Quest for Justice as Reconciliation of the Poor and the Righteous in Psalms 37, 49 and 73

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ABSTRACT

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The typical antithesis of the wicked and the righteous emerges in different literary works of post-exilic Israel. It is frequently combined with the motif of the shalom of the (rich and) wicked. Their fortune provokes envy and very serious challenges for the faith of those who understand themselves as the poor and the righteous. The heavy social crisis in the Persian period of the 5th and 4th century BC as well as the crisis of wisdom in this time appears as a global background of this topic. My paper examines the pursuit of justice, ie of God's justice and of the fulfilment of the frustrated religiously legitimated expectations of fortune, in the Psalms 37, 49 and 73. The intention is to realize the conflict situation presupposed by the texts and to profile the specific strategies and purposes of overcoming the conflict. The quest for justice doesn't intend a reconciliation of the poor and the rich or the wicked and the righteous. However, it leads to a "reconciliation" of the tempted pious, to a new trust in YHWH, to a new hope, and to a renewed capability of communal life.

A QUESTIONING AND BACKGROUND

One of the most serious religious crises in Israel after the exile gets its acuteness from the experience of a disturbed order of life. Disappointed expectations of happiness in life make the traditional religious interpretation of life a problem and call necessarily forth the question about the justice of God and his effectiveness. The question becomes concrete in a "reproach against God", a typical motif in lamentation and problem literature of Israel and of the Ancient Orient. The motif was recently thoroughly explored by Dorothea Sitzler (1995) in Ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature. It concerns wisdom-oriented reflection poetry which is addressed to a national and religious élite and according to Sitzler[1] it is based on a "confessional situation of decision". As tendentious

writings these poems want to show how a wise man can and shall stand the test in a critical situation of upheaval; they aim at a new act of consent with the attitude of the author. The works of critical Wisdom of the Old Testament, Job and in another way Ecclesiastes lead to a similar text typical and functional horizon like the ancient oriental poetry of reproach. It may be generally accepted that the three Psalms 37, 49 and 73 have much in common with the sapiential reflection poetry (cf exemplarily Gerhard von Rad)[2]. In spite of considerable differences in structure and contents the three psalms agree among other things in the following features:

1 Basically there is a rough antithesis of the "wicked" and the "righteous", and of the "rich" and the "poor" respectively (cf Ps 49:3).

2 The temptation and the crisis of the one spoken to or of the protagonist who appears himself as speaker is in each case decisively produced by an actual disturbing experience that thwarts a traditional way of thinking in categories of "deeds-consequence"-coherence. It is the prosperity, the שׁצוּם of the "wicked" and of the haughty rich respectively.

3 The three psalms try to find a solution of the crisis of the protagonist above all with regard to the final destiny or the future (שׁחרית in Ps 37, Ps 73 and conjectured in Ps 49:14), although this motif appears in the individual psalms very differently marked and accentuated.

Just as the book of Job the three Psalms presuppose the idea of an individual and adequate retaliation or retribution as Ezekiel decisively developed in the exilic situation in a pastoral intention. The fact that Ezekiel actually contributed to a rationalization of the conception of God, could be proved by Victor Maag[3]. The use of the plural רשׁעים "evil doers" as the polemic denotation for a group may for the first time be found in Jeremiah (Jer 5:26), where it refers to the members of the rich upper class. The typical antithesis of the "wicked men" and the "righteous" (in plural!), however, characteristically appears in different literatures of post-exilic Israel, in Malachi, Trito-Isaiah, Psalms, Job and Proverbs. This antithesis was for good reasons declared by Rainer Albertz as a result of the hard social crisis of Judah in the 5th century BC (cf Neh 5)[4]. The motif of happiness of the wicked that causes envy and jealousy among those who are faithful to YHWH, seems to be anchored above all in post-exilic texts from the 5th century onwards. Texts like Malachi 2:17;

3:13-21; Job 21:9-21; 24 lead to this conclusion; but also the most probably post-Jeremian text Jeremiah 12:1-4 and Proverbs 3:31; 23:17; 24:1 and 19[5]. The Persian period of the 5th and 4th centuries BC appears as the global background of the Psalms 37, 49 and 73. The social crisis of Judah at that time was by no means removed by the steps Nehemia had taken (Neh 5) in the second half of the 5th century[6] .

My contribution investigates the striving for justice in the three sapientially coined Psalms[7] 37, 49 and 73 as a stiving for the just order of God and as a way out of the crisis. I will first discuss Psalm 37, then Psalm 73 and finally only in the form of an outlook Psalm 49. This order corresponds to a tentative diachronic and theology-historical classification of these psalms. Nevertheless, I do not exclude a possible contemporaneousness of what is objectively not contemporaneous. In my presentation I start from a summary of the analysis of structure, genre, horizon and speech-situation of the psalms. The point at issue is to grasp the situation of conflict presupposed by each of the psalms and to emphasize the specific strategies, the methods and the aims or intentions of overcoming the conflict.

B THE CONFLICT AND ITS SOLUTION IN PSALM 37

1 *The form of an alphabetic acrostic* in Psalm 37 accentuates twenty-two units of sayings which each consist of Tetracola[8]. Although the psalm is built of sequences of proverbial forms, three phases of speech can formally and functionally be distinguished and these phases are in their turn subdivided[9]. The first part or the first phase of speech verses 1-11 is marked by warnings and invitations with arguments (כי v 2, 9) and with motivating announcements respectively. The contrast of אל תתחר "do not grow angry, do not fret" and בטח "trust" is arranged in a chiastic sequence: verses 1-4 and verses 5-8 with argumentation verses 9-11. The speech acts in this first part verses 1-11 clearly aim at soothing and appeasing the addressee and at arousing new confidence in YHWH, away from anger and forth to trust. The second main part of the psalm verses 12-26, formulates throughout in a representing way. This instruction about the doings and farings of the wicked and the righteous is ended with a winning autobio-graphical confession narrative of the speaker in first-person-form in verses 25-26. In the concluding third part, verses 27-40, the linguistic forms and the functions of the speech acts of the two preceding parts are combined, that means imperatives (here without vetitives), representing sentences and again a first-person-confession in

verses 35-36. It concludes the section, verses 27-36. The final admonition and instruction, verses 37-40, emphati-cally turns the eye to the אחרית, the "future" for "the man of peace" in contrast to the evil-doer who has no future. Thus this third main part serves as a summary and deepening of what was said before. It pleads for life and behaviour of the righteous and for confidence in YHWH. The Psalm is no explicit prayer, YHWH is never directly addressed. The only communication level expressed within the text starts from a speaker who appeals to his age and his experience as a צדיק in the autobiographically stylized confessions. He turns to the "you" of an addressee who appears as the type of the tempted YHWH-pious man.

