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DEUTERONOMY AND PSALMS: EVOKING A BIBLICAL CONVERSATION

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As all who plow the fields of academic research are well aware, the vagaries and contingencies of scholarship are more extensive than appears to be the case. The seriousness of our research seems to presume careful planning in which we determine that such and such is an important area of research, a topic that has been insufficiently studied, or something in which the scholar has had a deep interest from the beginning of his or her career. All those things are often true, but it is also the case that our involvements happen for all sorts of reasons that represent much less intentionality than that. Thus, a student desperate for a dissertation subject is told by a teacher that the paper for an assigned topic in a seminar might constitute the basis for a dissertation. Years later that student is an expert on a subject that arose largely by chance. Or an invitation comes from an editor or a publisher to write an essay, a commentary, or a topical book, and the outcome sets the scholar off in a particular direction. Certainly, much of our scholarship, from the academic to the popular in form, is provoked by outside forces, by invitations and suggestions, by the lure of royalties, and by the ties of friendship.

These comments, which I believe accurately describe the general picture of how much scholarship develops and how it is that people come to focus on certain areas, are autobiographical as well. So it is that some years ago when I was going on sabbatical leave and engaged in Psalms research, a smooth-tongued editor, trying to con me into agreeing to write a commentary on Deuteronomy, gave me a rather extended song and dance about how interesting and fruitful it might be to work on Deuteronomy at the same time that I was working on the Psalms, suggesting that there were all kinds of interactions hidden there, waiting to be discovered. As an editor who can do a pretty good shuffle myself when I am trying to pressure a potential author into taking on a

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project, I recognized what was happening. The editor was sharp and a good friend, but the stuff he was handing me was quite off the top of his head. In any event, beguiled by the snake oil, the ego enhancement, and the prospect of great wealth off vast royalties (!) I agreed. The outcome was eventually a commentary on Deuteronomy, while the hoped-for one on the Psalms never got written.

The editor's comment, however, even when seen for what it was—an editorial ploy—nevertheless sparked a question that has lain there through the years, slowly coming into focus only over an extended period of time in the study of the books of Deuteronomy and Psalms. Is there, in fact, a dialogue that goes on between these two books of the Bible that bids us listen to them together and not simply separately? Is there a conversation between the two great authors of scripture—Moses and David—that takes place when their primary works—Deuteronomy and Psalms—are looked at together?¹ Is there a larger enterprise of intertextuality that seeks to discern the resonances between the larger segments of scripture designated by the term “book”? It may be pre-

¹ Both Moses and David are portrayed as “authors,” though in one case the enterprise is more scribal (Moses) and in the other more compositional (David). They are depicted as responsible for creating and gathering together a significant body of literature: a body of instruction (Moses) and a body of prayers and hymns (David). In both cases, we are told about the completion of their efforts (Deut 31:24; 32:45; Ps 72:20), and both authors are given similar colophons with the verb *הִלְכָה*, “finish, complete.” (On the character and significance of Deuteronomy as written communication and for bibliography on the colophonic character of these verses, see J.-P. Sonnet, *The Book within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy* [Leiden: Brill, 1997] esp. 156–59, and the literature referred to there.) There is no specific reference to David's writing the Psalms, but the introductory verse to his lament over Saul and Jonathan speaks of that song being written down in the Book of Yashar and says David instructed that the “bow,” presumably the song, should be taught to the Judahites, thus calling for a teaching of his songs in a way that Moses calls for a teaching of the Torah (2 Sam 1:17).

There is a significant difference in their functions as “authors,” however, in that the completion of Moses' writing is truly that, and it is safeguarded by the canonical formula, “Do not add to it and do not take anything from it” (Deut 13:1 [Eng. 12:32]). For David, the opposite is the case. One encounters in the Psalter a large collection of prayers that are added to the completed prayers of David, some ascribed to him and even more ascribed to others. While the community needs no further instruction than Moses' teaching and its authority rests in part upon its completion and its ascription to Moses, David opens up for the community a continuing tradition of prayer and praise. He is as much a representative author as he is an authoritative one (see below and B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979] 520–22). Thus, others may do and pray and praise as David did, and others of his prayers and hymns come into the tradition. At Qumran, there is not only an ascription of over four thousand psalms to David, but the 11QPs Qumran Psalter is significantly “Davidized” (see P. W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* [STDJ 17; Leiden: Brill, 1997] 23, 193–95, 224). On David as author, see J. L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 87–98.

That both instances of “authorship,” Mosaic and Davidic, are an important and mythic literary “fiction” underscores the way in which being presented as inscribed voices of the two great leaders of Israel gives these two books an implicit but powerful authority through authorship.

mature to generalize about these questions, but I do believe that the biblical books of Deuteronomy and Psalms are amenable to an interactive relationship, capable of creating or evoking a conversation between them that enlarges our perception of both and contributes to a sense of the whole that is scripture.

