The Psalter

Constitution of the Text

Canonicity and Traditional Importance

Placed at the beginning of the Writings (K’tûbîm) in the Hebrew Bible and in the Septuagint (cf. also Lk 24:44), but after Job in the Catholic Bible, the Psalter presents itself as a collection of poems. The essential aspects of the spirituality of the Israelite people can be found there.

The word “psalm”, which comes directly from the Greek, means a poem that is to be sung, usually with musical accompaniment (cf. Ps 137:2); a derivative of the word, psaltêrion, designates a musical instrument. In Hebrew, the name given to this collection, Tephillîm, is semantically more restrictive. It means “praise”; however, the hymn genre only applies to 25 of the 150 psalms that make up the book.

In our day, the psalms are usually quoted according to the numbering in the Hebrew text. However, certain Churches keep the numbering of the old Greek and Latin versions, especially in the liturgy; in general, for the psalms between Ps 9 and 147 the difference is one number.

The Septuagint adds a 151st psalm, of which the Hebrew equivalent was found in Qumran. It is an autobiographical poem in which David tells of his vocation not only as king but also as musician and writer of psalms. The ancient Syriac version even has 155 psalms, for two of which Qumran vouches. That is to say that until the dawn of the NT the collection remained open, at least in certain circles.

The NT cites the psalms more than one hundred times. Jesus himself sang and prayed them, in particular during the last supper (Mk 14:26 and parallels). Several times in the gospels he quotes a verse of a psalm word for word; in fact, he uses eleven different psalms. Still today, these texts form an essential component in the prayer of Jews and Christians of every denomination.

Interpretation

Literary Genres

Especially since Gunkel, exegesis has given much attention to the form-critical classification of the psalms. It has become customary to distinguish more or less 14 literary genres: hymns, hymns to the LORD King, hymns to Zion, individual laments, psalms of individual trust, individual thanksgiving, collective laments, psalms of collective trust, collective thanksgiving, royal and/or messianic psalms, wisdom, historical, prophetic, cultic psalms (the last of these categories, for example, set forth the conditions for acceding to the sanctuary). As useful as it may be, such categorizing has its limits. For example, the use of “I” or “we” is not always decisive in concluding whether the psalm is that of an individual or of a collective; in the poems expressing trust, the one preceding and the one following the resolution of the drama are put on the same footing; it is difficult to distinguish certain hymns from the historical psalms or the prayers of collective thanksgiving; the so-called royal psalms, which are at times supplications and at times thanksgiving for the king, hardly have a precise form-critical status; finally, from the strict point of view of literary genre, a good number of psalms are composites. That has inadvertently led many exegetes to see in them an amalgam of texts by various authors and of various dates, whereas the study of the composition’s structure would rather tend to confirm their original literary unity.

In short, without neglecting the valuable information gained from the form-critical approach, it would seem preferable to opt for a simpler presentation of the categories of psalms, relying more on the
The Psalter

psychological moods expressed and on the way the believing persons and communities might use them, including of course, the people of Israel. Thus we shall distinguish between the psalms of praise, the dramas of liberation, the teaching poems, and the festive songs for special occasions.

- **The psalms of praise** celebrate the Lord for what he is and for what he does in creation and in history (Ps 8; 29; 33; 47; 92-93; 96-100; 103-105; 111; 113; 117; 135-136; 145-150).

- **The dramas of liberation** are rooted in situations of political, social, moral, physical, psychological or simply existential destitution experienced either by an individual or a collectivity or even by a king in solidarity with his people (Ps 3-7; 9-14; 16-18; 20-23; 25-28; 30-32; 34-36; 38-44; 51; 53-64; 66; 68-71; 73-74; 76-77; 79-80; 83; 85-86; 88-90; 94; 102; 106-109; 115-116; 118-120; 123-126; 129-131; 137-144). Theoretically, the drama type consists of eight stages: lamentation, supplication, trust in salvation, announcement of divine intervention, testifying to liberation, thanksgiving, unshakeable trust if the problems should ever recur, and testimony given in public. Certain poems are limited to one stage; others consist of several of them; two psalms even include up to seven (Ps 31 and 40).

