

The Eleventh Century BCE to the Fifth Century CE: Translation, Exposition, Instruction, Liturgy and the Prophetic Bias

Jewish Reception

From Composition to Compilation to Translation

The first millennium of reception history is the least complex, given that during this period the psalms were used exclusively in Jewish settings and within the defined geographical area of Syro-Palestine, Egypt and Babylon. However, our account begins where most commentaries end: the debates about the dates, authors and provenances of individual psalms are of minimal concern, because our emphasis is on the reception of individual psalms once the Psalter had become a recognized collection. So what follows is a brief summary of the stages leading to the compilation of the Psalter as a whole.

It seems fairly certain that many psalms were composed in the *pre-exilic period – psalms for the king to use in the Temple (for example, Psalms 2, 72, 89, 110 and 132), psalms which ratified the conviction that God would protect the city of Zion from invasion (such as Psalms 46, 48), and psalms which would be used in times of national distress (for example, Psalms 74, 77, 79, 80, 82). Other psalms with archaic language and Canaanite motifs are probably also early: these include Psalms 29 and 68. Some psalms may even be traced back to David himself (c.1000 BCE), although the title ‘A Psalm of (or in Hebrew, ‘to’) David’ is not a good guide to authorship as the psalm headings would have been added in the second Temple period. But all the psalms referred to above would have been preserved and reinterpreted during the period of exile in Babylon in the sixth century BCE. The so-called ‘royal psalms’ and ‘Zion hymns’ would have been used with an eye to the future, to encourage the community whose present experience would have made them question the confident faith expressed within them, and other psalms of distress (for example, Psalm 137) would have been added. Other additions would include



MAP 1.1 Jerusalem: the centre of psalmody for early Jewish and Christian communities.

the psalms celebrating God's kingship (for example, Psalms 47, 93, 95–9) which would have given the disenchanted exiles a new vision. However, given that these psalms have been scattered throughout the Psalter, a chronological arrangement was not the primary concern of the compilers.

After the exile, many psalms of a more personalized nature would have been added; the best examples are found within *'The Psalms of Ascents' (Psalms 120–34), which show how individual piety was incorporated into Temple worship. New hymns of praise, individual complaints and didactic psalms would also have been incorporated. Gradually psalms were organized into groups and then into collections, each given a heading to connect one with another, and later still, these collections would have been incorporated into the five different books which make up the Psalter as a whole.

The first book (Psalms 1–41) comprises mainly personal laments, and here the heading 'Psalm of David' dominates; this is a more homogenous work, comprising smaller groups of psalms (for example, Psalms 15–24). Books Two and Three (Psalms 42–72 and 73–89) form a second group, determined up to Psalm 83 by the prominent use of Elohim as a name for God, compared with the name Yahweh which is prevalent in Book One. Several smaller collections are evident here, and the title 'Psalm of David' is used only in Psalms 51–65 and 68–70. Books Four and Five (Psalms 90–106 and 107–50) form a third and final division, comprising one large collection (Psalms 120–34) and several smaller ones; here the psalms are mainly those of praise, and far fewer have superscriptions.

The adding of titles to individual psalms and the placing of psalms into collections and then into books thus mark the first stages of reception history. For example, the superscriptions give the psalm a different historical focus to that which the composer intended (the historical headings to psalms such as 3, 7, 18, 30, 34 and 51 now set these psalms in the life of King David as told in the books of 1–2 Samuel). Furthermore, by placing particular psalms next to those which have a different style and theology, as well as a different date, each psalm is read not only in its own light, but in the light of its neighbour. The best illustration is the way Psalm 1, a late psalm concerning the importance of meditating on the law, and Psalm 2, an early psalm suggesting an accession ceremony of the king, have been brought together to illustrate complementary themes, each key facets of Judaism – the 'Torah' (Psalm 1) and the 'Messiah' (Psalm 2). Given that by this time the Psalter would have been divided into five books, the juxtaposition of Psalms 1 and 2 suggest that here we have a second Torah, with David, not Moses, as the significant Messianic figure.

Although the precise details of this process are most unclear, up to this point of compilation – by the early Greek period, in about the third century BCE – the focal point is Jerusalem and the Temple, and the compiling and editing are being undertaken by scribes and priests living in Judah.¹

¹ Most introductions to psalmody offer a fuller discussion of these issues; see for example L. Sabourin (1974); J. Day (1990); S.E. Gillingham (1994); C. Hassell Bullock (2002).

The process starts to become more untidy when we start to examine the reception of the psalms through translation. The best-known Greek translation of the Psalter (known as the Septuagint, or the *LXX) was intended for Hellenistic Jews, probably in Alexandria (although some would argue the actual provenance could be Palestine). This occurred fairly soon after the formation of the Hebrew Psalter in Jerusalem, probably around the second century BCE. The earliest extant manuscript of this Greek translation dates from some four hundred years later: it is an uncial codex of the entire Old Testament, called *Codex Vaticanus* ('B'); only the beginning (up to Genesis 46:8) is missing, and the Psalms are therefore intact.

Over the past thirty or so years, a good deal has been written about the relationship between the Greek and Hebrew Psalters, and the extent to which it was intended to be an accurate translation or (given that many of the Hebrew terms, not least in the superscriptions, do not seem to have been known in second-century Alexandria) more of an interpretation. Given that the translator was living at a time when Jewish hopes for a cataclysmic redemption were high, this could have influenced his work, giving it a more future-orientated, eschatological bias, a feature which might be seen in the way he interpreted the titles to the psalms. For example, some of the musical terms in the titles have not been understood, so that, for instance, the term 'for the choirmaster' in fifty-five psalms reads in the Greek 'for perpetuity' or 'for fulfilment' – a term which might imply a more future-orientated reading. Or again, the musical term 'Gittith' ('a stringed instrument') in Psalms 8, 81 and 84 is read by the Greek as 'a wine-press' – a term which might denote their use as harvest-psalms, but also could be a metaphor about harvesting on the day of final judgement. Furthermore, the persona of David is more apparent in the Greek Psalter, so that even more psalms are given Davidic headings, and an extra psalm celebrating David's victory over Goliath is added at the end: this might indicate a future hope in a David-like Messianic figure, although it could also be a recognition of David as a pious hero of the past. It could be that the translator was concerned to provide as accurate a rendering as he could, and an eschatological reading has been read into the Greek text some time later, especially by Jewish-Christian commentators.

Whichever view one takes, the Greek translation is very different in some places. Not only do the psalm titles reflect twenty or so omissions and seventeen expansions, but, more substantially, the Hebrew word for God is not given the unique term it has in the Hebrew (Yahweh), but is translated according to Jewish spoken practice usually as, simply, 'Lord'. And the system of dividing one psalm from another is different: the LXX unites Psalms 9–10, which share the same alphabetic structure in Hebrew, and similarly connects Psalms 114–15, and splits 116 and 147, thus causing a different system of numbering the psalms in the Hebrew and the Greek. Furthermore, difficult verses in Hebrew are sometimes rendered more comprehensible in the Greek (e.g. Psalm 40:6 reads in the Hebrew 'ears thou hast dug for me' whereas the Greek reads 'thou hast given me an open ear'). Even if some of these changes are a result of later developments in the Greek text (and there was clearly more than one Greek version, as we know from other Greek manuscripts

dating from about this time), even the most cautious of scholars agree that this represents a new stage in the history of interpretation, inevitably bringing more Greek ideas and hopes for a better future into an earlier Hebrew version.²

Exposition: The Prophetic Bias

The discovery of other early Hebrew versions of the psalms at *Qumran offers further insights into the Septuagint translation. Amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), over twenty-seven manuscripts of psalms, some of them commentaries rather than translations, many of them fragmentary, almost all in a Hebrew script, were found in eleven caves near the ruins of Qumran; two others were found at Masada and a further two at Nahal Heber and Nahal Seelim. It is now possible to compare variant readings in these scrolls with the Septuagint and the traditionally accepted Hebrew Massoretic Text, or *MT. The most important discoveries are from Caves 4 and 11, where copies of 126 of the 150 Hebrew psalms have been found, dating from the first and second centuries BCE (Cave 4) and the first century CE (Cave 11). There appear to be at least two different arrangements of the psalms. It is likely that at least two different 'Psalter', as well as multiple collections of parts of the Psalter, were used in the community. Like the LXX, the standard number is not 150 psalms; there are even three psalms in Syriac (Psalms 151, 154 and 155).