Such a conversation happens on the intertextual level in its most basic sense, that is, in the echoes of one text to be found in another text. It also takes place through the interdependencies that are created in redactional and editing processes. The Deuteronomic influence is so widespread in scripture that it would be astonishing if it were not to be found in the Psalter, and indeed it is. To take only one example, Norbert Lohfink has shown how the concerns and language of Deuteronomy, particularly in its late redactional layers, permeate Psalms 114 and 115 and become even more extensive in the Greek translation of these Psalms, suggesting, as he puts it, that those who knew Deuteronomy by heart and lived and thought in its terms and its theology could feel themselves reminded of it in the recitation of Psalms 114/115. It is as if the voice of Moses breaks out into the song of the psalmist. In the early reception history of the Psalms, which has left its signs in the Septuagintal version, these Psalms were read and heard by those who would have lived out of an interiorized canonical Deuteronomic text and from it could spin out other texts with explanatory filigree.²

The conversation between these two books is enhanced and carried to no small degree by the interaction effected through familiarity with a particular thought world and a language world and by the evidence of such redactional and editing work. But my interest is more in the present effects than in the processes that brought them into being. And I would hope that one can see the conversation carried on both on the very particular level of the textual interaction of particular passages in Deuteronomy and Psalms and also on the larger plane of their theology and hermeneutics.

I. Divine Word and Human Word

I begin by calling attention to the way in which *human word* and *divine word* come to expression in Deuteronomy and the Psalms. Both books are divine word indirectly, but that happens in quite different ways. Much of Deuteronomy is *originally divine* word lying behind the present *human* words of Moses. The Psalter is *originally human* word that *finally* becomes *divine* word. In the first case, we have a book of scripture that is mostly divine instruction for the human community, mediated through Moses and becoming canon by its own intention and by its authority as divine word to the community. The

² Norbert Lohfink, "Ps 114/115 (M und G) und die deuteronomische Sprachwelt," in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn: Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen: Festgabe zum 70. Geburtstag von Heinrich Gross* (ed. E. Haag and F.-L. Hossfeld; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986) 199–205.

response of the community to this instruction is dictated by the divine word and is expressed in confession, song, recitation, and teaching. In the case of the Psalms, we have a book that is thoroughly human address to the deity, which, at times, incorporates the words of the deity in response to its prayers.

In one instance, therefore, we have *theology from above*, literally, and with all the consequent questions and problems that brings, manifest in the frequent resistance to the Deuteronomic voice in its own day as well as in later eras—for example, in our own time when the authoritative voice of Deuteronomy is often regarded as restrictive, dominating, intolerant, and simplistic. We often handle this unwelcome authoritative voice by talking about “the Deuteronomists” when the text knows nothing of Deuteronomists but only of Moses and God addressing the people. Does our focus on the voices behind the presented voice serve to cut the ground out from under the intended word of the text?

In the Psalter, we have *theology from below*, the very human voice that is often an apparent countertestimony to the core testimony of Deuteronomy, to use Walter Brueggemann’s categories in his recent *Theology of the Old Testament*.³ It is the voice of members of the community of faith speaking to the Lord so that the initiating word is a *human* word and the issue of response is placed on *God*, the reverse of the Deuteronomic movement.

The Moses voice in this conversation, therefore, presents an authoritative word in behalf of a fairly set theological structure, one that leaves the future open but the options sharp: “See I have set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster” (Deut 30:15). The prayers of the Psalter give us the human voice in less settled terms, the cries of individuals whose trust in the Lord is confessed but whose condition in life is incongruent with such a life of trust. The Psalter does not disagree with the Deuteronomic options. It sets them forth at the beginning of the book as it speaks about the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked in Psalm 1 and reiterates them again and again. But it allows into the conversation individual members of the community who do not speak in Deuteronomy in their own voice and who would not be heard as clearly without the Psalms to give voice to their cries.

The Psalter shares with Deuteronomy a perspective on Israel’s history that sees it as a history of disobedience and apostasy. The closest poetic analogues to the song of witness against the community in Deuteronomy 32 are the so-called historical Psalms 78 and 106. Like Deuteronomy 32, these psalms are indictments, even self-indictments, of the community for its history of not obeying the voice of the Lord (Ps 106:25). But in the Psalms there is a countervoice coming forth from the *community*, which, like the voice of the individual, challenges God’s way with them and asks questions in complaint about their history

³ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

and about the judgment that has come upon them. The Davidic voice reaches its nadir at the end of Psalm 89 with the fear of the people that God has spurned and rejected “your anointed,” and the king cries out at the end:

Remember, O Lord, how your servant is taunted;
how I bear in my bosom the insults of the peoples. (v. 51)

Even sharper, however, are the cries of the people articulated in the communal laments, such as Psalms 44 and 74, which do not cry out to the Lord in confession and repentance but in despair and rage:

Yet you have rejected and abased us
You have made us like sheep for slaughter
You have sold your people for a trifle
You have made us the taunt of our neighbors
All this has come upon us,
yet we have not forgotten you,
or been false to your covenant. (Ps 44:10–18 [Eng. 9–17])⁴

But the hearing of such cries, both individual and communal, is specifically characteristic of the God who is praised in the Psalms and who speaks through Moses in Deuteronomy. All the songs of thanksgiving in the Psalter are testimonies on the part of persons who have been delivered, whose cries have been heard and responded to:

O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me. (Ps 30:3 [Eng. 2])

The massive hymns of praise regularly exalt the one “who guards the lives of his faithful” and “rescues them from the hand of the wicked” (Ps 97:10; cf. 145:14–20; 146:6–9; etc.). And Deuteronomy, set and settled though it may seem to be, insists on the openness of God to the cries of the poor and needy:

On his day, you shall give him his wage and not let the sun set on him; for he is poor and for him that is his livelihood, so that he may not cry out against you to the Lord and it be a matter of guilt against you. (24:15; cf. 15:9)⁵

⁴ On the communal lament Psalms, see now W. C. Bouzard, Jr., *We Have Heard with Our Ears, O God: Sources of the Communal Laments in the Psalms* (SBLDS 159; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); Paul Wayne Ferris, Jr., *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (SBLDS 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); and Murray Haar, “The God-Israel Relationship in the Community Lament Psalms” (Ph.D. dissertation; Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1985).