- **The teaching psalms** are not addressed to God but to the collectivity. They aim at formation or reform. Of the following three aspects, one or other is predominant: historical (Ps 78; 114), cultic (15; 24) or moral (1; 19; 37; 49-50; 52; 75; 81-82; 91; 95; 112; 127). In the last case, the poem usually contains a prophetic interpellation or an oracle.

- **Other psalms finally underline and accompany special occasions of collective celebration.** Four sub-groups have been distinguished according to whether the psalm is dealing with civil feasts in honor of the king (Ps 2; 72; 101; 110; 132), wedding festivities (45; 128), pilgrimages (46; 48; 84; 87; 121-122; 133-134), or agricultural feasts (65; 67).

The Book’s overall Plan

Present-day commentaries are ever more sensitive to the canonical organization of the Psalter. Of course, its subdivision into five “books” based on very explicit references in the text (41:14; 72:18-20; 89:53; 106:48; 150:1-6), has always been noted:

1. Ps 1-41;
2. Ps 42-72;
3. Ps 73-89;
4. Ps 90-106;
5. Ps 107-150

Often, an analogy with the five books of the Torah was suggested, as if one were dealing here so to speak with a euchological expression of the Torah, which on the whole could be attributed to David in the same way as the Pentateuch’s composition was attributed to Moses. Even if it is difficult to decode the internal logic of the organization of each of the five “books”, a quite homogenous vocabulary and even a certain structural coherence can be observed in certain consecutive psalms.

Authenticity, Date and Addressees

Psalms 1 and 2, which an ancient tradition considered to be one single psalm (cf. “interpr”), structure the psalter as a whole. The first text gives an existential or wisdom frame, while the second envisages the history of salvation in a messianic perspective. At the beginning and at the end of the five books of Psalms, some authors point to texts that express one or other of these perspectives. Thus it is possible to distinguish a “covenant frame” that is shown at the beginning of Book I (Ps 2), the end of Book II (Ps 72), the end of Book III (Ps 89), and the first conclusion of Book V (Ps 144). This structure seems to be doubled by a “wisdom frame” (beginning of Book I: Ps 1; beginning of Book III: Ps 73; beginning of Book IV: Ps 90; beginning of Book V: Ps 107; first conclusion of Book V: Ps 145).

116 psalms are preceded by one or several words that serve as a heading. For example, 73 of them (in the Greek version 82) are attributed explicitly to David, which is even the case for the entire second “book” (Ps 72:20). These probably late additions seek to give precisions – which in truth are of varying reliability – as to the milieu in which the text originated or the circumstance that occasioned its writing, or also as regards its belonging to a collection or its standard liturgical use, etc. Let us just recall the series...
of 15 “Songs of Ascent” (Ps 120-134), which apparently were used for the pilgrimages to the Holy City.

Exegetes who practice the historico-critical method have tried to date each of the psalms. In the majority of cases, this is a waste of time because of the unreliability of the *incipit* (cf. the preceding), the brevity of the poems, their diverse origins and their content that is often not characterized and thus adaptable to various situations. That is why a good number of exegetes, though they do not ignore the historical dimension that in many ways is indispensable, prefer rather a canonical and even synchronic approach, which tends to consider the Psalter in its final state. As is true for the Bible as a whole, it is appropriate to become accustomed to considering the Psalter as a collective heritage both as regards its origin and as to its use. It served and still serves as an essential book to a believing and praying people.

**Presentation of the Pericope**

The first Psalm is a teaching poem and serves as an introduction to the whole psalter.

