

Researching Sense at the End of the Psalter

Pss 145–150 and Its Canonical Shapes

Egbert Ballhorn

1. Introduction: Which Canonical Text?

“You scholars have stolen my angels.” These were the words of a Catholic priest with whom I got into contact in 2016 after the new, revised version of the Catholic Bible translation was published, the so-called “Einheitsübersetzung”. What had happened? One of the last psalms of the Psalter, Ps 138, starts with the words “I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the angels will I sing praise unto thee”. This was the old, former translation. The revised version says: “before the Gods will I sing praise unto thee”. The different versions indicate the differences between Masoretic Text and Septuagint. The old, unrevised *Einheitsübersetzung* from 1980 was based upon an eclectic text version. It used the Hebrew text as a basis, but jumped into the Septuagint version whenever it seemed convenient to it – without fixed criteria. This reveals not only a different state of the art of textual criticism in the late seventies, where the Septuagint was simply a tool to understand the Masoretic Text or even to correct it and make it convenient, but it is a testimony of two different biblical traditions: the Hebrew and the Greek one. The revised version from 2016 is based consistently on the Masoretic Text with no exceptions and with all consequences for practical use as demonstrated above. In the discussion with the priest the question arose again: which textual shape of the psalms is original, traditional, authoritative? The three chosen adjectives indicate that there are different types of argumentation. The quest for the correct text touches different areas of truth, concerning historical, redactional, sociological, and juridical dimensions.

And what about the angels who recently left the German Ps 138? An exegetical decision had an impact on personal piety and the liturgical life of people. The priest told me that we cannot pray before Gods; this seemed to him an imagination that had been overcome for a long time. The other aspect was that this psalm is traditionally recited at the feast of the holy archangels (29 September). The Septuagint version became part of the Christian liturgical tradition for a long time.

How to answer this reproach of the removed angels from the psalm? It touches different exegetical dimensions: the question of textual criticism, the question of contemporary understanding and reading historical texts, and the question of ecclesiastical traditions. What are the criteria for choosing a variant? The argument of the priest was that he could not speak of the existence of Gods in our modern world, as this seemed to him as a denial of monotheism. “Angels” seemed to him easier to understand. In this case I would say he switched between worlds without knowing. Angels are not part of our modern world experience either, but they are part of the ecclesiastical tradition. The preference of the angels in Ps 138 was not more rational, but the decision for another cultural and symbolic system.

In fact, a shift of the exegetical paradigm has taken place in recent years. To mix up different textual traditions and to switch between them is no option. The Qumran documents and the Septuagint are witnesses of their own: for different textual traditions, for different developments, different eras of Judaism, and different Jewish communities.

This touches the question of Canon: of Jewish canon and of Christian canon. The question becomes complex. How can we deal with these different textual shapes? What are the consequences for the exegetical discussion? There are more different layers or stages of production of one text than maybe former generations of scholars have considered. In the following contribution, the Final Hallel will be examined in its different shapes in MT and LXX. What are the consequences of different textual traditions for the exegesis?

2. Pss 146–150: Composition or Mere Arrangement?

If we look at the Final Hallel of the Psalter (Pss 145–150), we can find a certain structure. All six psalms are framed by an opening and a closing “Hallelujah”. This framework has a strong unifying effect and binds the psalms together.¹ But besides these structural aspects and the similar contents: the connections between the framing Hallelujahs and the corpora of the psalms are different. For example, the opening Hallelujah in Ps 146 is continued by the phrase הַלְלֵי ה' אֶת־יְהוָה נַפְשִׁי, transforming the formal Hallelujah-call for praise (second per. pl.) directed to a greater audience into an invitation to praise directed to the speaker’s own soul – by using the same lexeme. But in v. 3, the speaker addresses a greater audience again: “Put not your trust in princes...”, which has the effect that the opening address is connected with the corpus of the psalm.

