CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE STILL ELUSIVE DEUTERONOMISTS

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As my contribution to this panel, I wish to offer a synopsis of a book I co-edited with Linda Schearing in 1999 entitled *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*. It was concerned, as is this panel, with trying to define Deuteronomism, and it even included a contribution by our organizer, Thomas Römer. In offering this synopsis I do not in any sense discount the important work that has been done in the intervening years, such as our organizer's own recent and highly significant introduction (Römer 2005). On the contrary, my intent is to bring additional voices to our discussion, since the book's essays, particularly those dealing with methodology, are still very much pertinent to the consideration of Deuteronomism.

The book began with two essays on Pan-Deuteronomism that had seen prior publication. Richard Coggins's essay, "What Does 'Deuteronomistic' Mean?" had sounded the alarm about Pan-Deuteronomism four years earlier (Coggins 1995). After pointing out "the extreme diversity underlying contemporary scholarly usage of 'Deuteronomistic'" (33)[1] and, citing Porter (1989, 71), "the tendency to attribute almost all Israelite literary activity, from the period of Josiah to some time after the exile, to the Deuteronomic school" (33), Coggins concluded that the problem stemmed partly from the confusing use of the term "Deuteronomistic" for three different phenomena: (1) relating to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History, (2) the disputed redaction of other parts of the Hebrew Bible, notably the Pentateuch and Latter Prophets, based on distinctive vocabulary; and (3) a particular ideology.

An abridged translation of Norbert Lohfink's article, "Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung," also published in 1995, problematized

[1] Reprinted in Schearing and McKenzie 1999, 22–35. Numbers not preceded by dates in this article also refer to pages in Schearing and McKenzie 1999.

the notion of a Deuteronomistic movement (36–66).[2] Movements, wrote Lohfink, are defined by social and political activities, not literary style. He agreed with Coggins that "Deuteronomistic" was confusingly used for different things. The broad-based and short-lived renewal movement that took place under Josiah had a form of Deuteronomy as its charter and produced an incipient Deuteronomistic History. Both were supplemented in the exile, when Jeremiah was also written. Lohfink was hesitant to apply the term "Deuteronomistic" to any other literature in the Hebrew Bible or to literary activity in the Persian period, preferring to see ostensibly Deuteronomistic material as the result of the influence of the basic Deuteronomistic canon serving as educational materials in Jerusalem. The citation of historical data, as in the dating formulas in the book of the Twelve, even if they stem from Kings, does not warrant the designation "Deuteronomistic," particularly since they lack corroborating Deuteronomistic language and ideas. Rather, Deuteronomistic material is to be identified on the basis of linguistic features in the basic Deuteronomistic canon (Deuteronomy + Joshua–Kings) and themes (cultic centralization, worship of Yahweh alone, obedience to the law, and the land) but also narrative patterns and style (rhetorical sequences using infinitives, framing of texts with exhortatory formulas, interpretive discourses linking historical narratives).

The third essay adapted the question from the Sumerian King List as its title: "Who Was the Deuteronomist? (Who Was Not the Deuteronomist?): Reflections on Pan-Deuteronomism" (67–82). In it, Robert Wilson traced the tendency toward pan-Deuteronomism in all parts of the canon: no longer confined to Deuteronomy, Deuteronomists had been assigned an active role in the composition of the Torah; in the Latter Prophets, Deuteronomistic composition had been found not only in Jeremiah, but also in Micah and Zechariah and Deuteronomistic themes and editing in Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve (in fact, Carroll's influential thesis [1986] that what appears as pre-exilic prophecy was actually a post-exilic Deuteronomistic creation seemed to make the Deuteronomists responsible for the creation of Israelite prophecy); even in the Writings, Deuteronomistic influence had been detected,

[2] The translation was prepared from a previously abbreviated version of the article that appeared in French as "Y a-t-il eu un movement deutéronomiste" in Lohfink 1996, 41–63.

particularly in the Psalms, in those believed to be of northern origin and in the Korah and Asaph psalms.

Among the implications that Wilson drew from this survey was the lack of agreement about what makes a text Deuteronomistic. Language, the most reliable criterion, has limitations because of the size of the Hebrew Bible corpus. Ideas and themes, such as covenant or retributive justice, are less helpful because they are hard to identify as exclusively Deuteronomistic. Arguments based on what would be congenial to the Deuteronomists or when they seem to have been active are little more than speculative. In short, Wilson stated, the work he surveyed "provides no coherent account of Deuteronomism as a social, political, or religious movement" (81). If Deuteronomistic literary activity was as extensive as scholars have suggested, then Deuteronomism may have been a much more diverse and long-lasting movement than commonly thought, although the reason behind all this activity remains unexplained and seems to vary in each case. Alternatively, the concept of Deuteronomism had become so amorphous that it should be abandoned. In other words, if everybody is a Deuteronomist, nobody is a Deuteronomist.

