

EDITORIAL

This second issue of *PARADOSIS* contains eight articles, all dealing in various ways with issues relating to Psalm studies and research.

To begin with, Ted Woods (Melbourne School of Theology) has made a response to the journal article by Patrick Miller (1999) that the Psalms have engaged in an important conversation with Deuteronomy. Building upon this observation, but taking it one stage further, it has been argued that the Psalms have also engaged in an important conversation with the book of Isaiah, thus making the whole enterprise a *threefold* conversation. Thus within the Psalms, one *learns* the story and command (Deuteronomy), how to *sing* and *pray* the Lord's songs (Psalms), and how to *see* the broader theological vision (Isaiah). This threefold mix and conversation of Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah, also reflects the importance of these three dominant books at Qumran, as well as their importance for works like Luke-Acts in the New Testament.

John Olley (Vose Seminary, WA) argues that the Psalms as a whole provide us with prayers that can illuminate our understanding with regard to God's *mission* that covers all nations. Previous studies have argued that kingship (Davidic and Yahweh) and wisdom are key elements in the Psalter's overall structure, but the present study has correctly sought to produce evidence that the place of the nations is inseparably linked to these motifs (e.g. Psalm 96 as a good case in point), as well as to the overall story-line of the Psalter.

One of the continuing 'chestnuts' of Psalm study remains the Imprecatory Psalms. Katy Smith (Bible College of South Australia) asks the question "Is it possible for Christians to pray the Imprecatory Psalms?" This is then pursued with two issues in mind. The first relates to justice (both God's and Israel's), and the second is the overall theological framework of the Bible. It is argued through an examination of Psalms 69, 109, and 137, that the Imprecations are an expression of *covenant faithfulness* in relationship to a sovereign God to whom vengeance belongs. And so, can Christians pray the Imprecatory Psalms? A qualified 'yes' is given, especially for situations of unjust suffering. But, in crying out for justice to be done, we leave any vindication to God's vengeance,

whilst at the same time praying that God's love might touch the hearts of those who oppose all that is good.

Next, Michael Theophilus (Australian Catholic University, Melbourne) visits his interest in Papyrology, with particular focus on the Psalter at Oxyrhynchus. He notes that almost half of the Septuagint (LXX) manuscripts discovered at this place are fragments of the Psalter. Amongst other things, this has important interest for the study of the Septuagint (LXX) text as it existed at a certain point in antiquity. Further, from this study it is argued that the scribal process of textual transmission in this place was *dynamic* and *fluid* rather than static and fixed, with several examples given. These examples will no doubt create further interest and implications for textual criticism and the wider interpretation of the Psalms.

In contrast to Bernhard Duhm's negative portrayal of Psalm 119, John De Hoog (Reformed Theological College, Geelong), seeks to address two questions to Psalm 119, relating to its *purpose*, as well as to its *process* (dynamics) by which it achieves its purpose. In answer to the first question, Psalm 119 is designed to commend a life of pursuing the Lord through His Word (Torah obedience). In answer to the second question, Psalm 119 is a multi-faceted portrayal of *what it actually looks like* to pursue the Lord through His Word (which is often not a smooth road). The Psalm achieves its purpose not by admonishing the reader but by painting a portrait of the life of a God-seeker. Finally, drawing upon the work of Erich Zenger in Book 5 of the Psalter, Psalm 107 at the beginning of this book poses the question: "Who is wise?" This is finally worked out through the connections between Psalms 111–112 and Psalm 119 (God's gracious/mighty actions in history, as a reason for his peoples' obedient response through Torah keeping).

Gillian Asquith (Melbourne School of Theology) explores how Psalm 137 can speak within differing historical contexts, both exilic (sixth century BC), as well as within a much later context of the third or second century BC. It is argued that considering the Psalter is finally a book of instruction, exhorting the wise to a Torah-adherence life, Psalm 137 plays a 'cautionary' role, reminding the reader that the divine justice that brings recompense for the victims of the Babylonian period is the very same justice that required their punishment in the first place. Mindful that God watches over those who love him, but destroys the wicked, the final redactors of the Psalter sought to combat Hellenistic apostasy in the Seleucid period

by compiling a book of divine instruction, encouragement, and warning, to which Psalm 137 makes a key contribution.

David Cohen (Vose Seminary, WA) makes Psalm 89 his focus of study. It is argued that as an act of liturgical use and memory, Psalm 89 articulates a convergence of four interrelated and critical aspects of human reflection: mythic, parabolic, mimetic, and parenetic qualities. It is these that create a space for significant *dialogue* and *memory* to take place within the ‘precipice’ of the exilic experience of the sixth century BC.

Finally, Andrew Brown (Melbourne School of Theology) appropriately concludes these articles and our study of the Psalter with a Hallelujah Psalm. It is argued that Psalm 148 (called a ‘creation-focused hymn’) not only stands at the centre of the final group of Hallelujah Psalms 146–150, but also has a certain pride of place and represents the *pinnacle* of the book. Structurally, Psalm 148 has seven units within, which reflect the seven days of creation. As such, it may be seen as a valuable contribution to a biblical theology of creation reflected at Genesis 1:1–2:3. But finally within its peers (Psalms 146–150), Psalm 148 stands above them all as the greatest expression of *inclusive* and *universal* praise.

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