

Some observations concerning the theology of the psalms from a structural-canonical perspective

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The Psalter has always been a popular book among Christians, Jews, and even atheists. There are many books written on the topic of the psalms and there are many songs based on them. Studying the Psalter has become quite popular among contemporary Old Testament scholars. Besides interest in the psalms themselves, the study of psalms is representative of current trends in Old Testament studies in general. For instance, we may learn a lot from structural-canonical and literary studies that focus on the psalms, but these studies also uncover a new perspective on our reading of the Old Testament in general. Let us begin with an overview of these studies.

1. Recent trends in Psalter studies

1.1. Form criticism

One of the newest approaches in Old Testament studies is the structural-canonical approach. However, for the greater part of the twentieth century form criticism was dominant. The founder of this approach was Hermann Gunkel. His main idea was to categorize psalms into genres and study each psalm from the perspective of its *Sitz im Leben* (place in life). He suggested that psalms could have not only historical but also cultic background, which could have different ideological value. Because of these suggestions Psalter studies moved in the direction of the recreation of their cultic background. The use of genres helped to systematize the psalms, but did not present a holistic picture of the Psalter. It is also important to mention Sigmund Mowinckel, who continued Gunkel's ideas on cultic background and suggested the existence of an annual «enthronement of YHWH» festival.^[1] The proposed theory viewed psalms having to do with a

king in the context of an enthronement festival (similar to festivals in Canaan and Babylon). These festivals represented the god's annual enthronement, and were celebrated every autumn. Mowinckel borrowed the idea from Babylonian New Year practices and suggested that the Hebrew king represented God at the festival.

Similarly to Mowinckel, Claus Westermann followed Gunkel's ideas about psalm genres and developed them further. In fact, he created the genre division of the Psalter most commonly used nowadays. More recently, Walter Brueggemann has proposed only three genres: orientation, disorientation, and reorientation.^[2] In the period following Gunkel's new suggestions, the Psalter was still perceived as a random collection of different songs from different periods and locations. These factors were thought to influence its five-book division.^[3]

1.2. Structural-canonical approach

Structural-canonical analysis of the Psalter was first suggested by Brevard Childs in his book *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*.^[4] The idea of reading the Psalter as a whole belongs to Claus Westermann.^[5] However, Childs really developed this thesis later. He noticed that the Psalter has been edited theologically more than any other book in

the Old Testament. This could be seen in the mixture of different psalm collections, the editing of the names of God in strictly limited excerpts of psalms, as well as in superscripts and postscripts.^[6] In Childs' opinion, the «authorship» of the superscripts not only informs us of the identity of the author, but also bears associative and theological connotations. Therefore, mentioning David in the Psalter and those psalms that describe details of his life play not only a historical, but also a representative role.^[7] Therefore, it could be said that the order of psalms in the Psalter was not only there to make mention of some stories from the past, but also to serve as a mode or image of Israel's history in general. Psalms also uncovered the story of God's people in an eschatological perspective. Childs also observed that every book of the Psalter has a doxological ending, and that the fifth book ends with an entire doxological psalm. In addition, all five final psalms start with «Hallelujah,» thus adding emphasis to the final doxology.

Moreover, Childs believes that Ps 1 is an introduction into the whole Psalter and it introduces the theme of the «righteous» and following the Torah. Psalm 2 serves as the second part of the introduction, and adds the «anointed» and the eschatological intervention of God as addi-

^[1] Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, Vol. 1, trans. by D. R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 106-139.

^[2] Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 2003), 288.

^[3] David M. Howard, Jr., «The Psalms and Current Study,» in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. by Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth (Leicester, England: Apollon, 2005), 23-40.

^[4] By «structural-canonical analysis» I mean a symbiosis of the structural theological approach and

canonical critical approach.

^[5] Claus Westermann, «Zur Sammlung des Psalters,» *Theologia Viatorum* 8 (1962), 278-284, quoted in Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 222 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 18.

^[6] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 511-512.

^[7] *Ibid.*, 521-522.

tional major themes. These two psalms are organized by the *inclusio* formula, «blessed is...» which makes them a single literary unit. Thus, the extended introduction to the Psalter introduces the important themes of God's anointed and the eschatological expectation of God's promises. Unlike Gunkel or Westermann, Childs sees the eschatological development of the anointed theme, for instance, in Pss 89 and 132.^[8] Furthermore, some eschatological moments could be found in psalms of sorrow. They often interrupt descriptions of hardships. For instance, in Ps 102, vv 1-11 and 23-24a stand in contrast to other verses; previously many scholars struggled with these unexpected changes in many psalms' content. This eschatological flavor could indicate the eschatological editing and arrangement of the content of the Psalter, which creates a new (eschatological) plot in the psalms that previously lacked it.

