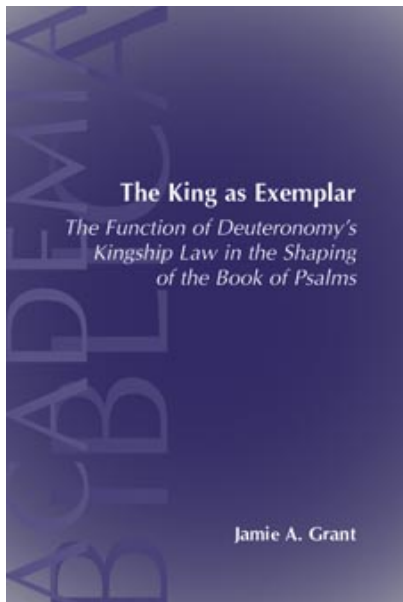


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Grant, Jamie A.

The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms

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This University of Gloucestershire dissertation uses canonical and intertextual approaches to explore the juxtaposition of *torah* and kingship psalms. Focusing on three sets of psalms (Pss 1–2; 18–21; 118–119), Grant proposes that the setting of *torah* and kingship psalms alongside each other is a deliberate shaping device in the final editing of the Psalter. Further, he suggests that such redactional shaping reflected the theology of the law of the king in Deut 17:14–20 as a reuse of that theology in the postexilic period, when the Psalter was finalized. This redaction addressed the theology and piety of the postexilic community to shape eschatological hope in a Davidic king and to model a type of devotion to Yahweh.

Grant's line of argument in supporting this thesis takes several steps. First, a methodological chapter discusses canonical method and notes how he will use it to establish editorial linkages across psalms, using four types of criteria: lexical, thematic, structural, and genre links. After discussing the editorial significance of the *torah* and kingship psalms, he then explains his approach in comparing these psalms to Deuteronomy. He describes his method here as broadly intertextual, focusing on linguistic and theological similarities in order to demonstrate that the law of the king was the paradigm for the juxtaposition of the *torah* and kingship psalms. The final section of the introduction discusses the eschatological orientation of the psalms; here Grant notes

that emphasis stemmed from the time of the final redaction of the Psalms and shaped the reading of the psalms generally and the royal psalms in particular.

Chapters 2–4 take the first step in his argumentation by detailing the Deuteronomic influences on each psalm, taking the groupings 1–2, 18–21 and 118–119, respectively. In these chapters, Grant accomplishes his exegetical work on the psalms, noting similarities to Deuteronomic language and themes, for example, the centrality of *torah*, dependence on Yahweh, Yahweh as refuge, the theology of the ways of righteousness and wickedness, *hesed*, and trust in Yahweh. He then goes on to consider the lexical, thematic, and theological linkages within each grouping of psalms, and among all the groupings, showing how the *torah* and kingship psalms in each grouping work together beyond just being juxtaposed. Each chapter concludes by asserting that the accumulated evidence shows that each psalm grouping deliberately echoes Deuteronomic thought.

The second step in his line of argument in chapter 5 then considers the other element of his comparison, the kingship law in Deut 17:14–20. Here Grant details, through the study of lexical and theological concerns, the characteristics of the king as portrayed in the kingship law. He highlights the restrictions on the power of the king, the king's dependence on Yahweh, the *torah*-based piety recommended to the king, and what he calls the “democratising effect” of requiring that the king be an Israelite “brother” and not place himself above his “brothers.” Then Grant finds that each of the fundamental concerns of the kingship law is echoed in at least one of the psalms in each grouping.

The next step in Grant's argument discusses the placement of these *torah*-kingship psalm groupings. Through a structural analysis in chapter 6, Grant shows that these groupings occupy key places in the Psalms: the opening (Pss 1–2) that introduces the thematic concerns for the whole Psalter, the central psalms of book 1 (Pss 18–21) that act as the first bracket of the Psalter's *torah*-kingship concern, and the central psalms of book 5 (Pss 118–119) that complete the bracket. Thus he finds that the *torah* and kingship concerns of the groupings reflect the deliberate shaping the Psalter by the final editors.