⁵ The departure from the NRSV’s use of plural forms in the case laws is intentional in the translation above. The formulation of the law in terms of the *individual* poor person is important and connects directly to the cry of the individual in the psalms. The *masculine* formulation is not significant. In the other context in Deuteronomy where the cry of the poor is anticipated, the inclusion of the poor woman or female slave along with the poor man is made explicit (Deut 15:12).

We do not hear the content of those cries until we turn to the Psalter, and there we find that the structures of existence are in fact much more open than appears to be the case in Deuteronomy, where those structures seem so set and determined. Such an interpretation of Deuteronomy, however, is in danger of misreading the complexity of Deuteronomy's theology. For if the cry of the poor and needy is a feature of the law of Moses in the Deuteronomic Code, Deut 4:7 makes response to that cry *constitutive of the very nature of God*:

For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him?

Deuteronomy is one of the places in scripture where the distinctiveness of Israel vis-à-vis the other nations and peoples is of large concern.⁶ In Deuteronomy 4, that distinctiveness is identified specifically with the responsiveness of God, the nearness of God when the prayer of the poor for help goes up. What one hears in the Psalms is precisely what Deuteronomy says marks off this community from all others. The prayer is typified by Psalm 22:12 [Eng. 11]:

Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.⁷

Such prayers reveal that the nearness of God is the central issue, just as Deuteronomy claims. But it is the central issue in the form of challenge and complaint as well as affirmation and plea: "Why are you so far from helping me?" (Ps 22:2 [Eng. 1]; cf. 10:1). Deuteronomy's claim that God is near is more complex than appears on the surface. The pleas for God's nearness are more extensive in the Psalms than complaints about God's absence and distance, but even the petitions, by inference, assume that the oppression evoking the cry is experienced as the distance of God and not God's nearness.⁸ That is why at the heart of the oracle of salvation, which is the expected response of God to the prayers of the Psalter, the assurance that the one in trouble need not be afraid is grounded in the claim of God to be near, in the divine promise, "I am with you."⁹

The Psalter thus provides the articulation of the cries to God that Deuteronomy places as a part of the law. Deuteronomy sets a translegal and trans-

⁶ See now the dissertation of Eric Elnes, "Discerning the Difference: The Distinctiveness of Yahweh and Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy" (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997).

⁷ Cf. 10:1; 22:20 [Eng. 19]; 35:22; 38:22 [Eng. 21]; 71:12.

⁸ Fredrik Lindström has made a strong case for understanding the suffering and trouble attested to in the prayers for help of the Psalter as arising out of the experience of God's absence. The laments thus seek the presence of God that will provide life and salvation in the face of death (*Suffering and Sin: Interpretations of Illness in the Individual Complaint Psalms* [Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1994]).

⁹ On the oracle of salvation and the many forms this assurance of relationship takes, see P. D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994) chapter 4.

judicial court of appeal—the cry for help to God in heaven—in the midst of the lawbook of Israel; in the psalms we hear what goes on in that court of appeal. But its existence as a theological structure in the midst of the legal ones is assumed by Deuteronomy.¹⁰ Deuteronomy tells us of a fundamental dialogue that moves from divine instruction to human prayer. It gives us the instruction part of the conversation but knows about the prayer; the Psalms give the prayer part of this dialogue, and the redactional shaping of the book turns it into divine instruction.

The dialogical character of Deuteronomy and Psalms around the interaction of divine word and human word is further underscored by the presence in both books of an extensive number of what we have come to call *motivation* clauses. In Deuteronomy, the motivation clauses are there as a part of the law, occurring in both the commandments, which come directly from God, and in the statutes and ordinances, which come from God through the teaching of Moses. Thus, the commandments set forth *sanctions* as a motivation for obedience—“for I the Lord your God am a jealous God . . .” and “the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name”—but also offer *promises* to the same end: “that your days may be long in the land . . .” They give reasons that indicate the usefulness and purpose of the command—“so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you”—and call upon the people’s recollection of their own experience as a ground for following a command of benefit to particular members of the community: “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt.”¹¹ Such sentences and clauses are scattered throughout the statutes and ordinances as well as the commandments and offer many reasons to urge and persuade the people to abide by a particular statute. The law in Deuteronomy is thus set in a *rhetoric of persuasion*. Obedience is not simply assumed. It is encouraged and rationalized. The law is presented in such a way that the community will be drawn into following it. Such constant rhetorical elements undercut any notion of the law’s authority as residing simply in its source and its promulgation as sufficient grounds for obedience. Deuteronomy says that the God who speaks in this law and through it commands the people also engages them in a conversation that provides reasons and benefits for their obedience. They are not simply told to obey. They are not coerced. They are persuaded, by

¹⁰ With reference to the Shema, Gerald Janzen has suggested to me that “the יהוה אחד” emphasis in Deuteronomy is not imperializing and oppressive but reflects an *embattled* situation amid which it is *liberating*; so, I would argue, the so-called ‘settled’ theo-logic of Deuteronomy (30:15–20, etc.) reflects an embattled situation of moral chaos that threatens to overwhelm and amid which Deuteronomy’s theology thrusts toward a margin of moral sanity” (private communication).