It seems that the first three books of the Psalter (Psalms 1–89) had a more stable history than the latter two. Scrolls which have several psalms from Books 1–3 (for example, 4QPs^a, which starts at Psalm 5 and ends at Psalm 69, although several psalms are missing) usually maintain the same order as the Hebrew Psalter and have no additional psalms amongst them. By contrast, 11QPs^a, the largest psalms scroll, which contains many of the psalms from Books 4–5 (starting with Psalm 101), does not maintain the order in the MT, and includes fifteen hitherto unknown psalms interspersed within it. For example, Psalm 101:1–8 is followed by Psalm 102:1–2 [+3–18], 18–29, then 103:1; this is followed by parts of Psalm 109, then similarly 118, then 104, and then 147; only the collection headed 'Songs of Ascent' keeps to the order of the Hebrew text. The additional psalms, found in the latter part of the scroll, indicate that psalms composed later (for example, a 'Plea for Deliverance' and an 'Apostrophe to Zion', both of which are found in

² A vast amount of literature has recently been written on this issue. For a more eschatological reading, see M. Rösel (2001) and J. Schaper (1995). For a more cautious approach, see A. Pietersma (2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2005); also F. Austermann (2000); C.E. Cox (2001); M. Flashar (1912); A. van der Kooij (2000); S. Olofsson (1997); A. Soffer (1957); and J.M. Wevers (2001); E. Zenger (2001). For English translations of the Psalms from the LXX, see J.M. Dines (1994) and A. Pietersma (2000a); see also the German study of the Septuagint Psalms at www.unikoblenz.de/~sept/index2.html.

other scrolls) were just as authoritative as the earlier traditional ones. 11QPs^a has fifty-six compositions in all; one is of David's last words (following parts of 2 Samuel 23:1–7), another concerns the inspiration of his compositions, and another two correspond to Psalm 151 in the LXX, thus reflecting the same Davidic emphasis as in the Greek Psalter. Some would argue that the remaining fifty-two psalms were a liturgical collection for fifty-two weeks of the year, although much of this depends on whether one sees the Qumran community using a lunar rather than solar calendar (and the latter is more likely). Whatever view one takes, this particular collection has a clear theology: its focus is the present and future salvation of God's elect who are inheritors of the promises made to David of old, with an emphasis on the psalms as prophecies awaiting fulfilment as much as on present application.

Another feature is the composition of new psalms based on old models. Some suggest personal, private use – for example, four psalms are to be recited against demons. Others indicate more public use: the *Hodayot*, or thanksgiving psalms, adapt the language of suffering and deliverance found in the biblical psalms. An interesting feature is the way that some of the language is also found in the Gospel accounts of the suffering of Jesus. Psalm 22:14–15, which speaks of sufferings in terms of an aching fever, is taken up in *Hodayot* 7:4; Psalm 22 is used repeatedly in the passion narratives of Jesus. Psalm 41:9, which speaks of betrayal by close friends, is used in *Hodayot* 5:23–4; John 12:18 also uses this verse in relation to Jesus. Psalm 69:21, which speaks of the thirst of the psalmist being relieved by being given vinegar to drink, is repeated in *Hodayot* 4:11; it is also in Mark 15:36. In addition to the *Hodayot*, other psalm-like copies have a more mystical orientation: the so-called 'Angelic Liturgy' or 'Songs for the Sabbath Sacrifice', imitating the praises of the angels in heaven, is an example of this.

As well as copying the psalms, other sectarian works at Qumran cite the traditional psalms explicitly or implicitly, interpreting them in the light of the events of their own time. The term used for this practice is *peshet*, a type of exegesis which is either a running commentary on a biblical text or a commentary on a group of texts (usually termed *'catena' or 'florilegium') arranged around a central idea. For example, in 4QFlorilegium, Psalms 1:1–2:1 are taken together along with parts of 2 Samuel 7:10–14, Is. 8:11, Ezekiel 44:10 and Daniel 12:10 to speak of the restoration of the Temple and the coming figure of the branch of David, the interpreter of the law. This undoubtedly has a prophetic emphasis. The same prophetic reading is evident in 11QMelchizedek: here Leviticus 25:9,13, Deuteronomy 15:2, Isaiah 52:7; 61:1–3 and Daniel 9:25 are used along with Psalms 7:7–9 and 82:1–2 to describe the redemption to be brought about by heavenly Melchizedek. Similarly 4QCatena combines psalmic and prophetic texts to speak of what is to happen to the community 'at the end of days'.

Fifteen other texts use the more continuous type of *peshet*, interpreting only one text at a time. Three of these are on the psalms. 1QpPs. is a *peshet* on parts of Psalm 68; 4QpPs^b, on Psalm 129:7–8; and 4QpPs^a, on parts of Psalms 37, 45 and 60. Here the emphasis is on the imminent fulfilment of the psalms in the life of the

community: for example, Psalm 37:11 ('... the meek shall inherit the land') is interpreted literally concerning the physical vindication of the community's leader, the Teacher of Righteousness, over his enemy who attempted to kill him, the Wicked Priest.

In summary, the psalms scrolls at Qumran give examples of at least four aspects of reception history of the Psalter: copying of Hebrew texts; distinctive liturgical collections for both public and private prayer; new psalm-like imitations used to instruct the community in matters of faith; and, most significantly, brief commentaries on psalms, interpreting them especially with what might be termed a prophetic spirit, in that they saw the psalms as prophecies soon to be fulfilled, probably within their own generation.³

These four aspects are not unique to Qumran. For example, in terms of copying and translation, some individual psalms were already being translated in a paraphrase from the Hebrew into Aramaic, the vernacular language of the Jews in Palestine and Babylon. Although the entire written collection, known as the Targums, did not emerge until between the fourth and sixth centuries CE, Aramaic psalms were known earlier, illustrated by Jesus' cry of dereliction using Psalm 22:1, given in Aramaic in Mt. 27:46, and a citation of Psalm 68:19 in Ephesians 4:18 which is closer to the Targ Pss in Aramaic than to the MT. There is also evidence of psalms in Syriac later in this period: Ps. 151, in two sections, is different from the Greek version, and two additional psalms at Qumran (Psalms 154 and 155: one a didactic psalm, the other a prayer with a confession of sin similar to Psalm 51) are also in Syriac.⁴

Instruction through Imitations of Psalms

A feature noted at Qumran was the prophetic use of psalmody. Several other examples of this mode of interpretation are found in intertestamental Jewish writings written in Greek. One is the first book of *Maccabees*: 1 Macc. 7:16–17 states 'the flesh of thy saints and their blood they poured out around Jerusalem, and

³ Studies of this subject are extensive, and the following references pertain only to the issues discussed above: cf. P.W. Flint (1992, 1994, 1997 and 1998); G.J. Brooke (1979–81, 1985, 1987, 1994); J.H. Eaton (2003), pp. 45–6; E. Glickler-Chazon (1993a, 1993b, 1994); M.P. Horgen (1979); J.A. Hughes (2006); T.H. Lim (2002); M. Mansoor (1961); E.G. Martinez (1996a, 1996b); S. Holm-Nielsen (1960a); J.P.M. van der Ploeg (1967, 1971, 1973, 1992); J.A. Sanders (1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966b, 1967, 1974); E.M. Schuller (1994–95, 1996); P.W. Skehan (1963, 1964, 1965a); E. Ulrich and E.M. Schuller (1994); B.Z. Wacholder (1988); G.H. Wilson (1983, 1985a, 1985b, 1997).