In Psalm 37 with its tripartite structure we can recognize an example of an *appellative sapiential instruction*[10], apart from the form of the acrostic. There is no question about the sapiential coinage of Psalm 37. Typical features are the different proverbial forms in the psalm (the bipartite admonition and warning, the representing saying, the טוב-saying) and the autobiographical confession. Within the whole book of Psalms the צדיק is described with the base חכם only in Psalm 37, as Avi Hurvitz[11] has shown: "The mouth of the just man utters wisdom and his tongue speaks what is right" - totally according to Proverbs 10:31. Psalm 37 can directly be called a literary display of the warning of jealousy and of envy against the evil-doer and a display of the motivation of this warning by the אחרית "future" and "hope" for the addressee in Proverbs 23:17f; 24:1 and 19f[12]. Psalm 37, however, is not simply a lesson of wisdom for the instruction in a "wisdom school" of any kind. Even if one disregards the redactional heading לדוד, which makes the text a psalm speech "in persona Davidis", there are certain influences of the language of the psalms: the intense admonition to trust YHWH; the language of persecution which reminds of the lamentations of the individual; the portrayal of YHWH as the faithful God who gives justice to the oppressed, to those who trust him and who helps according to the traditions of belief in Israel (eg vv 17-19, 28, 33, 39-40).

Psalm 37 has all features of a text written for re-use. It refers to a typical situation of religious contestation. The psalm appears as a kind of "sermon text", as an instrument of instruction in the hands of a religious wisdom teacher who may be compared with the "friends" in the dialogue poetry of the book of Job. Both speaker- roles - the one in Psalm 37 and the other of the Job friends - have their model in the part of Ezekiel as the prophetic guardian, the watchman (צופה) of Israel according to Ezekiel 3:16-21 and 33:1-9[13]. As a watchman Ezekiel has the task to warn of death

(זהר-H) the רשע, the "culprit/wicked man", and also the צדיק who does wrong (עול). If the watchman does not perform his task, YHWH will call him to account. Hence the engagement, the "pastoral" effort of the speaker in Psalm 37 and also of the Job friends seems to be inspired and motivated by the model of Ezekiel. With an important difference, however, compared with Ezekiel (and eg Ps 52). Psalm 37 and the Job friends only turn to the tempted and endangered, צדיק but not the רשע. The wicked man is not given a chance of conversion. His reconci-liation is not under discussion. Differently from the Book of Job the endangered just man in the "you"-address of Psalm 37 is from the very beginning and exclusively named and described in a typifying manner. For Psalm 37 we may assume a public speech situation in a circle of YHWH-followers who understand themselves as צדיקים (v 29, 39), as ענוים (v 11) and חסידים (v 28), as "righteous", as "afflicted" or "humble" in a religious respect and as "pious". Such a circle is not bound to the temple cult. With Erhard S Gerstenberger[14] I am inclined to think of an origin in and a primary application of Psalm 37 to a local community of YHWH followers, no difference whether within or outside of Jerusalem.

2 *The conflict in Psalm 37* arises definitely from the question concerning the "land". To whom does the land belong and to whom should it belong? Not the small allotment of the farmer is meant[15], but the land given to Israel by YHWH as the deuteronomic and deuteronomistic formula ירש ארץ "to inherit the land" emphasizes (47 times in Dtn among 89 quotations in the Old Testament). Five times the phrase is quoted in Psalm 37 (vv 9, 11, 22, 29, 34), moreover ארץ שכן "to dwell in the land" verse 3 (and vv 27c, 29b). It always occurs in the commissive speech act of a promise, also in the case of the imperative שכן verses 3, 27. The older promise of land to Israel is limited in Psalm 37 to the righteous who objectively form the true Israel[16]. This promise to the righteous is intensified by the contention that the wicked shall be exterminated out of the land (כרת-N vv 9, 22, 28, 34, 38). With regard to the speech situation it is pressupposed that the YHWH-followers do not possess the land as a gift of blessing of YHWH or that their staying in the land is extremely endangered. They see themselves delivered to a "ruthless social struggle for power"[17] that can be signified as the provoking conflict situation in the background of the psalm inspite of the typical features of the speech. The wicked man appears typically as the rich man[18]. He still prospers in his abundance (vv 16, 35), he pursues the just man ruthlessly and brutally (v 12) in order to deprive him of the basis of his existence ("to kill" him v 32,

cf v 14) and to warp justice in the court (v 33).

But who are the righteous? Psalm 37 clearly accentuates their ethical-religious qualification and not their social status. They are those who hope in YHWH (v 11), who are blessed (v 22) by him, his pious (v 28) who have internalized the Torah of their God and hence speak wisely and what is right (vv 30-31). The just man also shows his solidarity with the weaker man, he is charitable and merciful (vv 21, 26). Even as ענוים (v 11) the just are not in the first place the socially poor but those who are afflicted and humiliated before YHWH, those to whom the fulness of shalom is promised. The second bicolon in verse 14 that explicitly introduces עני ואביון, "the miserable and the poor man", may be a secondary addition owing to a redaction concerning the poor[19]. This addition, however, follows the social contrast between the righteous and the wicked in Psalm 37. The righteous possess comparatively little (v 16). The statements verse 19 and verse 25 cannot obscure the fact that they just do not render the social reality as the tempted and revolting just man experiences it in his actual life; there is indeed social impoverishment and danger of famine. The complaints of different groups among the people about the fellow Jews in Nehemiah 5:1-6 can elucidate the background of Psalm 37: "... we are powerless and our fields and vineyards belong to others" (Neh 5:5)[20]. Psalm 37 may probably presuppose Nehemiah's efforts for social justice in Judah (Neh 5:1-13)[21]. Nehemiah, by support of the pressure of a communal assembly, obtains among the noble and the rich whom he understands as "*brothers*", a change of conduct in favour of the weaker ones. Psalm 37, however, marks in its typifying language opposite to the righteous only the *definite* (rich and) "*wicked*". Nobody expects that they let themselves change. Their future ruin is certain for the author - a warning also for the addressee. The main question is whether YHWH acknowledges the justice (צדק v 6) of the just man and procures his right, as YHWH loves משפט (v 28, cf v 33). Therefore not only the validity of the "deeds-consequence"-coherence is at stake but also the trust in the God of the salutary order of right. In their passionate revolting and their jealousy because of the rich reckless wicked men the temptation of those feeling contested is great to act in an evil way in order to be able to hold their ground. The very same temptation for the righteous is recognizable in Psalm 125:3!

3 *How does Psalm 37 meet this danger?* The *informative aim* of the Psalm is totally submitted to the decisive *purpose of effect*. The most important information is the tenor of an *expectation*: Inspite of all negative

experiences in the present time the order of doing and faring remains effective. It will prove its validity in the time to come. Only the righteous have אחרית (vv 37-38) here in the meaning of a positive future, fulfilled hope of life (including an offspring), corresponding to Proverbs 23:18; 24:14 and 20. Only to them the land will belong. The unfaithful wicked only awaits inevitable ruin. Differently from the "Demotic Instruction of Papyrus Insinger" of the Ptolemaic period the paradoxes of experience in Psalm 37 are not just tolerated and accepted[22]. YHWH plays an explicit active part only in the presentation of the good destiny of the righteous (vv 4, 17, 23-24, 28, 33, 34, 39-40), besides statements that describe this destiny in a "neutral" way (vv 11, 29, 37c, cf 3c, 18b, 26b, 27c). The bad destiny on the contrary is not punishment inflicted on purpose but always the inner necessary effect of the bad deeds.