¹¹ It is also possible—and may be correct—to read this motivation clause attached to the sabbath command as a purpose construction, “so that you may remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt.” While the appeal of the motivation clause would be different, its rhetorical function is the same, to evoke a more intense interest in obedience and to explain why the command is given.

negative and positive means, by explanation and appeal to compassion, by rational argument and common sense.¹²

A similar rhetoric governs the prayers of the Psalter as those who cry out, individually or communally, constantly set before the deity reasons why God should respond to their cries, reasons that have to do with consistency on God's part in dealing with human beings, the innocence (or righteousness) and weakness of the one who cries out, the faithfulness of God to the covenant and to the promises of the past, and even God's reputation before the world. Indeed, not only the motivation clauses but virtually every aspect of the prayer for help in the Psalter serves to urge and reason with God in a way that will effect a positive response, similar therefore to the motivation clauses of the law, by which the Lord, through Moses, encourages a positive response from the people.¹³ Moreover, the petitions, by their motivational appeal, reflect an assumption on the psalmists' part that the structures of life either are, or are hoped to be, as set and settled as they appear to be in Deuteronomy.¹⁴ That is, the God to whom the appeals go up is consistent and can be counted on.

Deuteronomy and the Psalms thus uncover a highly dialogical relationship between the Lord and the community of faith, one that is directive but non-coercive, free to press and push the other member of the party, open to being persuaded by the appeal that is made from either side—in God's instruction of the community and in the people's cries for help to the Lord. The conversation between the books makes us aware of a conversation between the Lord and the people that is highly dynamic, open, hortatory, and argumentative, uncovering the freedom of both parties and the vulnerability of each to the persuasive case that is made by the other.

II. Torah and Song

One could make a fairly convincing case that the Psalter and Deuteronomy set before their readers a fundamental and shared claim, to wit, that following the law of the Lord is the way to blessing and life. The corollary of this is also often indicated: Disobedience to the law is the way to death. Such a claim is most obviously the case in Deuteronomy and is marked especially by the var-

¹² There is clearly an appeal to common sense in the prohibition against cutting down trees in a siege because they are not human beings and because they produce food (Deut 20:19–20) and in the requirement of building a parapet on one's roof so that nobody will fall off (Deut 22:8). On the rhetoric of Deuteronomy, see most recently J. S. Hamilton, *Social Justice and Deuteronomy: The Case of Deuteronomy 15* (SBLDS 136; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

¹³ P. D. Miller, "Prayer as Persuasion: The Rhetoric and Intention of Prayer," *Word and World* 13 (1993) 356–62.

¹⁴ Gerald Janzen suggests that this point is a version of the issue between Job and his friends: Job's moral anguish is a reflection of the fact that he shares their worldview—only, they consider it intact and he fears it is coming apart (private communication).

ious ways that the promise of the future is tied to obedience. At the climactic point of Moses' speech, the people are given a choice between life and death, good and evil, and are urged to seek life (30:15–20). The Psalter, however, also is now framed in such a way that the same offer is made. The addition of an introduction to the Psalter in the form of Psalm 1, which exalts the way of the righteous, a way marked by continuing delight in and attention to the law of the Lord, presents the whole book as a guide and encouragement to attend to the law. This same point is underscored by the location and content of the other Torah Psalms, Psalms 19 and 119. Psalm 19 is the pivot point for the central collection of Psalms in book 1 of the Psalter, Psalms 15–24, and describes the law as sweeter than honey and fine gold, the keeping of which brings great reward. Psalm 119, may have served as the concluding psalm to an earlier form of the Psalter¹⁵ and now towers over the final book of the Psalter as a mighty encomium to the law and its positive benefits.¹⁶

What the conversation between these two books makes even clearer, however, is that for the Psalter, *the law is Deuteronomy*. The chief clue to that fact is the way that Psalm 1 suggests an equation between “the law of the Lord” on which the doer of righteousness meditates and Deuteronomy. The only two occurrences of the expression “meditate on the law day and night” (הגה בתורה) (יוםם ולילה) are in Ps 1:2 and in the Lord's instruction at the beginning of the book of Joshua that “this book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night” (Josh 1:8). In the Joshua text, there is no question that the Deuteronomic law, whose teaching and inscription have been reported in the preceding book, is what is meant by “this book of the law.” Further, the Lord promises Joshua that if he is careful to “do” (עשה) in accordance with all that is written in the book of the law and—as the king is instructed in the Deuteronomic law of the king—“not turn from it to the right hand or to the left” (Josh 1:7; Deut 17:20), “you shall make your way prosperous” (תַּעֲלֶיךָ אֶת־דְּרָכְךָ [K]—Josh 1:8). This promise is then echoed in Psalm 1, which focuses on the “way” that the righteous one who delights in the law goes and declares that

¹⁵ This is the suggestive proposal of Claus Westermann (“The Formation of the Psalter,” in *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* [Richmond: John Knox, 1981] 250–58). Erich Zenger has argued against this in his 1995 SBL presentation on book 5 of the Psalter (“The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107–145,” *JSOT* 80 [1998] 97).

