/3) 105–112, 109.

<sup>14</sup> KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 40.

<sup>15</sup> Traces of orality are not only found in Asian religions, this phenomenon occurs as well in Abrahamic religions: The Hebrew Bible knows not only the *ketib*, the written version, but also the *qere*, the way it should be read. Quran means recitation and not scripture.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, IX: “When women study the Bible, we do not read from a written text. Instead, we share our stories, songs, and dreams”.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 57f.65. Likewise the contributions of Gomang Seratwa NTLOEDIBE-KUSWANI and Dora R. MBUWAYESANGO in: *Other Ways of Reading. African Woman and the Bible*, ed. by Musa DUBE, Geneva/Atlanta, 2001 are critical towards inculturation.

<sup>18</sup> Kwok does not differentiate between indigenization and inculturation. Inculturation however considers neither the Gospel nor the text as fixed, but operates with a dynamic concept of culture

Kwok's multireligious context completely changes the reading of the Bible. Differences are not annihilated and tensions are taken as challenge. Interreligious dialogue ethics imply that the other acknowledges our description of his/her faith as compatible with his/her self-understanding.<sup>19</sup> But Kwok's stride goes even further: "The Bible must also be read from the perspective of other faith traditions. Multifaith hermeneutics looks at ourselves as others see us, so that we may be able to see ourselves more clearly."<sup>20</sup>

One of the most difficult challenges for multifaith hermeneutics is probably to see the Bible with the lens of other religions and cultures, thus to be interpreted by the other.

## 2. Reconsidering the Issue of Canon from an Intra-Religious Plurality of Psalter Editions

The dialogical model described by Kwok Pui-lan, which weaves text and context together is already intrinsic to the Bible itself. This presupposition will be explained by taking the Psalter editions of the Hebrew Bible, of the Septuagint and from Qumran as examples. The contextuality of each (canonical)<sup>21</sup> edition will get evident. It has to be stated that the Psalter editions found in Qumran are fragmentary, in a very material sense as well.<sup>22</sup> The most striking manuscript is Psalm scroll 11QPs<sup>a</sup> which compasses besides of 39 psalms from the two last psalm books compositions which we do not find in the Masoretic text. The ranging of the Psalms also differs from that of the Hebrew Masoretic and the Greek Psalter.

In what follows the different Psalter editions will be investigated to discover the potentiality within (intra-) the Jewish-Christian tradition for the development of inter-religious hermeneutics.

### Canon as list (*norma normata*): Ps 151 LXX as a supernumerary Psalm<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the Masoretic Psalter which ends with Ps 150, in the Septuagint the Davidic autobiographical Psalm 151 is added. The first verse argues in an apologetic way. It reads ψαλμὸς ἰδιόγραφος καὶ ἐξωθεν τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ: "written by himself and a supernumerary Psalm". This quotation reflects that the Septuagint Psalter knows about a so-called "usual" edition with just 150 Psalms. Anyhow the

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(cf. Volker KÜSTER, *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ. Intercultural Theology*, London–Maryknoll–New York, 2001, 20–24, esp. 23f).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Volker KÜSTER, Art. *Dialog*, in: RGG<sup>4</sup>, Bd.2 (1999) 821.

<sup>20</sup> KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 92. Thesis 8.

<sup>21</sup> The character of the Psalter scrolls / editions found in Qumran is disputed. For Sanders the findings in Qumran reflect a major step in the process of canonization of the Psalter. He and Flint understand 11QPs as canonical, whereas others as Fabry, Talmon and van der Woude plea for a library edition.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the stress which is therefore layed on the difficult material state of the scrolls by Eva JAIN and Annette STEUDEL, *Les manuscrites psalmiques de la Mer Morte et la reception du Psautier à Qumran*, in: RevSR 2003, 529–543.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Dorothea ERBELE-KÜSTER, *Lesen als Akt des Betens. Eine Rezeptionsästhetik der Psalmen* (WMANT 87), Neukirchen–Vluyn, 2001, 97–103

editors trespass this number consciously by including a supernumerary Psalm in their canonical Greek edition. Ps 151 LXX brings in new aspects to the characterization of David. David is associated with a lyre and is described in Hellenistic terms alluding Orpheus.

The biographical Ps 151 of the Septuagint is also transmitted in a Hebrew version found in Qumran,<sup>24</sup> which served probably as model for the Greek one. Ps 151 LXX is an intertextual conflate reading of the Hebrew Qumranic Ps 151A and B. The Septuagint as translation for the Jews living in the diaspora was a precondition for communicating the faith in a changed historical situation which had to face the hellenized world. The Greek Psalter is an example for an edition referring to an existing normative scripture but nevertheless exceeding it.