Psalm 147 is a special case as the opening Hallelujah here is continued within the corpus of the text “...כִּי־טוֹב”. In this case, I would prefer not to agree

¹ Cf. BALLHORN, *Telos*, 300–304.

with Erich Zenger who understands the opening *ki* as a deixis² and not as an explicit continuation of the opening phrase.³

Psalms 148 opens with “Hallelujah” and continues with הללו את־יהוה, followed by many calls for praise (הללוהו). Similarly, Ps 149 continues the opening Hallelujah with שירו ליהוה. And Ps 150 parallels יה הללו with הללו־אֵל.

This overview shows that all of these five psalms have their own way of continuing the opening Hallelujah. Some of them repeat the identical form “הללו־”, adding another object (Pss 148; 150), one psalm takes up the root הלל and uses another grammatical form to continue the beginning, one psalm takes up the same grammatical structure of impv. pl. (Ps 149) by using another verb (Ps 146), one psalm uses the initial Hallelujah as opening phrase for a כִּי-clause (Ps 147).

Ps 145 can be added to this sequence of psalms, which does not formally belong to the final group as it has no framing Hallelujah, but which prepares the following psalms by the double usage of the noun תהילה at the prominent places of the superscription and as starter of the final clause, thus building an envelope structure around this psalm (even though the last line in v. 21, „The praise of the Lord shall speak my mouth“, is not a metatext like the superscription but part of the corpus). Moreover, Ps 145 uses the root הלל among other vocabulary of praise in v. 2 and 3 in its corpus and, thus, prepares in a special sense the Final Hallel (the last use of the root הלל occurs in Ps 135:1.3.21). Thus, Ps 145 functions as a transition between the last Davidic Psalter (Pss 138–145) and the Final Hallel.⁴

Thus, the psalm also mediates between the doxological language of the בִּרְךְ-terminology and even the metatextual doxologies in Pss 41; 72; 89; 106, and the הלל-terminology in Pss 146–150. At the same time, the text forms the transition from the last Davidic collection to the Final Hallel and provides it with a “Davidic touch”.⁵ The thematic shift from the Davidic kingdom to the kingdom of God and the universal perspective⁶ fits very well to the message of the last bundle of psalms.

² Cf. HOSSFELD/ZENGER, *Psalmen 101–150*, 825 (Zenger). The parallel examples Zenger gives there (Pss 73:1; 92:1 [sic!]; 133:1) do not use the deixis *ki*. This reading is based on a proposal of Risse (cf. RISSE, Gott, 18–20).

³ Cf. the argumentation by NEUMANN, *Hymnen*, 163 n. 31.

⁴ Cf. WILLGREN, *Garden*, 248. Willgren works out that there is an overlap between the הלל and בִּרְךְ vocabulary in the corpus (cf. *ibid.*, 252).

⁵ ZENGER, *Exkurs*, 809: “Literarischer (fiktionaler) Sprecher der Komposition ist im Textzusammenhang der ‘Knecht’ David, der JHWH, den wahren König Israels, preisen und loben will. Dieses in Ps 145 angekündigte Lob ist einerseits Ps 145 selbst. Andererseits präsentiert sich von der Textfolge her auch Pss 146–150 als dieses Lob”.

⁶ Cf. BALLHORN, *Telos*, 288–293.

We can guess but not prove that some psalms got their initial Hallelujah by a late redactor, whereas others were composed with the opening Hallelujah from the very beginning.

