
Preface

This volume began in a conversation during the 2005 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Philadelphia. Following a session of papers in the Deuteronomistic History section, Klaus-Peter Adam and I gathered with several other scholars who had presented papers to address what we recognized to be a growing problem. Namely: there was great disagreement whether the hypothesis of a Deuteronomistic History was in danger of becoming an obsolete model for exploring the development of major units of text and their historical implications. The model had become increasingly fragmented, with dramatically different understandings of what the term *Deuteronomistic* might even mean and of how effectively it could be applied as a criterion for evaluating language, politics, history, and theology in the books from Deuteronomy to Kings as well as significant chunks of the prophetic corpus. What is more, European scholars and North American scholars seemed to be having two very different conversations regarding the term and the texts to which it could apply, and the gulf between conversation partners in both continents appeared to be growing.

Klaus-Peter resolved to organize several special sessions in ensuing SBL meetings devoted to addressing this problem. He proposed that these sessions focus not on a “Deuteronomistic History” per se, but on the book of Kings (1 and 2 Kings in English Bibles). We all agreed that this one book represented a good starting point for refocusing the parameters of

the discussion. The sessions that Klaus-Peter organized in 2007 at both the International SBL meeting in Vienna and the Annual SBL meeting in San Diego provided opportunities for scholars from the United States, Canada, the U.K., and Continental Europe to bring their critical interests to bear upon a single text.

Everyone recognized that the book of Kings could still bear the weight of the traditional modes of inquiry that often had characterized earlier research into the Deuteronomistic History. But by emphasizing the book of Kings and not a larger scholarly construct, the sessions were able to reset the discussion in a way yielding a more clearly delineated set of questions that lent themselves to newer approaches beyond traditional redaction-critical scholarship. This new direction helped bring scholars from both sides of the Atlantic to the same table and allowed for the discussion to once more be truly international in scope, without narrowly conceived critical models hindering the dialogue. Those sessions stimulated important dialogues on the vitality of Kings as a cornerstone of historical-critical research into the history of Israelite religion and the formation of the Hebrew Bible. The present volume represents the fruit of those sessions.

Working with the contributors whose essays are gathered here has been an honor and a delight and has provided Klaus-Peter and me with an opportunity to approach a familiar text with a renewed sense of curiosity and enthusiasm. We hope that the reader will share in that experience. We are grateful for the support of Neil Elliott and the entire staff at Fortress Press who have given all of us behind this volume the very best forum for exploring our ideas. It bodes very well for the *Soundings* series that such a dedicated and congenial group of people are devoting themselves to such an enterprise. Both Klaus-Peter and I hope that the present work will be part of a larger trend where methodological and conceptual distinctions do not stand in the way of open and sincere inquiry across borders both national and academic.

Mark Leuchter