All stress is laid upon the *effect function* of the psalm in its two essential aspects: *First* the psalm is concerned to appease the addressee who is excited by anger and jealousy. The point is to allow him to express his inner tension, rage, envy and anxiety and to dam and canalize an implicit readiness for violence. For this purpose there is the direct warning and admonition not to become boiling with rage and to slip into wicked doings oneself (vv 8, 27). The descriptions of the wicked are an outlet of anger, it is true, but they avoid to give the addressee an opportunity to increase his rage. The descriptions of wickedness are at once followed by statements about the end of these wicked that is certain to come (cf eg vv 12-13). With that, the implicit impetus to a violent initiative of the tempted pious is withdrawn. But the psalm does not stop there. The *second essential aspect of the effective intention* in the psalm is the leading to a new trust in YHWH (vv 3, 5) as the just and faithful God who does not abandon his pious followers (v 28). Those who trust in him will not be deceived, for he will help the just order to break through if not in the present but at any rate in the time to come and he will change the misery of his faithful fundamentally. The whole tripartite structure of the psalm - warning, instruction, deepening - serves for the new trusting in YHWH and the decisive sticking to the ideal of the just man. The psalm begins with the trouble and uncertainty which the impious bring into the life of those faithful to YHWH (vv 1-2) and it ends with the firm confidence that YHWH saves the just (vv 39-40). The *invitation* to confidence (vv 3-5) finally becomes the *representation* of the attained trust, of the safety with YHWH (vv 39-40): "... They (the just) have (always) found refuge in him". Walter Brueggemann[23] has pointed out that "the socio-theological intentionality"[24] of Psalm 37 allows and demands a double reading: The

first one is an "ideological reading" in so far as it is "structure legitimating"[25]. In this sense the psalm strengthens the social stability and continuity for those who understand the possession of the land "as a sign of *virtue* as well as blessing"[26]. In a second approach as an "utopian reading" the Psalm is "not a defense of present social reality but it is an 'eschatological' anticipation that things will assuredly be different"[27]. One may name the intentional levels realized in Psalm 37 this way as Brueggemann proposes. It seems, however, important to me to recognize the inner and necessary coherence of the two levels in Psalm 37: Certainly, the psalm will no more be satisfied with the mere emphasizing of the "deeds-consequence" as a *fact of current experience*. But the enlargement of the field of view in the line of the decisive future, the hope for a fundamental change of social conditions centrally aims at encouraging the YHWH-faithful in the present time, so that they absolutely stick to their confidence in YHWH and in his just order of life even in spite of the frequently experienced contradictions. Ultimately paradoxes may not exist for Psalm 37. The thought of "deeds-consequence" remains strictly effective enlarged by the aspect of future offspring on earth.

As in Psalm 37 a general theodicy problem is not at stake in Psalm 49 and 73. The reason for the text process is the typical fear to lose confidence in God considering paradoxical experiences and at the same time the effort to show ways *existentially* and *paradigmatically* in order to overcome this life crisis. While Psalm 37 enlarges the inner-historical scope of validity of personal and adequate retaliation that is no longer sufficient in Psalm 49 and 73. Both psalms, however, go their own ways inspite of motif equivalents. It is unmistakable and uncontested that Psalm 73 shows a special proximity to the book of Job whereas Psalm 49 approaches the topic of the book of Ecclesiastes in some respect.

C THE CONFLICT AND ITS SOLUTION IN PSALM 73

Is it true what the liturgical thanksgiving formula confesses, that YHWH is good, that his grace lasts forever (Pss 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 136:1; Jer 33:11)? Is this true if in one's own life nothing of this goodness is perceptible but instead of it in the life of others who should actually be punished by God according to "pious" expectation of retaliation? The question of faith and the question of life cannot be separated in Psalm 73 as Ernst Würthwein[28] did. According to him the masoretical form of verse 1 ("surely God is good to Israel") would be the answer to the question of faith whether YHWH's grace is still valid for his people. The conjectural

text in verse 1 ("surely God [אל] is good to the upright [לישר]...") which is rejected by Würthwein, but is nevertheless probable, would only be the answer to the question of life, whether it is clever to adhere to the ישרים and whether one may expect to be rewarded for that reason. The irrationally good God would become a rational retaliating God in the horizon of a newer understanding of law[29]. This alternative cannot be supported. Psalm 73 proceeds from the basis of a faith in personal and adequate retaliation, but in a way overcomes this conception of life in a decisive new perception. This can be proved from the process of argumentation in this psalm.

The MT Psalm 73:1 "God is good to Israel" and in a different way also verse 10 lead to a collectivizing redaction[30]. It may be younger than the Elohistic redaction in Ps 73:1, 26 which probably dates from before the end of the 4th century BC[31] for good reasons has already related this collectivizing interpretation to the polarization between the חסידיהם, who understand themselves as the "true Israel" (cf Ps 149:1-2, 4) and the faithless members of the Jewish community in the Hellenistic period. The final form of verse 1 now appears as an important presupposition for the fact that Psalm 73 in the collection of the Asaf-Psalms which all deal with the overcoming of crisis, could be put ahead of the collective lamentation Psalm 74 of the time of the exile. Furthermore Psalm 73 in its final shape forms the head of the third Psalm book that might have been compiled under the leading aspect of the exile and its consequences[32]. It is, however, beyond question that Psalm 73 as a single text has nothing to do with the exile situation[33].

1 I resume some text observations[34]. Psalm 73 is a prayer monologue before God that reveals a double direction of discourse and by that reminds of the type of the individual thanksgiving song: On the one hand the psalm addresses God directly in the second person from verse 15 onwards, concentrated in verses 18-28. On the other hand the discourse about God in third person in verses 1, 17, 26 and 28 allows to recognize that the psalmist also speaks to human addressees although not in direct speech. They are those in verse 1 typifyingly called the "righteous" and those "clean of heart". The speaker in the text equates them with the "generation/circle of your sons" for whom he feels responsible according to verse 15. The manifestation of the intention "to tell/proclaim all your deeds" at the end of the psalm (v 28) cannot be related to another circle of addressees. Nevertheless the indirect addressees of the psalm-discourse are presumed as at least potentially endangered men and those led into

temptation, corresponding to the starting-point of the psalmist (vv 2-3). The רשעים which are talked about only in the third person, are excluded from the communication events (vv 3-12, 18-20, 27). Their inner monologue verse 11, however, confirms that they are not strangers but members of the psalmist's people. It interpretes them not only as faithless who contest that God knows what they do, the earthen happenings, it also makes them mention God's name El Eljon that is well founded in the Jerusalem cult tradition[35].