There are different opinions among scholars about how the redactional process took place. According to Zenger, the last five psalms build a thoroughly arranged composition.⁷ In Zenger's view, Pss 146; 149; 150 are worked out by the Hallelujah-redaction as well as the first half of Ps 147:1–11 and Ps 148:14. Friederike Neumann makes a different proposal and considers the Hallelujah structure as an original part of the psalms Pss 146; 148 and 150; thus, these psalms must be part of the redactional process as well. In contrast to Zenger and Hossfeld, who postulate a unifying "Hallelujah-redaction" which extends to all hallelujah structures in Books IV and V of the Psalter⁸, she claims a gradual formation of the Final Hallel.⁹

David Willgren makes a different proposal. In his perspective, "most of the attested Hallelujahs are secondary"¹⁰. The original ones are, in his opinion, Pss 147:1; 150:6; all others are later additions. One main argument for Willgren is that some Hallelujahs are integrated into the corpus of the psalm (especially in Pss 147:1; 150:6). That leads him to the conclusion "to not automatically assume that all attested Hallelujahs trace back to, say, the same redaction"¹¹. He corroborates his observation by adding the argument (an argument concerning the links between Pss 2 and 149, but which can be extended to the whole collection): "Their similarities were more likely to be due to similar conceptualizations of kingship than the result of the shaping of a collection".¹²

Considering the different ways of keyword association, he concludes that the last five psalms are more a collection of texts than a real composition. The reason for gathering the individual texts were their similarities, but there were no redactional intentions to shape a collection by giving it a unified message and form. Willgren writes that "the Hallelujah frameworks were not intended as borders of sequential reading. ... Basically, it could be suggested that similarities between these psalms ... might have provided the basis for them being juxtaposed."¹³

More in general, he writes "that the formation of the Book of Psalms is not ultimately an issue of shaping a 'book' ... but the creative preservation of

⁷ Cf. ZENGER, Exkurs, 807–810.

⁸ Cf. ZENGER/HOSSFELD, Buch, 450. Zenger speaks of a "von der Schluss-Redaktion geschaffenen 'Halleluja-Imprägnierung' des letzten Psalterdrittels" (Zenger, Exkurs, 809).

⁹ Cf. NEUMANN, Hymnen, 444–449.

¹⁰ WILLGREN, Garden, 283.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹² *Ibid.*, 281.

¹³ *Ibid.*

tradition".¹⁴ And he concludes "that the idea of a theology (or message) developing through the 'macrostructure' of the collection would have to be abandoned as an explanation for the formation of the 'Book' of Psalms. Being an anthology of psalms, the 'Book' of Psalms does not tell a (linear) story".¹⁵

To sum up these observations and conclusions, all recent scholars seem to agree that we should be cautious with identifying global "messages" or overall structures in the Final Hallel.

I would like to draw some conclusions from the discussion and add one methodological thought.

3. Reading on Different Levels

One conclusion seems quite evident: every psalm can be read and interpreted as a single artefact, as a single work of art.¹⁶ The single psalm does not "dissolve" in the horizon of a greater collection, it keeps its literal identity. Here I agree with Alma Brodersen: "Psalter exegesis seeks to supplement but not replace Psalm exegesis".¹⁷

Hermann Spieckermann has written a strong plea "for ending the hunt for the message inscribed into the final shaping of the Psalter".¹⁸ He considers the textual testimony of the different traditions as a reliable basis for an exegesis of the Hebrew and Greek Psalter,¹⁹ but he is sceptical about all attempts to search for unifying systems, which make the Psalter an entity and are based on only very few items. I agree with his remark that "it is ... necessary to be aware of the limits to enlightening the process, since diverse endeavours had been undertaken side by side while the Psalter was being shaped. There is no main avenue leading from the single psalms to the Psalter. And there is no progressively increasing trend which claims authority on how the growing and finally concluded Psalter is to be understood according to its editors"²⁰. He concludes that the psalms should be seen as textual individuals or at the most as parts of a surrounding cluster. But the quest for a message of the whole book should be given up. Willgren goes even further and postulates in his dissertation to give up the idea of perceiving the Psalter as a book.

¹⁴ Ibid., 394.

¹⁵ Ibid., 400.

¹⁶ This is the old plea of GERSTENBERGER, *Psalter*, 3–13. Consequently, he denies the book-like character of the book: "Der Psalter ist kein Buch, sondern eine Sammlung von außerordentlich reichen, theologisch und anthropologisch tiefsitzenden und tiefblickenden Gebeten und Liedern aus unterschiedlichen Lebenssituationen" (ibid., 12).

