

DAVID WILLGREN

# The Formation of the 'Book' of Psalms

*Forschungen  
zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe*

88

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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88





David Willgren

# The Formation of the 'Book' of Psalms

Reconsidering the Transmission and Canonization  
of Psalmody in Light of Material Culture and  
the Poetics of Anthologies

Mohr Siebeck

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*When my heart broke in two*  
*I taught both parts to sing*  
#canonfodder



## Preface

This book is a slightly revised version of my PhD thesis which was defended in May 2016. I wish to express my gratitude to the faculty opponent Dr. habil. Anja Klein, as well as to the members of the assessment committee Professors Samuel Byrskog, Else Kragelund Holt, and Jesper Høgenhaven for a stimulating discussion. A special thank you also goes to the editors of FAT II for accepting this work for publication, not least Professor Hermann Spieckermann, who graciously invited me to spend a week in Göttingen in 2015 where I had the opportunity to give a lecture on the formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms.

When I started this project, I had every intention to work within the field of *Psalterexegeese*, acknowledging the *Sitz in der Literatur* of individual psalms and focusing on psalms standing in structurally significant places throughout the ‘Book’ of Psalms. In short, I was following closely in the academic footsteps of Gerald H. Wilson. However, the longer I studied this fascinating collection and the deeper I went into the ancient artifacts, the more I started to realize that something was missing. I set out searching for an appropriate way to frame these issues, and the quest started to lead me away from my original presuppositions. Indeed, after a while, I even began to question them, and an early form of a more thoroughgoing critique had seen the light of day. I became convinced that a study of the formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms could never focus only on the collection itself, but had to consider various aspects of its transmission and use, always properly situated in the diverse and complex, yet fascinating scribal and material milieus in which it took shape. To be sure, I am not the first to have reached such conclusions, but in my case, it led me to a set of texts that had not previously been brought into the discussion, and to a theoretical framework that had been often overlooked.

As for where I ended up, I will not reveal here, but needless to say, I have not traveled alone. My sincere gratitude goes first and foremost to my supervisor, Professor Fredrik Lindström at Lund University. Your constant support and many thought-provoking comments have made this study much better than it could ever have been without them. This goes also for my assistant supervisor, Professor Göran Eidevall at Uppsala University. I have much appreciated both of your abilities to combine words of encouragement with academically sharp and constructive criticisms.



I also wish to thank the Old Testament seminars at Lund and Uppsala for providing many opportunities to discuss various parts of this study. I have benefited greatly from intense and detailed interaction with you all. In this context I also want to mention my New Testament colleagues at Lund University.

I started my exegetical journey at Örebro School of Theology, and it is with great gratitude that I look back not only to the early formative years, but also to the continuing support I have received. Besides the generous opportunity to have a study place at the library for two years I would like to thank the seminar of biblical exegesis, not least PhD student Stefan Green, Dr. Lennart Boström, Associate Professor Mikael Tellbe, and Professors Greger Andersson and Tommy Wasserman.

As a PhD student in Old Testament exegesis I have had a need to interact more broadly with scholars outside of Sweden, and thanks to the formidable OTSEM network (Old Testament Studies: Epistemologies and Methods), I have had many opportunities to try my wings in the presence of great minds. A special thanks goes to those who have taken their precious time to provide detailed and engaging responses to my papers, Dr. Urmas Nõmmik, Dr. habil. Anja Klein, and Professors Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson and Corinna Körting. I am also deeply indebted to Professor Terje Stordalen, with whom I have had many stimulating discussions, not least during my visit to Oslo in 2014.

A last group of scholars that I would like to thank are the ones I have shamelessly bothered with some of my texts via e-mail. They have all responded graciously and kindly to my blunt inquiries, and helpfully pointed me in the right direction. Thank you, Drs. Trine Bjørnung Hasselbalch, Alexandra Kleinerman, and Anders Mortensen, Associate Professor Angela Kim Harkins, and Professors James P. Allen, Jean-Marie Auwers, Walter Brueggemann, Jenny Strauss Clay, Susan E. Gillingham, Jean-Jacques Glassner, José B. Torres Guerra, J. Clinton McCann Jr., Norbert Lohfink, Richard B. Parkinson, Eileen M. Schuller, and William Yarchin for stimulating feedback. I am also grateful for the important input provided by Professor LarsOlov Eriksson, who served as opponent at my final seminar.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my friends and family for continuous support and encouragement. You all know who you are, but thanks go especially to my wife, Fatima, and our two boys, Samuel and Elias. I could not have done this without you.