### David as a rule (*norma normans*) for 11QPs<sup>a</sup>

11QPs<sup>a</sup>, a Psalm scroll found in Cave 11 at Qumran, copied between 30–50 CE differs completely in arrangement and content from the (pre)masoretic Psalter. Most likely it begins with Ps 101. Ps 151A followed by Ps 151B stands at the end. The scroll includes unknown material as well, such as the prose “David’s Composition”, which says that David has composed 3600 Psalms, and all in all even 4050 songs. Consequently for 11QPs<sup>a</sup> every Psalm that is written and/or read in the light of David is authoritative. The Davidic framework is taken as a sign for its authority.<sup>25</sup> Because 11QPs<sup>a</sup> takes the authorship and readership of David as an accepted fact, the line of the Greek version about the supernumerary status of the Psalm would not make sense. 11QPs<sup>a</sup> has no need to count the Psalms, in order to draw a line of demarcation between the 150 “regular” Psalms and other supernumerary, since anyhow it will not exceed the enormous number of 3600 or 4050 Psalms and songs. Therefore this Psalter is open to oral tradition.

### Intertextuality

On the other hand in narrative traditions blank space in the midst of the verse marked with **s** and **p**, the so called *Pisqah Be’emsa ‘Pasuq* (p.b.p.), signals openness for external voices or intertextual reading. Shemaryahu Talmon argues that for example in 1Sam 16:12, the election of David as king, the blank space could be “filled” or read together with Ps 151A of 11QPs<sup>a</sup>.<sup>26</sup> This does not necessarily imply that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> lacks authority and is “just” a liturgical collection. Because in other cases the p.b.p in the books of Samuel (2Sam 7:4) is expanded with canonical psalms as Ps 132. The phenomenon of intertextuality could be understood on the contrary as an argument for their use in the reading and interpretation process of narrative parts of the writings. Compositions such as Ps 151A and B in 11QPs<sup>a</sup> hence were attested “a certain degree of popular authority,

<sup>24</sup> See below.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. James S. SANDERS, *The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs<sup>a</sup>) Reviewed*, in: *On Language, Culture and Religion: In Honor of Eugen A. Nida*, The Hague 1974, 95–96 and id., *Variorum in the Psalms Scroll (11QPs<sup>a</sup>)*, in: HTR 59 (1966) 86–87.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Shemaryahu TALMON, *Pisqah Be’emsa ‘Pasuq and 11QPs<sup>a</sup>*, in: Textus 5 (1966) 11–21.

which might explain their inclusion in a canonical collection”<sup>27</sup> These blank spaces in midst the verses in ancient manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible open thus the text for further texts and voices.

### **David as hermeneutical key (*norma normans*)**

The Davidic superscriptions in all Psalter editions alike serve as an initial aid and hermeneutical hint to re-read the Psalms in the light of the experiences of David. David serves as a first reader (“implied reader”) which facilitates ongoing reading processes.<sup>28</sup> Using Davidic superscriptions embraces and fosters the oral transmission and at the same time it goes along with the stabilization and authorization of the written Psalter. In 11QPs<sup>a</sup> a “true Davidic Psalter”<sup>29</sup> has been created. Referring to these different Psalter editions makes clear that canon is historically shaped. Being canonical or not is depending on the community.

In attributing more and more Psalms to David in the Septuagint and Qumran editions the redactors have found a way to make the Psalms normative. Production and reception gets interwoven. Producing, adding a Davidic superscription is at the same token a way of reading the psalms. The confirmation that David is writing, praying and singing Psalms opens the text for new re-readings and re-castings.

### **3. Reconsidering the Issue of Canon**

Two different models have been dealt with: one developing a multifaith hermeneutics in an interreligious situation and the other providing an intrascriptural hermeneutics. But in both cases the concept of canon is not self-evident. The examination of the concept of scriptural authority in Asia will now be confronted with the concept of biblical scripture in the first century CE.

#### **Scripture between Fluidity and Stability**

“Canon implies boundaries, which have significant consequences for interpretation and use. [...] Canon does not; however imply fixed or unchangeable boundaries”<sup>30</sup> It became obvious that canon as a term commonly used in the sense of a clearly shaped body of authoritative books (*norma normata*) is not appropriate with respect to the multiscriptural situation in Asia. Instead of speaking of canon Kwok prefers the term scripture in the plural and uses it just as rule (*norma normans*) but not as a fixed corpus. Speaking of scriptures does imply a plurality of sacred scriptures without regarding just one as authoritative. Likewise the term canon is imprecise with respect to Qumran,<sup>31</sup> because the process of authorization and stabilization was still ongoing.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Gerald H. WILSON, *The Qumran Scroll Reconsidered: Analysis of the Debate*, in: CBQ 47 (1985) 624–642, 630.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. ERBELE-KÜSTER, *Lesen als Akt des Betens*, 53–107

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Peter W. FLINT, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (STDJ 17) Leiden / New York / Köln 1997, 224.

<sup>30</sup> Phyllis A. BIRD, *The Authority of the Bible*, in: NIB Vol.I (1994) 33–64, 44.

<sup>31</sup> Therefore FLINT, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls*, 24 does not use canon/canonical with reference to Qumran scrolls (cf.13–26).

Striking is that the scroll 11QPs<sup>a</sup> and the multiscriptural situation in Asia show that the concept of canon does not necessarily mean a fixed and closed list of acceptable books. The investigation on 11QPs<sup>a</sup> revealed that the Psalter was at least for its last third part open in content and arrangement.<sup>32</sup> Kwok understands the Bible as an “open” book. The metaphor of “fluidity”<sup>33</sup> underlines in both cases the processual character of canonization and the interpretation of the canon.