¹⁷ BRODERSEN, *End*, 270.

¹⁸ SPIECKERMANN, *Psalter*, 21.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

In my point of view, the argumentation cannot be based on the process of the genesis of the text alone. It is a question of reception as well. The “Book” of Psalms exists as such an entity, and so it can be read and interpreted as an entity.

From the diachronic point of view, we can, in the case of the Final Hallel, clearly identify redactional activity binding together five different psalms. In the light of the recent studies it is not possible to ascribe one unified structure or sense to the Final Hallel.

In addition to this evidence, the fact can be stated that the framing Hallelujah is a strong marker to identify these five psalms as a group. On the structural and compositional level, the framing effect of the Hallelujahs is noticeable at the first glance and cannot be denied.

I would like to ask: could the meaning of a text not be identified on different levels? On the one hand, there is the level of the authors and redactors, who have in mind certain ideas which they aim to express with the help of their text and their redactional activities. Thus, they create structures and meanings by writing and composing. On the other hand, a text starts its own life when it is finished and the long series of reading and interpreting processes starts. The meaning of a text cannot be limited to the intentions of its author(s). In other words, the difference between the *intentio auctoris* and the *intentio operis* should be made fertile for interpretation.²¹

To argue with the authorial intention of a writer is not the only way of interpreting a text, even in contemporary literature. Good literal texts evoke a broad variety of readings, a variety of interpretations on very different levels. If we could ask a modern writer, “Did you intend this or that interpretation during your process of writing?”, he might answer, “O no, I didn’t, but I see. You are right. Your interpretation explicates one dimension of my text.”

I think this does not mean to add anything to the text which is not based in its structures. The basic fact seems to me: the author and the redactor do not control the whole text in all its details. They are like jugglers; they cannot keep all the semantic and syntactic balls in the air at the same time. Due to complexity of language, it is not possible to write a text that is linear, totally clear, and without secrets. Every text is by definition indeterminate.

Literary texts can be understood as a network of intertextual knots and devices. Some of them are planned and designed by the author, others occur, crystallise around the author’s structures, enrich them, and add further aspects.

²¹ To interpret a text merely from an auctorial perspective is not possible from the point of view of the New Criticism. It is called “intentional fallacy”, a term which was already brought into the discussion in 1946 (cf. WIMSATT/BEARDSLEY, Fallacy).

Thus, an immense complexity emerges within the borders of the text – and beyond. It takes years or even centuries to reveal all dimensions of meaning hidden in literary texts.²²

Another aspect is to differentiate between author and redactor. The redactors (re)arrange the texts and add elements to them, even on metatextual levels (for example by adding framing Hallelujahs), but they work with pretexts. That means that an intratextual complexity emerges between the parts of the text written by the original authors and the layers added by redactors. Thus, the redactor does not have the last word. The text is more complex than the decisions and additions made by the redactor. The redactor can add elements, arrange parts of the text, superimpose certain structures like framing elements or headings, but even he is not ruler over the whole text in its complexity. The “message” of a text is not identical with the message of the “last hand” of the last redactor’s activity. The final text is a composition of different “votes”, and the readers have to find their ways within these structures and deal with the complexity of the whole corpus.

From this point of view, we can take, for example, a fresh look at the Final Hallel. In this case, I as a reader identify a Hallelujah structure which is not uniform but clearly discernible. And I start with this structure and use it as a pointer to look in that direction and to find more evidence to corroborate the interpretation. A text is an offer to its readers to recognise its structures and to create meaning, which is more than collecting information. It is a game of creativity. Thus, the readers have the chance to perceive the Final Hallel as a composition - with various possibilities to identify meaning in the structures of the text. The texts wait for the creativity of their readers to produce meaning by reacting to its structures. Texts make an offer to the readers who are invited to combine the data and draw lines among them. To reveal and analyse the complexity of a grown text, which has finally become a finished composition, is a task for the whole future reception of the text and it will never end.

