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Source: *Vetus Testamentum*, Oct., 2006, Vol. 56, Fasc. 4 (Oct., 2006), pp. 526-548

Published by: Brill

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20504083>

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LORD, REMEMBER DAVID: G.H. WILSON AND THE MESSAGE OF THE PSALTER

by

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It was with sadness that I learned of Gerald H. Wilson's untimely death from a heart-attack on 11 November 2005. I remember well when I first discovered *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* in Glasgow University Library while writing my MA dissertation on the Songs of Ascents in 1991.¹ I flicked through it, puzzled at first by its parade of lyrics from the Sumerian Temple Hymns, the Mesopotamian Hymnic Incipits, and the Qumran Psalms, until slowly the significance of the work began to dawn on me. For *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* was a truly seminal work, pioneering final form studies of the Psalms. Its approach, arising from B.S. Childs's canonical method, not only treated the Psalter as a finished product, but demonstrated that it was indeed a finished product, an ordered publication bearing the fingerprints of deliberate editorial arrangement throughout. It showed that there was correspondence between the placement of the royal psalms and the doxologies which conclude the individual books.² It showed too that a progression of ideas could be seen, moving from adversity, through a crisis situation in Ps. lxxxix, to a concert of praise at the end. Thanks to Wilson's work, there arose a scholarly consensus that the Psalms were redacted around a purposefully developing sequence of ideas.³

¹ G.H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA, 1985).

² Wilson, *Editing*, p. 199.

³ See, e.g., J.C. McCann (ed.), *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSup. 159; Sheffield, 1993); F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Die Psalmen I* (DNEB 29; Würzburg, 1993); K. Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (Tübingen, 1996); David M. Howard, Jr, "Recent Trends in Psalms Study" in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (Grand Rapids, 1999), pp. 329-68; R.L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III* (JSOTSup. 307; Sheffield, 2000); S. Gillingham, "The Zion Tradition and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter" in J. O'Day (ed.), *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), pp. 308-41. See too the essays in the two recent compilations, P.W. Flint & P.D. Miller (eds.), *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (Leiden-Boston, 2005);

Instead of a jumble of unrelated lyrics, they became instead an oratorio, forming together a literary context for their mutual interpretation. And so Wilson became, in Isaac Newton's celebrated phrase, one of the giants upon whose shoulders we all stood.

However it was one thing to demonstrate deliberate arrangement in the Psalter, another to interpret it. And, while in the first case I felt Wilson's work was masterful, in the second I thought he was mistaken. For I was already coming to the conclusion that the underlying agenda of the Psalms was eschatological and messianic, a conclusion quite at odds with Wilson's theory, which saw in Books I-III a retrospective of the failure of the Davidic covenant and in Books IV-V pointers to Israel's non-messianic future.⁴ This view always surprised me. For Wilson's own tutor at Yale, B.S. Childs, suggested six years before Wilson's book that an eschatologico-messianic purpose underlay the redaction of the Psalter.⁵

So in due course I responded with my *The Message of the Psalter*.⁶ I agreed that the Psalms had been redacted to represent a developing sequence of ideas. But I parted from Wilson and others in proposing that the Psalms were prophetic rather than didactic or wisdom literature. And so between us we indicated the way to two quite different understandings of the redactional agenda of the Psalms: I, eschatologico-messianic, pointing to a coming son of David; he, historico-didactic and non-messianic, pointing Israel to a future without the house of David.⁷

Recently, however, Wilson published two papers in which he reassessed some of his views and interacted with mine.⁸ Therefore, in the light of his last comments, I would like briefly to restate my own view, to

P. Johnston and D. Firth (eds.), *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (Carlisle, 2005), pp. 101-18.

⁴ Wilson, *Editing*, p. 213.

⁵ B.S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 516-17.

⁶ *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (JSOTSup. 252; Sheffield, 1997).

⁷ Wilson, *Editing*, p. 213. To be more precise about my own position, I saw the redactor referring to the messianic future from Ps. xlv to the end of the Psalter. However I did not exclude the possibility that the gathering of Israel depicted in Ps. xlii-xliv may be partly historical from the redactor's viewpoint (*Message*, p. 301). That depends on the date of redaction.

⁸ G.H. Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and the Shape of the Psalter" in P.W. Flint & P.D. Miller (eds.), *The Book of Psalms*, pp. 391-406; *idem*, "The Structure of the Psalter" in Johnston and Firth, *Interpreting*, pp. 229-246.

consider his revised position and its strengths, and to point out what I feel were its continuing shortcomings.

1. *My hypothesis: An eschatological programme in the Psalms*

The case for an eschatological programme in the Psalms requires twofold evidence: first, that the Psalms lyrics are set in a purposeful sequence or arrangement; second, that this sequence was intended to represent eschatological events. Now purposeful sequence is no longer an issue; there is broad agreement on the matter.⁹ What remains to be proven is the eschatological and messianic agenda of the final form of the Psalms. I would suggest that this view rests on five strong pillars.

- (1) The royal psalms are set in prominent positions in the Psalter.¹⁰ For instance, Ps. ii is part of the prologue, Ps. lxxii closes Book II, and Ps. lxxxix closes Book III. Yet, when the Psalter was redacted, the house of David was in eclipse. The redactor must therefore have meant these psalms to refer to a Davidic scion not yet come, if he did not want simply to highlight the failure of the Davidic covenant.
- (2) Many other psalms, including Pss. xxi, xlvi, xlvii, xlviii, lxvii, lxxx, lxxxiii, lxxxvii, xciii, xcvi, xcvi, seem to be intrinsically eschatological or ultimate in tone.¹¹ For instance, Ps. lxxx is a prayer for the restoration of the Josephites. But since the Josephites were long exiled by the time of the Psalter's redaction, the psalm's inclusion in the Psalter can only be explained as anticipating their future redemption. Likewise, Ps. lxxxiii describes a global coalition against Israel which apparently never took place in history, but looks suspiciously like the eschatological coalitions described at Dan. vii 7-25; Ezek. xxxviii 1-9; Zech xii.3; xiv 2; and elsewhere.

⁹ As noted above. Purposeful design in the Psalter was also noted by ancient writers. For instance, Augustine, "The sequence of the Psalms, which seems to me to contain the secret of a mighty mystery, has not yet been revealed to me" (*Enarrationes* on Ps. 150 §1). See further Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 16-40.

¹⁰ Many commentators note the centrality of the royal psalms to the overall message of the Psalms, particularly in their placement at significant junctures of the collection. See J. Forbes, *Studies on the Book of Psalms* (Edinburgh, 1888) p. 4; Childs, *Introduction*, pp. 515-17; Wilson, *Editing*, pp. 209-15; *idem*, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter" *JSTOT* 35 (1986), pp. 85-94; D.M. Howard, Jr., "Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the-Field Survey", *Word and World* 9 (1989), pp. 279-81; Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 86-87, 243-44.

¹¹ See Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 85-86; for more on Ps. lxxxiii, see pp. 101-103.