Ultimately, I hope that this study will contribute not only to academic discussions, but also, in the long run, to the body of Christ. It is only together with all the saints that we have the possibility to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. In Christ I take refuge. Lord, let me never be put to shame.

Umeå, 2016-06-01

*David Willgren*

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Part I

Framing the Task at Hand



## Chapter 1

# The Problem

About any[thing] so great..., it is probable that we can never be right; and if we can never be right, it is better that we should from time to time change our way of being wrong.<sup>1</sup> – T. S. Eliot

Every now and then, a study comes along that successfully challenges long standing presuppositions in a field, changes the way that some issues are approached, and perhaps even opens up entirely new lines of inquiry. If related to the study of the formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms, it would be no overstatement to claim that the work of Gerald H. Wilson could be understood along these lines. Starting with his Yale dissertation, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, originally presented in 1981 and subsequently published by SBL Press in 1985,<sup>2</sup> he was to somewhat reshape the way scholars approached issues of organization and editorial intent in relation to the ‘Book’ of Psalms, but as with all ground-breaking studies, Wilson’s observations were not without precursors. It is often repeated that prior to Wilson, scholars did, to a large extent, consider the ‘Book’ of Psalms as a rather haphazard collection of individual psalms, and this is certainly correct, but has to be somewhat qualified. A case in point would be Hermann Gunkel, whom Claus Westermann referred to as lacking “genuine interest”<sup>3</sup> in the issue. In his *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels*, Gunkel actually devoted an entire section to the compilation of the psalms (“Die Sammlung der Psalmen”),<sup>4</sup> and two aspects were considered. First, he discussed possible principles of organization, and second, he touched upon the question of the purpose of such an organization. Having first asserted that matters of *Gattung* or content seemed to play little role in the arrangement of psalms,<sup>5</sup> he then surveyed features of psalms that could in some way relate to the issue of arrangement, and concluded the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Eliot 1934, 126, stripped of Shakespearian reference. Cf. similar quotes in Becker 1975, 9, and McCann Jr. 1993a, 105.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson 1985a.

<sup>3</sup> Westermann 1981, 252.

<sup>4</sup> Gunkel & Begrich 1985, 433–55 (first published in 1933).

<sup>5</sup> “Daß die Anordnung der Psalmen nicht aus einem sachlichen Einteilungsgrunde erfolgt ist, ist leicht einzusehen” (Gunkel & Begrich 1985, 434).

Das Ergebnis, daß sich kein einheitliches Prinzip für die überlieferte Aufeinanderfolge erkennen läßt, wohl aber verschiedene Gesichtspunkte bei der Zusammenstellung einzelner Psalmen nachweisbar sind (Ähnlichkeiten bestimmter Gedanken, Übereinstimmung in besonderen Stichworten, Gemeinsamkeit der Verfasser, Gleichheit der Überschriften), drängt zu dem Schlusse, daß das Psalmbuch seinen gegenwärtigen Zustand einem verwickelten Entstehungsvorgang verdankt, bei welchem nicht nur an Zusammenfassung verschiedener Teilsammlungen zu denken ist, sondern auch an Umstellungen, die ohne Rücksicht auf die Grenzen der alten Teilsammlungen erfolgt sind.<sup>6</sup>

In light of such a process, the issue of purpose was also deemed complex and so Gunkel suggested that a way forward could be to look at the possible purpose (or purposes) of smaller collections of psalms. He then provided a brief model of formation which was based in particular on ‘author’ designations and other features of the superscriptions, but also proceeded from the notion of an Elohist collection. As an example, he noted a contrast between Pss 3–89 and Pss 90–150, and argued that apart from Pss 120–134, no principle(s) of organization could be found in relation to the many untitled psalms throughout Pss 90–150. In his view, Pss 90–150 were probably added to Pss 3–89, and hence never existed as a separate collection. Important for the question of purpose was, then, his suggestion that Pss 3–41 were to be understood as a distinct collection, intended as “ein Andachts- und Gebetsbuch.”<sup>7</sup> Because the collection could have been added to the ‘Book’ of Psalms at a late stage, Gunkel proposed that the compiler (“der Sammler”) wanted to give the entire ‘Book’ of Psalms a similar, post-cultic, setting.<sup>8</sup> Also probably intentional was the fivefold division of the collection, although he did not expand on its function in any greater detail besides noting that three of the doxologies would already have been in place as conclusions to earlier collections of psalms (Pss 41:14, 72:18–19, 89:53), while the one in Ps 106:48 was added by the compiler.<sup>9</sup>