⁴ On the psalms in Aramaic, see M. Bernstein (2005); E.M. Cook (2002); M.M. Stec (2005); M. Wilcox (1985); on the Syriac psalms, see R.J.V. Hiebert (2001, 2005); M. Noth (1930); H.F. van Rooy (1999, 2005); P.W. Skehan (1976); A.S. van der Woude (1974). Translations and commentaries of the psalms in Syriac does not take place until at least the mid-second century CE, and so will be dealt with more fully in the following chapter.

there was none to bury them', a phrase which is derived from the Greek translation of Psalm 78:2–3 (in Hebrew and English Psalm 79:2–3). The psalm refers to the suffering of the people at the time of the exile, in the sixth century, some four hundred years earlier. This description of the murder of the martyrs in Jerusalem in the second century BCE is a deliberate attempt to link the two events and to encourage the 'saints' (termed the Hasideans in 1 Macc. 7:13) to imitate the piety of the 'saints' (in the Hebrew, the Hasidim, as seen in Psalm 79:2). Another Greek text, also from about the first century BCE, is the *Psalms of Solomon*, and this also uses the psalms in a similarly didactic way: Psalms Solomon 17 recalls psalms about the protection of the Davidic king in Psalms 2, 89 and 132 and applies them to the impending punishment on the Roman nation after the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 64 BCE.⁵

A slightly later Jewish Greek text, probably from Alexandria, and probably dating from the latter part of the first century CE, also borrowed liberally from psalmody, but not so much in a prophetic spirit as in a homiletic one, in that its purpose was to show the superiority of Jewish wisdom above that of the Greeks. This is the *Wisdom of Solomon*: Wisdom 1:1, 6:1–2, 21 take up the language of Psalm 2:10–12, in its address to pagan nations to take note of the God of the Jews. For example, 'Love righteousness, you rulers of the earth, think of the Lord with goodness ...' (Wisdom 1:1) has been influenced by 'Be warned, O rulers of the earth, serve the Lord with fear ...' (Psalm 2:10–11). There are many more allusions to and citations of the psalms in Greek throughout *Wisdom of Solomon*: the most striking is Wisdom 15:15, concerning pagan idols which have 'eyes ... nostrils ... ears ... fingers ... feet' which they cannot see, smell, hear, feel or walk with – almost identical, except for the order, to Psalm 115:4–7 which speaks of idols with mouths, eyes, ears, nostrils, hands and feet in a similarly derogatory way. It is interesting to see how the LXX Psalms have been used by the writer of *Wisdom* in defence of the divine origins and hence ascendancy of Jewish wisdom, thus illustrating how psalmody was used didactically as well as prophetically.

In terms of other psalm-like compositions in addition to those found at Qumran, the evidence is abundant. Not only are there some fifteen outside the Psalms but within the Hebrew Bible (for example, the Song of Moses in Exodus 15, the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1, and the prayer of Jonah in Jonah 2, all of which became included in the collection of 'canticles' or psalm-like hymns in later Christian liturgy), but there are many examples, in Greek, within the intertestamental literature. Some are imitations of personal prayers: taking examples from the Apocrypha, these include the prayers of Mordecai and Esther in the Greek additions to Esther; the prayer of Azariah and the Hymn of the Three Young Men in the Greek additions to Daniel; the prayer of Manasseh; and prayers in the book of Tobit (3:2–6, 11–15; 8:5–8). Others are more

⁵ See A. van der Kooij (2001); U.A. Rappaport (1998).

eschatological and hymnic in form, breathed with a prophetic spirit concerning the salvation of Israel and the dawning of a new age, rather like the ‘Apostrophe to Zion’ at Qumran. Tobit 13 is a good example, as also is Baruch 4:5–5:9 (4:36–5:9 correspond with Psalms Solomon 11) and Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira) 36:1–17. Others are more mystical prayers, like the ‘Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice’ at Qumran: a good example is a later Slavonic translation from the Greek which in itself may go back to the Hebrew, called the ‘Apocalypse of Abraham’. The best example is of the song which an angel teaches Abraham on his journey to heaven (17:8–18). Many of these imitations of psalmody mark the beginning of another form of reception – that of liturgical innovation.⁶

One other early Jewish interpreter of the Greek psalms is *Philo of Alexandria* (20B CE–40 CE). This reading of psalmody is very different from that at Qumran, for example. In his allegorical commentary on the Pentateuch, ‘*Philo Judaicus*’, with an interest in God’s supreme revelation through the Torah, cites some twenty psalms when highlighting moral or theological points in the books of Genesis and Exodus. Each psalm is introduced as if divinely inspired and written by David, and its instructional value is clear; nevertheless, according to Philo, David is basically a disciple of Moses, and David’s role is to highlight the law. For example, in *De confusione linguarum* 39, on Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel story, Philo quotes from Ps. 31:19: ‘As one of the disciples of Moses ... prayed in his hymns and said, “Let their cunning lips be devoid of speech ...”’. The psalms are thus witnesses to underscore Philo’s exegetical points on the Torah. Hence when ‘*Philo Alexandrinus*’, the philosopher with a concern for reasoned faith, takes a more allegorical approach, looking at deeper meanings hidden within the biblical texts, he does this with the Torah, but not with the psalms. This is for the same reason; the relation of the soul before God is paramount far more in the Torah than in the psalms. So Philo’s concern *only* with the moral quality of the psalms contrasts well with other Jewish writers of his time, for example at Qumran, and in Maccabees; their value as prophecies, about to be fulfilled in the life of his community, is hardly evident.⁷

Christian Reception

Given that the first Christians were Jews, it is not surprising that when the New Testament writers and early church fathers use the psalms, their expositions echo

⁶ See also G.J. Brooke (2004); P. Fiedler (1988); S. Gillingham (2002); S. Holm-Nielsen (1960b); G.W.E. Nickelsburg and M.E. Stone (1983); O.H. Steck (1984); C. Thoma (1983); for online resources, see www.earlyjewishwritings.com/.

⁷ See P. Jeffrey (2004); D. Runia (2001a).

the polemical and prophetic readings found in the Qumran scrolls and their instructional works reflect those in *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo, similarly creating imitations of psalms. Most importantly they share a Greek translation – if not the LXX itself, something quite like it.

The Psalms as Prophecies in the New Testament

Over one-third of the 360 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament come from the psalms. Like both Philo and the sectarians at Qumran, the New Testament writers assume that David is the author of the entire Psalter. But there is one crucial difference: no longer is David the most important figure, writing psalms for instruction (as Philo emphasized) or as inspired prophecies (as Qumran upheld); instead, his authority has been superseded by Jesus Christ, of the Davidic line. The psalms may all be understood as ‘by’ David, but they are ‘about’ Jesus Christ, and so illustrate how the Old Testament is now fulfilled in his life and death.

The difference between the earlier Jewish and this Jewish-Christian emphasis is illustrated by comparing some of the psalms used at Qumran with the New Testament. Jesus Christ’s vindication and resurrection (his being raised up, exalted, received by God, his sitting at the right hand of God) echo the language of royal psalms also used at Qumran. For example, all three Synoptic Gospels both cite and allude to Ps. 2:7 (‘I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you”’). At Qumran this psalm refers to an idealized future figure (e.g. in 4QFlor and 11QPs^c) whereas in the New Testament it applies specifically to Jesus. Ps. 118, referring to a figure coming in the name of the Lord on a great festal day, is used in all four Gospels (Mk. 11:9–10; Mt. 21:9 and 23:39; Lk. 13:35, 19:38; and Jn. 12:13) and also at Qumran. Parts of it are found in 11QPs^a and 4QPs^b; in the latter, Ps. 118:1, 15 and 16 are followed by two apocryphal psalms called ‘Plea for Deliverance’ and ‘Apostrophe to Zion’, and in another scroll, 4QpPs^b, Ps. 118:26, 27 and 20 are read alongside parts of Ps. 127 and 129; together this illustrates how at Qumran the great festal day announcing the beginning of God’s return to his people is still in the future. By contrast, in the Gospels, this day has come, and Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, when this psalm is used, marks it. ‘Hosanna! [Save now!] Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’

By contrast, some of the most popular lament psalms in the New Testament, chosen because they echo Jesus’ suffering (his being betrayed, abandoned, troubled in spirit and delivered up), are rarely used at Qumran. For example, Psalms 22 and 69 are prominent in the Passion Narratives of all four Gospels; although the Qumran scrolls use other lament psalms, these two are hardly used (Ps. 22:15–17 occurs in 4QPs^f; Ps. 22: 4–9, 15–21 is found in the collection from Nahal Seelim; and parts of Ps. 69 are in 4QPs^a). And even here, the language of suffering is applied to the community of faith and not to any specific figure. By contrast, because parts of Psalms 22 and 69 fit, remarkably specifically, the sufferings of Jesus they are

frequently used by the New Testament writers as ways of showing that his suffering was foreordained long ago.