- (3) The figures whose names head the Psalms—David, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and Moses—were regarded as prophets from biblical times.¹² The redactor of the Psalter would have regarded psalms bearing their names as future-predictive.
- (4) Messianic expectation dominates second-temple period history and literature in general.¹³ We might therefore expect it to be the dominant theme of the Psalter, which was compiled in its final form in this period.
- (5) Eschatological interpretation of the Psalms was normative from late biblical times until the nineteenth century in both Jewish and Christian tradition.¹⁴

Such is the basis for the eschatologico-messianic interpretation of the Psalms. Now this is not an idea for which I claim much credit. It was advanced in the nineteenth century by F. Delitzsch and J. Forbes, and more recently by B.S. Childs and J.P. Brennan.¹⁵ So, in making my case for an eschatological programme, I simply took two established ideas about the Psalms—purposeful sequence and eschatological bent—and combined them.¹⁶ Both these ideas seemed to me, and still do, to be most cogent. Taken together, they provide a hermeneutical justification, on the basis of redactor intent, for the eschatologico-messianic interpretation of the Psalms. Therefore the general case for seeing an eschatological programme in the Psalms is solid, even if there

¹² David (2 Sam. xxiii 1-3); Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun are called *seers* (2 Chron. xxix 30; xxxv 15; 1 Chron. xxv 5); Moses (Deut. xviii 15; xxxi 19-22; xxxiv 10). See also M. Daly-Denton's wide-ranging evidence that David was regarded as a prophet before the turn of the era. "David the Psalmist, Inspired Prophet: Jewish Antecedents of a New Testament Datum" *ABR* 52 (2004), pp. 32-47.

¹³ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 82-83.

¹⁴ See the references to the Psalms in eschatological contexts at Zech. iv 7 (Ps. cxviii 22); Zech. ix 10 (Ps. lxxii 8). For later rabbinic and patristic interpretation, see *Message*, pp. 18-21, 25-28, 31-33, 83-85. It was, in fact, a rabbinic hermeneutical principle that the whole Bible foretells future events: "All the prophets prophesied only concerning the days of the Messiah" (*Ber.* 34b; *Sanh.* 99a); "Many prophets arose for Israel, double the number [of people] who came out of Egypt, but only the prophecy which contained a lesson for future generations was written down, and that which did not contain such a lesson was not written down" (*Meg.* 14a; cf. Proem to *Ruth R.* §2; *Song R.* 4.11.1).

¹⁵ F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (tr. D. Eaton; London, 1887) pp. 88-95; Forbes, *Studies*, pp. 3-4; B.S. Childs, *Introduction*, pp. 516-17; J.P. Brennan, "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies", *BTB* 10 (1980), pp. 25-29.

¹⁶ As I note in *Message*, pp. 88.

is room for disagreement on details. However I made my own suggestions about the details, which I stand by today.¹⁷

2. *Wilson's remarks on my hypothesis*

In the first of Wilson's two latest articles on the Psalms, he wrote about my hypothesis as follows.

His work is ultimately unpersuasive since it (like earlier attempts to reconstruct an enthronement festival) is based largely on tenuous connections between particular psalms and a supposed eschatological program discovered in Zechariah 9-14.¹⁸

If the Zecharian eschatological programme is "supposed", it was not I who supposed it. The phrase "eschatological programme" was borrowed from C.H. Dodd's description of Zechariah ix-xiv; likewise R.L. Smith refers to the prophet's "eschatological timetable" and M.C. Black to his "eschatological schema".¹⁹ My own reading of the Zecharian programme largely agrees with theirs, both in order and content.²⁰ The chief motifs are the gathering of Israel from exile under an eschatological king, a gathering of hostile forces against Israel, the death of the king, Israel's ensuing exile, the regathering of Israel, the divine rout of the nations, the establishment of the messianic *malkut* and Israel's gathering to the Feast of Sukkoth in Zion.²¹ I offered

¹⁷ I made only brief comments about the David psalms of Books I and II and the Korah psalms (*Message*, pp. 301-02). I have since expanded my comments on the Korah psalms in "'God Will Redeem My Soul From Sheol': The Psalms of the Sons of Korah" *JSTOT* 30 (2006), pp. 365-84.

¹⁸ G.H. Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 404 n. 34.

¹⁹ *Message*, pp. 140-41; C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (New York, 1953), p. 64; R. L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (Waco, TX, 1984), p. 271; M.C. Black, *The Rejected and Slain Messiah Who is Coming with his Angels* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1991), pp. 52-53.

²⁰ My own reading of the Zecharian programme particularly resembles that of Black (*Message*, p. 216). See too my frequent concurrence with the views of R.L. Smith, P. Lamarche, *Zacharie IX-XIV: Structure Littéraire, et Messianisme* (Paris, 1961) and W. Rudolph, *Haggai, Sacharja 1-8, Sacharja 9-14, Maleachi* (Gütersloh, 1976) in *Message*, pp. 140, 202-09.

²¹ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 139-44, 212-15. I suggested that the dying Messiah of the Psalms displays traits of the dying Josephite Messiah of rabbinic literature (*Message*, p. 255, n. 42; pp. 282-84). For more on this figure and its dating see my articles "Rabbi Dosa and the Rabbis Differ: Messiah ben Joseph in the Babylonian Talmud", *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 8 (2005), pp. 77-90; "The Fourth Deliverer: A Josephite Messiah in *4QTestimonia*", *Bib* 86.4 (2005), pp. 545-553; "Firstborn *Shor* and *Rem*: A

evidence to show that the broad pattern of this motif-sequence can be traced from the Baal Cycle, through the prophets, the pseudepigrapha, the Qumran literature, and the New Testament, to the apocalyptic midrashim of the first millennium CE.²²

As for the tenuous links between individual psalms and the Zecharian programme, unfortunately no example is given. However I was aware of the dangers of subjectivism likely to arise from basing a hypothesis on individual psalms and I therefore treated the psalms only in groups: Asaph Psalms (Chapter III), Songs of Ascents (Chapter IV), Book IV Psalms (Chapter IX); and more briefly, the Hallel Psalms (Pss. cxi-cxviii), and the Halleluyah Doxology (cxlvi-cl).²³ I also dealt with the Royal Psalms (Chapter VIII) which, though not heading-defined, have long been seen as a genre in their own right.²⁴ Only after defining a group's overall theme, did I suggest how it might relate to the eschatological programme. And only thereafter did I comment on the possible import of individual psalms. I am therefore not aware of the faults alleged.

In Wilson's final article on the Psalms, I am cited twice. Yet neither citation has any reference. Nor did I ever express the opinions attributed to me. The first passage is as follows:

Mitchell suggests that the placement of royal psalms at the seams of the first three books was part of an eschatological programme with messianic interests characteristic of this earlier independent Psalter collection.²⁵

I never spoke of Books I to III being in themselves an earlier eschatological collection (which appears to be what is meant). While I said

Sacrificial Josephite Messiah in *1 Enoch* 90.37-38 & Deuteronomy 33.17", *JSP* 15.3 (2006), pp. 211-28; "Messiah bar Ephraim in the Targums", *Aramaic Studies* 4.2 (2006). I have cited Psalms passages associated with Messiah ben Joseph in my article "Les psaumes dans le Judaïsme rabbinique", *RTL* 36.2 (2005), pp. 166-191 (187-89). If two Messiahs are indeed present in the Psalms they need not conflict. For they appear together regularly in rabbinic literature (cf. the midrashim cited in n. 22 below), and are sometimes conflated (cf. e.g. *Pes. R.* §37) in a way that suggests they were sometimes understood as two paradigms of one Messiah.

²² Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 128-65, 217-42. Six midrashim, dating from before the fall of Rome to the Crusades—*Aggadat Mashiah*, *Otot ha-Mashiah*, *Sefer Zerubbabel*, *Asereth Melakhim*, *Pirgei Mashiah*, and *Nistarot Rav Shimon ben Yohai*—are given in Hebrew and English in Appendix 1, *Message*, pp. 304-50.

²³ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 266-68, 296-98, 303; 94, 302.

²⁴ Ancient writers recognized the royal psalms as a genre; see Mitchell, *Message*, 243-44.