### The quest for authority of the canon

David as author, reader and singer of the Psalms serves as *norma normans* in the process of authorization. However this canonical principle intrinsic to scripture makes it possible to include other voices and texts in the ongoing re-interpretation. The Asian theologian questions the sacrality and authority of the canon generally, she demands to demythologize and to deconstruct the Bible as canon.<sup>34</sup> Unlike liberationist feminist theologians for whom the central message of the Bible is liberative, for Kwok the authority is rooted in the liberation process. She states: “The critical principle lies not in the Bible itself, but in the community of women and men who read the Bible and, through their dialogical imagination, appropriate it for their own liberation”<sup>35</sup>.

Thus the concept of text shifts from scriptural text to a living texture and the authority of the scripture is dependent from the community. The readers may recognize the inner qualities of the text.

It seems that in Kwok’s dialogical model no qualitative difference between the text and the context exists.<sup>36</sup> The text is no longer a static concept or as the Korean Theologian Chun Yun Kyung puts it: “we are the text”.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Peter W. FLINT, *Of Psalms and Psalters: James Sanders’ Investigation of the Psalm Scrolls*, in: *A Gift of God in due season*, ed. by Richard D. WEISS / David M. CARR (JSOTSS 225) Sheffield, 1996, 65–83, 68.

<sup>33</sup> KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 22 and SANDERS, Art. Canon, 847. Cf. Dominique BARTHÉLÉMY, *L’État de la Bible Juive depuis le début de notre Ère jusqu’à la deuxième révolte contre Rome* (131–135), 9–45, in: *Le Canon de L’Ancient Testament. Sa Formation et son Histoire*, ed. by Jean-Daniel KAESTLI and Otto WERMLINGER 1984, 19, dealing with Qumran states a “flou existant dans les frontières des Livres saints”. Thus speaking as well of boundaries he combines fluidity of the canon with the category of an existing repertoire.

<sup>34</sup> KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 30, 85

<sup>35</sup> KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 19.

<sup>36</sup> Kwok Pui-lan’s position is in contrast to a hierarchical model as those of Karl Barth. He warns for the nihilation between tradition (context) and text (id., KD I/2, 607). In his concept the authority of scripture supersedes the authority of the church (cf. Antje FETZER, *Tradition im Pluralismus. Alasdair MacIntyre und Karl Barth als Inspiration für christliches Selbstverständnis in der pluralen Gesellschaft* [NTDH 32] Neukirchen–Vluyn 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Chung Huyn KYUNG, *Struggle to be the Sun again: Introducing Asian Women’s Theology*, New York / Maryknoll 1990, 111: “The text of God’s revelation was, is, and will be written in our bodies and our peoples’ everyday struggle for survival and liberation. [...] Our life is the text, and the Bible and church tradition are the context which sometimes becomes the reference for our own ongoing search for God”.

### **From Intra-religious to Inter-religious Intertextuality**

Intertextuality is a biblical phenomenon, which goes already beyond the Hebrew Bible and can hence give insights for a general interreligious intertextuality. Taking Asian hermeneutical traditions into consideration Kwok strives for a “cross-textual”<sup>38</sup> reading, where both texts, the biblical text and the context, the cultural and religious text of the reader, are interwoven.

### **Towards an Inter-religious Hermeneutics**

Kwok Pui-lan’s methodology challenges Bible studies. The task is to develop inter-religious hermeneutics compatible to intra-religious hermeneutics. The findings in Qumran have changed the traditional understanding of canon. In the process of formation and stabilization of the canon itself exists a plurality of editions. This intra-religious plurality reflects the diversity of communities, because the community is of importance for the authorization of the canon.<sup>39</sup>

The experience of otherness as a shared subject of Feminist Theology and of Theology of Religion must thus be taken into consideration in interreligious dialogue. “Multifaith hermeneutics requires us to affirm that other religious traditions are as valid as Christianity”.<sup>40</sup> Kwok Pui-lan herself is a wanderer in-between cultures and religions.<sup>41</sup> Intercultural Exegesis and Intercultural Theology may contribute to create “hybrid, liminal or interstitial positions between religious traditions”<sup>42</sup>, which help to face the otherness/plurality.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 63 taking over a term coined by Archie Lee.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. David M. CARR, *Canonization in the Context of Community*, in: *A Gift of God in Due Season*, ed. by Richard D. WEISS / id., (JSOTSS 225), Sheffield, 1996, 22–64.

<sup>40</sup> KWOK, *Discovering the Bible*, 58.

<sup>41</sup> She described her identity as “a Chinese feminist intellectual in diaspora in the U.S” (cf. the letter to the author from 11 of October 1999) and in her recent book she speaks of herself as “a Chinese in Diaspora” (KWOK, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 50).

<sup>42</sup> So Tino RUPARELL in his paper *The Dialogue Party: Dialogue, Hybridity and the Reluctant Other*, given at Aarhus; see his forthcoming monograph: *Dialogue and Hybridity*, Albany / New York, 2002.