

Hymnus, Enkomion oder Psalm? Schattengefechte in der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft

NTS 56 (2010) 208–231.

Hymn, encomion or Psalm? Shadowboxing in New Testament Exegesis: For much of the 20th century scholars tried to reconstruct various cultic hymns beneath the surface of New Testament texts. With the rise of rhetorical criticism the focus of research has shifted to the properties of epideictic rhetoric. Exegetes, therefore, often tend to contrast “encomia” with “hymns” or “psalms”. To avoid any shadow boxing one has to consider which *descriptive language* would fit best the texts. A brief examination of ancient hymnic traditions and their treatment in rhetoric demonstrates that while encomia interact strongly with hymns each genre has its own characteristics; hymns, whether in poetry or prose, consist especially of praise of divinities and are addressed to divinities. Future *formgeschichtliche* analysis has to distinguish carefully between “hymn” (in a narrow sense), “hymnic praise” and “encomion” (which does not particularly refer to divine beings). In early Christian literature, as far as it relates to the textual surface, we find beside hymns to God only few hymns directed to Christ. Nevertheless Christ’s divine status is praised with rich hymnic rhetorical devices. This amazing tension corresponds exactly with what we call “Christological monotheism”.

Keywords: Hymn, Psalm, Encomium, Rhetoric, Formgeschichte, Prayer, Cult, Christology, Monotheism