²⁵ Wilson, "The Structure", p. 234.

that Books I to III “appear the product of one process of literary composition”, that they “display an essential unity” and were “designed as a consistent whole”, I never suggested that they had an independent life as an earlier collection.²⁶ Instead, I said that “Books I-III are a carefully crafted sub-unit, skilfully linked to Books IV and V” and that the whole Psalter is a “purposefully crafted ‘scripture’”.²⁷ I said that it was unlikely that any earlier independent arrangement would end with Book III because of the bleak tone of its closural Psalms lxxxviii and lxxxix.²⁸ I always emphasized that the eschatological agenda underlay the whole collection, not just Books I to III.²⁹

Nonetheless, I am called upon a few pages later to defend the same view, this time with further additions.

These two psalms [Pss. 74 and 89] suggest a fitting conclusion for the eschatological programme that Mitchell describes as the message of Pss. 2-89.³⁰

But, I repeat, I never suggested that Books I to III (with or without Ps. i) ever stood alone. I spoke of a complete Psalter, including Ps. i, as an eschatologically-purposed collection, fashioned in a single redaction, under the hand of an all-controlling redactor, in the early post-exilic period.³¹ I never suggested that an earlier eschatological programme was overwritten by sapiential concerns, which is the thrust of the argument in the above passages. I never said Pss. lxxiv and lxxxix form a fitting conclusion. I do not see how two psalms at the opposite ends of Book III can be a conclusion to anything. In this article my views have been badly misunderstood.

3. *Wilson's hypotheses earlier and later: A relegated David*

Now let us turn to Wilson's own hypotheses. In 1985 he proposed that Books I to III retrace the historical failure of the house of David, and Books IV and V respond by telling Israel that YHWH alone will be their help in future now that the “Davidic covenant introduced in

²⁶ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 72, 73, 77.

²⁷ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 88.

²⁸ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 79-80.

²⁹ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 79, 88, 298.

³⁰ Wilson, “The Structure”, pp. 239.

³¹ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 76-78.

Ps. 2 had come to nothing".³² According to this view, the David psalms were included in Books IV and V merely to point to David as a paradigm of trust in YHWH. The inconsistency of these views was noted by myself and others.³³

Recently however Wilson's position changed. He came to regard Books I to III not as historical retrospective but as an exilic collection intended "to foster hope for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom".³⁴ Books IV and V were then a suffix added much later—presumably in regret over the non-restoration of the house of David—"to redirect the hopes of the reader away from an earthly Davidic kingdom to the kingship of Yahweh . . . to trust in Yahweh as king rather than in fragile and failing human princes".³⁵ Rather than discounting the possibility of a "messianic reading of the royal psalms", he says that it "has always seemed rather transparently obvious" that "the royal psalms came to be read messianically"—*read* presumably by the redactor(s), since our mutual interest is redactional agenda.³⁶ But "the role of David is *down-played*" as a sort of priestly figure, with YHWH as undisputed king as in pre-monarchical times.³⁷ And he introduces a distinction about David in Books IV and V being less king and more Messiah—perhaps a priest Messiah is intended.

Nevertheless, the role of the Davidic מֶלֶךְ recedes in the final form of the Psalter, while David's role as the eschatological Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ) and Servant (עֶבֶד) who ushers in the kingdom and reign of Yahweh moves to the foreground.³⁸

Clearly I think Wilson's later position is a move in the right direction. Instead of the Psalms being simply an admonition to Israel to trust

³² Wilson, *Editing*, pp. 213.

³³ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 78-81; D.M. Howard, *The Structure of Pss. 93-100* (Winona Lake, 1997), pp. 201-202; J.E. Shepherd, *The Book of Psalms as the Book of Christ: A Christo-Canonical Approach to the Book of Psalms* (PhD dissertation; Westminster Theological Seminary, 1995), pp. 443-444; M.A. Vincent, "The Shape of the Psalter: An Eschatological Dimension?" in P.J. Harland and C.T.R. Hayward (eds.), *New Heaven and New Earth: Prophecy and the Millennium* (VTSup 77; Leiden, 1999), pp. 61-82; B.W. Anderson, *Out of the Depths. The Psalms Speak For Us Today* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 208-209; J.A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Academia Biblica 17; Atlanta-Leiden, 2004), pp. 33-39.

³⁴ Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 391.

³⁵ Wilson, "King, Messiah", pp. 392-93.

³⁶ Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 400.

³⁷ Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 401 (Wilson's emphasis); pp. 399, 392.

³⁸ Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 404.

YHWH alone in future, they now have an eschatological message with some kind of Davidic Messiah. This shift on his part even makes the differences between our positions seem more of degree than of kind. This is what D.M. Howard suggests, when he writes that between Wilson's view and mine

... a rapprochement of sorts is emerging, as Wilson in recent work seems to be allowing more room for an eschatological (re)reading of the royal psalms, even as he maintains the essential thrust of his original arguments in favor of a dominant wisdom framework.³⁹

However, as Howard recognizes, our basic positions—sapiential versus eschatological—remain distinct. Indeed, it rather looks to me like Wilson has come to realize the inevitability of messianic interpretation of the Psalms, but is unwilling to modify his non-messianic, sapiential bias to take full account of it. He therefore gives it reluctant house-room, calling it a former reading which was later overwritten in a presumed period when messianic hope had atrophied.

So, unable to dismiss the Messiah, Wilson tries instead to demote him. The final form of his theory is as follows. First, he says, a collection of Psalms ii-lxxxix without Ps. lxxiii initially stood alone as a collection designed to “foster hope for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom”.⁴⁰ It then underwent further redaction which added Psalms i and lxxiii and Books IV and V, in which, we are assured, the role of the Davidic king is downplayed.⁴¹ This final redaction turned the eschatological collection into a sapiential five-book Psalter pointing to YHWH's solo rule accompanied by a peripheral Messiah. As evidence for this late final redaction he advances the Qumran text 11QPs^a, which has thirty-nine psalms from Books IV and V arranged in an alternative sequence and interspersed with non-biblical texts, as purported evidence that the latter part of the Psalter was “still in a state of flux as late as the first century BCE to the first century CE”.⁴² Fourth, to support his appeal to 11QPs^a, he dismisses the evidence of the LXX Psalter.⁴³

³⁹ D.M. Howard, “The Psalms in Current Study” in Johnston and Firth, *Interpreting the Psalms*, pp. 23-40 (25).

⁴⁰ Wilson, “King, Messiah”, p. 391; *idem*, “Structure”, pp. 231, 239.

⁴¹ Wilson, “King, Messiah”, pp. 401-04; *idem*, “Structure”, pp. 237-39.

⁴² Wilson, “King, Messiah”, p. 394.

⁴³ Wilson, “King, Messiah”, p. 394.

There is a constellation of difficulties attached to this theory. I shall outline seven of them below.

(i) *The David of Books IV and V is still bigger than Wilson thinks.* Wilson says the role of David is downplayed in Books IV and V, but it is he himself who downplays it.⁴⁴ He suggests that, if we discount the *l'dawid* headings of Books IV and V, only three psalms refer to David (Pss. cxxii, cxxxii, cxliv), making him a minor player in the last two books.⁴⁵ But if one were to follow the same course also for Books I to III (which is only fair)—excising headings and the subscript at Ps. lxx 20—then the result would again be only three psalms referring to David apart from the rubrics (Pss. xviii, lxxviii, lxxxix). And since Books I to III contain 89 psalms, while Books IV and V have only 61, David is in fact proportionally better represented in Books IV and V than he is in Books I to III. If we then conclude that David is under-represented in Books I to III, and not in Books IV and V as Wilson would have it, then his proposal regarding the Davidic covenant in Books I to III falls apart, to say nothing of his methodology, which was built squarely upon rubrics.⁴⁶

Wilson also tries to downplay the view of David in the royal psalms of Books IV and V. As regards Ps. cx he asserts on the basis of v. 4 that ‘it is ultimately Yahweh who assumes the role of conquering monarch while the Davidic scion is affirmed as “priest forever”’.⁴⁷ There is no denying that the David figure is a priest. Yet, like his Genesis antitype, the priest-king of Salem (Gen. xiv 18), he is unquestionably a king as well. The *yodh* of *Melchizedek* is hardly the possessive pronoun—as Wilson’s rendition would have it: “My [heavenly] king (is) righteous”. It is the old Semitic genitive⁴⁸ followed by an absolute noun (קֶדָשׁ) functioning adjectivally. Thus it translates idiomatically as “Just and Legitimate King”, or more literally as “King of Righteousness”, as the writer to the Hebrews understood (Heb. vii 2). As for the rest of the psalm, even disregarding the heading, it depicts a conqueror enthroned on Zion at YHWH’s right hand—as David’s

⁴⁴ Wilson, “King, Messiah”, p. 401.

