THE SHAPE AND SHAPING OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS







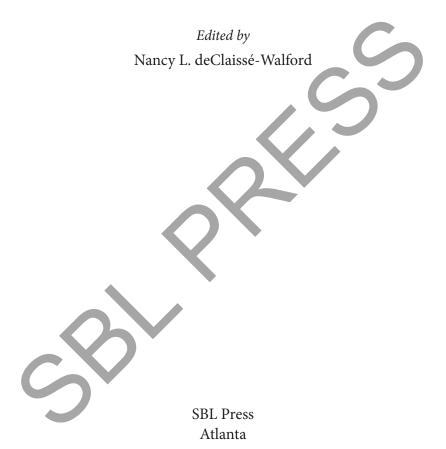
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THE SHAPE AND SHAPING OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

THE CURRENT STATE OF SCHOLARSHIP



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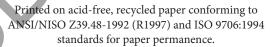
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This volume is dedicated to the memory of Gerald H. Wilson and his seminal work on the Psalter, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. In addition, it is dedicated to those gifted scholars who have studied, and will continue the work of studying, the Psalter's shape and shaping.



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PREFACE

Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford

The publication of *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* in 1985 inaugurated a new era in the study of the book of Psalms.¹ A biblical book, the study of which had been driven by form and cult-functional criticism for many years, was about to be subject to a very different kind of scrutiny—an examination of its shape and shaping. Within a few years, a Book of Psalms Consultation was formed in the Society of Biblical Literature, and Ph.D. students in many institutions were writing dissertations on both the macro- and micro-structuring of the Psalter.

In 2010, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of *The Editing* of the Hebrew Psalter, the Book of Psalms Section determined that it would be appropriate to dedicate two of its 2011 Society of Biblical Literature sessions to the topic of the shape and shaping of the Psalter. Many of the essays in this volume were presentations in those sessions, including Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford's "The Canonical Approach to Scripture and The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, Harry P. Nasuti's "The Editing of the Psalter and the Ongoing Use of the Psalms," J. Clinton McCann's "Changing Our Way of Being Wrong," Derek Wittman's "Let Us Cast Off Their Ropes from Us," Christine Brown Jones's "The Message of the Asaphite Collection and Its Role in the Psalter," Catherine Petrany's "Instruction, Performance, and Prayer: The Didactic Function of Psalmic Wisdom," Karl N. Jacobson's "Perhaps YHWH (Baal) is Sleeping: 'Awake' and 'Contend' in the Book of Psalms," W. Dennis Tucker's "The Role of the Foe in Book 5," Robert E. Wallace's "Gerald Wilson and the Characterization of David in Book 5," and Rolf A. Jacobson's "Imagining the Future of Psalm Studies."

^{1.} Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76: Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985).

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The authors listed above represent a fairly diverse group of American scholars—in terms of denomination, gender, and points in their careers. The study of the shape and shaping of the Psalter, however, is not confined to American scholars. Therefore the editor of this volume invited scholars from other parts of the world—Germany, South Africa, Canada, and England—to contribute essays in order to provide a broader perspective on the subject. Their responses were gracious and enthusiastic and their contributions add a rich depth to the volume: Erhard Gerstenberger's "The Dynamics of Praise in the Ancient Near East, or Poetry and Politics," Jaco Gericke's "Philosophical Perspectives on Religious Diversity as Emergent Property in the Redaction/Composition of the Psalter," Phil J. Botha's "Wealth and Riches Are in His House: Acrostic Wisdom Psalms the Development of Antimaterialism," Sampson S. Ndoga's "Revisiting the Theocratic Agenda of Book 4 of the Psalter for Interpretive Premise," Jonathan Magonet's, "On Reading Psalms as Liturgy-Psalms 96-99," and Peter W. Flint's "The Contribution of Gerald Wilson toward Understanding the 'Book of Psalms' in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls."

The reader will find the name of Gerald Wilson, the author of *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, invoked many times in the essays in this volume. Gerald Wilson, who was Professor of Biblical Studies at Azusa Pacific University in California, died unexpectedly in November 2005. This volume is not intended to be a Festschrift for Gerald Wilson, but its "shape and shaping" aptly reflects the tremendous impact that a single work can have on a discipline. Gerald Wilson embraced the canonical approaches to biblical criticism being advocated in the 1980s by scholars such as Brevard Childs and James Sanders and applied them to his study of the Hebrew Psalter.²

The canonical study of the book of Psalms is an interesting discipline. It calls itself "canonical criticism," but it actually employs a number of historically traditional and nontraditional approaches to reading the text. Hermann Gunkel's form-critical categorization of the psalms is a mainstay of psalm scholarship, although the designation of and assignment to various categories remains an open question. The historical-critical under-

^{2.} Brevard S. Childs, "Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God* (ed. Frank M. Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller Jr., Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 377–88; Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); James A. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

standing of individual psalms as well as of the whole Psalter is a major area of examination for canonical critics. They are concerned with questions about the origins and uses of individual as well as collections of psalms. And, finally, redaction questions interest canonical critics. How were collections of psalms and various individual psalms incorporated into the Psalter? When? By whom? For what reason?