A related approach to issues of both formation and purpose was taken by Sigmund Mowinckel, leading him to some similar conclusions. For example, while he proposed that small collections (which showed no clear principles of organization) had come into existence among temple singers, the final collection was rather to be attributed to the “the learned, ‘the scribes’, ‘the wise’.”<sup>10</sup> In Mowinckel’s view, it was compiled to “serve as a pattern for the prayers of the pious [in the temple service], or even to be used as models for prayers in the wisdom schools and in the private devotions of the individual pious.”<sup>11</sup> Interesting to note is that Ps 1 was to become a significant indicator of such a suggest-

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<sup>6</sup> Gunkel & Begrich 1985, 436.

<sup>7</sup> Gunkel & Begrich 1985, 455.

<sup>8</sup> Gunkel & Begrich 1985, 455.

<sup>9</sup> Gunkel & Begrich 1985, 455.

<sup>10</sup> Mowinckel 1967, 2:204.

<sup>11</sup> Mowinckel 1967, 2:204.

ed instructional focus. In fact, Mowinckel labeled the psalm a “kind of ‘motto’”<sup>12</sup> for the aim and use of the collection, so that the ‘Book’ of Psalms “could and ought to teach a pious and righteous man the ‘way of life’,” and “point out the kind of destiny that would befall the ungodly and unrighteous, ‘who walketh in the counsel of the ungodly and sitteth in the seat of the scornful’.”<sup>13</sup>

Using Gunkel and Mowinckel as representatives of an approach to the formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms that was, to a large extent, prevailing before the work of Wilson, small but significant signs of change will be seen as I now turn to the works of Westermann and Brevard S. Childs.<sup>14</sup>

Westermann raised the question of the possible existence of collections of psalms that were uniform in subject matter (thus contra Gunkel), and suggested that the “peculiar placing”<sup>15</sup> of psalms of praise and royal psalms needed to be taken into consideration.<sup>16</sup> Hence, he suggested, among other things, that the occurrence of the “unique” Ps 119 “just before” Pss 120–134 would indicate that Ps 119 once concluded a collection. As it had similarities in content with Ps 1, Westermann then proposed that they had provided a framework around a collection of psalms, and as such a framework, they indicated that the ‘Book’ of Psalms, “as a *collection*, no longer had a cultic function primarily, but rather circulated in a tradition devoted to the law. The Psalms have now become the word of God which is read, studied, and meditated upon.”<sup>17</sup> As for previous stages of formation, he argued that a collection consisting predominantly of complaints of the individual (Pss 3–41) was juxtaposed with an Elohistic collection (Pss 42–83), and that this new collection (including Pss 84–88) was framed by two royal psalms (Pss 2 and 89).<sup>18</sup> In fact, royal psalms were proposed to have been added or inserted secondarily into the various collections, so that their placement indicated a messianic interpretation, rather than having

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<sup>12</sup> Mowinckel 1967, 2:197.

<sup>13</sup> Mowinckel 1967, 2:205.

<sup>14</sup> As for research prior to Westermann and Childs, a Dutch Groningen dissertation should also be mentioned. Written by Cornelis T. Niemeyer, the study concluded that although purposeful organization might occasionally be detected on a lesser scale, no overall systematic arrangement of psalms could be seen (see, e.g., Niemeyer 1950, 157: “Vooraf moeten wij afwijzen de theorie van hen, die al te gemakkelijk spreken van een systematische rangschikking der Psalmen”). Moreover, Hengstenberg 1864 (esp. vol. 3) and Delitzsch 1867 had dealt with the issues at some length, and important contributions regarding both intentional juxtapositions of psalms and aspects of the formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms were made in, e.g., Zimmerli 1972; Gese 1974; Goulder 1975; Barth 1976; Reindl 1981.

<sup>15</sup> Westermann 1981, 252.

<sup>16</sup> The article was first published as Westermann 1962 (= Westermann 1964), and later incorporated in Westermann 1977. I will refer to the English translation found in Westermann 1981, 250–58.