⁴⁵ Wilson, “King, Messiah”, p. 396.

⁴⁶ He notes headings and *halleluyah* superscripts as evidence of editorial activity, and lack of heading as indicating a tradition of combination (Wilson, *Editing*, pp. 9-10, 177-79, 182-97, 199).

⁴⁷ Wilson, “King, Messiah”, p. 400.

⁴⁸ A. Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 23.

palace sat on the spur of Mount Zion to the right hand, or south, of the Temple Mount—who descends to crush his foes and rule the earth. No priest ever sat at יהוה's right hand on Zion. They stood before him on the Temple Mount. Therefore the hero of this psalm seems to me, as he seemed to the ancient Jewish interpreters who took him as the Messiah, to be none other than David or David's seed in all his conquering majesty.⁴⁹

Likewise Wilson thinks that Ps. cxxii 'does not offer a very significant challenge . . . since its reference is a rather vague historical one to the "thrones for judgment . . . the thrones of the house of David"'.⁵⁰ I fail to see this "vague and historical" reference. As I read it, the pilgrim psalmist arriving in Jerusalem sees the thrones of judgment of the house of David standing and functional (v. 5). This is the very beauty of his Jerusalem, the climax of his description of the city (vv. 1-5), that the house of David executes justice in David's city. The city's solid construction is a metaphor for its peaceable social fabric under the righteous rule of *bet-David* (vv. 3-5).

As for Ps. cxxxii, Wilson rightly admits that it is "a tougher case all together", but still maintains that it is about a minor-priestly rather than a kingly David. Yet the psalm radiates David-Zion-kingship ideology throughout. David's horn will grow; his lamp will be established; his crown will flourish (vv. 10, 17-18). It serves as a deliberate counterpoise to the nadir of Ps. lxxxix. Each recalls verbatim the Davidic covenant (Ps. lxxxix 4-5 [3-4], 31-38 [30-37]; Ps. cxxxii 11-12; 1 Chr. xvii 11-14; 2 Sam. vii 12-16); each, unique as a pair in the Psalter, mentions David four times—perhaps to represent the world-sovereignty of Judah.⁵¹ But while Ps. lxxxix recalls the covenant to plead its failure

⁴⁹ It is interpreted of a kingly Messiah ben David at *Otot ha-Mashiah* §viii 4 (Mitchell, *Message*, 313); *Midr. Pss.* 2, §8; 18, §29; *Tefillat Rav Shimon ben Yohai* (A. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* [=BHM]. Jerusalem, 1967 [Leipzig, 1853-77] IV, pp. 117-126 [125 bot.]). It is also interpreted of Messiah ben Ephraim (*Midr. Aleph Beth* 11b, §1; *Zohar*, Pinhas, §582), which confirms the royal-messianic, if not the Davidic, interpretation. However Ben Ephraim and Ben David were sometimes conflated; cf. n. 21 above. In the NT the psalm is consistently interpreted of a Messiah who is seen as both king and priest (Mitchell, *Message*, p. 260).

⁵⁰ Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 396.

⁵¹ The number four represents Judah, as in GenR on xlix 8: "Judah was the fourth of the patriarchs to be born, just as *daleth* is the fourth letter of the alphabet and is the fourth letter of his name." Four likewise represents the created world, with its four corners, four winds, four seasons, four-legged beasts, and four kingdoms, as in Dan. vii 17.

(vv. 39-46 [38-45]), Ps. cxxxii recalls it to reassert its eternal validity. Wilson maintains that the apparent conditionality in the covenant statement (cxxxii 12) means that David's sons do *not* sit on his throne for ever (because they failed to keep the covenant). But this is unreasonable. Not only do vv. 17-18 affirm a future rule for the house of David, but the original covenant which the psalm evokes is represented everywhere else as unconditional (Ps. lxxxix 4-5 [3-4], 31-38 [30-37]; 2 Sam. vii 14-16; 1 Chr. xvii 13), and a conditional covenant cannot justly supersede an unconditional one. Clearly David's seed has now kept the covenant well enough to regain the favour of God.

In Ps. cxliv, Wilson emphasizes the "strong context of human frailty and dependence on Yahweh".⁵² David is certainly dependent on YHWH against the uprising in the middle section of the psalm (vv. 7-11). But that does not make him frail. On the contrary, the inclusio describing the attack well illustrates its contained nature (vv. 7-8, 11). On either side is a confident song of praise and blessing. YHWH is David's trainer for war, his shield, who subdues nations under him, who will bring prosperity and lasting peace to Israel (v. 1-2, 12-15). Even in the heart of the threat-inclusio David sings a new song to God "who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword" (v. 9-10). This is no big alarm. It is the last doomed rebellion of the messianic time, well known in later apocalyptic literature.⁵³

It therefore seems that the David of Books IV and V is not a minor player at all. He is the King Messiah, conquering his foes (cx); entering Jerusalem in triumph (cxviii); to whom the tribes of Israel go up, as in Zechariah xiv, to celebrate the Feast of Sukkot (Pss. cxx-cxxxiv) in the city of David (Ps. cxxii) before the messianic throne (Ps. cxxxii); and who conquers every last uprising (Ps. cxliv).

⁵² Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 398.

⁵³ As I suggested in Mitchell, *Message*, p. 302. See the traditions about Gog and Magog going up against Jerusalem in the messianic time in Rev. 20.7-8; *Sefer Eliyahu* (M. Bottenwieser, *Die hebräische Elias-Apokalypse*. Leipzig, 1897, pp. 15-26; also *BHM* III, pp. 65-68); Saadia Gaon, *Kitab al-Amanat* VIII.6 (tr. S. Rosenblatt, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*. [New Haven, 1948] pp. 305-07); *Midr. Pss.* 118 §12; 119 §2. These accounts all speak of three attacks. Saadia tells how in the first attack Messiah ben Joseph dies, in the second Ben David conquers, while the third is overwhelmingly crushed by Ben David. In the NT, Rev. xix 19 and xx 7-9 speak of the second and third attacks, the first being presumably the former (Roman) occupation in which the Messiah died (Rev. i 7). Cf. also Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 85, 236-38, 241. These texts, of course, are later than the usual dates (though not Wilson's dates) for the redaction of the Psalms. But multiple attacks against the hero on the holy hill occur in the Baal Cycle, so the idea has ancient antecedents (*Message*, pp. 130-32, 152).

(ii) *The Kingships of YHWH and David are not mutually exclusive.* Yet in discussion of the Book IV and V psalms Wilson repeatedly contrasts them as if they were.⁵⁴ But there were two thrones in Jerusalem: the lion throne and the cherubim throne.⁵⁵ David's was a theocratic reign. He was chosen, anointed and raised up as YHWH's co-regent (1 Sam. xvi 1-13; 2 Sam. xxiii 1-7), as were his sons after him (2 Sam. vii 11-16).