An ancient tradition believes that Pss 1 and 2 were one single psalm (cf. Acts 13:33 Western Text; Justin, *1 Apol.* 1,40; and in Judaism *b. Ber.* 9b). In that case, “O happiness” (1:1; 2:12) would form an inclusion that links them closely together. The whole would then form a picture with two wings, made up of a first more existential or sapiential part and a second part that looks at the history of salvation.
Ps 1-2  Significance  The diptych formed by Ps 1 and Ps 2 has a messianic significance that Christians have not failed to emphasize. The “ainted one” in Ps 2 is the man-tree of Ps 1, and in the image of wood *voc1a. As regards ‘ašré, in James E. Pritchard [ed.], ...10-2010 08:42:00 chr1, which voc1a. As regards ‘ašré, in James E. Pritchard [ed.], ...verses 5-6 continue the antithesis, but with an eschatological perspective. The first word of the poem begins with aleph, the first letter of the alphabet, and the last one begins with the last letter, taw. In this case, the process can confirm the role of Ps 1 as a synthesis of the whole psalter, as can the passage from a to z, which is to say, from today with its moral choice to the tomorrow of eschatology.

TEXT

1a O happiness of the man who did not walk according to the counsel of the wicked, who did not stop on the way of the wicked, who did not sit at the sitting of the arrogant.

Vocabulary

1a Happiness  A noun that is always in the plural in Hebrew when introducing a macarism (‘ašré) *gen. The meaning is not static but dynamic, since the verbal root has the meaning “to walk straight” towards a goal. S and Tg. Ps. translated the term as *twbh, “happiness” (in the plural). G, V and almost all modern translations opt for the adjective “happy”, which is placed at the beginning of the phrase “happy (blessed)” in the NT (Mt 5:2ff.). Hence the common word ‘beatitude’.

1b arrogant  The word refers to the semantic field of senseless and extreme presumption. The usual translation as ‘scoffers’ or ‘mockers’ renders the weakened sense of the word in post-biblical Hebrew. In the Bible, on the contrary, lçwn is often translated into G as kakos (*wicked: Prov 9:7,8; 14:6), loimos (*grievous *pernicious: Prov 19:25; 21:24; 22:10; 24:9) or akolastos (*licentious: Prov 20:1; 21:11). In the Hebrew text, it appears as a parallelism to rš (‘godless: Prov 9:7), zdwn (‘insolence: Prov 21:24) or *ywlt (‘madness: Prov 24:9) and is in opposition to terms that characterize wisdom (hkm, *nbwn). The term lçwn, which comes from the same semantic group, offers comparable equivalents.

1-6/5f. Antithesis of numbers: singular and plural. As regards moral choices, verses 1-4 consider the righteous person individually and the wicked collectively. Thus the believer is seen as someone who resists, who goes against the stream. With a view to the after-life, verse 6 considers the two groups collectively.

1.5 at the sitting… did not sit… will not rise up… in the assembly Inclusion by means of an antithetical chiasm which underlines the outcome of ‘the way of the righteous’ vis-à-vis that of the wicked: because the righteous did not sit at the sitting of the arrogant, he will be able to appear at the final assembly; conversely, the wicked who stopped and sat will not rise up at the judgment.

1.5.6 wicked… sinners / wicked… sinners / wicked inclusive parallelism, the first two terms that describe the godless are first repeated in the same order at the end of the text (v. 5), before the stronger word (rš ‘šā’îm) is used to conclude the psalm (v. 6).

Literary Devices

1 macarism “O happiness of…” *vocla, a typical term in wisdom literature.

1.6 way of the wicked / way of the righteous In Egypt, the expression ‘path of life’ (mtn n’nb) goes back at least to the pharaoh Amenophis IV-Akhenaton: the right path in practical existence is linked to learning and ensures a happy life. A series of texts illustrate this theme. “The beginning of the teaching of life, The testimony for prosperity, All precepts for intercourse with elders, The rules for courtiers… In order to direct him to the ways of life, To make him prosper on earth” (The Instruction of Amen-Em-Opet, in James E. Pritchard [ed.], Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament [2nd ed.])

M/S/V

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M/S

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G/V

1 Blessed [is] the man who did not walk according to the counsel of the godless, who did not stop on the way of the sinners

   the path

and did not sit on the seat of the pestilential.  

   and on the seat of pestilence.

