

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

Edited by

Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford

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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 Petran'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).

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. Ndogo’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.

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

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 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 Neuen Testaments
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CC	Continental Commentaries
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
<i>CurBS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
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
<i>HBT</i>	Horizons in Biblical Theology
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HTS</i>	<i>Hervormde Theologiese Studies</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IBT	Interpreting Biblical Texts
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAJSup	Supplements to the Journal of Ancient Judaism
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBTh</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scripture</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
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
<i>McCQ</i>	<i>McCormick Quarterly</i>
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . Edited by W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
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	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
THAT	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament.</i> Edited by E. Jenni, with assistance from C. Westermann. 2 vols. Munich: Kaiser, 1971–1976.
ThSt	Theologische Studiën
ThWAT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament.</i> Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Stuttgart: Kohlham- mer, 1970–2006.
TWOT	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.</i> Edited by R. L. Harris and G. L. Archer Jr. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
VE	<i>Verbum et Ecclesia</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WW	<i>Word and World</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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