The standpoint of the speaker in Psalm 73 is immediately comprehensible from verses 23-26 and verse 28. It is the standpoint of averted misery and complaint as in the Babylonian classic of the Mesopotamian Job literature, the monologue confession *Ludlul bêl nêmeqi* "I will praise the lord of wisdom". From this point of view *the structure of Psalm 73* can be explained[36]. The psalm starts with a confession in verse 1 which motivates the formation of the text and which at the same time must be understood as the result of the text process. The text process takes place in steps contrasting each other. The temptation narrative verses 2-17 contrasts with the confession at the beginning. After the exposition of the dangerous conflict of the psalmist in verses 2-3 the description verses 4-12 of the happiness of the wicked and the part verses 13-17 describing the misery and endangering of the psalmist face each other. The verses 18-28 again formulate the newly given insight of the speaker as a new interpretation of life in contrastive steps. They on their part form contrasts to the structural components of the temptation narrative verses 2-17. Thus the אחרית, the future and the final destiny of the wicked verses 18-20 is followed by the confession of true happiness of the psalmist verses 23-26. It is contrastively introduced and mediated by perceiving how foolishly the praying psalmist behaved in the past misery and temptation verses 21-22. A *bipartite résumé* verses 27 and 28 concludes the confession of the new insight. Verse 28 and verse 1 stand in an inclusion: לי טוב parallels טוב לישר. The personally formulated experience legitimates the generalized confession of God's goodness towards the upright and redactionally to the true Israel at the beginning of the psalm.

The manifold proposals concerning the *genre of Psalm 73* only prove the individual profile of this psalm which cannot simply be assigned to a well-known *genre*[37]. Nevertheless it seems to me that the opinion is still well founded that Psalm 73 owes its structural basic shaping to the type of the individual thanksgiving song[38]. Certainly not more: For the sapiential reception and "alienation" of this structural model is more than distinct with regard to language, style, structure and motifs[39]. But sapiential speech

and thinking is rather the starting-point, not the actual aim of the psalm. And this not only because the psalm also shows important influences of an explicit religious and cult-oriented language just in the structural centre in verses 23-26 (cf altogether the way from the description of the personal misery to the new insight and the general confession: verses 13, 15, 17, 26, 28, v 1). It is perhaps true that the exegesis of Psalm 73 pays too little attention to the fact that Psalm 73 contains a criticism of wisdom. It is not only proved by the content but can be recognized by the appropriation of a sapiential model of speech and argumentation which emerges very frequently in Ecclesiastes: to come to reflection by seeing/experiencing (חשב-D, ידע v 16) in order to formulate a result therefrom. But in Psalm 73 the personal reflecting and judging does exactly not lead to a solution but into an aporetic situation (בעיני עמל היא v 16b). Here the sapiential self-helping by reflecting and judging is thoroughly deprived of its base, although the Psalm implies that all means of reflection have to be exhausted[40]. The kind of solution of the conflict in Psalm 73 is essentially defined by this criticism of wisdom. It calls for a fundamentally new start and effort (v 17).

2 With regard to the *conflict situation* in Psalm 73 the following aspects seem essential to me. Two kinds of religious temptation on the basis of the belief in individual and adequate retribution are combined in order to seize the whole of the possible misery of the pious. With that, the eye goes so to speak from the outside to the inside: from getting angry about the happy lives of the arrogant rich to turning to the misery of the speaker who feels struck by God in spite of his efforts for ethic-religious purity. If God would be good, according to the liturgical thanksgiving formula, appropriated in verse 1, he ought to give the earthly שלום of health, richness, honour and social influence to the pious on this level of thinking. The flagrant contrast of experience as to this kind of the expected goodness of God is the true reason of the temptation. Then God appears as the far one, the "Most High", so ignorant and unconcerned, as the רשעים, those who are far from him (v 27), maintain in their inner monologue (v 11). For the psalmist the danger is imminent to betray "the generation of the sons of God", that is concretely the community of the righteous and the traditions of Israel's belief preserved by them. To my mind verse 15 says that the betrayal would be performed as soon as the psalmist would proclaim aloud: It is ריק, "in vain, fruitless" to strive after righteousness! (cf Mal 2:17; 3:14f; also Job 1:9).

The speaker does not expressively call himself "poor"[41]. He does not seem oppressed by the rich either (differently to Ps 37). The speaker-

part of the ישר, the righteous one, however, defines itself from the contrast to the rich and "impious". Only this self-interpretation is the point. Different social variants of the ישר can meet in the temptation of the speaker, if they only agree in this self-interpretation.

3 *Which way out of the crisis does Psalm 73 show?* First of all the general dominating textual *functions of effect* must be mentioned. The autobiographical report of temptation, the central statements of conviction as well as the framing of the psalm in verses 1 and 28 do not allow any doubt: The main function of the psalm is confession and proclamation of faith on the basis of the certitude of confidence newly gained by the speaker. Yet the proclamation of faith aims at winning the endangered members of the "circle of the sons of God" over to new confidence. Therefore with regard to function the psalm could be called a *winning monologue of confession*. In verses 2-17 it allows a comprehensive complaint as an emotional relief, a vent of dangerous thoughts and reproaches against God. As the complaint, however, appears only in retrospect to the past misery and as it is dominated by the confession of verse 1, its dangerous stimulus is controlled. According to verse 15 the reflection of the speaker's relation to the "generation of the sons of God", the circle of God's community, in the speaker's presence including its past and its tradition of faith is fundamental and guiding the way out of the crisis. The speaker knows what he might betray and lose. And he knows that this betrayal would already begin in his thoughts (אמר for inner monologue). Verse 15 textpragmatically functions as an urgent indirect warning of the betrayal of God's community. It is not accidental that together with the reflection of God's community the direct prayer address to God appears for the first time in the psalm. With verse 15 the change begins already in the speaker's way of experience, although at first in a negative sense: reflection is necessary, but reflection alone must fail. It does not overcome the speaker's tearing test between the experience of his own misery that darkens faith and the commitment to God's community. A new step is necessary, a start for "God's sanctuaries" verse 17. An end of the exegetical controversy about the מקדשי אל in verse 17 is not yet in sight[42]. More recently it is above all Diethelm Michel[43] who pleads for the understanding of "God's Sanctuaries" in a figurative sense analogous to God's mysteries in the book of Wisdom 2:22 which are often quoted in this context[44]. In his opinion this conception is supported by the observation that the Psalm also in verses 23-28 uses partly polysemic words and that the "new insight" of God's acting beyond death for which the psalm stands has first formed