When Hercules reached the age of puberty – a time given by nature in order to choose the path of life that each person will take – he withdrew into solitude (…) there he deliberated a lot and for a long time with himself in order to know which of the two paths that he could see, that of Pleasure and that of Virtue, was more worth taking. (…) Imbued with the precepts of our parents, we are most of the time led to follow their customs and their way of living. Others are led by the judgment of the crowd, and what seems to be the most beautiful to the greatest number is what they desire above all else. Some however, either because of a certain good fortune or because of a happy nature, independently of their family upbringing, have followed the straight path in life."

- Silius Italicus (Punica 15,10) finally applied this story to Scipio.

RECEPTION

~ Biblical Inter-Textuality ~

As the first text in the “Writings” (Ketouvim), Ps 1 is directly connected with the two other traditional parts of the Hebrew Bible: the Torah (cf. v. 2, reference to the torah of the Lord and the theme of the tree of life in Gen 2:9) and the “Prophets” (Nevi‘im: beginning of this section, cf. the relationship of Ps 1:1-3 with Josh 1:7-8; and the end of the Prophets, cf. the relationship of Ps 1:2 with Mal 3:22-23 and of Ps 1:5 with Mal 3:13-24).

1a Happiness Macarisms "gen1" are a frequent form in the OT (37 times) and the NT (40 times). In Ps (25 times), what is found more frequently than “O happiness of the man (‘ādām) (twice) are synonyms: “O happiness of the courageous person (geber)” (3 times) or “O happiness of the man being (‘ādām)” (4 times), and at the collective level, “O happiness of the people” (4 times). So which deeds, values or attitudes get the human person “walking” towards happiness “voc2”?

Ps gives the answer: for the collectivity, to acclaim God and to live the covenant with God; for the individual, to meditate and to observe the Torah “voc2”, to take refuge in God, to trust God, to fear God, to be part of God’s household in the Temple, to receive God’s help, strength, forgiveness, to think of the poor, to have a family and prosperity, and even to ask God for the enemy’s punishment. Ps 119, which in every verse celebrates God’s Word, commandments, laws, etc., begins with the words, “Happy the ones whose way is faultless, who walk in the Teaching of the Lord.” Knowledge of God coincides with the observance of the commandments.

1.6 path of the wicked / path of the righteous In the OT, the theme of the two paths appears first of all without any reference to
retribution in the world to come (Hos 14:10; Sir 21:9-10; Prov 10:29). However, in the Book of Proverbs the association between the ‘path of the righteous’ and ‘life’ does appear (Prov 4:10-19; 12:28; 15:24). Ps 138:24 (G) also mentions the ‘eternal path’. More clearly eschatological, the theme of the two paths with different outcomes (Mt 7:13-14; Lk 13:24) underlines in the NT a contrast: on the one hand, the apparent ease of the spacious way chosen by many and which leads to perdition, and on the other hand, the initial difficulty of the narrow way found by a small number and which leads to eternal life.

 ~= Jewish and Oriental Peritestamental Literature ~=
1 to walk, to stop, to sit For Ibn Ezra, these verbs indicate a progression towards evil. Rashi understands them in the opposite way as causality: to sit down, then to get up, and finally to walk (the median verb can be understood as “to stop” or “to get up”).

 ~= Christian Tradition ~=
1-6 Basil Hom. Ps. compares this prooimion to the Psalter with the foundation of a building, the hull of a ship, the heart of an animal. According to Cassiodorus, Exp. Ps., if the poem does not have a title, it is because it is itself the heading for the other psalms and because nothing must be “placed at the head of our Lord and Savior” (there is an almost identical text in Bede, Ps. Exeg.; cf. also Ps-Haymon of Auxerre, Comm. Ps.).