We may also notice a connection between personal pleas and the sorrows of the nation, the so-called «corporate I.» We observe it in the superscript and content of Ps 30, or in the change of the speaker's identity in Ps 130. There is an interesting citation of Ps 2 in Acts 13:33 (in the Western New Testament text tradition) where it is mentioned as Ps 1, which could also indicate the deliberate editing of the Psalter. In Childs' opinion the Psalter in its final edition plays the role of a guide to the righteous life in the context of a synagogue service, and not a collection of psalms for cultic temple worship.^[9] If we recognize this approach, then the «righteous

people» of the Psalter serve as role models or prototypes for the whole nation of Israel; co-identification takes place. The Jewish name of the Book of Psalms, «Praises,» emphasizes its goal, and points to the result of its reading, which is worship (not only in the cultic sense). One more point that supports the holistic reading of the Psalter is the reinterpretation and reintegration of some psalms within it. For instance, Ps 108 consists of parts of Pss 57 and 60; likewise Ps 53 is an edition of Ps 14. All of this suggests that these psalms were theologically reworked and used in a different ideological context (or for a different purpose) than the one originally intended. This fact adds a point to the proposal of the typological plot of the Psalter, and against the Psalter as just a random collection of poetry. It is difficult to believe that there was a careless editor who «accidentally» repeated some psalms but edited their content very carefully.

Childs' student Gerald Wilson presented a monograph in 1985 entitled *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* in which, on the basis of his analysis of superscripts and postscripts, he demonstrated the presence of deliberate theological editing in the Psalter.^[10] Following Childs, Wilson took superscripts not as *Sitz im Leben* markers, as was popular before, but as directions for reading. Mention of David's name could serve not only as an indication of authorship (it is more obvious in Hebrew where ב «lamed» could also signify «related to David,» which strongly affects the context of the psalm), but as theological markers of David as the «ideal King.» According to Wilson, the editing of the Psalter uses a five-book division and takes every book as a period in a typological history of Israel and its anointed one. In Wilson's opinion, the first three

[8] *Ibid.*, 517.

[9] *Ibid.*, 513.

[10] Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. SBL Dissertation Series 76 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985).

books of the Psalter represent an early theological editing with an emphasis on the hope of the anointed. However, the fourth and fifth books reveal disappointment with the office of the anointed and a return to God as King, as He was in the time of Moses. With this monograph Wilson laid the foundation for a twenty year-long dialog in the field, and also described the basic plot of the Psalter. This paper was one of a series that developed and revealed the relevance of Brevard Childs' suggestions.

Nevertheless, not all scholars accepted plot interpretation enthusiastically. For instance, John Walton disagrees with Wilson and maintains that the cessation of the kingship of the anointed in the second part of the Psalter could be explained by moving its fulfillment into the eschatological future.^[11] James Luther Mays proposes a similar idea, and thinks that the eschatological presence of the anointed plays an important part in the last two books of the Psalter.^[12] Thus, Walton and Mays attempt to show that the topic of the anointed is relevant to the whole Psalter. In general, we could say that most present day scholars accept or use suggestions related to the theological plot redaction of the Psalter. The main division centers on the definition of the main

topic or principle of the Psalter's plot and the role of the «David» superscripts in Books Four and Five.

We find some ideas of reading the Psalter as a whole at the beginning of the Common Era among both Christians and Jews. Asterius, a Christian writer of the fourth and fifth centuries mentioned that the order of the psalms is important for learning their content.^[13] A Jewish writer of the early medieval period, Salmon ben Yeruham, stated that because of the prophetic nature of the psalms commentators should take their order seriously.^[14]

Peter Flint and some other scholars, on the basis of the Qumran Psalter scroll (11QPSa), state that the canonization of the fifth book of the Psalter was late and therefore we cannot take intentional theological plot seriously.^[15] On the other hand, there are several reasons to doubt that: the existence of the Septuagint for quite a period of time; new translations of the Bible into Greek at the beginning of the second century C. E. (they would not make sense if the Septuagint was newly completed); and the theological particularity of the Qumran sect in first century Judaism (they would have had reasons to change the possible theology of the Psalter).^[16] Moreover, Tyler Williams compared LXX versions of Proverbs and

^[11] John H. Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34. (March 1991): 21-31.

^[12] James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

^[13] Georg P. Braulik, "Psalter and Messiah: Towards a Christological Understanding of the Psalms in the Old Testament and the Church Fathers," 34, in Dirk J. Human and Cas J.A. Vos, eds., *Psalms and Liturgy*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 410 (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 15-40.

^[14] Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of*

Psalms: From Saadiah Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra, trans. by Lenn J. Shramm, SUNY Series in Judaica: Hermeneutics, Mysticism, and Religion (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), 70-71.

^[15] Peter W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms: Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 17.

^[16] Menahem Haran, "11QPSa and the Canonical Book of Psalms," in Marc Brettler and Michael Fishbane, eds., *Minh'ah le-Nah'um: Biblical and Other Studies Presented to Nahum M. Sarna in Honor of his 70th Birthday*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 154 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 193-196.

Isaiah with Maccabees and Philo and showed that they (and the larger part of the Septuagint) should be dated not later than the middle of the second century B. C. E.^[17] All these facts suggest that even if we cannot be sure about the dating of the editorial finalization of the fifth book of the canonical Psalter, and even though there is a Qumran version which has a different order and additional psalms, we could still hold to the earlier theological fixation of the psalms in the context of the whole Psalter.