something like an esoteric doctrine. Of course, the peculiarity, even the uniqueness of the personal confession formulated in verses 23-26 must in no way be restricted. On the other hand the semantic openness of the language in Psalm 73 may not be disregarded. The psalm does not only bear the features of things personally experienced, it also individualizes the typical experience of temptation. The psalm, moreover, allows its addressees to share a way of experience with the speaker. As it happens in the book of Job the psalm makes them undergo a development from the experience of almost having been stumbled (v 2) to a new certitude of the communion with God and of a new knowledge of God's goodness towards the righteous (v 1). *The pastoral tendency* in the speech process of the psalm is unmistakable. But in this frame an understanding of verse 17 fits in very well which can do with fewer suppositions and which corresponds to the immanent literary context. Neither a metaphorization from the "Sanctuaries of God" to divine counsels or mysteries can be made plausible nor does the parallel clause with בין אחרית in verse 17b force a figurative understanding of the verb construction בואאל מקדשי אל in verse 17a. מקדשי אל may signify the sacred areas of the one temple (Jer 51:51; Ps 68:36 and others). Or possibly it means an intensified expression of the sanctity of the place where God is present. At any rate the relation to the temple may well be founded if one accentuates the experience of God's presence in the sacred area. For on the one hand the experience-oriented way of the psalmist consistently leads from the knowledge of his responsibility before and for the community of the sons of God (v 15) to the sacred place verse 17, where this community constitutes itself and finds its centre. On the other hand the place of God's presence is extremely well suited as a space of the new experience: "But I am always with you!" (v 23, cf 25, 22). In addition קרבת אלהים verse 28, an expression that points to cultic connotation (Is 58:2) but which may certainly not be linked to a special cultic act, clarifies verse 17 as to the content: to approach God and to stay near him is "good" for the psalmist, it is his happiness.

Verse 17 shows two steps or ways which finally lead to the overcoming of the crisis of faith: ie to enter the sacred area of God's presence and to comprehend the final destiny! In other words: *Cult and Wisdom cooperate to overcome the crisis.* In the sacred area the speaker's self is given more of new insight, experience and certainty than what corresponds to his pre-existing will of understanding. What verses 18-20 say about the final destiny of the wicked, sounds rather traditional, it too distinctly reminds of Psalm 37, the friends' speeches in Job 18 and 20 or of Psalm 52. This psalm is especially interesting for us, because it gives a text-

pragmatic hint in which way in the misery of temptation just in the area of the temple or in its outer-courts insight could be gained: namely by the charismatic-authorative word of an "inspired-authorized wise man", as Walter Beyerlin[45] has shown. But the verses 18-20 in Psalm 73 do not simply represent the "thereafter", the future of the wicked. They are rather to be understood as general facts: The psalmist recognizes what always has happened to the wicked on the part of God[46]. The personal confession of the psalmist in verses 21-26, however, leads far beyond this perception of the life destiny of the wicked. It is also formally no more included by the theme "insight into their - that is the wicked's - final destiny". The description which the praying man gives of his former blindness and folly while he was tempted is still sapientially toned (vv 21-22). The confession in verses 23-26 is, however, unique in the Old Testament also compared with Psalm 49:16. It appears as a sole unfolding of the spiritualized Levite prerogative: "My portion is YHWH for ever". Here I don't have to give further explanations of this confession, especially on verses 23-24[47]. The psalmist testifies to "a being with God" that was granted to him all his life and that was not given to him only in the "end". Yet I agree - inspite of some recent disputes - with several exegetes in this point that according to the imaginative model of being taken (לקח), especially with reference to Enoch in Genesis 5:24, a firm individual hope of communion with God also beyond the limit of death is formulated[48]. The confession verses 23-26 signifies a *revaluation of values*. The earthly possessions of the old doctrine of retribution no longer play a role for the psalmist. On an essentially new level of understanding now the saying is valid: "Yet God is good to the righteous, to those who are pure of heart" (v 1).

With his psalm a spiritual man, probably a Levite, sapientially educated, encourages, consoles and instructs endangered members of God's community in an assembly of a confessional liturgy in the area of the second Jerusalem temple (probably in the 4th century BC). Psalm 73, too, is from the very beginning designed to be re-used. Following up the Job-dialogue poetry and on the basis of personal experiences of faith the author shows a way that can by all means be marked as a way of reconciliation with God and with the assembly of "the children of God".

I close my investigation with a short comparing outlook onto Psalm 49.

D COMPARISON WITH PSALM 49

In comparison with Psalm 37 and 73 the character of a reflective problem poem is most distinctly marked in the Korahite-Psalm 49[49]. In the back-

ground of this psalm, however, there can also be found a historical-political constellation that in many a way reminds of the social suppositions in Psalm 37 and 73. It is not the problem of riches as such but the rich and the powerful, they have become a problem, although they hardly appear as a unified group. What is new above all is that the rich and the powerful are on the same level with the wise and the fool (vv 11-13). An established educational wisdom of rich people with an aristocratic image of man is presupposed ("Man in splendour" verse 13, 21, cf Job 19:9; Ps 8,6-9). *Psalm 49 at the same time critcizes power and wisdom!* The author solidarily is on the side of the defenceless and powerless simple people, of the poor (v 3), although he addresses himself to the rich and to the poor at the same time. According to the well known observation that in the post-exilic period the wise men by and by take over the prophet's function, the wise poet and singer of Psalm 49 appears with the claim of a kind of prophetical revelation (vv 4-5). What he has to say is generally valid (underlined by the call-to-attention formula as the opening of an instruction v 2). The cantor intends to encourage people who feel oppressed by the rich potentates (v 6), those who seem to wait in vain for divine help and who live in fear of definitely losing happiness in life in view of inescapable death. Their complaints are still reflected in the "why"-question of verse 6.

The psalm with its well-known textual difficulties is probably revised in verse 9 and surely in verse 15, but for the rest in my view it is uniform[50]. The main parts are clear: opening of instruction verses 2-5; argumentative carrying-out verses 6-16, starting from self-encouragement verse 6, that corresponds to the encouragement of the oppressed man in the final discourse of admonition verses 17-21 (in the form of a salvation oracle). The psalm is a model specimen of an appellative sapiential instructive speech, still more distinctly than Psalm 37.

The singer takes up the misery of others into his own reflection in verse 6 and thus he makes it flow in a more fundamental meditation about the question: What value has my life considering the rich who boast of their riches and on the background of inescapable death (cf Ps 90 and Eccl)? Armin Schmitt[51] and Georg Fohrer[52] have described the three steps of a solution of this question. 1) verses 8-10: The rich man, too, is not able to redeem himself from death. 2) verses 11-13: Death makes all men alike, the wise and the foolish as well as the rich potentates (cf Eccl 2:14f; 9:3-6; 3:18-23). Riches are no advantage in view of death. 3) verses 14-16 as a positive step of solution: there is surely a separation after one's death. God makes the great difference. He ransoms from the power of Sheol (פדה) him who relies on him and not on riches and takes him up to him (לקח as Ps

73:24). The proud rich remain in death. Thus the oppressing injustice in the social situation of the addressees which becomes a question to God finds an answer of fundamental validity. It probably presupposes already Psalm 73[53]. Nevertheless the message is totally new in its circle of addressees[54]. Psalm 49, too, cannot only have been composed for an élite sapiential circle[55]. The psalm belongs to a communal assembly which knows beside prayer also instruction and encouraging speech.