Indeed recent research has noted that several psalms seem intentionally to conflate YHWH and the king.⁵⁶ For instance, in Ps. cx, מֶלֶךְ (v. 1), apparently the king, invites comparison with מֶלֶךְ (v. 5), who is apparently YHWH, yet performs the human action of drinking from a river (v. 7). Remove the Masoretic vowel-pointing (dating from well over a millennium after the psalm's composition) and the two figures blur together.⁵⁷ Ps. 2 displays the same ambiguity.⁵⁸ Is the *adonai* enthroned in heaven (v. 4) YHWH or his son the *mashiah* (v. 2, 7)? Cole notes the same phenomenon throughout Book III, including Pss. lxxv, lxxviii, and lxxxix, and suggests, "the evidence here in Book III of divine characteristics attributed to the Davidic heir is consistent with evidence in the Psalter as a whole."⁵⁹ I too noted this phenomenon in my earlier work, particularly in Ps. xlv, whose vocative address to the king as *elohim* (v. 7 [6]), is confirmed by all the ancient translations.⁶⁰ I noted it also in Zechariah where the house of David is "like *elohim* and the מֶלֶךְ YHWH" (xii 8-9), and where YHWH's feet touch down on the Mount of Olives (xiv 4). The writers of all the above texts were apparently depicting a king with divine attributes. Of course, while such ideologies have long been recognized among Israel's neighbours, particularly Egypt and Babylon, their existence in the Hebrew Bible

⁵⁴ Wilson, "King, Messiah", pp. 400, 404.

⁵⁵ The lion was the symbol of the Judahite throne certainly in Solomon's time (1 Kgs x 19-20; 2 Chr. ix 18-19). Whether the same symbolism existed in David's period depends on the dating of Gen. xlix 9 and Ps. xxii 22 [21], where the lion and *rem* seem to represent Judah and Ephraim (Deut. xxxiii 17)—all Israel under Saul—arrayed against David. For the temple cherubim as YHWH's throne, as in Ps. lxxx 2 [1] and 1 Kgs vi 23-28, see O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (London, 1978), pp. 166-71; T.N.D. Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* (tr.) F.H. Cryer (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 127-131.

⁵⁶ Cole, *Shape and Message*, pp. 229-35; Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 246-48. A recent in-depth discussion of the Israelite concept of divine kingship in the royal psalms is M.W. Hamilton, *The Body Royal: The Social Poetics of Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Leiden, 2005).

⁵⁷ Cole, *Shape and Message*, pp. 120-21, 229; Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 262-63.

⁵⁸ Cole, *Shape and Message*, pp. 120-21.

⁵⁹ Cole, *Shape and Message*, pp. 229; cf. also pp. 178-79, 185, 193, 234-35.

⁶⁰ See my comments at *Message*, pp. 246-48.

has been resisted. I have already suggested that such passages require us to rethink the nature of Israel's sacral kingship.⁶¹

A related recent emphasis of Wilson's work is the observation that *melekh* frequently describes the king of Israel in Books I to III but not in Books IV and V.⁶² Wilson suggests that this usage "deflects attention away from *human* kingship in Israel to the enduring kingship and kingdom of Yahweh."⁶³ There is however another way of interpreting this data. I suggested that Ps. lxxxix represents the apparent breach of the divine promise in the death of the *mashiah* and the Book IV Psalms represent Israel's ensuing desert exile (Pss. xc-xcix)—as in Zech. xiii 7-9 and Ezek. xx 35-36—followed by repentance and ingathering (Pss. ci-cvi; cf. cvi 47), including the repentance of the house of David, as in Zech. xii 10-xiii 1.⁶⁴ There is therefore another good reason why Book IV does not refer to the king of Israel. Exiled Israel is kingless (Hos. iii 4; Ezek. xxi 25-27; Zech. xiii 7). The *mashiah*—wherever he may be—is not with them.

But how can we account for the same usage in Book V? I noted that some psalms, such as Ps. cx, conflate YHWH and his king so as to present a *mashiah* who seems as much divine as human. Following

⁶¹ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 247-48. Messiahs with attributes bordering on the divine are not unknown in later Israelite literature. See Messiah's heavenly pre-existence in *Pes. R.* §xxxvi-xxxvii; the messianic interpretation of the hero enthroned beside YHWH in heaven in Dan. vii 9-14 (*Sanh.* 38b; *Midrash Wayyosha* §15 [BHM I.56]; *Pirkei Hekhalot Rabbati* §xxxvii 2 [S.A. Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*. Jerusalem, 1952-55. I, p. 128]; *Nistarot Rav Shimon ben Yohai* 28 [Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 332, 349]; cf. *1 En.* xlvi 1) and in Ps. cx 1-2 (*Midr. Pss.* xviii §29; *Otot ha-Mashiah* viii 4 [Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 313, 339]; *Tefillat Rav Shimon ben Yohai* [BHM IV, pp. 117-126: 125 bot.]). The pre-existence of the Messiah in paradise is described in *Midrash Kohen* (BHM II, p. 29); *Seder Gan Eden* (BHM III, p. 132 *et seq.*, 195). At *Pes.* 54a; *Ned.* 39a; *Yalk.* i §20 the name of the Messiah was among the ten things created before the world was made. (For the *Yalkut*, at least, the "name" indicates actual pre-existence and not simply predestination, as it describes the latter idea as "another" view: "According to another view, only the Torah and the Throne of Glory were [actually] created; as to the other things the intention was formed to create them.") A divine Messiah is central to NT thought (e.g. Mt i 20; Lk i 31-35; Jn i 1-14; Col. i 15-19), as is the theosis of mortals (Jn i 12-13; 1 Pet. i 4).

⁶² Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 402; *idem*, "Structure", p. 236.

⁶³ Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 402.

⁶⁴ See Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 210-12, 272-96; "God Will Redeem My Soul from Sheol", pp. 381-83. See too Israel's wilderness exile following the death of Messiah ben Joseph in the midrashim cited in n. 22 above, as well as in *Tefillat Rav Shimon ben Yohai* (BHM IV.125); *Pereq Rav Yoshiyyahu* (BHM I.115); and Saadia, *Kitaḥ* VIII.5 (Rosenblatt, 303). Wilson also notes that Ps. ci begins the repentance section of Book IV ("The Shape of the Book of Psalms", *Int* 46 [1992], pp. 129-142: 140-41).

the divine oracle of victory in Ps. cviii and what seems to be the ritual cursing of the enemy in Ps. cix, the *mashiah* descends in Ps. cx to conquer the earth. I would suggest that in this psalm the hypostatic union—if one will pardon such a freighted term—of YHWH and his king, first intimated in Ps. ii, now becomes manifest. In Book V *melekh* is used of YHWH alone for, as in Zechariah's great dénouement, YHWH and his *mashiah* have come to rule the earth as one (Zech. xiv 4, 9).⁶⁵

(iii) *Wilson's theory does not accord with Israel's attitude to the house of David at any time.* There is no evidence that Israel ever expected a kingdom where the son of David would be reduced to a minor priestly role, neither in the first century CE—Wilson's favoured period for the Psalter's final redaction—nor before, nor since. In a sense this is almost surprising, for many flavours were on offer. In Hasmonean times the Priest Messiah does take precedence over the King Messiah (*T. Reu.* vi 7-12; *T. Jud.* xxi 1-5; *T. Naph.* v 1-3; *IQSa* 2.14-20), but in these cases the Priest Messiah is strictly an Aaronite, not a Davidide. Again, one might point to the Judahite Messiah with high-priestly functions in the letter to the Hebrews, except that this Messiah is emphatically not a minor figure, but a king and more, the co-creator and heir of the universe, the divine son of God.⁶⁶