There are some opponents to this proposal, notably Michael Goulder. He sees each book of the Psalter as a separate collection. Similarly to Goulder, Norman Whybray thinks that the Psalter is a random collection that was formed over the course of time, so that the first book is the oldest and the fifth is the latest.^[18] There are several articles published recently that take the Psalter as a random collection. Arens is one of these authors; he thinks that the Psalter served as a lectionary for Shabbat readings parallel to Torah readings.^[19] It is hard to argue with his observation, but the five-book division and parallel readings do not exclude suggestions of a structural-canonical approach. There are some other scholars who accept a measure of logic in the collection but do not agree that there is a clear structure. Walter Brueggemann is one of these; he sees the Psalter as a way by which Israel

dealt with hardships through worship and dialogue with God. In his methodology he uses the suggestions of Gunkel and Westermann.

Even though the structural-canonical approach introduced by Childs and Wilson was criticized, there are more and more scholars of both German and Anglo-Saxon traditions who use the ideas and perspective of theological editing and theological plot.^[20]

1.3. Some observations on the content of the five books of the Psalter from the structural-canonical perspective

It is difficult to present a clear and full picture of the Psalter's five-book interpretation from the structural-canonical perspective because there is no unity among scholars who use this method. Yet we could speak about the general picture of theological editing. Thus, those scholars who use the idea of theological plot editing all accept that each book of the Psalter describes a specific period (or condition) in the history of Israel. These topics are:

- 1) the period of David (struggle for kingship);
- 2) the period of Solomon and other kings (mostly peaceful kingdom);
- 3) the destruction of Jerusalem and exile;
- 4) life in exile;
- 5) return from exile and restoration (perhaps eschatological).^[21]

[17] Tyler F. Williams, "Toward a Date for the Old Greek Psalter," in Robert J. V. Hiebert and Claude E. Cox, eds., *The Old Greek Psalter: Studies in Honor of Albert Pietersma*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 332 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 275-276.

[18] Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 222 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 124.

[19] J. Day, *Psalms*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., reprint 1993), 110-111.

[20] Erich Zenger, ed., *Vvedenie v Vetkhii Zavet* (Moscow: Bibleisko-bogoslovskiy institute sv. Apostola Andreia, 2008), 458-463.

[21] For a detailed article on this theme, see Brian G. Toews, "The Narrative Structure and Theological Design of the Psalter," <http://www.ournet.md/~theology/psalter.htm> (9.05.2006).

Let us look through each book to see the themes more clearly.

Book 1 (Psalms 1-41)

Most psalms of the first book have David's name in their superscripts. Several psalms have biographic superscripts, but taking into account that Ps 3 starts with Absalom's revolt, they do not follow chronological order as it is presented in the Books of Samuel. Most psalms of the first book are personal laments by their genre.

We may notice some structural peculiarities of this book. Several scholars see an *inclusio* based on Pss 15 and 24 which both ask: «who shall dwell in thy holy hill?» and consider Ps 18 as the chiasmic center of this structure.^[22] Psalm 19 mentions the topic of Torah, and it emphasizes the importance of this theme in the context of David's persecution. Many scholars see a connection between this psalm and Ps 119, which shows the universality of the topic of Torah for the whole Psalter. Thus, we see a development of the Torah theme from the first psalm, and that the anointed and the nation could turn to the Torah and trust God in difficult circumstances. Erich Zenger suggests another chiasm which is based on the *inclusio* of Pss 25 and 34 (compare: 25:12 and 34:12; 25:15 and 34:16; 25:16 and 34:17; 25:22 and 34:22) with Ps 28 (its theme is God as king over creation) as a concentric center.^[23] This chiasmic structure emphasizes the deliverance of David by God (as a righteous man who trusts in God), and the

royal position of God. Note that we see the kingship of man in Ps 8 and God's kingship in Ps 29, so they complement each other (similar to what we see in Ps 2 between God and his anointed one).

There are three psalms in Book One that detail biographical incidents from the life of David: Ps 3 describes Absalom's revolt; Ps 18 describes David's victory over all his enemies (including Gentiles); Ps 34 describes Saul's persecution of David when he hid at Abimelech's house. Because most psalms of the first book are laments, we discover David's hardships as the true anointed and righteous man who suffers at the hands of charlatans and the wicked. However, in light of all the sufferings we also see the theme of God's kingdom and the worldwide rule of the anointed one (Ps 18, but in the light of the context it is apparently not yet fulfilled).

There are several «beatitude psalms» in Book One: 1 and 2, 32-34, 40 and 41. Psalms 1-2 and 40-41 create a beatitude *inclusio* for Book One. This seems quite odd if we take into account all the laments that are present throughout the book. If we accept that the first two psalms are an introduction to the Psalter we should remember that they introduce an important theological idea—the fulfillment of God's promises to the righteous. Oddly, these themes are interwoven with laments, and Ps 34 describes David's personal exile. However, all of it makes sense if we take David's sufferings as God's

^[22] Millard Matthias, *Die Komposition des Psalters: Ein formgeschichtlicher Ansatz*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 9 (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 24-25; P. Auffret, *La sagesse a bati sa maison*. OBO, 49 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 407-438, from Patrick D. Miller, *The Beginning of the Psalter*, 86 in J. Clinton McCann, ed., *The Shape*

and Shaping of the Psalter, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 159 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993), 83-92.