¹⁶ See on Psalm 119 in its context, G. Wilson, *The Editing of the Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985) 220–28; and Jon Levenson, “The Sources of Torah: Psalm 119 and the Modes of Revelation in Second Temple Judaism,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion* (ed. P. D. Miller, Jr., P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 559–74. Levenson identifies clear Deuteronomic influences and other aspects of Psalm 119 that are non-Deuteronomic in character. On the three Torah Psalms generally and their place in the Psalter, see J. L. Mays, “The Place of the Torah Psalms in the Psalter,” *JBL* 106 (1987) 3–12 (reprinted in J. L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994] 128–35).

all that such a one “does” (עָשָׂה) “shall prosper” (וַיִּצְלֵחַ).¹⁷ The Psalter and the Deuteronomistic History both begin with an explicit focus on the desirability of a constant attention to the law, which is understood to be the Deuteronomistic law.

There is a further association of Psalm 1 with Deuteronomy 6:6–9. Since at least as far back as Ibn Ezra the negative forms of the verbs “walk” (הִלְכָה), “stand” (עָמַד), and “sit” (יָשָׁב) in Ps 1:1 have been associated with the positive instruction of Deut 6:7 to recite or repeat, that is, to meditate upon,¹⁸ the words of the law “when you ‘sit’ at home, when you ‘walk’ on the way, when you lie down, and when you ‘arise’” (קוּם).¹⁹ The activity enjoined in Deut 6:6–9 expresses a constant and total commitment to the law of the Lord comparable to what is pronounced the blessed way of the righteous in Psalm 1.²⁰

In all three Torah Psalms, *meditation* plays a significant part. In Psalm 1, it is meditation (הִגִּידָה) on the Torah. In Psalm 19, the meditation (הִגִּידָה) of the

¹⁷ This identification of the *tôrâ* of Psalm 1 with Deuteronomy is further underscored by the last words of David to Solomon, which echo the instruction to Joshua and the language of both Deuteronomy in general and Psalm 1 in particular: “Keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandment, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper (תִּשְׁכַּל) in all that you do (תַּעֲשֶׂה) and wherever you turn” (1 Kgs 2:3).

¹⁸ G. Fischer and N. Lohfink have made a persuasive case for understanding the phrase כִּי רַבֵּר בִּי in Deut 6:7 as a repeating or murmuring of the law—they translate the phrase with German *summen*—and explicitly compare this act to what is described in Ps 1:2 (“Diese Worte sollst du summen”: Dtn 6,7 *wëdibbartâ bam*—ein verlорener Schlüssel zur meditativen Kultur in Israel,” *TP* 62 [1987] 59–72). They also follow G. Braulik’s construction of “these words” (הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה) as referring to the whole of the Deuteronomistic law (chaps. 5–26). See G. Braulik, “Die Ausdrücke für ‘Gesetz’ im Buch Deuteronomium,” *Bib* 51 (1970) 39–66.

¹⁹ For a summary of Ibn Ezra’s comment on this in his commentary on Psalms, see Stefan C. Reif, “Ibn Ezra on Psalm I 1–2,” *VT* 34 (1984) 232–36; cf. Gunnell André, “Walk’, ‘Stand’, and ‘Sit’ in Psalm I 1–2,” *VT* 32 (1982) 327. It should be noted that only two of the verbs are equivalent, but קוּם is the functional equivalent of עָמַד and often occurs in parallel to it.

²⁰ The association of *tôrâ* in the Psalter with Deuteronomy is probably to be assumed for other uses of the word as well as for the terms מִשְׁפָּטִים וְחֻקִּים (“statutes and ordinances”). G. Braulik has made a good case for understanding “the scroll of the book” (מִגְלַת סֵפֶר) of Ps 40:8 as a reference to Deuteronomy. He does not, however, regard תוֹרַתְךָ (“your law”) in v. 9 as also meaning Deuteronomy, seeing in that expression reference rather to an unmediated divine instruction placed in the heart of the individual by God (cf. Isa 51:7; Jer 31:33). His argument against this as a reference to Deuteronomy is based on the fact that Deuteronomy never uses *tôrâ* in a construct or genitival relation or with a pronominal suffix or in a promulgation sentence with Yahweh as its subject. That is indeed the case. It is always “this (book of the) law,” or “the (book of this) law” (e.g., Deut 1:5; 4:44; 17:18, 19; 27:3, 8, 26; 28:58, 61; 29:20 [Eng. 21]; etc.).