Psalms 110, a royal psalm which is used in all four Gospels and in Hebrews, is also not found at Qumran, neither as a copy nor as part of a *peshet* commentary. This is extraordinary, given that verse 4 of this psalm ('You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek') could have been an important commentary on Melchizedek returning to redeem Israel in 11QMelch. It is possible that given the debates in the Qumran community about the authority of the priesthood in the Jerusalem Temple, this psalm might have been too contentious. But for the New Testament writers it was an ideal way of illustrating the divine nature and priestly calling of Jesus Christ.⁸

MARK'S GOSPEL

The allusion to Ps. 2:7 ('You are my son; today I have begotten you') in the accounts of both the baptism and transfiguration has already been noted. The acknowledgment by God 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Mk. 1:11 and 9:7; also Mt. 3:17 and 17:5, and Lk. 3:22 and 9:35) demonstrates that Jesus is the anointed Son of God, of Davidic lineage. The use at the baptism in Mk. 1:11, so early in the Gospel, suggests that Mark is using this idea of sonship and kingship to challenge imperial Rome. The use of Ps. 2:7 at the transfiguration in Mk. 9:7, where the verse is addressed to the disciples in the context of the prediction of Jesus' sufferings (Mk. 8:31), makes the same point as Jesus nears the end of his ministry. The final section of the Gospel (chapters 11–16) makes use of two other psalms which suggest the same theme. As Jesus enters Jerusalem, Ps. 118:25–6 ('Save us, we beseech thee O Lord ... Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord') is put in the mouths of the crowds to show that Jesus is the promised king arriving on a festal day (Mk. 11:9–10). Mark follows this with the account of the cleansing of the Temple (Mk. 11:15–19) which is framed by the accounts of the cursing of the fig tree (11:12–14, 20–24), where the leaders, unlike the crowds, fail to acclaim Jesus. At the end of this sequence, in Mk. 12:10–11, Ps. 118 is used again: this

⁸ Four psalms discussed here will recur in our assessment of the New Testament's use of the psalms. On the use of **Psalm 110**, see D.R. Alexander (2001); J. Dupont (1974); D.M. Hay (1973); M. Hengel (1993, E Tr 1995); E.E. Johnson (1992); O. Linton (1981); W.R.G. Loader (1978). On the use of **Psalm 118**, see M. Berder (1996); J.A. Sanders (1993); J. Schröten (1995); J.R. Wagner (1997). On the use of **Psalm 2**, see N. Fuglister (1988); J.W. Watts (1990); W. Weren (1989); J.T. Willis (1990). On the use of **Psalm 22**, see H.D. Lange (1972); J.L. Mays (1985); V.K. Robins (1992). For more general works which have informed the following discussion, see S.E. Balentine (1984); G.T. Brooke (1998); A.Y. Collins (2003); R.J. Dillon (1987); C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders (eds.) (1990); C.A. Evans (2005); J.A. Fitzmyer (1960–1); D.A. Koch (1986); U.P. McCaffrey (1981); D.J. Moo (1983); M.J. Mulder (ed.) (1988); S. Moyise and M. Menken (eds.) (2004); H. Ringgren (1985); and A. Rose (1962).

time vv. 22–3 ('the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone ...') is used to foretell that although Jesus is soon to be rejected as God's Son and the people's king, he will later be vindicated. This is followed in Mk: 12:36 by Ps. 110:1 ('The Lord says to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool"') where Jesus appears to accept the title 'son of David' whilst at the same time claiming his authority over the Davidic king. (The same point is made in Mk. 14:62, when this verse is alluded to again.)

The accounts of the trial and crucifixion are punctuated with psalms about a righteous sufferer. Ps. 41:9 is used in Mk. 14:18 ('one of you will betray me') as if it is a prophetic text now being fulfilled. In the same way, Ps. 42:5,11 and 43:5 are alluded to in the prayer in Gethsemane, in Mk. 14:34 ('I am deeply grieved, even to death'); and on the cross, Ps. 69:21 ('for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink') is evoked in Mk. 15:23 as Jesus is offered wine to drink. But it is Psalm 22 which dominates this sequence: see Ps. 22:18/Mk. 15:24, on the dividing of garments; Ps. 22:7/Mk. 15:29, on the derision of Jesus; Ps. 22:8/Mk. 15:30–31, on the taunting; Ps. 22:6/Mk. 15:32, on taunting Jesus to come down from the cross; and finally, Ps. 22:1/Mk. 15:34, on the cry of dereliction, uttered in Aramaic: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' So Mark's use of the psalms is profoundly theological: three psalms illustrate Jesus' conflict with the authorities and his future exaltation (Psalms 2, 110 and 118), and four others demonstrate that his exaltation can only be achieved through the path of suffering (Psalms 41; 42–3; 69; 22).⁹

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Matthew has more allusions to psalms than Mark, in part because he also uses them didactically, to highlight Jesus' teaching. One example is the formulaic phrase 'Blessed is the man' (for example in Ps. 1:1, although the phrase occurs nearly thirty times in the Psalter), which is used in the Beatitudes in Mt. 5:2–12: this link back to the teaching of David shows Jesus as the teacher whose authority supersedes that not only of Moses but also of David. Another didactic use of a psalm is in Mt. 16:27 ('for he will repay everyone for what has been done') which has echoes of Ps. 62:13. A further example is in a psalm which Matthew shares with Luke. Psalm 91 is a didactic psalm, and vv. 11–12 are used in the account of the temptations (Mt. 4:6; also in Lk. 4:10–11). Earlier in the psalm we read of 'terror ... pestilence ... destruction' (vv. 3,5,6), which in the Aramaic version becomes the 'terror of demons ... the arrow of the angel of death'; Qumran includes Psalm 91 in a collection of four exorcism psalms (11QapocrPs) so its contents make it an appropriate psalm to be 'perverted' by the devil: 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself

⁹ On the use of the Psalms particularly in Mark, see A.Y. Collins (1997); J. Marcus (1992); and R. Watts (2004).

down [from the temple]; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you ... on his hands they will bear you up ...' (vv. 11–12). The didactic lesson here is that just as Jesus resists false routes to power, by implication, his disciples must do the same. Two other psalms are also used didactically by both Matthew and Luke: Mt. 7:23 ('Go away from me, you evildoers') is also in Lk. 13:27 and is a reference to a Greek version of Ps. 6:10, and Mt. 13:32, on the birds of the air nesting in the trees, is also in Lk. 13:27 and taken from Ps. 104:12.