^[23] Erich Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament. Studienbücher Theologie 1,1*. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995), 312.

providence: God who controls and is present in the life of David, even in his personal «Babylonian Exile.» This leads to the conclusion that even during hard times of the anointed and his nation, God keeps acting, blessing, and fulfilling His promises.

Book Two (Psalms 42-72)

The second book contains psalms attributed not only to David, but also to the sons of Korah and to Asaph, who were involved in temple service in the times of David and Solomon. The book ends with a group of Davidic psalms with the last one mentioning Solomon. Psalm 45 describes a king's wedding that gives quite an optimistic perspective for future stability and prosperity. An interesting feature of this book is that it contains most of the biographical Davidic psalms: Ps 51 describes David's sin with Bathsheba; Ps 52 describes his betrayal by Doeg the Edomite and the conflict with Saul; Ps 54 describes another betrayal and persecution by Saul; Ps 56 describes the Philistines' attack on David; Ps 57 describes another persecution by Saul; and Ps 59 mentions an ambush on David's house which was planned by Saul. Psalm 60 deserves special attention because it mentions David's triumph over the Edomites in the superscript, but consists of a plea. Psalm 65 is the single beatitude psalm. It describes the blessedness of being in God's temple. We can scarcely trace the chronological order, but we can see that the

psalms are ordered in a way that starts with David's sin and leads through persecution and betrayals. We should also take into account Ps 65 which redirects us to the theme of the Torah and being in God's presence. We may see that although this book mentions fewer conflicts, they definitely do not completely disappear.

The «Elohistic Psalter» starts in Book Two (Pss 42-83 which mostly use God's name אלהים). According to the suggestion of Erich Zenger and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, this usage shows a certain distance from God and a growing internal crisis both within David's life and within Israel.^[24] If we compare it with the description of David's sin we notice that a dangerous tendency to withdrawal was growing in the nation, but that God was still guiding and delivering David (as national head). Zenger takes Books Two and Three as a single structural chiasmic entity based on their superscripts^[25]:

A Sons of Korah (42-49)

B Asaph (50)

C David (51-72)

B* Asaph (73-83)

A* Sons of Korah (84-88)

The second book ends with the phrase: «The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended» (Ps 72:20). This shows that the epoch of David is over, yet when we take into consideration the structure of the Psalter as a whole, he is still a significant figure.

Book Three (Psalms 73-89)

Both the «Elohistic Psalter» and the chiasmic structure suggested by Zenger, end in Book Three. If his suggestion about God being distant is correct, then we can

^[24] Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, «The So-Called Elohistic Psalter: A New Solution for an Old Problem,» in Brent A Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen, eds., *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 42-51.

^[25] Zenger, *Vvedenie v Vetkhiy Zavet*, 462.

see that this coldness leads the anointed and the nation into hardship. The last psalm of this book (Ps 89) describes the rejection of the anointed and apparently the rejection of God's covenant and promises to David. Thus, the author of the psalm asks: «How long, O Lord?»

Book Three describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Pss 74 and 79). Consequently, the apparent rejection of the anointed seems to be the last straw both of the third book and its conclusion with Jerusalem's destruction. It makes more sense if we consider that the king was the embodiment of the country's existence and unity. It seems odd, but we find two beatitude psalms in this book (meaning mention of the blessed in the body of a psalm), namely Pss 84 and, even more paradoxically, 89. Psalm 84 restates a psalm from Book Two which describes the blessedness of being in the temple (it is interesting that the temple's destruction is described before Psalm 84, consequently there is no actual temple standing when we come to this psalm) and the «depressive» Ps 89 also mentions the blessedness of being in God's presence (89:15-16). Therefore, in spite of its overall gloom, Book Three still holds out hope for reunion with God.

Book Four (Psalms 90-106)

The fourth book starts with the song of Moses, which brings us back to the period of Israel's wandering in the desert and its dependence on God for receiving the

Promised Land. It makes sense in light of the description of the loss of the land in the previous book. Many psalms of this book include phrases such as «the Lord reigns,» or «let us sing to the Lord,» that emphasize Israel's dependence on God as it was time of the Exodus.^[26] In light of these psalms Wilson sees a rejection of the anointed and his substitution by God, that is, a move from hope in a human king to hope in God as king.^[27] Yet, unexpectedly, we find two psalms with the Davidic superscripts: Pss 101 and 103. Both psalms speak of distancing from sin. The first speaks of David's efforts to cleanse his life and environment, and the other speaks of God forgiving all sins. It is as if the anointed repents for the nation. There are two beatitude psalms in the book: Pss 94 and 106. If we take the allusions to the Exodus and Moses not as markers of having no human king, but as the period when the Torah was given and the covenant was established (as, for instance, in Ps 103:17-18), then we may see in this book a picture of repentance and return to God's covenant and his Torah.