The final step in supporting his thesis is to show that the *torah*-kingship psalms and the kingship law speak in the same manner about the theological concerns he has highlighted, that is, that there is a high degree of correlation between their key concerns. This, he holds, would show that the Deuteronomic king was the exemplar for the eschatology and piety of the Psalms. In chapter 7 he compares the themes of *torah*, kingship, and democratization in Psalms and Deuteronomy and finds a strong similarity between them on all three themes. He thus considers his thesis proven, that indeed, the kingship law acted as the thematic and theological paradigm by which the final Psalm editors

conveyed both their eschatological hopes for kingship and their *torah*-based piety that was recommended to the king and thus also recommended to their audience.

In broad terms, the book succeeds in highlighting the concerns that possibly guided the placing of the psalms into their canonical shape. Grant produces a useful exercise in reading canonically from the lexical and thematic connections among the psalms and in reading intertextually between the Psalms and other biblical books. His strongest arguments occur where the texts of the psalms themselves are the clearest about their *torah*- and kingship-centered foci. The juxtaposition of such foci does seem to have intertextual echoes to Deuteronomy's interests in kingship placed under and within the covenant/*torah*. The steps of Grant's argumentation are logical and, lacking a chance to interview the ancient editors themselves, are the best line of reasoning available from the text to a judgment about the interests of the redactors in the shaping of the book of Psalms. Likewise, it seems straightforward to read from such themes to a supposition that the redactors were making a case about eschatological hopes for kingship and about piety in the postexilic era.

While the book works in these broad terms, there are some weaknesses that detract from the force and scope of the argument Grant makes. First, as he builds the steps of his reasoning, the conclusions to the exegetical chapters (2–4) seem already to decide his case: that Deuteronomistic *torah* and kingship themes shape the placing of the studied psalms. When he then turns to consider the kingship law itself, his thesis takes on a sense of circular reasoning. Since he seems already to have concluded that there are extensive lexical and thematic Deuteronomistic links, how could he not find that there is “remarkable overlap” (221) between the Psalms and Deuteronomy? He might better have left the description of the nature of the connections with Deuteronomy in more neutral language until he had completed his study of the second of the comparative terms.

The nature of his evidence is also at times bit weak. In some cases, he seems to draw the description of Deuteronomistic language and themes so widely that one wonders if he is still in the Deuteronomistic thought world. For example, “dependence on Yahweh” is hardly exclusive to the Deuteronomistic understanding of kingship or piety. The lists of Deuteronomistic themes he comes up with in the psalms do not read like the most characteristic language of either Deuteronomy or the Deuteronomistic books. Given how broadly he depicts the themes and language, how would one tell a Deuteronomistic influence from one rooted in wisdom? More precision and fewer items on the lists might have made a stronger argument.

The greatest weakness, however, is that Grant conveys no sense of the social world that shaped and was shaped by the rhetorical and political interests of the editors either of the

Deuteronomic kingship law or the Psalms. He produces a simplistic and naïve reading of the kingship law because he does not recognize that the king as just one of the “brothers” whose powers are limited is language that rhetorically plays into the hands of the other elite power-holders who want to limit the power of an actual (or potential) king (including both Judahites and foreign overlords). The reuse of such themes and language by the editors of the Psalms in the postexilic period cannot help but convey and carry equal rhetorical and political overtones, albeit in a very different context. And when Grant labels the equality of the king with his brothers a “democratising effect,” he introduces a wildly anachronistic concept into a social world that at best could be described as an elite oligopoly of power.

These shortcomings do not undermine his thesis, but they do mean that the book does not produce the concise and insightful argument that could have been possible. But Grant has helped us understand better the intertextual thematics in the Psalms, and that is a welcome addition to a growing area of research.