<sup>17</sup> Westermann 1981, 253 (emphasis original).

<sup>18</sup> Westermann 1981, 255.



cultic significance.<sup>19</sup> As with Gunkel, he further remarked that the “first half” of the ‘Book’ of Psalms contained more “fixed, self-contained groups,” (identified by means of their superscriptions) while the latter featured more “individual Psalms.”<sup>20</sup> He also observed that doxologies were regularly used to conclude collections. The clearest example of this was Ps 150, which was argued to conclude Pss 107–150.<sup>21</sup>

By focusing on the “canonical shape” of the ‘Book’ of Psalms, Childs developed further the ideas concerning possible purpose(s) of the collection.<sup>22</sup> Ps 1 was not only a “kind of ‘motto’” (so Mowinckel), but a “preface to the psalms which are to be read, studied, and meditated upon,” so that its placement testified to transformation of Israel’s prayers to God into God’s word to Israel.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the collection had a clear theological function, although the complex process of formation indicated that “no one doctrinaire theology was allowed to dominate.”<sup>24</sup> Dealing with the royal psalms, Childs also suggested that their scattering could indicate a new understanding of them. The placing of Ps 2 was judged as significant, perhaps even to be seen as a “formal part” of the preface, and as such, it emphasized a “major theme” of the ‘Book’ of Psalms, namely the kingship of YHWH.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, Childs suggested that, when read in light of the failure of human kingship, the placement of royal psalms (as well as the “future orientation” of many of the complaint psalms) indicated that the “final form of the Psalter is highly eschatological in nature.”<sup>26</sup>

A final aspect providing a backdrop to Wilson’s work was the ongoing unrolling of ‘psalms’<sup>27</sup> scrolls from the Judean Desert, and the most significant publication was that of the large ‘psalms’ scroll 11Q5 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>) by James A. Sanders.<sup>28</sup> As it contained psalms in sequences differing from those of the MT ‘Book’ of Psalms, as well as psalms not attested in the Masoretic collection, it would quickly lead to intense discussions about its status and function, and

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<sup>19</sup> Westermann 1981, 257–58.

<sup>20</sup> Westermann 1981, 256, n. 17.

<sup>21</sup> Westermann 1981, 256.

<sup>22</sup> Childs 1979, 504–25.

<sup>23</sup> Childs 1979, 513.

<sup>24</sup> Childs 1979, 522.

<sup>25</sup> Childs 1979, 516.

<sup>26</sup> Childs 1979, 518.

<sup>27</sup> I will use this designation to refer to scrolls that preserve (parts of) psalms that are now included in the MT ‘Book’ of Psalms, regardless of what other compositions might feature on the same manuscript. Hence, ‘psalm’ is to be understood primarily as a MT psalm, and the single quotation marks show that the designation is somewhat artificial, as, e.g., 4Q380 and 4Q381 should also probably be classified as psalms scrolls due to the many similarities with both MT psalms and ‘psalms’ scrolls (see also Davis 2015). For a further discussion, see pp. 326–32 below.

<sup>28</sup> Sanders 1965; see also Sanders 1967 (the “Cornell edition”).

when taken together with the other ‘psalms’ scrolls uncovered at Qumran, it would affect the way in which the formation of the (latter parts of the) ‘Book’ of Psalms was reconstructed. Consequently, these scrolls would become an unavoidable part of scholarly discussion.<sup>29</sup>

### A. Wilson’s New Framework

Painted in broad strokes, the stage was now set for Wilson (a student of Childs), and proceeding from one of his first publications in 1984 – “Evidence of Editorial Divisions in the Hebrew Psalter” – he set out to provide evidence for a “continuing, purposeful editorial attempt to bring meaningful ‘shape’ to the whole Psalter.”<sup>30</sup> Developed in length in his dissertation, and then further expanded and revised in numerous articles, Wilson provided a methodological framework on which subsequent studies would build,<sup>31</sup> and this line of inquiry proceeded from two interrelated focal points. As demarcated in the introduction to his dissertation, he wanted first to identify and describe organizational techniques used to combine and unify earlier, originally unrelated collections of psalms. Second, he aimed to address the issue of what editorial purpose might have governed such an organizational process.<sup>32</sup> So put, there is a degree of continuity in focus with the research sketched above, but Wilson took further steps in relation to both focal points. As for the first, he provided a new set of comparative material. In chapter 2, he introduced a collection of Sumerian temple hymns, followed by a focus on what he designated as (Mesopotamian) catalogues of hymnic incipits in chapter 3. In chapters 4–5, he dealt with the growing number of Dead Sea ‘psalms’ scrolls mentioned above, and throughout these four chapters, he identified several possible editorial techniques which were then put into dialogue with the MT ‘Book’ of Psalms in chapters 6–7. A number of conclusions were drawn.