Book Five (Psalms 107-150)

Book Five is the last, and it is quite reasonable to suggest that it concludes most themes that appeared previously. Wilson notes that Ps 107 describes the return from the Babylonian Exile, and Ps 137 speaks of it directly.^[28] This book also contains many beatitude psalms: 112, 119, 127-128, 137, 144, and 146, which also convey many other themes.

We should not forget another fact, namely that there are many Davidic psalms in Book Five, some with his name in their superscript, and some with a description of him or the anointed in their body. Psalms that mention David in their

^[26] David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament the Supplement Series 252 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 295.

^[27] Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215.

^[28] *Ibid.*, 220-221.

superscript are: 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145. All these psalms give us reason to take the theme of the anointed seriously in Book Five, and not consider it completed at the end of Book Three. Psalm 142 includes a biographical reference to David's hiding in a cave when he was persecuted by Saul. But special attention should be given to Ps 132, which mentions the promises from Ps 2 and 2 Sam 7, where the Davidic covenant is described. Whybray concludes that this psalm has connections with Jer 23:5; 33:15; Ezek 29:21 and Zech 3:8; 6:12, texts that refer to the eschatological David.^[29] It seems that the kingship of God and David are supplemented by one another as we may also see in Pss 144 and 145, where both the anointed and God as king are mentioned, without the one excluding the other.^[30] We do see a rejection of the anointed one in Ps 89, but we also see his return in Ps 132; this contradicts Wilson's theory that God fully substituted the anointed with himself as king.

Another important theme of Book Five is the Torah. For instance, Wilson, Mays, and Zenger emphasize the significance of Ps 119 and its messianic connotations.^[31] Psalms 111-112 unite the theme of the Torah with God's deeds and promises.^[32] As we have noted, the theme of the Torah is important for the whole Psalter, starting with Ps 1. It is by the Torah that

the anointed may exist, and as we see in Book Five it is an eschatological way of restoration for both the nation of Israel and the anointed.^[33] It is also interesting to note that Ps 110 makes the anointed a priest, which broadens his role.

The «songs of ascent» and the final psalms in Book Five focus our attention on praise and worship. In the context of psalms that describe the return from exile, they emphasize the restoration of Israel and hope for a safe future with God. In light of all we have discovered, we may see that God guides His anointed (as a representative of God's power on earth) and His nation through history by means of the Torah, and brings them into His presence, which was also the intention of psalmists in previous books—to dwell in the presence of God.^[34]

2. Structural observations on the Psalter

2.1. General observations

In my own research I did not analyze all the detailed structures of the Psalter, but only of its beginning and ending. From a methodological perspective if we accept that the Psalter has a theological plot, its beginning and ending should present important theological concepts. Previously Childs applied this suggestion when he analyzed the beginning and ending of the

^[29] Whybray, 96-98.

^[30] David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego, Volume 5 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 201-205.

^[31] Zenger, "The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107-145," pp. 97-99; Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," 72-82; James Luther Mays, "The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106/1

(1987): 10-11.

^[32] Harm van Grol, "The Torah as a Work of YHWH: A Reading of Psalm 111," in J.W. Dyk, ed., *Unless Some One Guide Me...: Festschrift for Karel A. Deurloo*, Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese van de Bijbel en zijn Tradities. Supplement Series 2 (Maastricht, The Netherlands: Shaker Publishing, 2001), 229-236.

^[33] Mays, *The Lord Reigns*, 122-125.

^[34] *Ibid.*, 124-127.

Psalter. Therefore, I have used some suggestions by Childs and analyzed them from a broader context. Using this starting point I took Pss 3-15 and 138-145, which have Davidic superscripts and are complete substructures of Books One and Five. The term «Davidic *inclusio*» will be used for these groups of psalms.^[35]

It is important to note a possible *inclusio* that consists of Pss 1-2 and 146-150. Joseph P. Brennan noticed that many words and concepts from Ps 2 reappear in Ps 149, for instance: «nations,» «kings,» «anointed,» and «rod».^[36] Moreover, in Pss 146-149 we find the following words and concepts from Ps 1: «happy,» «righteous,» «wicked,» and «Torah of the Lord.» It emphasizes the importance of themes from Pss 1 and 2 («righteous/wicked,» «Torah,» «blessed/cursed,» «anointed/nations,» «God's rule/revolt») for the whole Psalter, and restates them in the ending. So we may say that these topics should serve as «lenses» for our reading of the Psalter as a book.

Many authors who react negatively to the idea of a theological plot in the Psalter use the presence of the «Elohistic Psalter» as a reason. In respect to this objection we may use the suggestion by German scholar Erich Zenger which sees theological editing, and not the occasional usage of God's name Elohim, in Pss 41-83.^[37] Thus, the theological meaning of the «Elohistic Psalter» according to Zenger is to show that the name «Elohim» presents a dis-

tant God, while the name «Yahweh» presents God as the God of the covenant and closeness to Him. In this way the editor used God's names to show Israel's attitude to God. Consequently, the usage of «Yahweh» shows closeness to God and the faithfulness of his nation, while «Elohim» looks forward to the approaching crisis which is exposed in Book Three, particularly in its last psalm.