Elsewhere Matthew uses psalms, alongside other Old Testament quotations, to show how Jesus' life and words are in fulfilment of scripture (Mt. 1:22–23; 2:15, 17–18, 23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:25; 21:4–5; 27:9–10). Mt. 13:35 is from a psalm: Ps. 78:2 ('I will utter my mouth in a parable ...') is used to explain how Jesus' teaching in parables is in fulfilment of prophecy. (Matthew may have had Is. 29:13–14 in mind, but Ps. 78:2 also fits the citation.) It is clear that Matthew thought of David the psalmist as a prophet: elsewhere, without an explicit fulfilment quotation, he marks out stages in Jesus' life to show implicitly how the words of the psalms are being fulfilled. In Mt. 3:17 and 17:5, Ps. 2:7 is used in the account of Jesus' baptism and transfiguration, like Mk. 1:11 and 9:7; Ps. 110:1, used in Mk. 12:36, is found in Mt. 22:44; Ps. 118:26 is used in Mt. 21:9, as in Mk. 11:9–10, and it occurs again in Mt. 23:39, after Jesus' lament over Jerusalem. (The fact that Psalm 118 is an important Passover psalm makes its use here, as Passover draws near, all the more apt.) Psalm 8:2 is cited in Mt. 21:16, with prophetic implications: in the psalm the young infants are singing praises to God, and here they are in the crowds praising Christ upon his entry into Jerusalem. Ps. 118:22–23, on the rejected stone becoming the head of the corner, which occurs in Mk. 12:10–11, is found in Mt. 21:42. The psalms of lament (Psalms 41, 42–3, 69, 22) used in Mark also occur in Matthew; as in Mark, Ps. 22 dominates (Mt. 27:35/Ps. 22:18; Mt. 27:43/Ps. 22:8 [here expanding Mark] and Mt. 27:47/Ps. 22:1).

Matthew differs from Mark in that he uses the psalms more explicitly to show that Jesus is the new David as well as the new Moses – teaching, as did David, through psalmody, and bringing about a fulfilment of the words of the psalms in his own life and death. Like Mark, Matthew has no difficulty turning particular psalms Christwards, to show that Jesus is the son of David by adoption (Pss. 110; 118) and the Son of God by nature (Ps. 2) whose suffering is necessary as it leads to his future exaltation (Pss. 69 and 22).¹⁰

LUKE'S GOSPEL

Luke is unique amongst the Gospel writers in creating psalm-like compositions, following the practices at Qumran and in the Apocrypha. Placed in the mouths of Mary (Lk. 1:46–55), Zechariah (Lk. 1:68–79) and Simeon (Lk. 2:28–32), these 'new

¹⁰ On the use of the psalms in Matthew, see M.J.J. Menken (2004) and S. Van Tilborg (1988).

psalms' speak of the dawning of a new age. Hence like Matthew, the prophetic spirit of psalmody is assumed, although, given Luke's particular liturgical appreciation of psalmody, his way of demonstrating this is different. (The liturgical emphasis is also evident in the way Luke, alone of the Gospels, uses the title 'Book of Psalms' [Lk. 20:42; also in Acts 1:20] and the term 'psalms' [Lk. 24:44; see Acts 13:33,35].)

Nevertheless, the prophetic element is made explicit: Luke follows Mark and Matthew in using Ps. 2:7 at the baptism and transfiguration (Lk. 3:22 and 9:35, with the addition 'My Son, my Chosen ...'). Like Mark and Matthew, Luke also uses Pss. 110 and 118, albeit with a different twist. As in Matthew, Ps. 118:26 is twice used in Lk. 13:35 and 19:38, before the entry into Jerusalem: however, in 19:39 Luke adds 'Blessed is the *King* who comes in the Lord's name', to make his emphasis clear. And in Luke's schema, Psalm 118 comes at both the beginning and end of a journey narrative (chapters 13–19) from Galilee to Jerusalem, a journey which ends in Jesus' death. This psalm is important to Luke: Ps. 118:22 (the 'rejected stone') is alluded to in Lk. 20:17 at the end of the parable about the wicked tenants (it is also used in Acts 4:11, where it combines with Ps. 146): in Luke it shows that Jesus' rejection in Jerusalem, as the new Davidic king, is part of God's plan. Ps. 110:1 ('The Lord says to my Lord ...') is used in Lk. 20:42–3: like Ps. 118, it is another important psalm in Luke, used also in Peter's first speech in Acts 2: 24–35. In the Gospel it shows that Jesus is both the son of David and yet David's 'Lord', and it is used in Acts to show how the disciples have to testify to the same truth.

Luke also takes up the psalms of the 'righteous sufferer' used by Mark and Matthew. Ps. 42:5 is found in Lk. 22:42, Ps. 22:17–18 in Lk. 23:34, and Ps. 69:21 in Lk. 23:36. In chapters 22 and 23, Luke also takes up another lament psalm, 88:4–13, in the allusions to Jesus being forsaken by all his friends. This psalm is most pertinent for Luke: Jesus may be forsaken by his friends, but he is not forsaken by God. Following from this, Luke does not include the cry from Ps. 22:1 ('My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?') on the cross, for this is too radical in its God-forsakenness: he chooses instead Ps. 31:5 ('... into thy hands I commit my spirit ...') in Lk. 23:46. This has links with the ways in which the psalms are used in Acts: Ps. 16:11 is used in both Acts 2:25–8 and 13:35, as a clear statement that God will *not* abandon his Son in Hell. Hence the appropriateness of a committal into God's hands, rather than a cry of dereliction, from the cross.¹¹

JOHN'S GOSPEL

John is perhaps the most unusual of the Gospels in his use of the psalms. He has little interest in royal psalms such Pss. 2 and 110. The only three psalms John uses

¹¹ On the use of the Psalms in Luke, see R. Brown (1993); P. Doble (2004); C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders (1993a); D.R. Jones (1968); C.A. Kimball (1994); N. Lohfink (1994); and J.R. Wagner (1997).

in a way similar to the Synoptics are Ps. 118, 22 and 41. Ps. 118 is used just once, to mark the entry into Jerusalem (Ps. 118:26, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord', in Jn. 12:13). Psalm 22 is also used just once: Ps. 22:18 occurs in Jn. 19:24, and is prefaced by explicit 'fulfilment quotation' ('this was to fulfil what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots"). Ps. 41:9 is found in Jn. 13:18, and again John brings in a 'fulfilment quotation' ('But it is to fulfill the scripture, "The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me") which incidentally reveals in the Greek that John is not quoting from the Septuagint but from another version.

Like Luke, John has his own particular selection of psalms. Instead of using Psalm 110 in the discourse with the Jews about his divine origins, Jn. 10:34 takes up Ps. 82:6, a difficult psalm speaking of God's judgement on the deities of other nations; here it makes the point that those who reject Jesus as God will themselves be judged, like foreign deities, as strangers to God. (Small wonder that the interpretation of this psalm results in an attempted arrest, presumably for blasphemy, in Jn. 10:39.) Not surprisingly, given John's theology about the oneness of the Father and the Son (see Jn. 8:29 and 16:32, for example), John, like Luke, omits the cry of God-forsakenness in Ps. 22:1. Instead, the cry (not echoing any known psalm) is 'It is finished'. Another psalm used by John is 78, rich in references to the exodus from Egypt, which highlights the old exodus/new exodus motifs in Jn. 6:31 (Ps. 78:24–5) and Jn. 7:38 (Ps. 78:16,20): Jesus is seen as the living water and the bread from heaven, giving not only physical food (through the feeding of the five thousand) but also spiritual food and drink, in contrast to Moses' sole material provision of manna and water in the wilderness. Hence in the use of these two psalms Jesus is shown again to be greater than David (through Ps. 82) and greater than Moses (Ps. 78).

John's use of Ps. 69, a psalm of a 'righteous sufferer', is also different from the Synoptics': it occurs three times, and serves as another witness to the way in which Jesus' life and death is a fulfilment of prophecy. The psalm is first found early in the Gospel, at the time of the cleansing of the temple in Jn. 2:17: 'Zeal for thy house has consumed me' is from Ps. 69:9. The reference here may be intentionally profound: Ps. 69:8 refers to the psalmist being forsaken by his mother's sons, and in Jn. 2:12, Jesus has just been with his brothers and mother, before this act of cleansing took him away from them. Psalm 69 further illustrates well John's theme of human forsakenness (though not God forsakenness), as in Jn. 15:25, verse 4 is used ('they hated me without cause') to show how the disciples can expect to be hated as Christ too will be hated. The final allusion is of Ps. 69:21 in Jn. 19:28 ('I thirst').