In Wilson's favoured period of redaction—from c. 50 BCE to c. 50 CE—the King Messiah from David is again in foremost position, the Priest Messiah having faded with the Hasmoneans. *Pss. Sol.* xvii foresees Messiah ben David coming to destroy foreign invaders, gather Israel, resettle them in the land, and set up his throne in Jerusalem, where all nations shall come and serve him. The same hope appears in the Qumran literature, the NT, and rabbinic literature of all periods.⁶⁷ It was a live political threat in Domitian's time (81-96 AD),

⁶⁵ For the implied appearance of the Messiah in Zech. xiv 4, see *Message*, pp. 143-48, 212-14, 264-65, and the authorities there cited. Another view on the "king" language in Books IV and V is that of R.L. Cole. He sees the Messiah as resurrected in Ps. lxxxix, after his sufferings in Ps. lxxxviii, and sees the merging of the functions and roles of YHWH and the king taking place from Book IV onward: "Yahweh's long-awaited kingdom, proclaimed triumphantly in Book IV, is the same as that promised to David's descendant in answer to the repeated laments of Book III" (*Shape and Message*, p. 235). Of course, such a view is different from my own, but it is notable that Cole too sees the explanation for the "king" language of Books IV and V in the merging of the roles of YHWH and the *mashiah*.

⁶⁶ Heb. i 2, 8; iv 14; vii 13-14.

⁶⁷ A specifically Davidic Messiah is found at 4Q174 Florilegium; 4QP Bless 3; 4Q285 vii 3-4. The Messiah of Israel (IQS ix 11; CD xii 23-xiii 1; xiv 9; xix 10-11; xix 35-xx 1) and the Star from Jacob (4Q175) are probably to be identified with the same

when Jude's grandsons, descendants of David, were arrested as potential royal pretenders.⁶⁸

Probably the only time in Israel's post-exilic history when messianic hope ever slumped as low as Wilson suggests was in the period from Bar Kokhba's defeat (135 CE) to the end of the second century. The Mishnah's nigh silence on the matter testifies to late-tannaitic weariness with would-be messiahs. But not even Wilson has posited a final redaction of the Psalms as late as this. In addition, there is no evidence even then that any Israelites ever believed that the son of David was in future to receive a minor priestly role. Or if an unknown consortium holding such beliefs did exist, how did they fix it so their Psalms compilation became definitive for all Israel?⁶⁹

(iv) *An initial collection of Books I to III alone would not "foster hope for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom"*.⁷⁰ For Wilson this initial three-book hypothesis "seems certain" and "generally accepted among commentators" (although no references are supplied).⁷¹ But I have always opposed it.⁷² Book III closes with the hero falling into Sheol (Ps. lxxxviii) followed by Ps. lxxxix's lament, which Wilson himself recognizes as being for "the destruction of kingdom and monarch".⁷³ Moreover Ps. lxxxix is not merely about the cutting-off of David's line, but even more about the failure of YHWH's promise to David (Ps. lxxxix 35-39 [34-38]). The psalm therefore denies the very things on which any hope for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom might be built: that is, the existence of the house of David and the faithfulness of God. A collection closing this way would not have the effect which Wilson suggests.

figure (see e.g. G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* [London, 1962], pp. 48-49, 245). For the NT, see e.g., Mt xxi 5-9; Mk xi 9-10; Lk i 32-33; Jn i 49; vi 15; Acts i 6; Rev. xix 11-21. For rabbinic references see, e.g. the discussions on the coming of Ben David at *Sanh.* 97a-99a and the midrashim cited in n. 22 above.

⁶⁸ Eusebius, *History*, III.xx.1-6.

⁶⁹ This is not to ignore the evidence for Psalters with different numbers of psalms which existed among various Jewish communities until Renaissance times. However in every case these Psalters have the same psalms as MT in the same sequence; the difference is only in the division and numeration of lyrics. For more, see my "Les psaumes dans le Judaïsme rabbinique", pp. 167-68.

⁷⁰ Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 391.

⁷¹ Wilson, "Structure", p. 231; *idem*, "King, Messiah", p. 393.

⁷² Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 79-80.

⁷³ Wilson, "Structure", p. 234. Cf. my comments on Pss. lxxxviii and lxxxix in "God Will Redeem My Soul from Sheol", pp. 382-83.

The only way in which hope can be drawn from Ps. lxxxix is if the destruction of the monarchy and the breach of the covenant are only apparent, and are followed by the restoration of the monarchy and the fulfilment of the promises. But such a scenario requires that Books I to III never existed as an independent unit, but were redacted together with Books IV and V in a single process. In that case Books IV and V do depict the restored Davidic kingdom to come, under a son of David who will conquer (Ps. cx), rule from Jerusalem (Ps. cxxii), and receive the fulfilment of all the former pledges to David (Ps. cxxxii).⁷⁴

We must therefore recognize Wilson's insistence on Books I to III as an earlier collection for what it is: the remains of his earlier view that saw Books IV and V as a later exhortation to Israel to trust YHWH alone in future following the failure of *bet*-David in Books I to III. He does not seem to have realized that this vestige of his former view is in plain contradiction to his revised view which sees Books I-III looking for the restoration of *bet*-David.

(v) *There is no evidence that Pss. i and lxxiii were added later to form a "cohesive sapiential framework"*.⁷⁵ Wilson repeatedly states this as a fact in need of no proof.⁷⁶ But the evidence against it is, in fact, Wilson's own. For it was he who alerted us to 'the "separating" and "binding" functions of author and genre groupings'.⁷⁷ So if Ps. lxxiii were a later addition, we would expect it to be marked by a different title, or by no title. But instead its Asaph title binds it firmly to the ten following psalms of the Asaph group. As for Ps. i, there is no evidence that it was prefixed to an already existing collection beginning with Ps. ii. Their mutual lack of superscription suggests, if anything, that both were prefixed to an existing David collection.⁷⁸

Nor does Ps. i cast over the Psalms the sapiential aura that Wilson sees. If Pss. i and ii are interpreted as the pair that they clearly are (however their pairing arose), then Ps. i's figure who does not associate with evildoers, who meditates in YHWH's Torah, who is like a fruitful tree, who succeeds in all he does, is really the same figure as the hero

⁷⁴ Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 253-68. I suggested in *Message*, pp. 281-84, that this king displays characteristics both of the Josephite and Davidic Messiahs. For Ben Joseph, see n. 21 above.

⁷⁵ Wilson, "Structure", pp. 237.

⁷⁶ Wilson, "King, Messiah", pp. 394-95; *idem*, "Structure", pp. 229, 231-34, 237-39.

⁷⁷ Wilson, *Editing*, p. 199.

⁷⁸ So too Grant, "The Psalms and the King", in Johnston and Firth, *Interpreting*, pp. 101-118 (108).

of Ps. ii; that is, YHWH's *mashiah*.⁷⁹ That is, Ps. i states the universal principle: *The righteous will prevail over the wicked*; while Ps. ii makes the quintessential application: *The Messiah will conquer those who rise against him*.⁸⁰ Therefore, not only is there is no evidence for the later addition of Ps. i, but its presence does not make the collection sapiential. It is therefore no evidence for a sapiential redaction.