Wilson's article implicitly left open the possibility that Deuteronomistic literary activity was not, in fact, as widespread as many scholars have proposed, and this was the contention of several subsequent pieces in the book. James Crenshaw argued against Weinfeld's attempt (Weinfeld 1972) to identify Deuteronomism with Wisdom (145–58). He pointed out that while there are similarities of phraseology and ideology between Deuteronomy and the Bible's Wisdom literature there are also significant differences, or the expressions or ideas they have in common, such as theodicy, were so widespread in the ancient world as to be meaningless.

There was pointed disagreement about Deuteronomistic redaction in the Latter Prophets. Stephen Cook argued for Deuteronomistic redaction in Micah 5:9–14 and 7:14–20 and reconstructed both proto-Deuteronomistic forebears to Micah in pre-exilic clan leaders and, following von Rad, liturgical and scribal Deuteronomistic activity among post-exilic Levites (216–31). However, Rob Kugler made a strong case against Deuteronomistic redaction in Micah and the rest of the Latter Prophets (127–44). He began by pointing out the paucity of evidence supporting the notion of a Deuteronomistic social movement. He then evaluated four categories of evidence cited in favor of Deuteronomistic redaction of the Prophets: (1) language or themes associated with

Deuteronomism that are more widespread (for example, First Isaiah); (2) themes known only in the Deuteronomic canon but not exhibiting its language (for example, Amos 2:4–5; 5:25–27); (3) language in the Deuteronomic tradition but lacking Deuteronomic concepts or ideas (for example, Third Isaiah); (4) and passages with both Deuteronomic themes and language (for example, Amos 3:7; 5:4–5, 14–15). Kugler contended that only the last category evinces potential Deuteronomistic redaction as opposed to influence and that even then, redaction has occurred only when Deuteronomic theology is promoted at the expense of the ideology of the book being edited. He concluded that the "isolated hints of deuteronomic redaction found in Amos 3.7; 5.4–5, 14–15 hardly indicate the existence of a school of thought" (144) and even

> [t]he large-scale redaction of Jeremiah's words, though certainly intriguing, is just as easily explained by positing the conversion of Jeremiah's disciples to a deuteronomic outlook as it is by imagining that a separate 'Deuteronomistic' group edited his legacy with hostile intent. (144)

Hence, "only Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History permit the hypothesis [of a Deuteronomistic group of editors] the little vitality that it has" (144).

Römer disagreed with Kugler at least in regard to Jeremiah (189–99), seeing a first edition of Jeremiah in chs. 7–35 as very close to the Deuteronomistic History but the second edition comprising chs. 1–45 as "quite different" (198) and reflecting "a certain evolution" (198) of both ideology and vocabulary.

Nevertheless, Corrine Patton (now Carvalho) and Ehud Ben-Zvi adopted positions very close to Kugler's. Patton used Ezekiel to illustrate her contention that authors in the Persian period consciously appropriated Deuteronomistic ideology, motifs, and traditions and adapted them to their own theological purposes (200–15). One might speak, therefore, of Deuteronomistic influence in Ezekiel, but not of Deuteronomistic redaction.

Taking Micah, Zephaniah, and Obadiah as points of reference, Ben-Zvi also argued that there is no evidence of Deuteronomistic redaction in the Latter Prophets (232–61). In the course of examining shared words and expressions as well as the question of common theology, Ben-Zvi made a series of methodological observations typified by the following quotations:

- "from the citation of deuteronomistic texts [in Chronicles] it does not necessarily follow that the texts were written or redacted by a deuteronomistic group" (240, n. 21);
- "should some overlap be found, the study should take into account not only mere occurrence of expressions but also the meaning(s) that they convey in their literary context" (241, n. 23).
- "The authors/redactors—were conversant with the relevant religious literature—of their time—and were surely able to activate linguistic expressions in their language according to—the general discourse (and world of knowledge) in which they lived" (247).
- Ben-Zvi went on to point out that this includes use of a lexical repertoire and imitation: "– one may say that both the writers of these books and their rereadership were likely influenced by texts included in the deuteronomistic corpus, but so were those of Chronicles and Ruth (cf. Acts 7, Stephen's speech)" (252–53).
- "it does not follow that the mentioned prophetic books underwent a dtr redaction, nor that the superscription or its temporal clause is a redactional addition written by a member of a 'deuteronomistic movement' or someone who was active in a 'deuteronomistic group'" (253).
- In reference to shared theological ideas, "– none of them requires the acceptance of a separate and distinctive deuteronomistic theology that could not be shared by many other literati –" (255).