For all of its likeness to traditional critical approaches to the study of the Psalter, the canonical approach is a new and innovative way to approach the Psalter (and other books of the Bible). In 1976, Brevard Childs wrote that, because of the vagaries of culture and time, the authors and the editors of the biblical text simply cannot be known, and therefore the main focus of research should not be to pursue what he calls the editors' "motivations and biases."3 The canonical critic, rather, can only study the "final form" of the text—the form provided to us in the Hebrew Psalter. James Sanders, as he outlines in "Canonical Context and Canonical Criticism," agrees with Childs, but he maintains that the scholarly community has been looking in the wrong place for the "motivations and biases" behind the shape and shaping of texts such as the Psalter. The final shape of biblical texts should not be attributed to individual redactions, but to communities of faith—those who found value in various texts and preserved and transmitted them over the millennia. Sanders writes, "There has been a relationship between tradition, written and oral, and community, a constant, ongoing dialogue, a historical memory passed on from generation to generation, in which the special relationship between canon and community resided."4

This volume explores questions of communities of faith, of collections of psalms, of theological viewpoints, of sovereignty, and, most of all, of the shape and shaping of what is arguably the most beloved book of the Old Testament.

Many thanks are due. To the authors of the essays, no words are adequate. This volume would not have been possible without your generous contributions. To the Society of Biblical Literature Press, many thanks for working with the editor to craft a volume that would be reader-worthy. To my dean, Alan Culpepper, my heartfelt gratitude for believing wholeheartedly in the contributions that his faculty members make to

^{3.} Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 79.

^{4.} Sanders, From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, 166.

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their own distinct disciplines in this somewhat crazy world we call theological education.

McAfee School of Theology Atlanta, Georgia December 2013



ABBREVIATIONS

AB Anchor Bible

ABD Anchor Bible Dictionary. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6

vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

ANESSupS Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series

AS Assyriological Studies

AThANT Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und NeuenTesta-

ments

BBB Bonner biblische Beiträge

BCOTWP Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and

Psalms

BDB Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. A Hebrew and

English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Oxford: Clarendon,

1907.

BETL Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium

BEvT Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie

Bib Biblica

BJS Brown Judaic Studies
BTB Biblical Theology Bulletin

BWANT Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testa-

ment

BZAW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissen-

schaft

CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CC Continental Commentaries
CM Cuneiform Monographs

CurBS Currents in Research: Biblical Studies
DJD Discoveries in the Judaean Desert

DJDJ Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan

DNEB Die Neue Echter Bibel

ETCSL Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature

FAOS Freiburger Altorientalische Studien FAT Forschungen zum Alten Testament FOTL Forms of the Old Testament Literature

HBS Herders Biblische Studien
HBT Horizons in Biblical Theology

HTKAT Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament

HTR Harvard Theological Review HTS Hervormde Teologiese Studies

IBC Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and

Preaching

IBT Interpreting Biblical Texts
IEJ Israel Exploration Journal

Int Interpretation

JAJSup Supplements to the Journal of Ancient Judaism

JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society

JBL Journal of Biblical Literature JBTh Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie

JBQ Jewish Bible Quarterly JHS Journal of Hebrew Scripture

JSOT Journal for the Study of the Old Testament

JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement

Series

JSJSup Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism LHBOTS Library of the Hebrew Bible and Old Testament Studies

McCQ McCormick Quarterly

NIDOTTE New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology

and Exegesis. Edited by W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand

Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

NIVAC New International Version Application Commentary

OBO Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OTE Old Testament Essays
OTL Old Testament Library

PTMS Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series

RB Revue biblique RevQ Revue de Qumran SBLAcBib Academia Biblica

SBLDS Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series SBLMS Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series

SBS Stuttgarter Bibelstudien

SBT Studies in Biblical Theology StBL Studies in Biblical Literature

STDJ Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah

SubBi Subsidia Biblica

SVTQ St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly

THAT Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament.

Edited by E. Jenni, with assistance from C. Westermann.

2 vols. Munich: Kaiser, 1971-1976.

ThSt Theologische Studiën

ThWAT Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament. Edited by

G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Stuttgart: Kohlham-

mer, 1970-2006.

TWOT Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Edited by

R. L. Harris and G. L. Archer Jr. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody

Press, 1980.

VE Verbum et Ecclesia VT Vetus Testamentum

VTSup Supplements to Vetus Testamentum

WBC Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ Westminster Theological Journal

WW Word and World

ZAW Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

ZTK Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