If. happiness Gregory of Nyssa, based on 1 Tim 6:15-16, sees God as the one and only happy One and thus defines human happiness as resemblance to the divine beatitude (Ps. Inscr.). More commonly, the Fathers identified the perfect human person with Jesus as Lord (Augustine, Enarrat. Ps., who also establishes a relationship with Ps 40:8: “At the beginning of the book [that is to say, in Ps 1], it is written of me”; Jerome, Tract. Ps.), Savior or Spouse of the Church (Origen, Sel. Ps., Eusebius, Comm. Ps., Theodoret of Cyrrhus Interpr. Ps., Cassiodorus Exp. Ps.), the first-born of every creature (Hilary, Tract. Ps.), the new Adam (Bede Ps. Exeg.) who did not walk according to the plan of the godless, who is identified with Adam and/or the tempting devil (Arnobius, Comm. Ps.). Cf. also Thomas Aquinas, In Ps. But since “the whole Christ is head and body, [the psalm] speaks of Christ and of his body the Church” in a marital perspective (Ps-Albert, Comm. Ps.). In a more anthropological and moral sense, Calvin, Comm. Ps., defined happiness...
as the result of a good conscience. For Bellarmine, it consists in true righteousness, friendship with God (Ps. Explan. 9).

1 counsel... way... seat
= sin in thought, in deed and through teaching (Jerome, Tract. Ps.)
= sin in thought, in deed and out of habit (Ambrose, Enarrat. Ps.), where he defines sin not only in relation to the commandments of the Decalogue, but even along the lines of evangelical radicality, which invites a person to total dispossession; item: Basil. Hom. Ps.,
= sin in thought, in deed and by bringing others to do what is evil (Thomas In Ps.).
= sin by turning away from God, by delighting in sin, and by no longer being able to return to God unless one is freed by Christ (Augustine Enarrat. Ps.).

Following Tertullian, Marc. 4,8, several Fathers saw in Joseph of Arimathea the type of the righteous person described here in the negative. Theodoret of Cyrirus, Interpr. Ps., specifies the inclusive meaning of the word “man”, which “also includes women”.

1c to sit in the seat In general, this is seen as an allusion to the chair of the scribes and the Pharisees (Athanasius, Exp. Ps.; Hilary Tract. Ps.; Ambrose Enarrat. Ps.; Cassiodorus Exp. Ps.). According to Origen, Sel. Ps., the verse can apply to three situations: not benefiting from the truth by surrendering to vain thoughts, not living according to the true teaching, considering false dogmas to be true. Ps-Albert, Comm. Ps.: spreading the poison of bad teaching through word or example; the “seat” has four feet: malice, contempt for God, absence of shame, shrewdness in propagating evil. For Calvin, Comm. Ps.: a metaphor calling to mind the hardening that is brought about through the habit of a life in sin.

1c 1 mockers Rupert of Deutz, Oper. Sp. Sancti 2,10-11, develops the theme of the crucified righteous One who is overwhelmed by mockery.

— Theology —

1 Moral Theology: Social Relations It is not so much a matter of cutting oneself off from compromising human contact and of turning in on oneself, as some religious movements encourage one to do, but rather of absolutely refusing to make a pact with evil. Did Jesus not sit down more than once in the company of sinners, even in opposition to what was customary?
2 On the contrary, in the Teaching
$s the law of the LORD [is] his desire
he murmurs his Teaching day and night.
$s he meditates his Law

3 He is like a tree planted near watercourses,
which gives its fruit in its time,
and its foliage does not wither
$s does not fall
and all that he does succeeds.
2 On the contrary, in the law of the Lord [is] his will and on his law he will meditate day and night.

3 He will be like the tree planted near springs of water, that will give its fruit in its time, whose foliage will not dry up, and everything he does will succeed.

the constant intention to read the Law as the taste for observing it”. He exhorts people to “drink” both Testaments; the First diminishes thirst, the New one quenches it completely (Enarrat. Ps.). For EUSEBIUS, Comm. Ps., “law” can be understood at three levels: natural law, the law of Moses, and the Gospel. For ATHANASIUS, Exp. Ps., “angelic law”. HIŁARY, Tract. Ps. as well as JEROME, Comm. Ps. and Tract. Ps., make clear that one must not only read Scripture but put it into practice. AUGUSTINE, Enarrat. Ps., makes a very Pauline distinction: “It is one thing to be in the Law and another to be under the Law. The person who is in the Law acts according to the Law; the one who is under the Law is led by the Law. Thus the one is free, the other a slave.” BÉDE, Ps. Exeg., repeats, barely annotating.

3a tree... watercourses According to several Fathers, a reference to Prov 3:18.