The distinction between Deuteronomistic redaction and Deuteronomistic influence lay at the heart of the disagreement between Blenkinsopp (84–115) and Van Seters (160–70) about the Sinai pericope and the Pentateuch as a whole. While they agreed about much of the literary analysis of Exodus, including its post-Deuteronomic dating, they disagreed about the designation of the responsible party or parties and the nature of the literary enterprise represented. Blenkinsopp contended on the basis of terminology and themes that "Deuteronomic editors have reworked an existing literary tradition of a Sinai theophany into a paradigm of covenant making in keeping with their own ideological agenda" (94) and eschewed Van Seters's retention of "the siglum J for an exilic author, or narrative strand, distinct from but influenced by Deuteronomic writings" (90, n. 11). In so doing, he asserted that it is "established that these writings come from a multigenerational school" (90, n. 11). Van Seters, however, argued that the

Exodus account uses Deuteronomic terminology in the service of a very different ideology, especially as concerns the content of the law-book delivered to Moses on Sinai (160–70). Hence, this writer is an author, not a redactor, and he is writing later than and under the influence of Deuteronomy but is not a Deuteronomist. "There is, therefore," he concluded, "no dtr redaction in the Tetrateuch" (170).

Conclusions

I perceive five trends emerging from the essays in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists* that are relevant for our consideration of the same topic today.

1. There was a reaffirmation of the existence of the Deuteronomistic History and of the distinction between the adjectives "Deuteronomic," in reference to the original book of Deuteronomy, and "Deuteronomistic," referring to the authorship or editing of the Former Prophets and probably Jeremiah in its wake (Coggins, Lohfink, Blenkinsopp, Crenshaw, Patton). However, both points were complicated beyond the usual recognition of Deuteronomistic revision of Deuteronomy by two articles not yet mentioned. Marc Brettler argued that Deut 30:1–10 had been influenced by Jeremiah, rather than the other way around (171–88). And Graeme Auld contended that the flow of influence was from the Former Prophets to Deuteronomy, rather than the reverse, so that the term "Deuteronomistic" is not appropriate (116–26). These two pieces, especially Auld's, portended what has become a growing question for a number of scholars, namely that of the very existence of a Deuteronomistic History.

2. There was general agreement among the essayists, at least theoretically, about the criteria for identifying Deuteronomistic material. It is not just the presence of a set of vocabulary and expressions but the accumulation of these together with rhetorical and stylistic features and characteristic themes (Blenkinsopp, cf. Lohfink, Wilson, Römer, Van Seters).

3. Given the unanimity about identifying features, it is ironic that there was far less agreement when it came to discerning which texts are Deuteronomistic, and this is still the situation today. There was and is sharp division especially about the questions of Deuteronomistic editing in the Pentateuch and the Latter Prophets, and it indicates

that the source of disagreement may be how the criteria for identifying Deuteronomistic literature are applied. Specifically, despite the recognition that language alone is inadequate as a marker because it was easily imitated and because the literary corpus is small, there is still a tendency to rely primarily or exclusively on vocabulary and language for identifying Deuteronomistic material. Perhaps this is of necessity, but it is a certainly a reason to exercise caution in drawing conclusions about authorship and socio-political affiliation.

4. Several authors (Lohfink, Wilson, Crenshaw, Ben-Zvi) stressed the absence of evidence for the existence of Deuteronomism as a multigenerational social movement or school of thought. However, this notion was assumed by others (Blenkinsopp, Brettler, Römer, Cook). The idea of a "Deuteronomistic school" continues to be widely held yet poorly defined. The conception of the Deuteronomists as a scribal school (Person 2002; Römer 2005) has better social parallels. But the idea of a scribal school that used similar language to voice different ideological concerns over generations essentially ignores ideology as a marker and runs the risk of making the term "Deuteronomistic" so amorphous, as Wilson observed that it might better be abandoned.[3]

5. There was increasing recognition of a distinction between Deuteronomistic composition (authorship/editing) and Deuteronomistic influence. Several of the authors (Lohfink, Patton, Ben-Zvi) pointed to Chronicles, as an illustration of the latter. Person's recent book (2010) notwithstanding, this seems to me a crucial distinction.

In my own modest postscript to the *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, I suggested that Deuteronomy was the Archimedean point not only of Pentateuchal criticism but of the entire Hebrew Bible. Thus, it and the Deuteronomistic History in its wake exercised considerable influence in the development of the Hebrew Bible. This does not mean, though, that all of this literature can be considered Deuteronomistic or that there was a continuing group of Deuteronomistic writers. I reiterate that suggestion today. I continue to believe that true Deuteronomistic

[3] Person's work, in my view, is a case in point. His most recent book (2010) argues *inter alia*, that the scribal school responsible for Chronicles was Deuteronomic in root. Knoppers's essay in this volume ably demonstrates key ideological differences between the two works. This does not, of course, disprove Person's theory, which is ultimately unfalsifiable. But if Chronicles is designated Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic, then the latter term is no longer of any use in designating a particular literature or ideology.

composition is limited to the discrete works of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History and perhaps portions of Jeremiah, though Kugler's point about other possibilities for Jeremiah's affinities is germane. Otherwise, we are dealing with influence.

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