What is finally said is valid for all the three psalms which have been examined. They are not primarily written for private meditation. In the sense of Fritz Stolz[56] one may call these psalms "post-cultic". But to me it seems more appropriate to speak of a changed cult situation in post-exilic times which has become more manifold and decentralized. At any rate the commitment of the oppressed and tempted followers of YHWH to the community and to its liturgical assembly proves to be essential for the way out of the crisis. In this situational framework the single one in his distress is by all means taken seriously (cf the address to the second person singular in Psalm 37 and 49 as well as the "I"-form confession in Psalm 73). The loss or the darkening of faith in God's justice within the social reality and in one's own life is the essential misery that is taken up by those who are responsible for the community in Psalm 37, 73 and 49. As documents of overcoming the crisis these psalms aim at soothing the aggressions, at wakening new confidence in YHWH and at a new capability of communal life for the oppressed and the tempted. A violent change of social conditions is totally alien to the psalmists' view. The hope for a social overthrow from the part of God in Psalm 37 is intended to strengthen confidence and steadiness in the present time and to control anger and latent readiness for violence[57]. The extraordinary misery calls for an extra-ordinary answer. It is given in Psalm 73 and then repeated in Psalm 49 with different accentuations. The reconciliation of the distressed and tempted is accomplished in the certainty of the indestructible communion with God.

NOTES:

1 D Sitzler, "Vorwurf gegen Gott". Ein religiöses Motiv im Alten Orient (Ägypten und Mesopotamien): *Studies in Oriental Religions* 32, Wiesbaden 1995, 135-137.

2 G von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1970, 263-266.

3 V Maag, Hiob. Wandlung und Verarbeitung des Problems Novelle, Dialogdichtung und Spätfassung (*FRLANT* 128), Göttingen 1982, 68-72, 130ff; cf Ezekiel 18; 20; 33.

4 R Albertz, Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit (Bd. 2): Vom Exil bis zu den Makkabäern: *ATD Erg.* 8/2, Göttingen 1992, 543-546, 538-541.

5 Furthermore, the motif of the happiness of the wicked emerges as a generally presupposed principle in the sceptical paradox of Qohelet Eccleciastes 8:12, 14; also in Sirach 11:2ff; Wisdom 3:13-4:6 and 4:7-19 (but cf the final judgement Wisdom 4:20-5:23). Regarding extra-biblical texts the Babylonian Theodicy, l. 70f, can be cited: "They walk on a good path those who do not keep on seeking the gods; but those who implore the god[dess] now became poor and weak" (cf W von Soden, "Weisheitstexte" in akkadischer Sprache, in: O Kaiser (ed), Weisheitstexte I: *TUAT* III/1. Gütersloh 1990, 150). The demotic instruction of Papyrus Insinger giving remarkably much space to the paradoxes of life formulates as a warning: "Do not sail the course of a wicked man even if fate means well to him" (l. 436 according to H Brunner, *Altägyptische Weisheit. Lehren für das Leben. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert*, Zürich/München 1988, 327; cf H J Thissen, Die Lehre des P Insinger, in: O Kaiser (ed), Weisheitstexte II: *TUAT* III/2, Gütersloh 1991, 280-319, 303 = Paper p 20, l. 2).

6 Cf Albertz, *op cit*, II:539-541; the same R Albertz, Der sozialgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Hiobbuches und der "Babylonischen Theodizee", in: J Jeremias, J a.o. (ed.), *Die Botschaft und die Boten.* Festschrift H W Wolff, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, 366-368.371f; W Schottroff, Arbeit und sozialer Konflikt im nachexilischen Juda, in: L Schottroff, & W Schottroff (eds), *Mitarbeiter der Schöpfung.* München 1983, [104-148]104-117.147f; H G Kippenberg, *Religion und Klassenbildung im antiken Judäe. Eine religionssoziologische Studie zum Verhältnis von Tradition und gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung*, Göttingen 1978, 54-77; H Kreissig, *Die sozialökonomische Situation in Juda zur Achämenidenzeit: Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orient 7.* Berlin 1973, 101-114, especially 110; J M Halligan, Nehemiah 5: By Way of a Response to Hoglund and Smith, in: P R Davies (ed), *Second Temple Studies. 1. Persian Period* (JSOT SS 117), Sheffield 1991, 152f.

7 Besides the commentaries and special investigations of each of the three Psalms several contributions in a summarizing way deal with questions of sapiential coinage and socio-cultural presuppositions of Psalms 37, 49 and 73, cf eg A K Jenkins, *Three Wisdom Psalms? A Consideration of the Classification "Wisdom Psalms" with Particular Reference to Psalms 37, 73 and 49*, Cambridge 1969; F Stolz, "Psalmen im nachkultischen Raum", *ThSt* 129, Zürich 1983, 46ff, 57ff, 60ff; P A Munch, "Das Problem des Reichtums in den Psalmen 37. 49. 73", *ZAW* 55 (1937), 36-46.

8 The structures of parallelism in Psalm 37 were thoroughly explored by H S Kriek, *Psalm 37: Reading Parallelism*, Dissertation, Pretoria 1993.

9 Cf E Cortese, Salmo 37. Una interpretación en diálogo con el tercer mundo: *EstB* 51 (1993), 32f, similarly C Westermann, Aufbau und Absicht von Psalm 37, in: C Westermann, *Das mündliche Wort. Erkundungen im Alten Testament*, (edited by R Landau), Stuttgart 1996, 176-179.

10 Cf B Lang, *Die weisheitliche Lehrrede. Eine Untersuchung von Sprüche 1-7: SBS* 54, Stuttgart 1972 on Proverbs 1-7.

11 A Hurvitz, addiq = 'wise' in Biblical Hebrew and the Wisdom Connections of Ps 37, in: K-D Schunck, & M Augustin (eds), *Goldene Äpfel in silbernen*

Schalen. Collected Communications to the XIIIth Congress of the IOSOT, Leuven 1989: *BEATAJ* 20, Frankfurt a.o. 1972, 109-112.

12 The sequence Proverbs 24:1-22 as a collection of rules of life is composed alphabetizingly. Possibly the author of Psalm 37 was inspired in forming his alphabetical acrostic thereby as well. Cf E Zenger, *Die Psalmen I. Psalm 1-50: Die Neue Echter Bibel*, Würzburg 1993, 230.

13 Cf Maag, *op cit*, 137, on the book of Job.

14 E S Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part I. With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry* (*FOTL* 14), Grand Rapids, Michigan 1988 (reprint 1991), 157f, 159f.

15 H Gunkel, *Die Psalmen. Übersetzt und erklärt: Handkommentar zum Alten Testament*, Göttingen [5]1968, 156; Munch, *op cit*, 39.