Starting with the Mesopotamian material, Wilson suggested that an analysis of the Sumerian Temple Hymns could reveal several clues as to its arrange-

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<sup>29</sup> For a more thorough introduction to this research, see below, pp. 104–32.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson 1984, 337.

<sup>31</sup> Wilson 1985b; Wilson 1985c; Wilson 1986; Wilson 1992; Wilson 1993a; Wilson 1993b; Wilson 1997; Wilson 2000; Wilson 2002b; Wilson 2005a; Wilson 2005b, and the early Wilson 1983. His impact on research of the “shape and shaping” of the ‘Book’ of Psalms has been monumental. Recently, a volume was dedicated to various aspects of his legacy (deClaisé-Walford 2014c, see also Mitchell 2006b), and several anthologies have been devoted to issues of composition and purpose (see, e.g., McCann Jr. 1993b; Seybold & Zenger 1994; Zenger 1998c; Flint & Miller 2005; Zenger 2010a). See also the multiple overviews by Howard Jr. (Howard Jr. 1989; Howard Jr. 1993b; Howard Jr. 1999b; Howard Jr. 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Wilson 1985a, 5.

ment.<sup>33</sup> It was an example of a collection where individual compositions were arranged on the basis of a “larger schema,” with doxologies in concluding positions. Important was also the observed fixation of a “colophonic material as a ‘frozen’ part of a literary composition,” which was argued to provide a parallel to the superscriptions in the ‘Book’ of Psalms, and indicated that even minor adjustments to a collection could make it relevant in (later) historical contexts that had little in common with its original *Sitz im Leben*. Consequently, a notion of adaptability was introduced.

Moving on, Wilson noted that several techniques were used to organize compositions in the “catalogues of hymnic incipits.”<sup>34</sup> While the main concern seemed to have been genre, he also detected arrangements based on liturgical correspondences, series, deity addressed, similar phraseology, currency of usage, language of the compositions, the type of tablet on which a composition was written, and even where the tablet was stored. In Wilson’s view, this indicated an “extremely flexible system of classification” that could accommodate various purposes, and as there were overlap between catalogues, he concluded that there was an increasing standardization in the way incipits were juxtaposed, and that this could be understood as a “‘canon’ in the making.”<sup>35</sup>

As for the ‘psalms’ scrolls from the Judean Desert, Wilson was the first to relate 11Q5 more closely to not only the ‘Book’ of Psalms, but the other ‘psalms’ scrolls as well. These were analyzed with an eye to both aspects of organizational techniques and issues of intent, and provided additional insights into the issue of “shape and shaping” of the MT ‘Book’ of Psalms.<sup>36</sup> Most important were the suggestions that the ‘psalms’ scrolls, if arranged chronologically, seemed to indicate a gradual stabilization of the collection, with ‘books’ 4–5 being fluid up until the first century CE, and that 11Q5 used editorial techniques similar to those attested in Pss 90–150, as over Pss 1–89.<sup>37</sup>

Turning to the “Hebrew Psalter,” that is, the well-known Masoretic sequence of psalms that was the main focus of the study, Wilson suggested that several editorial techniques had been used, and that most of these related to various features of the psalms superscriptions.<sup>38</sup> In line with previous studies of the formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms, Wilson argued that some features of the superscriptions indicated earlier collections of psalms – most significantly the widespread use of ‘author’ designations throughout ‘books’ 1–3 – and he also noted

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<sup>33</sup> Wilson 1985a, 13–24. See further below, pp. 56–59.

<sup>34</sup> Wilson 1985a, esp. 53–60. For an introduction, see Appendix 1 below.

<sup>35</sup> Wilson 1985a, 59.

<sup>36</sup> See Wilson 1983; Wilson 1985a, esp. 93–138. He was to return to the issue in a number of articles, see, e.g., Wilson 1985b and Wilson 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Wilson 1985a, 116–38.