= image of the cross JUSTIN (1 Apol. 1.40-42 and Dial. 86; cf. TERTULLIAN, Adv. Jud. 13.11; CASSIODORUS, Exp. Ps.).

= Christ himself (JEROME, Tract. Ps.), as the Spouse (GREGORY OF NYSSA, Hom. Cont. 5), the new Man (RUPERT, Oper. Sp. Sancti 1.18 et 20), the Word (BÉDE, Ps. Exeg.), near the rivers = the divine Scriptures (HIPPOLYTUS, Comm. Dan. 1.17; EUSEBIUS, Comm. Ps.; ATHANASIUS, Exp. Ps.; PS-ALBERT, Comm. Ps.), AUGUSTINE, Enarrat. Ps., reads “in its time” as a reference to the resurrection, and the ascension of the Spirit; this theme is taken up again by BÉDE, Ps. Exeg. and Ps-HAYMON of AUXERRE, Comm. Ps.

= the baptized person. Very early, the ecclesiological and sacramental perspectives were grafted on to this old Christological reading, with the water calling to mind baptism (BARN. 11.1-11; CYPRIAN, Epist. 73.10; HIŁARY, Tract. Ps.; GREGORY OF NYSSA, In bapt. Christi).

3b fruit... foliage AMBROSE, Enarrat. Ps., connects the fruit to the mystical realities (faith, knowledge of the mysteries), and the foliage, which protects the fruit against the sun or the cold, to the moral virtues. PS-ALBERT, Comm. Ps., distinguishes three kinds of fruit, which are associated with three kinds of plants: scholarship that is free of error (grape), sweet consolation (fig), sweetening and healing (olive). BELLARMINE rather holds on to the trees that do not lose their foliage: pine, palm, olive tree (Ps. Explan. 10).

Ps 1 in the Roman Lectionary The liturgy develops the moral interpretation of the psalm in order to illustrate:

- the two ways: Friday of the 2nd Week of Advent, following Isa 48:17ff. (“the path on which you walk”); Thursday after Ash Wednesday, following Deut 30:15-20 (the two ways); Thursday of the 7th Week in Ordinary Time I, following Sir 5:1-8 (“Do not trust in your riches, do not delay in returning to the Lord”); Monday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time II, following Eph 4:32-5:8 (darkness, light).

- the two kinds of human being: Thursday of the 2nd Week of Lent and the 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time – C, following Jer 17:5-8,10 ("cursed the man... like a thistle in the desert / blessed the man... like a tree near the water").

- the fruitfulness of holiness: Common of Men and Women Saints; Thursday of the 29th Week in Ordinary Time I, following Sir 5:10-12 (“Do not trust in your riches, do not delay in returning to the Lord”); Monday of the 28th Week in Ordinary Time II, following Gal 5:18-25 (fruit of the flesh, fruit of the Spirit).

- the reward promised to the righteous: Thursday of the 27th Week in Ordinary Time I, following Mal 3:13-20a (“those who fear the LORD”); Monday of the 33rd Week in Ordinary Time II, following Rev 1:1-5a; 2:1-5a (“I will give the victorious one to eat of the tree of life”).

~ Theology ~

3 fruit in its time Spiritual Theology: Fruitfulness Following the Fathers, many a reader will spontaneously make a connection with the tree of life in Gen 2:9; 3:5:χρήσις. Even if it is difficult to attribute this allusion to the psalmist himself, it is not impossible that it surfaced in Tg. Ps. "χρήσις. In any case, “in its time” places the deepening of the Word of God within the dynamism of God’s free gift. Adam and Eve sinned by trying to take for themselves the fruit (eternal life, total knowledge) by their own initiative and immediately, instead of waiting for God to give it to them at the time he wanted and totally freely. Similarly, the long process of assimilating the Word “day and night” ςυμπλήρωσεν God’s action over time rather than in the immediate. Meditating on the Word brings the human person into a situation of ever greater availability for receiving God’s gift.
4b straw that the wind takes away Tg. Ps. “the storm”. G has ἐχνος, which in theory can mean dust as well as straw, but the addition apo proisôpou tês gês orients the translation towards the first meaning (cf. V).