There are several problems with this line of argument. The use of חֵפֶץ in the parallel colon of Ps 40:9—“I *delight* to do your will, O my God”—is *reminiscent* of the חֵפֶץ (“delight”) in the Lord’s תוֹרָה of Ps 1:2. Further, Braulik acknowledges that DTR has the phrases “in the book of the law of God” (בְּסֵפֶר תוֹרַת אֱלֹהִים), Josh 24:26) and “in the law of the LORD” (בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה), 2 Kgs 10:31), this last in the semi-Deuteronomistic sentence: “Jehu was not careful to walk (שָׁמַר לְלִבָּתוֹ) in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel with all his heart.” To these examples, however, should be added the various references in DTR to “the law of Moses” (Josh 8:31–32; 23:5; and 2 Kgs 14:6; 23:25). Finally,

psalmist at the end looks back on the law and the glories of God's handiwork. The meditation (שִׁיחַ) of the psalmist in Psalm 119 is on the law as precepts (vv. 15, 78, פְּקֻדִים), torah (v. 97), decrees (v. 99, עֲדוּת), statutes (vv. 23, 48, חֻקִים), and promise (v. 148, אֲמָרָה) but also on "your wondrous works" (v. 27, נִפְלְאוֹת). These Psalms, together with others, lift up what Georg Fischer and Norbert Lohfink have called the "meditative culture" of ancient Israel.²¹ At the heart of that meditative culture, they suggest, is the continual speaking, reciting, or murmuring of the Deuteronomic law. The Psalms also place to the fore a continuing meditation on the law, but they join that with a constant meditation in song and speech on the glorious deeds of the Lord of Israel. The psalmist concludes Psalm 104: "May my meditation (שִׁיחַ) be pleasing to him" (v. 34), and then at the beginning of Psalm 105 calls the community to "meditate (שִׁיחַ) on all his wonderful works" (v. 2). I would suggest that the meditation of which Psalm 104 talks is the poem itself, that is, the praise of God sung in the poem. So also the meditation of Psalm 105 is the praise of God's wonderful works. The term נִפְלְאוֹת looks backward and forward: backward into God's wonderful works of creation recounted in Psalm 104 and forward into the wonderful works and acts for Israel in Psalm 105. The Psalter thus comes to us as an echo of Deuteronomy's injunction to the recitation and meditation upon the law but also as a collection of prayers and songs that themselves function as vehicles for recitation and meditation and expand the focus of constant attention to include, alongside the Torah, the wonderful deeds of the Lord. One is reminded of Luther's words: "Every morning, and whenever else I have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc." Both Deuteronomy and the Psalms call for a continuing meditation and then themselves become the primary content and substance of that meditation and recitation.

In this way, the Psalter and Deuteronomy are the books of scripture that most explicitly set within the community of faith a *cultural memory* that funds its identity and guides its life.²² Explicitly and implicitly, Deuteronomy nurtures

Braulik does not take sufficient account of the different character of Deuteronomy as divine-mediated word and the Psalms as human address to God and on occasion divine response. Except for Ps 78:5 ("He appointed a law in Israel"), הוֹרִיחַ in the Psalter always has a pronominal modifier or a construct relation, beginning with Ps 1:2. But it is appropriate in these prayers to refer to "the law of the Lord" or to "your law" or "his law." There is no reason to expect that Deuteronomic influence would require that in another context only the nonconstruct forms and those without suffixes could be used (G. Braulik, *Psalm 40 und der Gottesknecht* [FB; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1975] 149–61).

²¹ Fischer and Lohfink, "Diese Worte sollst du summen."

²² On "cultural memory," see J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1997); and G. Braulik, "Das Deuteronomium und die Gedächtniskultur Israels: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zur Verwendung von לְמַד," in *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel: Für Norbert Lohfink SJ* (ed. G. Braulik, W. Gross, and S. McEvenue; Freiburg: Herder, 1993) 9–31. In his study,

the regular rehearsal of the law in communal ritual and family life and the constant recollection of the story in its own preservation and rereading as a way of instilling within each generation a vivid awareness of the community as a covenant people and servants of the Lord of Israel. The Psalter is more implicit but full of clues that its prayers and songs are to be recited *spontaneously* on any occasion where the cry to God is appropriate and thanksgiving is the outcome and *regularly* as the praises of the people are sung in the sanctuary. And, like Deuteronomy, it knows the power of cultural and personal memory to shape and fund the present. In Psalm 22, the memory of the way that previous generations trusted in the Lord and cried out for help (vv. 5–6 [Eng. 4–5]) and the personal memory of the psalmist's long experience of God's protecting care (vv. 10–11 [Eng. 9–10]) lift the soul of the psalmist into a renewed confidence in the God who seems so far off and so unbearably silent. The community of faith regularly sings the Psalms and teaches them to future generations. In the tradition of the church, for example, the commandments and the Psalms are at the catechetical center. They are the substance of what is taught and learned: Deuteronomy and Psalms. Thus, one learns the story and the command and how to sing the Lord's song.

In this process, a cultural memory is preserved, incorporating the individual experiences of persons and families across many generations. That memory is shared and effects a continuing identity, one that is capable of crossing ethnic boundaries, as is demonstrated by the story of synagogue and church and their common identification with the people who left Egypt and were instructed by Moses. The Psalter invites identification of its songs with the experiences of Israel (so the superscriptions about David and Moses and Solomon²³) but also with the sufferings and deliverances of generations yet unborn (so Ps 22:31–32 [Eng. 30–31] and the superscription of Psalm 102). Deuteronomy is set in a very specific time and place (the plains of Moab prior to the occupation of Canaan) but reveals in various facets of its presentation and the history of its composition that its words are appropriate for a community in sharply varying circumstances—on the brink of the promise and the salvation gift, at risk of los-

Assmann takes his cue about the Israelite development of cultural memory from the questions of the children in Deuteronomy 6 and several times in Exodus. He does not draw on the Psalter, which needs to be included in any discussion of cultural memory in ancient Israel. For the Psalter is the means by which the children not only learn the story but also how to sing praise. Memory is not simply of the story or of the laws. It is also memory of the song, as Deuteronomy 31–32 makes evident by the Lord's insistence that Moses write down "this song," that is, Deuteronomy 32, and teach it to the Israelites for future generations (Deut 31:16–22). With reference to Josh 1:8, Assmann speaks of a "conversational remembering" (219 n. 49). To that the Psalter adds a singing memory.