2.2. Some observations on the «Davidic *inclusio*»

The structure of the first book contains several chiasms, for instance:^[38]

	Absalom, the fool	
Ps 3.....		Ps 14
	A plea to God: How long?	
Ps 4.....		Ps 13
	A call for God's judgement	
Ps 5.....		Ps 12
	Harshness and persecution	
Ps 6.....		Ps 11
God prepares judgement for the wicked		
Ps 7.....		Ps 9-10
	What is man?/«King»	
	Ps 8	
	and ^[39]	
	Who may dwell?	
Ps 15.....		Ps 24
	Songs of trust	
Ps 16.....		Ps 23
	Plea for God's help	
Ps 17.....		Ps 22
	Royal Psalms: king's gratitude	
Ps 18.....		Ps 20-21
	The Torah	
	Ps 19	

^[35] *Inclusio* is a literary device based on a concentric principle that marks beginning and ending of a textual unit. It is usually based on textual repetitions. In this case I mean a theological and thematic *inclusio*.
^[36] Joseph P. Brennan, "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, Vol. X (January 1980): 26-29.

^[37] Hossfeld and Zenger, "The So-Called Elohistic Psalter: A New Solution for an Old Problem," 43, 45,

50-51.

^[38] Hendrik J. Koorevaar, *Wijheidsanon 1: Wijsheid en de eigen koning (Rut, Psalmen, Job, Spreuken, Prediker, Hooglied)*, versie 4.1 (Leuven: Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, 2005), 31.

^[39] Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 24-27, 124-144; P. Auffret, *La sagesse a bati sa maison. Etudes de structures litteraires dans l'Ancien Testament specialement dans les Psaumes*, 407-438.

There is another possible parallel between the last psalm of the first book and Ps 3. It is a parallel between the revolt of Absalom and David's counselors and mention of the «peaceful man» who ate David's bread and «raised his heel» against him. There could also be a parallel between Pss 3 and 34, which describe two occasions when a son and father-in-law tried to kill David the anointed, because they themselves were rejected. It is interesting that the quote in Acts 4:24-27 is applied to unbelieving Jews together with pagans, so it is possible that the nations that rise up in Ps 2 could be illustrated by Absalom and Saul. All these facts from Book One show that the righteous man does not receive his blessings immediately; on the contrary, he experiences many persecutions. However, his blessings are real and they are coming, a fact that is underlined in Book One by psalms that show David's success and a God who intervenes.

Just as in Book One, we can find another chiastic structure at the end of Book Five, this time with a negative accent in the central part:^[40]

Praise of God universally
Ps 138..... Ps 145
David confesses his ways before God and trusts
Ps 139..... Ps 144
Extreme struggles with enemies
Ps 140-141..... Ps 143
Struggle in a cave (with historical superscript)
Ps 142

Here we see a return to the struggle with Saul and to the struggle with Absalom ac-

^[40] Koorevaar, 57.

^[41] N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993), 141, 150-153.

ording to the Septuagint superscript. We see theme of the return from the exile in Pss 138-145 (especially if we consider the preceding Ps 137) and worship of God afterward. Moreover, Zenger observes that the anointed becomes a priest in Ps 110, and «humble» in 149:4. Essentially we observe two things: the anointed does not play the same role in Books Four and Five that he did in the first three, but he remains present in the historical arena. The anointed gives his rule to God, and God conquers his enemies for him in fulfillment of the promises in Ps 2. The story seems even more intriguing from the Christian perspective. «David/anointed» becomes a priest and is persecuted, but trusts in God as His «servant.» There is another image of the David figure in Book Five, namely his identification with Adam. Psalms 8 and 144 ask: «Who is man?» and their content refers to the creation story (especially Ps 8). Therefore, through God's deliverance the anointed becomes king of all the earth, just as Adam was king of creation. This leads to another possible idea, that the final return from exile will be a restoration of creation through the humble sufferings of the anointed, and not merely the return to Palestine from the Babylonian Exile.^[41]

3. Dynamic theology of the Psalter

If we accept the theological plot editing of the Psalter, we see that it is not a chronological compilation, nor a chronological commentary, but a typological and theological commentary related to the history of Israel. In contrast to Wilson's suggestion, it seems more likely that God is presented as king from the beginning of the Psalter (Pss 5, 9). If we take these

psalms into account from the beginning, then Wilson's suggestion of God who substitutes the anointed beginning with Book Four seems inadequate. We also find the topic of exile in Book One (Ps 14:7). David experiences persecution and exile from Absalom and Saul. «David of the Psalter» (a typological person based on superscripts that name David) serves as the national representative and the eternal anointed and thus is much more than the historical personality of David. The eschatological hope for a final return seems to be connected to this «David of the Psalter.» Some scholars have noted connections between the Psalter and some prophetic books, particularly with some eschatological prophesies.^[42] This confirms that the Psalter serves not only as a book of praises, but also as a prophetic, eschatological book. It is remarkable that Jesus also used the Psalter in a messianic and prophetic way.