In all these different ways, the prophetic use of the psalms is uppermost: six of the examples above are accompanied by explicit 'fulfilment quotations' (Pss. 69:9 in Jn. 2:17; 82:6 in Jn. 10:34; 118:26 in Jn. 12:13; 41:9 in Jn. 13:18; 69:4 in Jn. 15:25; and 22:18 in Jn. 19:24) – even more than in Matthew. John assumes the psalms are prophecies and points them Christwards, to illustrate Jesus' eternal sonship from the Jews' own scriptures; like Matthew, he uses the psalms to show Jesus is both

greater than David and greater than Moses. It is significant that the affirmation of Thomas in Jn. 20:28 ('my Lord and my God!') picks up the addresses in the psalms always used of God, which here are applied to Jesus instead.¹²

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Here the psalms partly echo the theology and selection in Luke's Gospel. Often they are used explicitly as 'proof texts'. For example, Pss. 69:25 and 109:18 are used to justify the choice of Matthias in Acts 1:20; and in Peter's brief speech in Acts 4:8–12, the familiar Ps. 118:22 (the 'rejected stone' text) is used again. In three other key speeches, an interesting *midrashic use of psalmody is evident, rather like the way the Qumran texts interwove several psalms together to bring about an 'inner meaning' of the whole. In Peter's first speech in Acts 2:25–36, four psalms serve this end: in just two verses (vv. 34–5) Pss. 16:8–11; 89:4–5; 132:11, and Ps. 110:1 together show how Jesus is even greater than David, for he, unlike David, has risen from the dead. Peter's prayer upon release from prison in Acts 4:24–31 begins with a brief imitation of a thanksgiving hymn (rather like Luke 1–2), but this develops into a speech using both Pss. 146:6 and 2:1–2, to illustrate that 'now' is the time of the dawning of the kingdom of God. In the third speech (this time by Paul) in Acts 13:17–41, Pss. 89:21, 2:7 and 16:10 are used together to argue that Jesus is the Messiah. The use of the speech form to create a commentary on several interconnected psalms is quite different from the method used in the Gospels, although the underlying purpose, to show how the psalms are prophetic texts now being fulfilled, is very like that of the Gospels.¹³

PAULINE EPISTLES

In *Romans*, allusions to the psalms are more common than citations of them. The predominant use is didactic and rhetorical, defending Paul's authority as well as his theological polemic. For example, in a lengthy passage which demonstrates the sinfulness of both Jew and Greek (1:8–3:20), Rom. 2:6 alludes to Ps. 62:13; Rom. 3:4 to Ps. 51:4; and Rom. 3:10–18 is a 'catena' of Pss. 14:1–2 (53:1–2); 5:9; 140:3; 10:7 and 36:1, with a prophetic text (Is. 59:7–8) included as well. In the next passage (Romans 3:21–5:21), which argues for the justification of all sinners who have faith in Christ, Rom. 4:7–8 takes up Ps. 32:1–2 ('Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven ...'). Occasionally, like the Gospel writers, familiar psalms are

¹² On the use of the Psalms in John, see *J. Ashton (1991)*; *J. Beutler (1979)*; *M Daly-Denton (2000 and 2004)*; *B.G. Schuchard (1992)*.

¹³ On the use of the psalms in Acts, see *C.K. Barrett (1994)*; *W.H. Bellinger (1990)*; *R.I. Denova (1997)*; *P. Doble (2004)*; *J. Dupont (1962)*.

used to show how Christ has fulfilled the prophecies of the old covenant: Rom 8:34 uses Ps. 110:1 to demonstrate that Jesus is greater than David, and Rom. 15:3 uses Ps. 69:9 to show Jesus as the righteous sufferer.

Another related use of psalmody is to remonstrate with the Jews. Although Paul uses more examples from the Law and the Prophets, Rom 11:9 takes up a psalm, namely 69:23–4 ('Let their eyes be darkened so they cannot see ...') to show that the Jews' resistance to the Gospel is in part providential. Rom. 10:18 uses a psalm to defend the mission to the Gentiles: Ps. 19:4 ('Their voice has gone out to all the earth'), originally referring to the glory of God over the created order, now refers to how the Gentiles have understood the Gospel in ways the Jews cannot comprehend. Rom 15:9, adapting the Greek, uses Ps. 18:49 ('I will extol thee amongst the nations') again to defend the mission to the Gentiles; Ps. 117:1 ('Praise the Lord, O nations') is used similarly in Rom. 15:11. This is just a selection of the mosaic of psalms which defend the various themes in Paul's arguments in Romans: they are basically used as proof-texts, for instruction and for doctrine, so that a psalm's original meaning is less important than its contemporary appeal, with a key reason for their inclusion being their support for the mission to the Gentiles.

Other than in Romans, Paul's use of psalmody is not as extensive as texts from the Law and the Prophets. *Galatians* has just two allusions: in Gal. 2:16, Ps. 143:2 is used as part of an argument about God's justice ('Enter not into judgement with thy servant: for no man living is righteous before thee') and Gal. 3:16 alludes to Ps. 89:4–5, in its reference to an eternal covenant, but these are far from clear. Similarly in *1 and 2 Corinthians* the references are allusive. 1 Cor. 3:20, in the debate about the nature of wisdom, may be an allusion to Ps. 94:11; 1 Cor. 15:27, on the relationship between the church and Christ, may echo Ps. 8:7 ('all things are put in subjection under him'); 2 Cor. 4:13, on Paul's need to speak out in adverse situations, may allude to Ps. 116:10; and 2 Cor. 9:9, on giving to the poor, suggests Ps. 112:9. The use of the psalms to support Christian doctrine and practical morality has correspondences with the way psalmody is used in Romans.¹⁴

OTHER EPISTLES

Hebrews reflects a distinctive use of psalmody. Sometimes the writer uses a *pesher* commentary on just one psalmic text: Heb. 2:5–8 makes lengthy use of Ps. 8 ('... you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor ...' [v. 5]) to illustrate the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus; similarly Heb. 3:7–4:1 uses Ps. 95:7–11 several times (3:12–19/Ps. 95:5; 4:1–5/Ps. 95:3; 4:6–10/Ps. 95:2; 4:11–13/Ps. 95:11) in the plea for the people to repent ('today if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart'), applying the psalm to the present

¹⁴ On psalmody in Pauline literature, see *J.P.G. Dunn (1998)*; *C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders (eds.) (1993a)*; *A.M. Harman (1969)*; *R.A. Harrisville (1985)*; *R.B. Hays (1993)*; *S.C. Keesmat (2004)*; *F. Mussner (1986)*; *C.D. Stanley (1992)*; *D.M. Swancutt (2004)*; *H.H.D. Williams (2004)*.

moment. Another didactic use of psalmody is in Heb. 10:5–10 which takes up Ps. 40:7–9 in the teaching about a spiritual sacrifice being acceptable to God. Other examples are on a theme, taking up a string of familiar psalms (for example, Psalms 2 and 110) as well as other non-psalms, like the use of *catena* at Qumran (for example, 4QFlor) to develop an argument. Heb. 1:5–13 draws from Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14; Deut. 32:43; Pss. 97:7; 104:4; 45:6–7; 102:25–7 and 110:1 in an argument about Christ's superiority over the angels. Heb. 4:14–5:14 is an argument about Christ's eternal priesthood, drawing from Pss. 2:7 and 110:1–4. (Psalm 110:4 is used again to conclude the same point in Heb. 6:20.) Sometimes psalms are introduced by a formulaic quotation; at other times they are just alluded to. Sometimes they are used to address Christ as God; at other times they are used to describe his divine nature. The use of the psalms in Hebrews is complex, not least because the writer, rather like Philo, is as well versed in Platonic philosophy as in Jewish midrashic exegesis, so that what emerges is a good example of Jewish and Hellenistic exegesis of psalmody, seen through a Christian lens.¹⁵