4. The Final Hallel in Parallel Editions and Shapes of the Book of Psalms

From this point of view, we should have a look at the “parallel edition” of the Final Hallel. The Septuagint version is a reception of the Protomasoretic Psalter, and it sets its own accents which have often been described.

²² In this case we have an interesting parallel debate concerning the interpretation of the constitution of the United States of America. “Originalism” is a concept which means that the constitution has to be interpreted based on the original understanding of the authors or the people at the time it was ratified, cf. JOHNSON, Rights; TANEY, Dred Scott. All questions and consequences of interpreting Bible can be applied to the debate about originalism.

The Septuagint version has a more consistent but also simpler concept of Hallelujah. The word “Hallelujah” is not translated but transliterated. Thus, it remains a reference to the original Hebrew text and the Hebrew language. The Septuagint permanently marks (especially through the words “Amen” and “Hallelujah”) that it is dependent on another text, on an original revelation in a different language. The Septuagint “knows” the semantic meaning of the word, as in other cases it translates all occurrences of ללה with the verb αἰνέω. (cf. Ps 148:1 Αἰνεῖτε τὸν κύριον, Ps 150:1 Αἰνεῖτε τὸν θεόν). At the same time, it modifies its pragmatics by using it as a genre marker. While it can be discussed whether the Hallelujah in the Hebrew text is part of the framing or part of the corpus, in the Greek edition, it is quite clear that “Hallelujah” is a metatextual (and metalingual) signal. In the Septuagint we never have a concluding Hallelujah (with one important exception); it is always in the opening position of a psalm. When the Hallelujah can be found at the end of a psalm in the Hebrew text, it is shifted to the beginning of the following psalm in its Greek version.²³ We can draw several conclusions from this: the Hebrew pre-text has a somewhat canonical status; the text cannot be changed totally, but small “shifts” are possible. The word “Hallelujah” has become a fixed term which needs no translation. The psalms are considered as a composition with a fixed order, and if it is possible to transfer an element from the end of a text to the beginning of the following text, this means that these psalms are to be perceived as a textual continuum.

The Septuagint unifies the whole Hallelujah system. The ambivalence regarding the question of whether the Hallelujah is part of the corpus or superscription of the psalm is resolved. In the ambiguous case of Ps 147, all has become clear. The Hallelujah from the end of Ps 146 is transferred to become the genre superscription of Ps 147, whereas the opening hallelujah of the psalm (which is part of its corpus) is translated (sic!) into αἰνεῖτε τὸν κύριον.

²³ This can clearly be seen at the transition from Ps 113 to Ps 114. Ps 113 ends with a Hallelujah which is shifted in the Septuagint to the beginning of Ps 114 (Ψ 113), where it functions as a kind of superscription or as a genre marker. We have the same case with the Hallelujah in MT final position in Ps 115 and 116, which occur in Septuagint at the beginning of the following psalm. The textual continuity remains unchanged, but the text divisions are slightly altered, obviously according to a different concept of meaning and function of “Hallelujah”.