We see that David suffers in Book One, but not because of his sins; sins are described only in Book Two. We see sufferings as a result of hatred towards the anointed, who also serves as the «righteous» from Ps 1 and thus unites two major themes of the book. Exile for the sake of Torah becomes the model for other righteous and for Israel as a nation (note the emphasis on Torah in Pss 15, 24, 19 and 119). If we take this into account we

see new reasons are revealed for the captivity of the innocent. This observation shows that the Psalter has a message similar to Habakkuk's words «the righteous will live by his faith» (Hab 2:4). Paul also used this passage to emphasize the importance of living by trust in God.

The theme of exile and David's persecution reappear at the end of the Psalter just before the final praise, and it may support the idea of Israel being in exile even after the return from Babylon, based on non-canonical writings (Tobit 14:5; Sir 36:8; 1En 85-90; Jub 1:15-18; 2Macc 1:27-29; 1Esdr 8:73-74; 2Esdr 9:7).^[43] Israel also will go through final sufferings before the kingdom comes. Therefore, «exile» could refer not only to Babylon, but also to personal or national exile, or even the exile of all humanity (exclusion from God's presence). Tom Wright observes that it is quite possible that first century Jews considered themselves in exile (even before the destruction of Jerusalem).^[44] Rabbinical authors mention that if Israel lives by Torah, then God will send His Messiah and deliver the nation from exile, which fits well into the theological plot that we have discovered in the Psalter.^[45] Thus, Torah becomes a way of survival in exile, and Messiah becomes God's deliverer. It also corresponds with the Psalter's themes and brings us to the subject of the suffering Messiah of Christianity.

^[42] Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament the Supplement Series 252 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Christopher Seitz, *Word Without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 150-167; Jerome Creach, "The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of the Second Isaiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 80 (1998): 63-76.

^[43] T. R. Hatina, "Exile," 348-349, in Craig A. Evans, ed., *Dictionary of the New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000), 348-351.

^[44] Tom Wright, *What St. Paul Really Said* (Oxford, England: Lion Publishing, 1997), 30-31.

^[45] C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, eds., *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1974), 132, 318, 551; Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and the Interpretation of Scripture: Introduction to the Rabbinic Midrash* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 131, 146-154.

Brian G. Toews shows that the theme of exile is important for the whole Psalter emphasizing its role in Book One (he sees a correspondence between Ps 3 referring to Absalom and Ps 41 mentioning Ahitophel).^[46] Toews sees in Book Two a lament in Pss 42-44 because of separation from «God's sanctuary;» in Book Three the lament deepens; in Book Four he sees a new exodus, and restoration of the Messiah in Book Five.^[47] He basically uses the approach mentioned earlier, but his important addition is his emphasis on the exile theme in the whole Psalter and David as the embodied «expellee» and righteous one who goes into exile and is saved by the Torah given by God.^[48]

Thus, the «David of the Psalter» is a typological suffering anointed one who is righteous and expects his kingdom from God. However, God brings this kingdom about only at the end of the Psalter; in other words, at the end of the typological history of Israel. This image of the anointed corresponds with the New Testament theology of Jesus Christ as a suffering anointed (king and priest), as well as with prophetic books that prophesy the deliverance of Israel. Dale A. Brueggemann shows that New Testament citations show that Jesus and the apostles viewed Christ as the «David of the Psalter.» Christ's persecution and victory are typologically connected with the Psalter's plot in its ca-

nonical form.^[49] Let us look at these passages^[50]:

Psalm	Gospels and Acts
2:1-2	Acts 4:25-26
2:7	Acts 13:33
6:4	John 12:27
6:9	Mat. 7:23; Luke 13:27
8:3	Mat. 21:16
16:10	Acts 2:28-31; 13:35
22:1	Mat. 27:46; Mark 15:34
22:7-8	Mat. 27:39, 41-43
22:15	John 19:28
22:18	Mat. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:23-24
31:5	Luke 23:46
34:20	John 19:36
35:19	John 15:25
41:9	John 13:18
42:5, 11; 43:5	Mat. 26:38; Mark 14:34
62:12	Mat. 16:27
69:4	John 15:25
68:10	John 2:17
69:21	John 19:28-30
69:25	Acts 1:20
78:2	Mat. 13:35
78:24-25	John 6:31
82:6	John. 10:34
89:20	Acts 13:22
91:11-12	Mat. 4:6; Luke 4:10
104:12	Mat. 13:32; Mark 4:32; Luke 13:19
110:1	Mat. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; see also Mat. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69
118:22-23	Mat. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; see also Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-8
118:25-26	Mat. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38; John 12:13
132:11	Acts 2:30
146:6	Acts 4:24
148:1	Mat. 21:9; Mark 11:10

^[46] Brian G. Toews, "The Narrative Structure and Theological Design of the Psalter," <http://www.ournet.md/~theology/psalter.htm> (9.05.2006)

^[47] Ibid.