<sup>38</sup> For his own discussion, see Wilson 1984; Wilson 1985a; Wilson 1985c, but also the subsequent Wilson 1993a; Wilson 1993b; Wilson 2005b.

the peculiar change after Ps 89. However, in contrast to previous research, he suggested that changes in such ‘author’ designations marked strong “disjunctures,” especially around the ‘book’ divisions (e.g. לשלמה in Ps 72, cf. לאסף in Ps 73). So put, they were indications of “conscious editorial activity either to introduce such author-changes in order to indicate disjuncture between such divisions or to make use of such existing points of disjuncture in the division of the Psalter.”<sup>39</sup> The disjunctures were labeled “seams,” and would constitute an essential focal point for further observations.

As with the ‘author’ designations, Wilson argued that ‘genre’<sup>40</sup> designations were used to demarcate segments in the collection (see, e.g., מזמור in Pss 3–6), implying a tendency to “juxtapose compositions whose superscripts have one, two, three or more terms in common”, although there was an obvious “failure of the editor(s) to pull together all similar superscripts.”<sup>41</sup> Notably, they were also suggested to have a function in relation to the seams. More specifically, they were used either to soften transitions between groups that were identified by change in ‘author’ designation (מזמור in Pss 47–51; מזמור and שיר in Pss 62–68; מזמור in Pss 82–85; the double superscript in Ps 88 etc.), or to emphasize “purposeful breaks” (that is, the breaks between ‘books’ 2–3, 3–4, and 4–5 respectively).<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the use of both ‘author’ and ‘genre’ designations seemed to overlap in significant ways, leading Wilson to conclude that “[t]he widespread and consistent nature of this phenomenon militates against any chance distribution of the psalms and supports the idea of purposeful, editorial activity behind the organizational process.”<sup>43</sup>

According to Wilson, ‘books’ 4–5 did, however, reveal quite different editorial techniques. Rather than using ‘author’ and ‘genre’ designations, Hallelujah psalms were argued to conclude segments (Pss 104–106, 111–117, 135, and 146–150), while psalms featuring a הודו formula opened segments. Based on a similar use of such features in 11Q5, Wilson proposed that this indicated purposeful editorial activity intended to demarcate borders of “discrete segments of the larger collection.”<sup>44</sup> Consequently, although proceeding from observations as to concluding doxologies made by many scholars before him, he made

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<sup>39</sup> Wilson 1984, 339.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. what I call ‘type’ designations below (pp. 178–82).

<sup>41</sup> Wilson 1984, 343.

<sup>42</sup> On a lesser scale, Wilson would suggest that psalms with no superscription throughout ‘books’ 1–3 (e.g. Pss 10; 43) were used to preserve a tradition of them being combined with their immediate predecessor (Pss 9; 42, see Wilson 1985a, 173–77; cf. Wilson 1985c), and that, apart from ‘author’ designations and ‘genre’ designations, other techniques that had been discovered in the comparative material were also used (e.g., juxtaposition by similar incipit [Pss 103–104], divine name [the “Elohistic Psalter”] or the use of “catch phrases” [Pss 32–33], Wilson 1985a, 194–97).

<sup>43</sup> Wilson 1984, 349.

<sup>44</sup> Wilson 1984, 350.

some crucial modifications of these ideas, and apart from the הודו and Hallelujah psalms, he also suggested that Ps 145 had originally functioned as concluding doxology for ‘book’ 5, so that the entire final Hallel (Pss 146–150) now served as a conclusion to the ‘Book’ of Psalms.

According to Wilson, the discontinuity between the two main parts of the ‘Book’ of Psalms (‘books’ 1–3 and ‘books’ 4–5) further underscored the observed “stabilization” of the collection in the ‘psalms’ scrolls, and pointed to two major stages,<sup>45</sup> but he also related them to each other as he provided a key to the understanding of the final shape of the collection that was only hinted at in the observations made by Westermann and Childs. In picking up on both the “peculiar” scattering of royal psalms throughout the ‘Book’ of Psalms and the possible prefatorial function of Ps 1, he suggested that the solution was to be found in the seams. More specifically, he argued that the editor(s) had created two overlapping frameworks by the placement and use of specific psalms at the seams of the collection, and these revealed a final purpose that was intended to guide the reader. Hence, the last piece of the puzzle related to organizational techniques and enabled him to move to the issue of editorial intent.