(vi) *Neither 11QPs^a nor LXX are evidence that Books IV and V were added to an already existing collection of Books I to III.* Wilson repeatedly advances the idea, first proposed by J.A. Sanders and developed by P.W. Flint, that 11QPs^a shows that the Psalms were still in a state of flux in the second half of the first century CE.⁸¹ He even suggests, following Flint,

⁷⁹ So too J. Grant, "The Psalms", pp. 111-12, 115-18, who sees the Psalter's repeated juxtaposition of kingship and Torah as deriving from Deuteronomy's kingship law (Deut. xvii 14-20); R. Cole, "An Integrated Reading of Psalms 1 and 2", *JSOT* 98 (2002), pp. 75-88; *idem*, *Shape and Message*, pp. 121, 228-29; P.D. Miller, "The Beginning of the Psalter" in J.C. McCann (ed.), *Shape and Shaping*, pp. 83-92 (91); J.L. Mays, 'The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter', *JBL* 106 (1987), pp. 3-12 (10); G.T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct* (New York, 1980), pp. 142.

⁸⁰ Likewise Grant comments that "Ps. 1 'democratizes' the royalty of Ps. 2, but at the same time Ps. 2 adds a royal flavour to the 'everyman' inclusiveness of Ps. 1. The figures of king and anonymous believer merge" ("The Psalms", p. 118).

⁸¹ Wilson, "King, Messiah", pp. 393, 401; *idem*, "Structure", pp. 229-32, 240-44; "The Qumran Psalms Manuscripts and Consecutive Arrangement of Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter," *CBQ* 45 (1983), pp. 377-88; "The Qumran Psalms Scroll Reconsidered: Analysis of the Debate," *BBQ* 47 (1985), pp. 624-42; J. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPs^a)* (Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan 4; Oxford, 1965); *idem*, "Variorum in the Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a)", *HTR* 59 (1966), pp. 83-94; *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1967); *idem*, "The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a) Reviewed," in M. Black and W.A. Smalley (eds.), *On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida* (Paris-The Hague: Mouton, 1974), pp. 79-99; P.W. Flint, 'The Psalms Scroll from the Judaean Desert: Relationships and Textual Affiliations', in G.J. Brooke (ed.), *New Qumran Texts and Studies: Proceedings of the First Meeting of the International Organisation for Qumran Studies, Paris 1992* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 31-52; *The Psalters at Qumran and the Book of Psalms* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah; Leiden, 1997); *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and The Book of Psalms* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 17; Leiden, 1997); "The Book of Psalms in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls" *VT* 48 (1998), pp. 453-72; cf. likewise D.D. Swanson, "Qumran and the Psalms" in Johnston and Firth, *Interpreting the Psalms*, pp. 247-61 (256-59).

However the view has been widely opposed. Apart from my own comments here, see S. Talmon, 'Pisqah Be'emsu Pasuq and 11QPs^a', *Textus* 5 (1966), pp. 11-21; M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a). A Problem of Canon and Text", *Textus* 5 (1966), pp. 22-33; P.W. Skehan, 'Qumran and Old Testament Criticism' in M. Delcor (ed.), *Qumran. Sa piété, sa théologie, et son milieu* (Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium 46; Paris, 1978), pp. 163-82; 'A Liturgical Complex in 11QPs^a', *CBQ* 34 (1973), pp. 195-205; M. Haran, "11QPs^a and the Canonical Book of Psalms" in M. Brettler and M. Fishbane (eds.), *Minhah le-Nahum* (JSOTSup, 154; Sheffield,

that MT, LXX and 11QPs^a represent three different quasi-authoritative versions of the Psalms current in the first century CE.⁸² He says, "Examination of these three significantly different texts has highlighted the distinctive shape and vision of each in response to the crushing experience of exile and the loss of the Davidic monarchy".⁸³ And he proposes, "The Qumran Psalms Scroll offers a more radical alternative to the Masoretic collection than does the LXX Psalter . . . and represents an alternative vision for completing the earlier collection of Pss. 2–89".⁸⁴

But MT, LXX and 11QPs^a do not exhibit three different possible versions for Psalms Books IV and V. What they do exhibit is one Book of Psalms (MT and LXX) and one collection of lyrics having no demonstrable link to the Book of Psalms (11QPs^a).

For LXX features exactly the same psalms as MT in the same order, varying only in enumeration and minor additions.⁸⁵ As Haran says: "... despite the slight differences between the Masoretic Text and the LXX, . . . the two versions are essentially the same".⁸⁶ Nor do its additional David headings in Book IV constitute an alternative more-Davidic conclusion to the Psalter, as Wilson suggests.⁸⁷ For LXX not only adds Davidic headings to Book IV, but removes them from Book V—a fact on which he is silent—and adds them also in Books I to III.⁸⁸ In fact, LXX simply adds a Davidic heading to every psalm

1993), pp. 193-201; R.T. Beckwith, "The Early History of the Psalter," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46.1 (1995), pp. 1-27; Mitchell, *Message*, pp. 22-23. These writers all see 11QPs^a as some kind of liturgical or "library" compilation (Haran "11QPs^a", p. 194).

⁸² Flint, *Dead Sea*, p. 239.

⁸³ Wilson, "Structure", pp. 243-44.

⁸⁴ Wilson, "Structure", pp. 242.

⁸⁵ MT Pss. ix and x are one psalm in LXX, as are also Pss. cxiv-cxv, while Pss. cxvi and cxlvii are each divided into two psalms. This has the effect of making LXX numbering lag one behind MT for most of the Psalter. LXX also makes additions and minor deletions from psalm headings, and adds one explicitly supernumerary (ἐξᾠθὲν τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ) psalm, LXX cli, at the end of the collection.

⁸⁶ M. Haran, "11QPs^a", p. 194.

⁸⁷ Wilson, "King, Messiah", p. 401; "Structure", p. 241.

⁸⁸ Thirteen LXX Psalms have Davidic superscriptions not present in MT. Nine are added in Book IV: LXX xc [MT xci], LXX xcii [MT xciii], LXX xciii [MT xciv], LXX xciv [MT xcv], LXX xcv [MT xcvi], LXX xcvi [MT xcvi], LXX xcvi [MT xcvi], LXX xcvi [MT xcvi], LXX xcvi [MT xcvi]. One is added in each of Books I, II, III, and V: LXX xxxii [MT xxxiii], LXX xlii [MT xliii]; LXX lxx [MT lxxi]; LXX cxxxvi [MT cxxxvii]. However LXX removes the Davidic headings of MT Pss. cxxii and cxxiv [LXX cxxi and cxxiii].

untitled in MT, and there are more untitled psalms in Book IV.⁸⁹ So the claim that LXX Books IV and V constitute an alternative ending to the MT Book of Psalms is unwarranted.

As for 11QPs^a, there is no evidence at all that it was ever seen as an alternative ending to, or in any way associated with, Psalms Books I to III.⁹⁰ Therefore to advance it as evidence for the late redaction of Psalms Books IV and V is simply fantasy. If a simile may be allowed, MT and LXX stand in relation to 11QPs^a like a human mother and daughter to a small quadruped lacking limbs. That is, two are composed of the same material, relate to each other as source and issue, and are alike in overall appearance, form, function, and endowments;⁹¹ while the third, although sharing some of the same material—about 25 percent—is completely different in arrangement, shape, and purpose. The differences between the two are insignificant when compared with the third.

Of course, there is no complete Qumran Psalms manuscript to support the MT arrangement. (Few of the Qumran biblical texts are complete, and such a large scroll would have been unlikely anyway.⁹²) But there is apparent evidence for the MT Psalter in the twenty-two fragments of 1QPs^a, containing portions of Psalms lxxxvi, xcii, xciv, xcvcxvi and cxix, suggesting a scroll that featured MT Psalms Books III and IV conjoined. And if this seems dubious (since we do not know what else 1QPs^a might have contained), it is still heaps better than the entire absence of evidence for 11QPs^a being suffixed to MT Books III.