5a they will not rise up… at the judgment Tg. Ps. adds several words: “they will not be judged innocent, they will not rise up, the wicked, on the day of the great judgment”.

5b assembly G and V read barāqat instead of ba’ādat, repeating the same term as in v. 1a (cf. boulê, consilium), but with the meaning of “council“, rather than “counsel“.

6a the LORD knows the way Tg. Ps. reverses the subject and the object: “it opened itself before the LORD, the way of the righteous” ἔγνω.

6b the path of the wicked Tg. Ps. has “paths” in the plural but the verb in the singular. V does not repeat “path” (via) the second time but uses a synonym (iter) so as to vary expressions.

〜 Grammar 〜

5a at the judgment… in the assembly of the righteous The preposition b can indicate the place (“in”) or the means (“by”) of the act conveyed by the verb. Both meanings seem possible here: the wicked will not rise up because of / in the midst of the assembly of the righteous since they were not found to be righteous by / at the time of judgment.

6a for he knows lit.: “for he is knowing”. Almost all translators, both old and modern, understand the actor-subject of the verb in the participle to be the L ORD, with the exception of Tg. Ps. ἔγνω.

〜 Literary Devices 〜

5f. wicked… righteous… righteous… wicked Chiasm.

〜 Comparison of Translations 〜

5a G will rise up Here, the Hebrew term yāqūmû keeps all the force of the original image: the physical movement of the one who rises up suggesting an eschatological movement. The context (v. 4: the image of the straw carried away by the wind, connoting death; v. 5: judgment, assembly of the righteous; v. 6: the way of the righteous of which Θεός knows the outcome) points towards what is over and beyond: to rise up after death. The wicked will not rise up, either as a consequence of judgment or because they are not known in the assembly of the righteous. The verb yāqūm first called to mind an earthly eschatology (cf. Deut 25:6, where “the first-born to whom the (Levirate’s) wife will give birth will make the name of his deceased brother rise up – yāqūm") before referring to an absolute eschatology. The meaning will pass into the Greek anistamai. In Mt 12:41 (“the people of Niniveh will rise up (after death) – anastérontai), the verb anistamai has a double meaning: “to rise up” and “to rise up in order to accuse” (“on the day of judgment”: the same theme can be found in Wis 3:7-8, in 1 En 27,3, as well as in Qumran: 4Q418, fr. 69, v.7). M, G and V thus all use a verb (yāqūm, anistamai, resurgere) that in certain books of the OT commonly recalls either resurrection (the simple return of the deceased to life on earth, cf. Isa 26:14,19) or the final resurrection (cf. Dan 12:2 for the Greek). This second meaning also applies to the NT.

〜 Biblical Inter-Textuality 〜

4 straw There is a classic comparison between the godless and the weightless chaff that is carried away by the wind (Job 21:18; Ps 18:43; 35:5; 83:14; Wis 5:14; Isa 17:13; 29:5; 40:23-24; Jer 13:24; Dan 2:35; Hos 13:3) or burnt in the fire (Isa 47:14; Nah 1:10; Mal 3:19; Mt 13:12; Lk 3:17; 1Cor 3:12).

5 assembly of the righteous Contrary to Ps 111:1, which speaks of the present-day liturgical assembly (G sunagogē), ἐδῶ seems here to have an eschatological meaning. As regards the “righteous”, Heb 12:23 uses the term ἐκκλησία, the Church that is in the world to come.

〜 Jewish and Oriental Peritextual Literature 〜

6 way… way The image with the double juridical and eschatological perspective (the two spirits) is developed in a whole paragraph in IQS (3,13-4,26). Cf. also Qur’an 1,1.6-7. A major theme in Qumran, like that of the two spirits. Rashi explains v. 5 by means
It is not the same [for] the godless, not the same. On the contrary, [they are] like the dust that the wind carries [away] from the face of the earth.

That is why the godless will not rise up at the judgment, nor the sinners in the council of the righteous.

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous; but the way of the godless will be lost.