Reading the book of Lamentations as a whole: canonical-literary approach to the scripture as divine communicative action

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Abstract:
This dissertation is basically a reading the book of Lamentation as a literary whole in a sense of a text-centred approach, which aims to interpret the Scripture as divine communicative action. The major philosophical resources that I employ in this study are the Speech-Act theory developed by J. Austin and J. Searle, and the concepts particularly exemplified in the work of K. Vanhoozer. I look at repetition and literary techniques in Lamentations as a clue to its structural unity. In the body of the dissertation, Instead of historical-critical approaches, I claim that the meaning exists not ‘behind the text,’ but ‘in the text itself as a whole.’ One of the most important literary approaches to understanding the book of Lamentations is to note the poetic voices, which interweave in the text. The poetic voices are my main focus of understanding the book of Lamentations. I explain the literary meaning reading the text and demonstrate that we must find the canonical level of the meaning which supervenes on the literary level. The meaning of a text at a literary level must be carefully studied and modified by the ‘fuller sense (or meaning)’ derived from the canonical context. The ‘fuller sense’ of Scripture associated with divine authorship emerges only at the level of the whole canon. Here for the canonical meaning of the text, I focus at Vanhoozer’s assertion, having proposed the suitability of speech act theory for the various tasks of biblical interpretation and theological hermeneutics. When we read the text, there is no utterance from God in Lamentations. It is the missing voice. The main theme of Lamentations is “Where is the true comfort?” The text presents no comfort. In the literary context, God looks silent (non-speaking). Canonically, however, Christian readers as God’s people read the Bible, connecting it to Jesus Christ. Within the canonical context, we can indeed find an answer and God’s answering speech (that is, His act), because Jesus is their true comforter acting as God’s response. We can find this response in his teaching (e.g. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount) and in his mission (e.g. presenting his body as the temple, being Immanuel, God-with-us).

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idea of a finished Old Testament canon was spoken by both biblical and nonbiblical sources. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish writer of the first century, had this to say: From the Gospels we see that Jesus spoke of Scripture as being complete. He said to the religious rulers: You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life (John 5:39). The books admitted to the canon of Scripture were inspired by God. There were, however, many false books that claimed inspiration. How did the people judge between the true and the false? Reading, particularly the reading of culturally authentic texts, has become one of the central claims for curriculum reform in EFL teaching (Swaffar, 1999; Arens & Swaffar, 2000; Dupuy, 2000). The latest developments of text-based teaching also recommend a curriculum "in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuum" (Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World, 2007). In this sense, recent studies indicate the undeniable benefits of literary texts as an important part of the EFL programs, despite the fact that their use might be proved.