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Trägerkreise in den Psalmen

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The current volume gathers papers presented at a colloquium at the Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, held in October 11–13, 2012. As the title reveals, the overall focus is on the question of who may have been responsible for the transmission and compilation of the psalms now found in the “Book” of Psalms. After a brief preface by the editors and a short introduction by the late Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, the volume contains ten contributions; nine in German and one in English. No indices are provided.

The first chapter is written by Ulrich Berges. It focuses on possible overlaps between the tradent groups (Ger. “Trägerkreise”) of the “Books” of Psalms and Isaiah. After discussing the need for a “diachronically reflected synchrony” (11), Berges sketches the contours of the sociological context of biblical literature in post-exilic Jerusalem and sets out to search for clues of literary overlaps in three parts: 1) shared themes, motifs and epithets such as “Zion,” רנה/רנן, שיר חדש, or יהוה צבאות; 2) hymnic responses; 3) overlaps between Isa 49–54 and the Psalms. According to Berges, the results point to the levitical singers as a plausible tradent group.

In chapter two, Gillingham also makes a case for a levitical tradent group. Six proposals constitute the backbone of the hypothesis. If levitical singers were compilers, one would expect: 1) a focus on the figure of David; 2) an interest in the Torah; 3) the use of didactic material; 4) a specific attitude to the efficacy of cultic practice; 5) a focus on the poor and needy; and 6) a prophetic emphasis. Finding traces of these aspects throughout the whole “Book” of Psalms, Gillingham concludes that there is “no more likely candidates for the complex compilation process of the Psalter than the Levitical singers” (56).

A contrasting perspective is argued in chapter three. Martin Leuenberger shows how scholarly consensus has moved away from the idea

that the “Book” of Psalms is a songbook of the Second Temple compiled by priests and singers and towards seeing it as a book for personal piety to be read and meditated upon, compiled by scribes. Agreeing with the latter, he attempts to further identify the tradent group by focusing on the transformation of the theology of the kingship of YHWH. According to Leuenberger, after Ps 89, YHWH no longer has any earthly representatives, the kingship has become unpolitical. As a consequence, the tradents would not have been an organized or institutionalized elite. By a study of Ps 1 as well as of Pss 146–150, Leuenberger instead proposes that they would have understood themselves as a community of righteous and faithful (דַּיָּקִים). With an eye to socio-historical contexts, he suggests that the tradents could be identified as proto-hasidic (cf. Ps 149).

The fourth chapter is written by Beat Weber, and focuses on possible overlaps between the twelve Asaphite psalms and Pss 90–106. After identifying four main characteristics of Asaphite psalms—1) judgment references; 2) direct divine speech; 3) a focus on the people; and 4) a dependence on earlier traditions—Weber surveys overlaps with Pss 90–106 (terminology, motives, Gattung, and superscriptions) in seventeen detailed tables. The emerging picture is a clear Asaphite influence. Psalm 78 is seen as a central psalm, since all psalms in “book” 4 (except Pss 97 and 100) has overlaps with it, and Pss 90–92; 93–100; and 101–106 are placed on a scale from little to much Asaphite influence. Ultimately, Weber proposes that the evidence points towards Asaphite tradent groups behind not only the Asaphite psalms, but also parts of “book” 4.

In chapter five, Magnus Steiner focuses on the Korahites. The point of departure is Num 16, which is argued to relate to a post-exilic conflict between priestly Aaronites and levitic Korahites. Steiner then moves to the Books of Chronicles, where the Korahites are related to Heman and perform a wide array of functions, although primarily understood as gatekeepers. Modifying the work of Hartmut Gese, Steiner outlines three stages in the historical development of the Korahites: 1) Asaph as the singer *par excellence*; 2) the Korahites join the Asaphites; 3) the

singers are an (ideal) triad with Heman (the Korahites), Asaph, and Jeduthun/Ethan (and their sons).

In chapter six, Corinna Körting discusses overlaps between the “Book” of Psalms, the “Book” of Isaiah, and the *Apostrophe to Zion* (11Q5) with respect to their use of Zion theology. She first discusses Ps 102 and Ps 45. In relation to the latter, Körting compares the portrayal and function of Zion with that in Isa 49–62 and argues for an identification of the bride with Zion. Then, Körting moves to the *Apostrophe to Zion*, where she finds images based on traditions found in the Psalms and Isaiah, not least Isa 62:6 and Ps 137:5–7. In all, Körting concludes that although it is clear that the Psalms know of prophetic material, not much can be said about the tradents. Nonetheless, the *Apostrophe* provides an interesting juxtaposition of prophets and singers.

In chapter seven Johannes Bremer focuses on the (redactional) transformation of the theology of the poor throughout Pss 3–41 (Pss 3–14; 15–24; 25–34; 35–41) as a way of identifying possible tradent groups. He argues that all four subgroups conclude with an emphasis on the poor (the last two are framed by it), and a possible tradent group is hinted at in the fact that the psalmists always show solidarity towards the poor. Bremer then argues that groups 3–4 (and Ps 9–10) present the poor in a way different from groups 1–2. While the former have material threats in focus, the latter are more wisdom oriented. When put in dialogue with plausible socio-economic backgrounds (the early Archemenid times and onwards), three fundamental impulses are identified that point to a cult-critical tradent group that shaped the last part of Pss 3–41 (groups 3–4), while also inserting significant accents into groups 1–2.

Chapter eight, by Judith Gärtner, does not explicitly address the issue of tradent groups. It focuses on the significance of Ps 135 in the redaction of the “Book” of Psalms. Following an outline of Ps 135 where the centrality of the confession of the uniqueness of YHWH is highlighted, the psalm is put into dialogue with Ps 136. Gärtner notices that Ps 135 has a wider, more universal claim of the power of God. This

is also found in relation to Ps 115. After surveying some additional intertextual overlaps (e.g. with Ps 113; 118; and 134), Gärtner suggests that the theological and compositional significance of Ps 135 can be outlined in five steps: 1) vv. 1–3 and 19–21 create a compositional link to Pss 111–118 and Pss 120–134 by combining Pss 113:1 and 134:1, 3; 2) references to Pss 111–118 indicate that this sequence was already in place before the inclusion of Ps 135; 3) overlaps with Pss 113 and 118 emphasize the uniqueness of YHWH; 4) Ps 135 relate to the psalms that follow through Ps 136; and 5) the transformation of the יהוה-*יהוה* formula by יהוה anticipates Pss 146–150.

Lastly, Bernd Janowski discusses the transformation of cultic references in the “Book” of Psalms. The study is structured around three theological concepts: 1) Zion and temple; 2) the face of YHWH; and 3) festivals and sacrifice. According to Janowski, they all bear witness to a transformation of the cult into the area of personal piety where every day spirituality is emphasized. In the background is a specific anthropology, and the result is that the “Book” of Psalms functions as a literary sanctuary, and becomes an example of what Janowski calls a movement from “Kultreligion” to “Buchreligion.”

The volume is a valuable contribution to the field. The chapters stand in some refreshing tension to each other, and even though many of them reflect ideas that the authors have already published elsewhere, the compilation of them all in a volume provides the reader with an excellent and up-to-date resource. The methodological awareness of many of the authors is commendable, and most areas relevant to the issue are covered, even if a chapter on tradent groups responsible for the Qumran psalms scrolls would have been welcome. In sum, the volume is a must have for any scholar that seriously wants to engage the issue of tradent groups.

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