16 Stolz, *op cit*, 63f.

17 H J Held, Hoffen auf Gott und Entschlossenheit zum Guten. Unterweisung auf dem Weg der Gerechtigkeit in Psalm 37 und in der Bergpredigt, in: P Mommer a.o. (eds), *Gottes Recht als Lebensraum*. Festschrift H J Boecker, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1993, 298.

18 Cf Albertz, *op cit*, 1992, 544.

19 BHS; Cf Cortese, *op cit*, 1993, 35f; Zenger, *op cit*, 230, 231, 236.

20 Cf Isaiah 60:21; 61:7f; 65:9f; Psalm 25:13; Proverbs 2:21f; 10:30.

21 There is a far-reaching consensus solely with regard to dating Psalm 37 to the post-exilic period. H Kreissig, *op cit*, 13, relates Psalm 37 to the disputes between the first home-comers from Babylonia and those who had remained in the land, within the years from 539 to 520 BC. Zenger, *op cit*, 229f, pleads for the 5th century BC. O Kaiser, Von der Gerechtigkeit Gottes nach dem Alten Testament, in: O Kaiser, *Der Mensch unter dem Schicksal. Studien zur Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartsbedeutung der Weisheit* (*BZAW* 161). Berlin/New York 1985, 160, hints at the late 5th or the 4th century BC. C Levin, "Das Gebetbuch der Gerechten. Literargeschichtliche Beobachtungen am Psalter", *ZThK* 90 (1993), 370, dates Psalm 37 close to the Psalter redaction presumed by him, a redaction entering the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, in any case in the final phase of the formation of the Psalter. The dominant problem of the land and the comparison with Nehemiah 5; Isaiah 60:21; 61:7f; Malachi 2:17; 3:13-21 and Job 21; 24, furthermore the differences to the Torah-psalms as Psalm 1; 19B; 111; 112 and 119 give reason to believe that Psalm 37 should not be dated too far from the activity of Nehemiah, possibly towards the end of the 5th century or the beginning of the 4th century BC.

22 Cf Thissen, *op cit*, 280ff; Brunner, *op cit*, 295ff, 492ff.

23 W Brueggemann, Psalm 37: Conflict of Interpretation, in: H A MacKay a.o. (eds), *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages*. Festschrift R N Whybray (JSOT SS 162), Sheffield 1993a, 238-254 [229-256].

24 Brueggemann, *op cit*, 238.

25 Brueggemann, *op cit*, 245.

26 Brueggemann, *op cit*, 244.

27 Brueggemann, *op cit*, 247.

28 E Würtwein, Erwägungen zu Psalm 73, in: W Baumgartner (ed), Festschrift A Bertholet, Tübingen 1950, 538f.

29 Würtwein, *op cit*, 538.

30 Cf H Irsigler, *Psalm 73 - Monolog eines Weisen. Text, Programm, Struktur*, *ATS* 20, St Ottilien 1984, 100-105; R J Tournay, "Le Psaume LXXIII: relectures et interprétation", *RB* 92 (1985), 187-191; J C McCann, *Psalm 73: an Interpretation Emphasizing Rhetorical and Canonical Criticism*, Durham NC 1985, 176-179.

31 Cf Irsigler, *op cit*, 1984, 95-100, 371, according to H Gese. B Renaud, "Le Psaume 73, meditation individuelle ou priere collective?", *RHPR* 59 (1979), 548f.

32 Cf J C McCann, Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter, in: J C McCann (ed), *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOT SS 159), Sheffield 1993, 95-100; B Weber, Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld (*BBB 103*), Weinheim 1995, 294, 290-296.

33 Inspite of A Caquot, "Le Psaume LXXXIII" *Semeia* 21 (1971), 30f, 41, 46, 54.

34 Cf among the more recent studies on Psalm 73 especially A Schmitt, *Entrückung - Aufnahme - Himmelfahrt. Untersuchungen zu einem Vorstellungsbereich im AT* (*FzB* 10), Stuttgart 1973, 253-309; H Irsigler, *op cit*, 1984; McCann, *op cit*, 1985 and J C McCann, Psalm 73. A Microcosm of Old Testament Theology, in: K G Hoglund, a.o. (eds), The Listening Heart. Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms. Festschrift R E Murphy (*JSOT.SS* 58), Sheffield 1987, 247-257; Tournay, *op cit*, 187-199; L Alonso-Schökel, *Treinta Salmos. Poesia y Oracion*, Madrid 1986, 265-286; G Ravasi, *Il libro dei Salmi. II. Sal. 51-100*, Bologna 1991b, 489-530; also C Westermann, *Ausgewählte Psalmen*, Göttingen 1984, 98-107; K Spronk, Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East: *AOAT* 219, Kevelaer Neukirchen 1986, 315-327; J Krašovec, Antiteticna zgradba psalma 73. Antithetic Structure of Psalm 73: *BogVest* 49 (1989), 275-288; O Keel, *op cit*, 1991, 39-45; M Girard, *Les Psaumes redécouverts. De la sructure au sens. 51-100*, Quebec 1994, 282-294; P Auffret, "Et moi sans cesse avec toi. Etude structurelle du Psaume 73" *SJOT 9*, 1995, 241-276; E Cortese, E se il salmo 73 lo recitano i poveri?: *RivBib* 43 (1995), 55-76; A Schmitt, *Wende des Lebens. Untersuchungen zu einem Situations-Motiv der Bibel* (*BZAW* 237), Berlin/New York 1996, 212-240.

35 Eg H-J Zobel in *ThWAT V*, 137.

36 Regarding the questions of the linguistic and textual structure of Psalm 73 cf the analyses concerning expression and content in Irsigler, *op cit*, 1984; L C Allen, "Psalm 73: an Analysis" *TyndB 33* (1982), 93-118; Krašovec, *op cit*, 275-288; Auffret, *op cit*, 241-276.

37 Cf J Luyten, Psalm 73 and Wisdom, in: M Gilbert (ed), La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament (*BETL* 51), Gembloux Leuven 1979, 59-64; Irsigler, *op cit*, 1984, 353f, 353-364; McCann, *op cit*, 1985, 90-101; also E Nielsen, Psalm 73. Scandinavian Contributions, in: A G Auld, (ed), *Understanding Poets and Prophets*, Festschrift G W Anderson (*JSOT SS* 152), Sheffield 1993, 273-283; Cf W Brueggemann, Response to James L Mays, "The Question of Context", in: J C McCann (ed), *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (*JSOT SS* 159), Sheffield 1993b, 40, makes a virtue of the necessity of determining the genre of Psalm 73 in interpreting the Psalm on the level of the Psalter: "The uncertainty

of genre perhaps bespeaks the uncertainty about Israel's faith after the collapse and end of the world of Psalm 72. In the face of such a collapse, the question of faith is how shall we speak, which implies not only what shall we say, but what genre is adequate?". With that the question of genre on the level of the Psalter seems to me more than over-interpreted. Nevertheless, I endorse Brueggemann's remark on the redactional importance of Psalm 73: "I suggest that Psalm 73 is a pivotal and probably distinctive point in the move from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150" (p. 40)

38 Allen, *op cit*, 1982, 116, 93-118; Irsigler, *op cit*, 1984, 363f, 353-363.

39 Cf especially Luyten, *op cit*, 59-81.

40 Cf Irsigler, *op cit*, 1984, 363 and concerning the question of autobiographical stylization, see 300-302, 356-359.

41 Cf Cortese, *op cit*, 75f.

42 Cf for discussion Schmitt, *op cit*, 1973, 279-282; J F Ross, "Psalm 73", in: *Israel Wisdom*, Festschrift S Terrien, New York 1978, 165-199; Ravasi, *op cit*, 1991, 517-519.