1 Peter is notable for its use of the familiar 'rejected stone-text' (Ps. 118:22–3) found in 1 Pet. 2:4 and 7. (1 Pet. 2:4–10 uses a typical *catena* of texts, from the prophets and the law as well as from this psalm, under the theme of Christ as the 'corner stone' and the church as 'living stones'.) But it is Ps. 34, used only here within the New Testament (with the possible exception of Ps. 34:20 in Jn. 19:36), which makes 1 Peter most interesting: 1 Pet. 2:1 ('Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice ...') may well be alluding to Ps. 34:13; 1 Pet. 2:3 ('taste and see that the Lord is good') more clearly uses Ps. 34:8. And in the heart of the letter, 1 Pet. 3:10–12, Ps. 34:12–16 creates a long homily on loving one another. Both the psalms are connected with the key theme of this letter: Ps. 118 provides the model for the rejected/exalted Christ, and Ps. 34 offers a model of archetypal suffering which the church must expect if it is to follow Christ.¹⁶ Hence in this letter we see especially the didactic use of psalmody is more apparent than prophetic use.

Ephesians is interesting in its use of Psalms 8 and 110 in Eph. 1:20–3. These two psalms are also used together in Hebrews and 1 Corinthians, as seen above, but *Ephesians* illustrates best why these two psalms occur together: their combined meaning is that the one who sits at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1) is the one who has put all things in subjection under his feet (Ps. 8:6). Both psalms are thus now about the exaltation and dominion of Christ. Psalm 8 was originally a hymn to God the Creator, and Psalm 110, a psalm addressed to the king: it is interesting how much their meaning has changed. *Ephesians* is also noteworthy for its unusual use of Ps. 68:18 in Eph. 4:8–10, and provides a good example of the difficulty of knowing which Greek version the writer used. In the Hebrew, the text clearly reads 'you have *received* gifts among men', and the LXX translates this accordingly. But

¹⁵ On the use of the psalms in Hebrews, see D.R. Anderson (2001); H.W. Attridge (1989, pp. 21–58, 113–121; 2004); P. Enns (1997); *L.D. Hurst* (1990); S.E. Kistenmaker (1961); D.F. Leschert (1995).

¹⁶ On the use of psalms in 1 Peter, see S. Woan (2004).

Eph. 4:8 reads ‘when he ascended on high ... he gave gifts to men’. It may be that the author is refuting a way in which the psalm had been used in Jewish liturgy: a rabbinic text, Meg31a, refers to the use of this psalm at the Feast of Weeks (i.e. the festival of Pentecost) whose focus was on the *receiving* of the law from Moses on the mountain. The Christian writer here is stating that, whereas Christ *descended* from the mountain, he also *ascended* (to heaven) thus showing himself superior to Moses, and so was able to give the ‘new law’ (the Spirit of Pentecost) to his church. Here we see Jewish/Christian polemic packed tightly into the different translations of this one verse. These three psalms in Ephesians may not seem much: but they together offer another illustration of the use of psalmody in the early church.¹⁷

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The psalms are important here because of their teaching about God’s judgement on the nations and the salvation of the faithful. Occasionally psalm-like compositions, both hymns and laments, are used to make this point (for example, Rev. 4:8,11; 5:9–10; 7:15–17; 11:17–18 (see Ps. 95:1); 15:3–4 (see Ps. 86:8–10); 16:5–6; 18:4–8, 10, 14, 16–17, 19–20): these illustrate the influence of both psalmic forms and psalmic language, if not specific psalms. But it is the use of Psalm 2 – which typifies both positively and negatively the themes of judgement and salvation referred to above – which is most significant. In Rev. 2:26–27, the motif of the ‘iron rod’ (see Ps. 2:8–9) is used to highlight the authority of the church over the nations. The same use is evident in Rev. 19:15, which depicts the rider of the white horse (symbolizing the church) having power over the nations. A more negative use of Ps. 2:8–9 is found in Rev. 12:5, which refers to the male child born of a woman (where the enemy power is Rome). Ps. 2:1–2, by contrast, is alluded to in Rev. 11:15,18, which depicts God’s sovereignty over the nations. Interestingly, Ps. 2:7, used so frequently as a prophetic text concerning the nature of Christ, does not appear at all in Revelation; nor is any other psalm like it specifically cited. The use of the psalmody here is much more subtle, without any specific proof texting.¹⁸

In conclusion, it is clear that the New Testament writers use the psalms both didactically and polemically. The didactic use has many similarities with the ways in which non-Christian Jews used psalmody; by contrast, their polemical use, reading psalms as prophecies now being fulfilled within the life of the Christian community and thus illustrating the superiority of the new covenant of Christ over the old covenant of David, is more divisive. It marks a break with the Jewish practices of reading psalmody throughout the first millennium BCE, and develops into a sophisticated approach throughout the period of the early church fathers.

¹⁷ On the use of the psalms in Ephesians, see T. Moritz (1996; 2004); J. Muddiman (2004).

¹⁸ On the use of the psalms in Revelation, see D.E. Aune (1997); J. Paulien (2001); S. Moyise (1985; 2004).

The Psalms as Prophecies in the Church Fathers

As the Jewish-Christian communities and then Gentile-Christian communities were established beyond Jerusalem and Palestine, and later beyond Caesarea and Antioch, and further into Asia Minor, Greece and Rome, the Graeco-Roman setting influenced another change in the way the psalms were read by Christian commentators. The emphasis was still polemical, but not so much to confront Jewish ways of reading the psalms as to respond to criticisms of Christian theology from Greek (often *neo-Platonic) philosophy. In addition, the second- and third-generation Christians had to confront an increase in divergent Christian beliefs and the rise of heresies (in part due to different Hellenistic contexts), especially about the nature of Christ's relationship with God. Again, the psalms were used as part of the discourse in refuting heresy, but this time with a different audience and a different purpose from the New Testament writers.

This period culminates, somewhat artificially, with the *Council of Chalcedon in 451. Throughout this time over twenty Greek or Latin writers produced commentaries or homilies on the psalms which are still extant today. Up until the time of Origen (184–254) the medium, like that of the New Testament, was more by way of letters, homilies, tractates; from Origen onwards, the genre of 'exegetical commentaries' begins to develop and expand. Throughout all this period, the psalms familiar to the New Testament writers are still very much in use – Psalms 2, 8, 110 and 118 as psalms testifying to Jesus as the 'new David' and Psalms 22 and 69 as witnessing to Jesus as the 'righteous sufferer'. In addition, other psalms which received little attention in the New Testament gain prominence, of which the most notable are Psalms 1, 34 and 45. The dominant interpretation of psalmody is still Christocentric, although, as will be seen, the approach gradually departs from the more Jewish-centred prophecy/fulfilment bias of the New Testament writers.¹⁹

THE APOLOGISTS

A Jewish audience is still presumed by some of the early Christian writers, known as *Apologists. Of these, *The First Epistle of Clement*, possibly written by Clement,

¹⁹ Concerning the popular use of Psalms 1 and 45 in this period, relevant works include, on **Psalm 1**, D.A. Koch (1994); J. Maier (1987); and C. Waddell (1995); on **Psalm 34**, L.O. Eriksson (1991); and on **Psalm 45**, R.C. Hill (1993). More general works on the use of the psalms by the early church fathers include *J. Allenbach (1975–7)*; *D.L. Balas and D.J. Bingham (1998)*; P.F. Bradshaw (1995); B.E. Daley (2002 and 2004); B. Fischer (1991); *E. Fergusson (ed.) 1990, 1998*; *R.P.C. Hanson (1970)*; *W. Horbury (1988)*; J. Irigoien (1994); O. Linton (1969); *R. Loewe (1957)*; *R.N. Longenecker (1975)*; J.M. Neale and R.F. Littledale (4 vols.: 1874–9); C. Reemts (2000); M.-J. Rondeau (1982–5); *M. Saebo (ed.) (1996)*; *F. Young, L. Ayres and A. Louth (eds.) (2004)*; The two most helpful websites for consulting texts in English translation are www.earlychristianwritings.com and www.ccel.org/fathers, and these will be referred to with respect to particular commentators.