The first framework was called a “royal covenantal frame,”<sup>46</sup> initially described as stretching from Ps 2, through Ps 72, and concluding with the lament of Ps 89, but later argued to extend into the fifth book by a strategic placing of Ps 144.<sup>47</sup> This framework was then put into dialogue with a final wisdom, or “cohesive sapiential”<sup>48</sup> framework, governing the way one should approach the theology of the first framework. Although it primarily structured the last two ‘books’ by the placement of Pss 90(–91), 106/107, and 145, it also extended into ‘books’ 1–3 through Ps 73 and Ps 1, the latter serving as an entry into the entire collection.<sup>49</sup> The effect of these frameworks was, then, the shaping of a ‘book’ that

move[s] consistently and purposefully and so joins and arranges early collections, individual pss and later groupings, that the final product speaks the message intended by the final editor(s); a message which is distinct from and which intends to supersede that of the earlier pss-collections on which it is partly based.<sup>50</sup>

Important in detecting such a message was the understanding of ‘books’ 4–5 (especially ‘book’ 4, seen as “editorial ‘center’” through its Mosaic focus alongside the יהוה מלך psalms)<sup>51</sup> as an answer to the cry of Ps 89, “direct[ing]

<sup>45</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see below, pp. 113–17.

<sup>46</sup> The term was introduced in Wilson 1992, 134.

<sup>47</sup> Compare the identification of royal psalms in Wilson 1986 with the later Wilson 1992 and Wilson 1993a.

<sup>48</sup> For this designation, see Wilson 2005b.

<sup>49</sup> For the inclusion of Ps 106, see Wilson 1992. For Ps 107, see Wilson 1993a.

<sup>50</sup> Wilson 1985a, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson 1985a, 214–15.

the faithful to trust in Yahweh as king rather than in fragile and failing human princes.”<sup>52</sup> So put, the ‘Book’ of Psalms was claimed to have a message that moved from “lament to praise,” from “individual to community,” stressing YHWH’s “enthronement on the praises of his people,” all being a “matter of life and death,”<sup>53</sup> but as the wisdom frame had the “last word,”<sup>54</sup> there was also an important move from performance to meditation, so that the ‘Book’ of Psalms had now become the word of God.<sup>55</sup>

In sum, although some of his conclusions inevitably resembled earlier observations, the major innovation was the way in which editorial purpose was identified and interpreted, and one effect this would have on subsequent research was a distinct move away from being primarily interested in original (cultic) contexts of individual psalms, and towards an increasing focus on the arrangement of these psalms into a ‘book’. By claiming that the ‘Book’ of Psalms was carefully crafted scripture, intended to convey a specific message through its seams, Wilson had provided scholars with a new interpretive framework for the individual psalm: its *Sitz in der Literatur*. Such a framework would then enable further studies, both on the shape (that is, the “final” or “canonical” form) of the ‘book’ as a whole, and on smaller parts of it, and in 2006, David C. Mitchell would state that “[t]hanks to Wilson’s work, there arose a scholarly consensus that the Psalms were redacted around a purposefully developing sequence of ideas.”<sup>56</sup>

## B. Sketching Major Trajectories

Much of the research on issues of “shape and shaping” that followed Wilsons’ work would relate back to the two core concerns of most previous scholarship: traces of formation and questions of intent. As a methodological framework had been established, studies could now proceed to more detailed studies of the suggested psalms in the seams, but the work of Wilson also triggered the question of whether a purposeful arrangement could be detected on a lesser scale as well. Ultimately, a third line of inquiry would start to gain momentum. In reading the MT ‘Book’ of Psalms synchronically (as a book), some scholars would proceed from Wilson’s conclusions, trace themes and motives throughout the final shape of the collection, and propose new ways to understand issues related to an overall message and the *Sitz in der Literatur* of the individual psalms.

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<sup>52</sup> Wilson 2005a, 393.

<sup>53</sup> Wilson expands on these topics in Wilson 1992, 136–42.

<sup>54</sup> Wilson 1993a, 81; cf. Wilson 1985a, 199–228.

<sup>55</sup> In Wilson’s view, the final redaction took place in the first century CE (see Wilson 2000).

<sup>56</sup> Mitchell 2006b, 526; cf. Miller 2003, 90.