	MT		LXX
Ps 145	<p>תְּהִלָּה לַדָּוִד וְאֶהְלֵל שְׁמֶךָ וּמְהֵלָּה מַאֲד תְּהִלַּת יְהוָה</p>	Ψ 144	<p>αἴνεσις τῷ Δαυιδ καὶ αἰνέσω τὸ ὄνομά σου καὶ αἰνετὸς σφόδρα αἴνεσιν κυρίου</p>
Ps 146	<p>הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה הַלְלֵי נַפְשִׁי אֶהְלֵל יְהוָה הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה</p>	Ψ 145	<p>αλληλουια Αγγαιου καὶ Ζαχαριου αἶνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου αἰνέσω κύριον [...]</p>
Ps 147a	<p>הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה כִּי־טוֹב ...</p>	Ψ 146	<p>αλληλουια Αγγαιου καὶ Ζαχαριου αἰνεῖτε τὸν κύριον</p>
Ps 147b	<p>... הַלְלֵי אֱלֹהֵי צִיּוֹן הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה</p>	Ψ 147	<p>αλληλουια Αγγαιου καὶ Ζαχαριου αἶνει τὸν θεόν σου Σιων [...]</p>
Ps 148	<p>הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה</p>	Ψ 148	<p>αλληλουια Αγγαιου καὶ Ζαχαριου αἰνεῖτε τὸν κύριον [...]</p>
Ps 149	<p>הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה</p>	Ψ 149	<p>αλληλουια αἶσατε τῷ κυρίῳ [...]</p>
Ps 150	<p>הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה הַלְלוּ־לֵא הִלְלוּ־יְהוָה</p>	Ψ 150	<p>αλληλουια αἰνεῖτε τὸν θεόν Αλληλουια</p>

Table 1: Comparison of Masoretic Text and Septuagint.

All of this has an impact on the perception of the Final Hallel in the Septuagint version. It becomes a more unified text with clear definitions of superscription and corpus. The centre of gravity moves into the direction of a “composition”, with an emphasis on the connection of the elements.

One new and important accent is the closing Hallelujah at the end of Ps 150.²⁴ This is a strong signal. No other psalm ends with “Hallelujah”. As the readers of the Greek text are used to consider *Hallelujah* as a genre marker, it functions as an important “blank space”. The praise which has to follow has to be invented, has to be written. This can be interpreted in two ways (which are not mutually exclusive): either as an eschatological expectation of a new text sung by the whole universe or as an implicit invitation to the readers to start their own hymns. At the end of the Psalter the readers are not only witnesses to the God-praising creation, they become part of it. The last Hallelujah bears the message “to be continued”.

There is another interesting point in the Greek version of the Final Hallel. Four psalms give the author indication *Αγγαιου και Ζαχαριου*; “of Haggai and Zechariah” (Ψ 145–148). It is a strong and unexpected signal and opens a new world. The Davidic superscriptions link the psalms to the life of the greatest king of Israel, as it is written in the books of Samuel.²⁵ And now we have, additionally, a link to the prophets. There are four places in the Bible where both prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, appear together: 1 Esd 6:1; 7:3; 2 Esd 5:1; 6:14. After the return from the exile, the temple in Jerusalem is being rebuild, while Haggai and Zechariah are prophesying. The prophets accompany the erection of the temple, they support the process by revealing the will of God. In all four instances, there is a junctim: as long as the prophets are doing their work and function as intermediaries between Israel and God, the building of the temple makes progress. For the process of reading the Psalter, this has multiple effects. First, the four psalms get a new concrete context which, in the MT, they do not explicitly have: they are “implanted” into the history of Israel. This is a parallel to the Davidisation of the psalms.²⁶

A second effect is that these four psalms (which are only three in the Hebrew text: Ps 146–148) are strongly formed as a group. Through the figures of Haggai and Zechariah, they are connected together under the headline “temple theology”. This is an instruction of how to read these texts. The heavenly liturgy and the cult in Jerusalem are explicitly bound connected together.

²⁴ Not in all manuscripts. The Codex Alexandrinus is an exception, which seems to indicate it to be the *lectio facilior*.

²⁵ See BALLHORN, Klage.

²⁶ With the small difference of the accusative *τῷ Δαυιδ* and the genitive *τοῦ Αγγαιου και Ζαχαριου*. The difference may be that the Davidical psalms are dedicated to David, whereas these four psalms are really ascribed to these prophets as (fictitious) authors. We have a parallel case in Ps 137 (Ψ 136) which is ascribed to Jeremiah in some manuscripts. Cf. Ψ 64:1.