(vii) *Dismissal of the LXX Psalter in support of the 11QPs^a theory is not credible.* The whole issue of 11QPs^a as evidence for a late final redaction of the Psalms hinges on one thing: the antiquity of the LXX Psalter. Now LXX Psalms certainly derived from a Hebrew source (unless someone is proposing that the Psalms were composed in Greek).

⁸⁹ Of course, the *hallelu-yah* which heads some Book IV and V psalms should be taken as a superscription.

⁹⁰ For a list of the thirty-nine Book IV and V psalms and the other material which forms 11QPs^a, see Flint "The Psalms Scroll", p. 52; Mitchell, *Message*, p. 22.

⁹¹ Indeed, the relationship between MT and LXX is closer than the parent-child relationship. For whereas MT Psalms appears to be the sole progenitor of LXX Psalms, the human parent, apart from cloning or parthenogenesis, must accept genetic input from another party.

⁹² So Flint, *Dead Sea*, pp. 40, 48, who notes that a full MT Psalter would have been 15 m long—about twice the length of the 7 m Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a) or the 8 m Temple Scroll (11QT^a)—and so too unwieldy to be practicable.

And they were certainly translated from an MT-type collection. For it is unthinkable that the Hebrew editors would have copied the arrangement and book divisions from a collection of Greek psalms translations. Moreover, LXX shows itself to be the derived version by supplementing the MT headings. Therefore LXX Psalms was translated from a Hebrew *Vorlage* which was in all essentials like the MT Psalter.

Now one may argue as much as one likes about whether and when the MT version became authoritative or official. But clearly the Alexandrians regarded it as the one to translate. And they would have accepted its authority only from Jerusalem. (They were Jews, after all.) So we have a Hebrew Psalter deriving from Jerusalem, sufficiently authoritative to be taken as the *Vorlage* for the Alexandrian LXX, and definitively endorsed at Yavneh in the first century CE. It was certainly the main version of Psalms around.

Therefore those who think 11QPs^a shows that the Psalter was still in a state of flux in the mid-first century CE must date LXX Psalms to that period, in defiance of the generally accepted dating of LXX in the second century BCE. Therefore Wilson denies that the LXX Psalms existed in the second century BCE. Instead he says that either the early LXX had no Psalter, or else it had a quite different Psalter, perhaps with only the first three books.⁹³ Let us look at these options in turn.

The possibility of there being no LXX Psalter in the second century is remote. Our knowledge of LXX depends not only on Aristee's semi-legendary *Letter to Philocrates*, which Wilson mentions, but also on the soberer testimony of the younger Ben Sira, on which he says nothing. Ben Sira's prologue says that by the 38th year of Euergetes (132 BCE), not only the Law and the Prophets, but also "the rest of the books" were already translated into Greek. Now, whether we agree with Sarna that "the rest of the books" denotes the Hagiographa-*ketuvim*, including the Psalms, or with Barton that the Psalms were included in the prophets, their inclusion can hardly be doubted.⁹⁴ For "the known fact that this version was made in response to the needs of synagogue worship makes it virtually certain that the Psalms were turned into the vernacular in Alexandria even before much of the

⁹³ "King, Messiah", p. 394.

⁹⁴ Sarna, "Psalms, Book of", *EJ* XIII, pp. 1304-22 (1311); J. Barton, *Oracles of God* (London, 1986), pp. 47-48. Likewise M. Haran states that the LXX Psalter dates from "no later than the first half of the second century BCE" ("11QPs", p. 194).

prophets.”⁹⁵ The Psalter’s status as head of the *ketuvim* (2 Macc ii 13; Philo, *Cont.* 25; Lk xxiv 44) would also have ensured its early translation.

As for the LXX Psalter being not the one we have today, this could be so only if a later version supplanted the original one.⁹⁶ However the likelihood of one text supplanting another depends on the authority of the texts concerned. The authority of LXX derived from the Alexandrian *bet-din* and, if Aristéas is believed, from royal warrant also. Therefore any supplanting version would need to possess such authority as to ensure that all copies of the *bet-din* Psalter were eradicated without trace even in Alexandria itself. This would entail the following scenario. First, the MT 150-Psalm arrangement either appears, or becomes authoritative, relatively late, say, in the mid-first century CE. This new authoritative Psalter is so influential that it immediately gives rise to its own Greek translation (our LXX). This new Greek translation then supplants all existing versions of the earlier Alexandrian *bet-din* Psalter, written two hundred years before, leaving no trace.

This is surely an unlikely theory. In practice, if a new variant Hebrew Psalter appeared after LXX the outcome is likely to have been as with Jeremiah; that is, MT and LXX offering substantially different versions. In that case we would expect the earlier Greek text to be still in existence, if only among Alexandrian Jews. But it is not. There is no Greek Psalter with a substantially variant text. There is, in particular, no known three-book arrangement—either in Greek or Hebrew—to support Wilson’s case. Therefore, in the absence both of evidence and of a suggested scenario of how and when and why the mooted proto-LXX was so completely displaced, the case for a late LXX cannot stand.

Therefore the early existence of LXX Psalms is an insuperable barrier to the theory that 11QPs^a is evidence of a late final redaction of Psalms Books IV and V. In fact, LXX suggests that MT Psalms not only existed, but was seen as authoritative, in the early second century BCE. As a result, 11QPs^a is no evidence for the late addition of Psalms Books IV and V.

⁹⁵ Sarna, “Psalms, Book of”, p. 1311.

⁹⁶ Wilson finds support for this idea in E. Ulrich’s recent acceptance of the possibility of such a process. But Ulrich, it seems to me, does not allow changes on the scale which Wilson proposes, but only a revision “to reflect with *greater lexical and grammatical exactness* the Hebrew textual form of the book that the rabbis used, the so-called proto-Masoretic text.” (My emphasis). E. Ulrich, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Their Implications for an Edition of the Septuagint Psalter” in A. Aejmelaeus and U. Quast (eds.), *Der Septuaginta-Psalter und seine Tochterübersetzungen* (Göttingen, 2000), pp. 323-36 (323).

Conclusion

I have offered here my response to Gerard H. Wilson's work on the editing of the Psalter. I have tried to be accurate and fair, for I am aware that he can no longer reply. Yet I have not spared what look to me like inconsistencies, for biblical interpretation is an important matter.

The taproot of Wilson's theory through two decades is that, in the final form of the Psalter, Books IV and V point to a time when YHWH alone will be king. In his early work, YHWH is to be king without any Davidic monarch. In his later work he allows for a relegated future Davidic scion, perhaps with a priestly role. Why Wilson was so attached to this pro-YHWH low-Messiah view I cannot say. But for its sake he bypassed the views of his Yale tutor, B.S. Childs. For its sake he downplayed the role of the king in Book V. For its sake he dismissed the weighty evidence of LXX, espoused the theory that 11QPs^a shows that the final redaction of the Psalter was not yet agreed in the first century CE, and proposed that the Psalms underwent a late final redaction to turn an eschatological collection into a sapiential one. I have proposed that in these things he was mistaken.

However the majority of his work remains foundational to modern study of the Psalms. He pioneered final form studies of the Psalter by showing the presence of redactoral activity and purpose in its headings, doxologies, fivefold book division, and in the placing of the royal psalms. He pointed out its progression of ideas, emphasizing the centrality of the Davidic covenant and the 'covenant crisis' of Psalm lxxxix. And so, presenting the Psalms as a finished work, he opened a new chapter in Psalms interpretation. In all these things we learned from him. So we salute him, and thank God for his work, and bid him peaceful rest until the day when all our works are assessed.

Abstract

Following the recent death of G.H. Wilson, this article offers an appraisal of Wilson's views past and present, restates the case for an eschatologico-messianic programme in the Psalms, replies to Wilson's recent remarks on the author's own work, and points out the strengths and weaknesses of Wilson's final views.