

Psalm of Kings, King of Psalms

The Formation and Theology of Psalm 72

in light of the Redaction of the Psalter

Theses

1) In its current form the Book of Psalms is not an “amorphous set” of separate poems but a consciously edited, conceptional work. The methodological consequence of this is that instead of the entirely isolated analysis of the psalms, the broader literary context – also relevant for the analysis of the psalms, and represented by (sub)collections and the whole book – must also be considered. By the parallel assertion of both diachronic and synchronic approaches and by applying redaction-critical methods, this dissertation aims to contribute to a new paradigm, still in formation, of contemporary international Psalm research.

2) In the composition of the Book of Psalms those psalms deserve accentuated attention which are situated at structurally crucial positions. When interpreting these, it is not merely possible but necessary to overstep the boundaries of the psalm in the interpretation. Considering how the formation of the Book of Psalms shows a pattern of expansion from the centre outwards, Ps 72 found its way into the Psalter relatively early; furthermore, it played the decisive role of the final poem in the structure of its collectional context. Therefore, the literary development of Ps 72 is not independent from the literary development of the Book of Psalms; and the issue of the formation of Ps 72 cannot be detached from the question of the formation of the book.

3) The analysis of Ps 72, together with the critical revisitation and specification of existing results of literary- and redaction-criticism, has revealed six literary strata.

The basic stratum of the psalm from the 7th century BC is located in verses 1ab–8.12–14.16–17aab. In the period of the exile, at the middle of the 6th century BC, the poem, once independent, was integrated into a collection. This was the time Ps 72 became part of the Asaphite Psalter (Ps 50–83*) and was complemented with the addition 1aa.4*.14*.20. A more voluminous extension (Ps 72:9–11) can be dated to the second half of the 6th century BC, reacting to the international situation changed by the expansion of the Persian Empire and to the end of the period of exile; in terms of redaction-criticism, this is connected to the compilation of the Elohist Psalter (Ps 42–83*). The perspective of the Elohist Psalter towards gentiles is reinterpreted by a Korahite appendix edited into the book in the 5th century BC (Ps 84–88*). This redaction resulted in the additions of Ps 72:15.17ag.b. Lesser modifications to verses Ps 72:3*.7* are connected to the redaction of Ps 2–89* edited by the end of the Persian period (the middle of the 4th century BC). The final, Hellenistic addition to the psalm (ca. 4th/3rd century BC) is the doxological clause (Ps 72:18–19), placed at the end of the royal psalm by the redactor of Ps 2–106*.

4) The literary growth of Ps 72 depicts a theological *relecture* process in close connection to the formation of the theological conception in the book, in which bipolarity is observable between tendencies of representative (or indirect) theocracy and of absolute (or direct) theocracy which leaves any earthly ruler out of account.

The current form of the Book of Psalms witnesses to how the transfer of royal psalms continued after the kingdom was lost; their interpretation, however, was constantly changing in light of the formation of historical situations and social contexts. The reinterpretation of the theology of Ps 72 can be observed from the era of monarchy (7th century BC) until the beginning of the Hellenistic period (3rd century BC). The basic psalm is a theological-liturgical programmatic text, legitimising the (Judean) king and kingdom, which, when the kingdom is lost, transforms into a prayer inducing hopes of restoration and reinforcing national identity – as a part of an early collection of psalms. After the exile, the idea of universality and a “proto-Messianic” character become enhanced in the psalm; and, finally, the doxology indulges in a dialogue with

direct theocracy. The process of reinterpretation thus appearing in the psalm correlates with the different theological emphases visible during the successive growth of the Book of Psalms. Thus, in the final text of Ps 72, and in its theology, we can observe the conceptional model of the Book of Psalms.