Moreover, the attribution to the two prophets changes the character of the text somewhat: it changes its pragmatic from prayer to prophecy. Via superscriptions the texts get a prophetic seal, a countersignature. This has an effect on reading/praying these psalms: it becomes an act of cooperation in preparing the future temple and attending the reign of God. This gives these psalms an additional dimension of effectiveness.

Finally, the last two remaining psalms lack of the prophetic ascription which means that they are linked together even stronger. From a formal point of view, they become a counterpart of the opening psalms (Pss 1–2). Zenger speaks of the development “From the Tora to the Tehilla”.²⁷ Pss 1–2 and Pss 149–150 exemplify this movement.

5. Conclusion

What do the different shapes of the text mean for a canonical interpretation of the Psalter? The choice of the exegetical starting point is always a question of confession. As a theologian coming from the Catholic tradition I have, so to speak, a “twofold” Old Testament, a binding text in two “editions”: the Hebrew and the Greek text. This is the reason why, in the case of this essay, I have omitted the Qumran tradition, which is a witness of a past reading community. Every shape of text on which I decide implies a choice for a reading community which is aligned to this particular textual form.

It is quite interesting (and not an obstacle) that a reading community such as the Latin church is oriented towards to more than one canonical text – or better: to a twofold text. Texts are the result of a long and not unilinear development process. At the starting point of these texts are faith communities which develop them over time. And at the end of these processes, there are faith communities as well which adopt such texts and declare them as the base of their own faith and practice. This is the final stage of canonisation. The acknowledgement of a text through a reading and interpreting community *makes* it readable and reliable and interpretable. It is a decision based on a previous experience with this text and on a long process of redaction and discussion. But at the end, when the resulting text is declared as stable (in many cases more through use than through a juridical act), the previous process of growing is neglected. The particles of meaning are not researched in the past, but in the structures of the text itself.²⁸

²⁷ Cf. ZENGER, Exkurs, 809: “Durch die Abgrenzung von Pss 149 und 150 als eigenes Abschlusspar wird in der LXX der Bezug zum Anfangspaar Pss 1–2 verstärkt”. Zenger uses the wording “‘Von der Tora zur Tehilla’”.

²⁸ Cf. STEINS, Bibelkanon, 29: “Als Traditionsliteratur konserviert der Kanon nicht die Spuren der Geschichte als Quellen und Überraeste, sondern *stilisiert* sie zu Gunsten der

The idea of canon is not bound to a total stability of text. Different forms can exist side by side, which have most parts of the text in common and, in some cases, set slightly different accents – mostly at the “seams” of the texts. Canonicity does not necessarily imply total stability of a text. A stable textual shape occurs only at the very end of a long line of development; the idea of canonical text emerges much earlier and allows a slight textual instability without any problems.

And we can differentiate a little further. Different communities have different sacred texts. The idea of having a sacred text, a canon, does not mean “total stability” of this text as well. The fringes are the most interesting parts! We have overlapping texts, as we can see in Judaism, which had – in ancient, formative times – two (or three or even more) semi-canonical collections called “scripture”. And at the end of this evolutionary process, the Masoretic Text came to light – in its final stage only in “postbiblical times”. The newly emerged Christianity took two versions of the Holy Bible with it. Orthodox Christianity was based on the Septuagint, the Catholic tradition kept both versions, and Protestantism refers to the Masoretic Text. Different shapes of canons set different accents, but they do not deny the common basis of textual material.

“Tradition” is only available in plural, not in singular. In the Catholic tradition there are two binding text forms of the Old Testament, which mostly converge and set special accents in some smaller points. But this fact does not render it impossible to write a biblical theology or a theology of the Psalter. The idea of canon is not destroyed by the plurality of text forms. Canon is a question of decision. It is possible to analyse every single text form on its own. The Septuagint Psalter evokes a slightly different theology with different compositional systems within (for example a different Final Hallel) and with other intertextual references than the Masoretic Text. Thus, we have different shapes of canon which can be made fertile for an understanding of “Bible” as a complex literary concept in general. The idea of Bible is an abstract concept which has multiple shapes of concretion. The etymology of the word “Bible” may remind us of this fact: the word is generally used as a singular – but in its origin it is a plural!