²³ The superscriptions of the Psalter are extended to other figures in later versions of the Psalter, and *Midrash Tehillim* connects many lines and verses of the Psalter with figures in Israel's history.

ing it all, and experiencing the pain of exile and loss. The hermeneutics of the Psalter and the hermeneutics of Deuteronomy thus join together to provide the community with instruction and song that are appropriate in every circumstance of its life that the future can bring forth.

Deuteronomy and the Psalms give the community the two things it needs for its life through the centuries: a law book and a song book. Each anticipates the need of the other. Deuteronomy is preeminently the lawbook of the Bible and the Psalms are preeminently its songbook. But the Psalter begins with the law and sets its songs and prayers on the way of *torah*. And Deuteronomy ends with a song, knowing that the people cannot travel by *torah* alone.²⁴ Deuteronomy 31 and 32 indicate that Israel must sing the song as regularly as it reads the law (31:21–22). Moses writes the song down and teaches the people the song as he teaches them the law. As the law is regularly read, heard, repeated, and meditated upon, it is made fresh in new and changing times. As the songs are regularly played and sung, or also read and recited, the praise of God and the exaltation of the wonderful works of God go on in new generations.

III. The Fear of the Lord

The goal of the whole, as both books inform us, is *to teach the fear of the Lord*. When the Psalmist says, “Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord” (Ps 34:12 [Eng. 11]), one hears as well the voice of Moses in those words. In Deuteronomy, “the fear of the LORD your God” is synonymous with the demand of the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods besides me.” The positive form of that demand in Deuteronomy is “You shall fear the LORD your God.”²⁵ But the whole purpose of the law, of writing it down, of listening to it read, of teaching it to the children, is so that those who read and listen may learn to fear the Lord your God (e.g., Deut 4:10; 6:2, 24; 31:12–13). Even the rituals of festival and tithe are so that the people may learn to fear the Lord your God always (14:23), and the primary duty of the king is to model the aim of every citizen by reading in his copy of the law constantly (“all the days of his life”) to learn the fear of the Lord his God (17:19).

Thus it is that the congregation that enters the sanctuary to sing the praise of the Lord is the community of “those who fear him” (Ps 22:26 [Eng. 25]; 66:16; 118:4; 135:20). The הַיְיָ, the public thanksgiving feast of the one whose prayer has been heard and answered, evokes in those who hear this testimony the fear of the Lord and trust in God (Ps 22:24 [Eng. 23]; 40:4 [Eng. 3]; 64:10

²⁴ Note that Deuteronomy 32 is turned into hymnic praise by its framework (32:1–4, 43).

²⁵ While this point can be made as a general inference from Deuteronomy as a whole, as 6:13 encapsulates the first group of commandments having to do with the sole worship of the Lord, not serving other gods or idols, and the right use of the name of the Lord, it does so with the language of the fear of the Lord: “The LORD your God alone you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear” (see also Deut 10:20).

[Eng. 9]; 119:74). The Psalmist identifies the fear of the Lord with all the expressions of the law (Ps 19:8–10 [Eng. 7–9]; 119:74, 79). The twin Psalms 111–12 are hinged around the fear of the Lord, a fear that is expressed in Psalm 111 in elaborate praise of the Lord (Ps 111:10) and is manifest in Psalm 112 in “delight” in the Lord’s commandments (Ps 112:1). And the Psalter is full of enumerations of the wonderful benefits the Lord provides for those who fear him (103:11, 13, 17; 111:5; 112:1; 119:38; 128:1, 4; 145:19; 147:11). The songs of praise and the “new” song of the psalms express the fear of the Lord that is the first commandment of all. I have suggested elsewhere that Israel’s praise as set forth in the Psalter was its most visible expression of obedience to the First Commandment. But Luther may have said it best when he suggested: “What is the whole Psalter but meditations based on the First Commandment.”

There is one particular place where, at a strategic point in the Psalter, the fear of the Lord is enjoined upon a different audience. The second part of the introduction to the Psalter is the royal Psalm 2, which seems to move us away from the delight in the law that is the subject of Psalm 1 to a quite different matter, to the rule of the anointed of the Lord over the nations. But Deuteronomy has made it clear that the rule of that king is utterly determined by obedience to the law of the Lord. In Psalm 2, this requirement is extended, and what is only inchoate in Deuteronomy becomes a primary theme in the Psalter: The *nations* and their *rulers* are also called to “serve the Lord with fear” (Ps 2:11; cf. Deut 6:13; 17:19).²⁶ Deuteronomy closes Israel off from the nations, and in the Psalms they are often the enemy. But the Psalter is also the place where the hostile nations are expected to come to serve the Lord in fear, to praise the God of Israel (9:20; 96:6; 99:1–3; 102:15). In a way that is reminiscent of Isaiah 2 and Micah 4, Psalm 2 implies that in the nations’ acceptance of the *torah* of the Lord, in their service of the Lord by living the righteous way embodied in the law, the kingdom of God, the universal reign of God takes visible form.²⁷

There is far more to this conversation than I have been able to evoke on this occasion. The theology of kingship is a subject of great weight in the con-

²⁶ That the service of the Lord of Israel is inchoate in Deuteronomy is suggested by the references to the gods of the nations having been allotted to them by the Lord (Deut 4:19; 29:25 [Eng. 26]) and by the nations marveling at Israel being a people so wise and having a God so near and laws so just and righteous (Deut 4:5–8). On this theme in Deuteronomy, see P. D. Miller, “God’s Other Stories: On the Margins of Deuteronomical Theology,” to be published in a festschrift in honor of Edward Campbell.