^[48] Ibid.

^[49] Dale A. Brueggemann, "The Evangelists and the Psalms," in Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth, eds., *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2005), 263-278.

^[50] Ibid., 264-266.

Let us also look to parallel passages in Epistles:

4:5	Eph. 4:26
5:10	Rom. 3:13
8:5-6	Heb. 2:6
8:7	Eph. 1:22
10:7	Rom. 3:14
14:1-3 and 53:2-4	Rom. 3:10-12
18:49	Rom. 15:9
19:4	Rom. 10:18
32:1-2	Rom. 4:7-8
34:8	1 Pet. 2:3
34:12-16	1 Pet. 3:10-12
36:1	Rom. 3:18
40:6-7	Heb. 10:7-9
44:22	Rom. 8:36
45:6-7	Heb. 1:8-9
68:18	Eph. 4:8
69:9	Rom. 15:3
69:22-23	Rom. 11:9-10
94:14	Rom. 11:2
95:7-11	Heb. 3:7-11, 15; 4:7
97:7	Heb. 1:6
102:25-27	Heb. 1:10-12
104:4	Heb. 1:7
110:1	Heb. 1:13
110:4	Heb. 5:6; 7:17
117:1	Rom. 15:11
118:22	1 Pet. 2:7
135:14	Heb. 10:30
140:3	Rom. 3:13

According to parallel passages from the Gospels and Acts we see that Book One connects the persecution of Christ with the persecution of David by Absalom and Saul. Citations from Book Two also show persecution of the anointed. Citations from Book Three refer to the exhortation of people by Jesus because they became indifferent to God. Those citations also show that God preserves the anointed even in times of the country's destruction. Book Four is cited by Satan in the New Testament and Jesus responds by showing that resolution should come from God and is not gained by the efforts

of the anointed. Book Five is cited to show the enthronement and return of Jesus—the anointed.

Citations from the Psalter in the Epistles emphasize Christian co-identification with some psalms (particularly laments) and emphasize the impressive appearance of the Messiah in Books Four and Five. Some references teach practical lessons from the Psalter. There is an interesting reference to Pss 94 and 95 that illustrates the repentance of the nation and the return from exile. We see that the Epistles present the same vision of the anointed as in the Psalter. Analysis of references from Ps 2 at the end of Book Five shows that they describe suffering and exaltation. Citations from Book Five also mention the theme of the wicked. All these parallels suggest that New Testament usage of the Psalter resembles some of the observations made by canonical- structural analysis. It could also attest to the existence of a tradition that leads to the specific reading of the Psalter as a book.

4. Possible hermeneutics behind the Psalter's editing and the relation of the Psalter's theology to other books and traditions

The Psalter serves as an intermediate book between the Prophets and Writings of the Hebrew canon. It contains both types of revelation. Themes of Torah and wisdom in the life of a righteous person play an important role in this book. Therefore, it also stands between Job and Proverbs. The Writings are also absorbed with the theme of the «anointed,» with references to David, Solomon or «anointed/ righteous» almost in every book. This leads to the suggestion that there was a strong

messianic tradition at the time when this canonical block was formed.

When we look at the Psalter we notice that taking psalms out of their initial context (particularly out of their *Sitz im Leben*) and using a theological-hermeneutical perspective in putting them together is the rule rather than the exception. Thus, the Psalter serves as an example of this hermeneutical principle. Some psalms in the Septuagint have commentary (absent from the Hebrew version) that fit well with a theological plot based on the canonical structure of the Psalter. Consequently, we may conclude that the translators of the Septuagint knew the theological hints related to the psalms' structure. For instance, in the Septuagint we find additions to Ps 143 that mention Absalom; the addition of the phrase «when he fled» in Ps 3; or the addition of «Goliath» in Ps 144. All these additions emphasize structural theological plot ideas. These additions are not random, nor are they based on the personal decisions of translators. Rather, these additions are in line with Jewish theology (later this kind of interpretation was accepted by the Church as we could see Paul used the Septuagint as Scripture). Moreover, Rabbinical and New Testament traditions of interpretation may have emerged from the formation of the canonical block of

Writings. This leads us to the conclusion that when we use a theory of interpretation that separates itself from the context of the theological tradition, we still have a theological context, but of a different kind. Therefore, the canonical approach emphasizes our need to understand the original interpretive tradition that was established when the canon was formed. It is also important to analyze how Jews and the Church viewed the text, as bearers of a theological-canonical perspective of interpretation (the tradition that existed from the formation of the canon). We should analyze the principles of this perspective and its development throughout history. There is a need to develop holistic biblical hermeneutics that analyze both texts and the history of their «biblical interpretation.» We would transform our Old Testament theology study if we would rethink the way we use «the deposit of the faith» or the direct canonical «Midrash» of the faith (by this I mean theological-canonical ideas based on the structural-canonical approach) and put them at the foundation of our biblical hermeneutics. In conclusion, we should give more attention to the role of theological and interpretive traditions and their analysis, especially in the context of recent studies in the field of canonical criticism.

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