‘Erinnerung’. Der Bibelkanon hat ‘Denkmalcharakter’, er transportiert nicht Vergangenheit, sondern ‘erinnerte Zukunft’, einen narrativen Entwurf der Identität der zugehörigen Glaubensgemeinschaft.” He continues (*ibid.*): “Der Text bleibt auch gegenüber der ursprünglichen Textverwendung polyvalent; sein Sinnreichtum ist größer als die hypothetisch erschlossene Ursprungsbedeutung, d.h. die Bedeutung zum Zeitpunkt seiner Entstehung. Rezeption ist ein kreativer, Sinn anreichernder Prozess und kein ‘Nachstellen der Ursprungssituation’.”

Bibliography

- BALLHORN, E., *Zum Telos des Psalters. Der Textzusammenhang des Vierten und Fünften Psalmenbuches (Ps 90–150) (BBB 138)*, Berlin/Wien: Philo 2004.
- , *Klage als Weisheit des Königs. Untersuchungen zur Davidstypik in den Psalmen*; in: J. Schnocks (ed.), „Wer lässt uns Gutes sehen?“ (Ps 4,7). *Internationale Studien zu Klagen in den Psalmen (HBS 85)*, Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder 2016, 244–270.
- BRODERSEN, A., *The End of the Psalter. Psalms 146–150 in the Masoretic Text, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Septuagint (BZAW 505)*, Berlin: De Gruyter 2017.
- GERSTENBERGER, E.S., *Der Psalter als Buch und als Sammlung*, in: K. Seybold/E. Zenger (eds.), *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung (HBS 1)*, Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder 1994, 3–13.
- HOSSFELD, F.-L./ZENGER, E., *Psalmen 101–150 (HThKAT)*, Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder 2008.
- JOHNSON, W., *No Rights Which the White Man Is Bound to Respect*, in: *Boston Review*, 27 September 2017, <http://bostonreview.net/law-justice/walter-johnson-no-rights-which-white-man-bound-respect> (accessed 13 August 2020).
- NEUMANN, F., *Schriftgelehrte Hymnen. Gestalt, Theologie und Intention der Psalmen 145 und 146–150*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2016.
- RISSE, S., „Gut ist es, unserem Gott zu singen“. *Untersuchungen zu Psalm 147 (MThA 37)*, Altenberge: Oros 1995.
- SPIECKERMANN, H., *From the Psalter back to the Psalms. Observations and Suggestions*, in: *ZAW 132 (2020)*, 1–22.
- STEINS, G., *Der Bibelkanon als Denkmal und als Text. Zu einigen methodologischen Aspekten kanonischer Schriftauslegung*, in: G. Steins (ed.), *Kanonisch-intertextuelle Studien zum Alten Testament (SBAB 48)*, Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk 2009, 15–35.
- TANEY, R.B., *Dred Scott v. Sandford. Opinion of the Court*, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dred_Scott_v._Sandford/Opinion_of_the_Court (accessed 13 August 2020).
- WILLGREN, D., *Like a Garden of Flowers. A Study in the Formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms*, Lund: Lund University 2016.
- WIMSATT, W.K./BEARDSLEY, M.C., *The Intentional Fallacy*, in: *The Sewanee Review 54 (1946)*, 468–488.
- ZENGER, E., *Exkurs: Die Komposition des sog. Kleinen Hallel bzw. Schluss-Hallel Pss 146–150*, in: F.-L. Hossfeld/ E. Zenger, *Psalmen 101–150 (HThKAT)*, Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder 200.
- ZENGER, E./HOSSFELD, F.-L., *Das Buch der Psalmen*, in: E. Zenger/C. Frevel, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2016, 431–455.