²⁷ Erich Zenger, “Wozu tosen die Völker . . . ?” *Beobachtungen zur Entstehung und Theologie des 2. Psalms*, in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn: Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen: Festgabe zum 70. Geburtstag von Heinrich Gross* (ed. E. Haag and F.-L. Hossfeld; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986) 509. Zenger points to the close associations of Ps 2:11–12 with Deut 6:13–18. This includes the burning anger of the Lord if Israel and the rulers of the nations do not serve and with fear.

versation between Moses and David.²⁸ But such matters will have to be taken up in other contexts and hopefully by other scholars. I want to conclude with two brief and different notes that grow out of the enterprise I have embarked on this evening.

The effort to engage these two biblical books in a theological conversation is a particular suggestion about one way of working at discerning a coherence in the theology of the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible and its understanding of God that makes the work of biblical scholarship available for the larger theological enterprise without silencing the various voices that speak out of its pages. The distortions that have happened by singling out particular strands or voices and neglecting others is something of which we have become well aware. The question that is so uncertain now—and some would say inappropriate—is whether through the varied voices of scripture it is possible to hear chords that create a harmony, even if the chords are sometimes dissonant ones. Or is there such dissonance in the whole that we can no longer be interested in the whole, and what we present comes across as a cacophony or a collection of motley voices that give little sense of a whole and coherent composition? The answer to such questions is up for grabs. One way of working on them may be to acknowledge the different voices but to engage them in ways that draw them together in the kind of conversation I have sought to elicit here.

Finally, I began by pointing to the vagaries of scholarly research, writing, and publishing that often lead us in directions unplanned or not much thought about. Now I want to recognize that the complexity of academic scholarship as a reflection of personal interests and stories is not always as happenstance as my examples suggested. I have been fended off by prospective authors whom I have invited to write something often enough to be aware of the care with which many of us plan our work and focus on small and large subjects that really do matter to us and that we think should matter to others. In my case, the conversation partners I have described this evening are not simply the outcome

²⁸ I have suggested some of the ways in which Deuteronomy and Psalms together share a common understanding of the role and responsibility of the king in two essays: "The Beginning of the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. C. McCann; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 83–92; and "Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15–24," in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung* (ed. E. Zenger and F.-L. Hossfeld; Herder's Biblische Studien 1; Freiburg: Herder, 1994) 127–42. The interplay of divine kingship and human kingship is another area in which there is a significant interaction between Deuteronomy and Psalms, particularly in light of the work that has been done on book 4 of the Psalter (Psalms 90–106) as being a climactic response to the problem of kingship as it has become manifest in books 1–3 (see G. Wilson, *Editing of the Psalter*). The opening of book 4 with a Psalm of Moses that has significant affinities with Deuteronomy, especially Deuteronomy 32, affinities that are carried forward elsewhere in succeeding Psalms, has led Marvin Tate to speak of book 4 as a "Moses-collection." The cry of the Davidic voice at the end of book 3 (Ps 89:50–52 [Eng. 49–51]) is answered in book 4 by the voice of Moses echoing Deuteronomy (Marvin Tate, *Psalms 50–100* [WBC 20; Dallas: Word Books, 1990]).

of dissertation research and the beguiling words of an editor. My study of the Psalms began at my mother's knee, literally, in the circle of the family and with my sisters as we read and memorized some of the Psalms on Sunday afternoons. The Psalms were there long before I knew I would earn a living studying them (and that may be why I earn my living this way). Nor is it particularly surprising to find a student of the Bible whose theological and religious life has been deeply set in the Reformed tradition, with its positive view of the law in the moral life, spending much of his life in the study of Deuteronomy. Scholarship and personal formation are often deeply interactive.

That interaction, however, is never simply one-way. If who we are sometimes sets our work in certain directions, then it is also the case that scholarly work may reshape us, sometimes quite radically. There are some who, having entered the world of biblical scholarship from a base of personal experience and piety, have wandered into the study of the history of religion, for example, and found themselves unable to return to their theological and religious homeland. Some of us spend our academic lives fighting the demons of our religious upbringing, while others continue to undergird and reinforce the theological tendencies that first shaped our lives.

Yet this often strange mix of the uncharted and seemingly haphazard paths of our academic activities and the things within us that shape and lead us are finally the stuff that keeps research from having a sameness to it, from being predictable and uninteresting. And in such strange mixes, whether they include the religious experience of the child or the beguiling tongue of an editor, new knowledge is formed, possibilities literally not dreamed of or intended come to reality, and both the community of learning and the community of faith are enhanced and enriched.