43 D Michel, Ich aber bin immer bei dir. Von der Unsterblichkeit der Gottesbeziehung, in: H Becker, a.o. (eds), *Im Angesicht des Todes - Ein interdisziplinäres Kompendium: Philosophie - Humanwissenschaften - Kunst - Geschichte - Biblische Theologie* (Pietas Liturgica 3), St Ottilien 1987, 644-647, 652.

44 But against this cf Schmitt, *op cit*, 1996, 223.

45 W Beyerlin, *Der 52. Psalm. Studien zu seiner Einordnung* (*BWANT* 111), Stuttgart a.o. 1980, 104-113.

46 "The end has already begun", as H J Kraus, *Theologie der Psalmen: BKAT XV*/3, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1979, 217 says.

47 Most probably the text in verses 23-24 reads as follows: "Yet I am always with you. You have seized my right hand. You guide me with your counsel and onto glory you will take me (to yourself)". On the syntactic and semantic problems and the motifs of the verses cf Irsigler, *op cit*, 1984, 41-50, 247-248, 266-272; Schmitt, *op cit*, 1996, 226-231; further O Keel, Psalm 73. Zornig begreifen, in: *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Missionar*, Dienste/Dt. Bibelges./ Kath. Bibelwerk (eds), Ausdrücklich leben. Psalmen: *Texte zur Bibel* 7, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991, 43f.

48 Cf Schmitt, *op cit*, 1973, 300-302; U Kellermann, "Überwindung des Todesgeschicks in der alttestamentlichen Frömmigkeit vor und neben dem Auferstehungsglauben", *ZThK* 73 (1976), 273-277; Irsigler, *op cit*, 1984, 266-272; G Ravasi, "La Speranza della salvezza definitiva nei Salmi 49 e 73", *ParSpV* 9 (1984), 92-94 = 82-95; L Ramaroson, "Immortality and Resurrection in the Psalms", *ThD* 32 (1985) 237-238 = (235-238); Spronk, *op cit*, 315-327; Michel, *op cit*, 643-656; J L Mindling, "Hope for a Felicitous Afterlife in Psalms 16, 49 and 73", *Laur. 32* (1991), 346-367; McCann, *op cit*, 1985, 224, definitely shortens the scope of meaning in his interpretation: "Instead, verse 24b affirms to the community that God is still leading his people as he had in the past". J D Pleins, "Death and Endurance: Reassessing the Literary Structure and Theology of Psalm 49", *JSOT* 69 (1996), 23f, contests a reference of Psalm 49:16 to a hope of "afterlife", but not plausibly, cf in contrast eg Spronk, *op cit*, 327-33.

49 For an analysis of Psalm 49 cf more recently P Casetti, "Gibt es ein Leben vor dem Tod? Eine Auslegung von Psalm 49",*OBO* 44. Freiburg (Schweiz) Göttingen 1982, moreover H Irsigler, "Gibt es ein Leben vor dem Tod? Eine Auslegung von Psalm 49", *OBO 44*, Freiburg (Schweiz). Göttingen 1982: *ThR 80* (1984a), 107-111; Spronk, *op cit*, 327-334; O Loretz, "Ugaritisches und Jüdisches. Weisheit und Tod in Psalm 49", *UF* 17 (1986) 189-212; P R Raabe, *Psalm Structures*,(*JSOT SS* 104), Sheffield 1990, 68-89; G Ravasi, *Il libro dei Salmi. I. Sal. 1-50*, Bologna [5]1991a, 869-892; cf also Gerstenberger, *op cit*, 1988, 202-207; F-L Hossfeld, & E Zenger, *Die Psalmen I. Psalm 1-50: Die Neue Echter Bibel*, Würzburg 1993, 299-308 and the important contributions of P Volz, "Psalm 49", *ZAW* 55 (1937), 235-264; J van der Ploeg, Notes sur Psaume 49, in: B Gemser (ed), *Studies in the Psalms* (*OTS* 13), Leiden 1963, 137-172; Schmitt, *op cit*, 1973, 193-252; F de Meyer, "The Science of Literature Method of Prof M Weiss in Confrontation with Form Criticism, Exemplified on the Basis of Ps 49", *Bijdr* 40 (1979), 152-166.

50 The very far-reaching redaction-critical suppositions on Psalm 49 by Casetti, *op cit*, 29-34; Loretz, *op cit*, 192ff (189-212); Hossfeld, *op cit*, 300, cannot do justice to the carefully structered psalm which regarding verses 6-21 appears even as a treatise with a practical application. Cf also J van Oorschot, Der ferne deus praesens des Tempels. Die Korachpsalmen und der Wandel israelitischer Tempeltheologie, in: I Kottsieper a.o. (eds), *"Wer ist wie du, Herr, unter den Göttern?". Studien zur Theologie und Religionsgeschichte Israels*, Festschrift O Kaiser, Göttingen 1994a, 426, footnote 47; he regards as secondary verse 9 and (less plausibly) verses 14-15 only.

51 Schmitt, *op cit*, 218.

52 G Fohrer, Das Geschick des Menschen nach dem Tode im Alten Testament, in: G Fohrer (ed), *Studien zu altestamentlichen Texten und Themen (1966-1972)* (*BZAW* 155), Berlin, 1981, 196.

53 Spronk, *op cit*, 327, 33f.

54 Casetti, *op cit*, 285 dates his "Grundpsalm" as a predecessor of Qohelet to the 5th century or to the first half of the 4th century BC, for good reasons. I agree to this for the (primary) psalm as a whole. If Psalm 49 already presupposes Psalm 73 and as we may suppose that Psalm 73 looks back to the Job poetry (especially Job 19:25-27, cf Spronk, *op cit*, 327, 333f) a dating of Psalm 49 to the 4th century BC seems probable.

55 Against Casetti, *op cit*, 1982, 282, cf also Gerstenberger, *op cit*, 206.

56 Stolz, *op cit*, eg 18-20, cf J van Oorschot, "Nachkultische Psalmen und spätbiblische Rollendichtung", *ZAW* 106 (1994b), 69-86.

57 This is also valid for the eschatological hope of the ישרים of the secondary MT Psalm 49:15 in accordance with Malachai 3:21.