Bishop of Rome, c.96 CE, uses the paraenetic approach of Philo, but here the psalms highlight the moral teachings of Jesus rather than the laws of the Pentateuch, thereby illustrating the superiority of Christ over David rather than – as did Philo – of Moses over David. The best example is in 1 Clement 36, concerning the use of Psalm 34 (a psalm used in 1 Peter); v. 1 says ‘Come, children, listen to me!’ which Clement interprets as Christ addressing us. 1 Clement 36 intersperses some thirty-two psalms with verses from Heb. 1:5–14: this illustrates well that, by the end of the first century, the psalms still had an authoritative use for Jewish Christians, alongside the New Testament.²⁰

Justin Martyr (c.100–65), born in Palestine but mainly living in Rome, had contacts with non-Christian Jews and thus read the psalms, as did the New Testament writers, for their prophetic worth. His *Dialogue with Trypho* (c.160) uses Psalm 22 in this way. Not only was it unusual to offer a Christian exegesis of one entire psalm, but the emphasis throughout on this being a prediction of the passion of Christ is striking. Justin also uses this psalm in his other works: referring to Ps. 22: 16–18 (‘My hands and feet have shriveled ... they stare and gloat over me ... they divide my clothes among themselves’) Justin contends that ‘David, the king and prophet, who says these words, has not suffered any of these things. But Jesus Christ had his hands stretched out’ (*I Apol.* 35.6). The speaker of Psalm 22 is therefore Christ, not David, whose words were later to be fulfilled. What is new here is that Justin’s reading is as much influenced by Greek neo-Platonism as it is by Jewish *midrash. Jesus Christ is now viewed as the timeless Word of God, and references to this Word pervade the psalms, sometimes speaking of Jesus’ life, sometimes of his death and resurrection. Three examples must suffice. In Ps. 110:1 (‘The Lord says to my Lord ...’) and Ps. 45:6 (‘Your throne, O God, endures for ever’) are not in fact addresses to the king, but rather, because they could be speaking about two natures in the Godhead, they point towards ‘the divine Christ’. Similarly, because Ps. 24:7–8 (‘Lift up your heads, O gates ... that the King of glory may come in ... who is the King of Glory?’) cannot refer to Solomon, as the community would know who he was, it must refer to Christ; and because it cannot refer to the Temple gates (which have been destroyed), the allusion must be to the gates of heaven; thus the meaning of the entire psalm is that it points to Christ’s ascent into heaven (*I Apol.* 51; also *Dial.* 36 and 85).²¹

Irenaeus, c.130–200, Bishop of Lyons, uses Pss. 110 and 45 in a similar way to Justin. In two relevant works, *The Proof of Apostolic Preaching* and *Against Heresies*, the entire Old Testament – not only the Psalms – is subsumed under the category of the prophetic. However, the psalms are especially useful for a prophetic focus in stating the supersession of Christianity over Judaism. Unlikely psalms – also used by Justin – such as Ps. 21:5 (‘splendour and honour thou dost bestow on him’) and

²⁰ See S. Jellicoe (1972), and www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-lightfoot.html.

²¹ See O. Skarsaune (1987); also www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.iv.i.html (on *Dialogue with Trypho*).

Ps. 3:5 ('I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the Lord sustains me') are used as witnesses to Christ's death and resurrection. But Irenaeus goes beyond Justin in his choice of other psalms. Not only Psalm 22, but also Psalm 69 (also used in the Gospels) testifies to Jesus' death and resurrection. And not only Psalm 24, but also Psalm 68 (vv. 17 ff.: 'Thou didst ascend the high mount') witnesses to Christ's ascension; not only Psalm 45, but also Psalm 132 (not least vv. 1–2 and 11 where David 'swears to the Lord') show Christ's authority over David and his rightful claim to be the Messiah because of his divine and human nature.²²

Of the writings of *Tertullian of Carthage*, c.160–220, three relevant Latin works offer different examples of his use of the psalms to argue against opponents of the Christian faith. In *Answer to the Jews*, Tertullian (a convert at the age of thirty-seven) argued, like Irenaeus, against the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament in general, using the psalms as illustrations of their misappropriation by the Jews. Tertullian uses Ps. 19:4 ('their voice has gone out into all the world') rather like Paul's use of this psalm in Romans, to show how salvation for the Gentiles has been prophesied in the psalms; whilst Pss. 132:17 ('I have prepared a lamp for my anointed one') and 72:15 ('May gold of Sheba be given to him') testify to Jesus as the Messiah prepared by David, fulfilled in part by the visit of the Magi at his birth (*Against the Jews*, Chs. IX and X). *Against Marcion* argues, conversely, against *Marcionism and its preference for New Testament scriptures over the Old, and here Tertullian uses the psalms as a bridge between the two covenants. He does this not only by taking psalms which have a positive evaluation of the Law (Psalms 1 and 119 in particular) but also specific verses, such as Ps. 82:1 ('God has taken his place in the divine council, in the midst of the gods he holds judgement'), which speaks, he argues, of other beings being judged as non-gods (*Against Marcion*, Bk. II Ch. XIX and Bk. I, Ch. VII; see also John 10:34). In *Against Praxeas* Tertullian contends with Christian *Gnosticism in general and with Praxeas in particular, in their denial of the divine nature of Christ as well as the Trinity. It begins with a quotation from Ps. 91:11 ('he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways'), also used in Jesus' Temptations, to show how Praxeas is sowing similar seeds of doubt in the church at Rome as the devil tried to do to Christ (ch. I). Tertullian then uses the psalms to show how the divine nature of Christ is clearly evident in the psalms – typically, he uses Ps. 45:7 and 110:1 (chs. IV, XI and XIII). This is why Christians can use the psalms as an address to Jesus Christ as God: Tertullian uses Pss. 96, 23 and 34 in this respect.²³

Although the authentic writings of *Hippolytus of Rome*, c.170–235, are difficult to establish, a few commentaries on individual psalms in Greek, and fragmentary

²² See www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.i.html (*Against Heresies*).

²³ See *T.P.O'Malley* (1967); also www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.iv.ix.i.html (*Answer to the Jews*); www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.v.iv.ii.i.html (*Against Marcion*); www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.v.ix.i.html (*Against Praxeas*).

verses on other psalms, are likely to have come from his hand. Like Tertullian, Hippolytus's works often address both the Marcionites, with their negative view of the Old Testament, and the *Montanists, with their enthusiasm for contemporary prophecy in the church. To show that the Old Testament has an inherent value, and that prophecy has an ancient foundation, Hippolytus selects various psalms to show their worth as prophecies, pointing to the life and death of Christ. He speaks of the Psalms providing us with a 'new doctrine' after the law of Moses, in that it was David, more than Moses, who was deemed worthy of bearing the name of the Saviour. His commentary on Psalm 110 refutes Christian Gnosticism by way of a 'florilegium' which intersperses psalms with other biblical texts to create an overall Christological bias. And his commentary on Psalms 23 and 24 shows how Ps. 23 is about the death of Christ, and Ps. 24, about his resurrection and ascension. Taking Psalms 1 and 2 together, Psalm 1 is (surprisingly) about the birth of Christ; Psalm 2, about his passion.²⁴

Both Tertullian and Hippolytus also give us insights as to how the psalms were viewed by their Gnostic opponents, who invented their own copies (the expression '*psalmoi idiotikoi*' applied to all sorts of private compositions, but certainly included those of the Gnostics) in order to disseminate their own doctrines in hymnic forms. We know that a *Mandean Gnostic called Valentinus (c.100–175 CE) composed his own psalms; that by the third century the *Manicheans also composed their own copies – the more mystical *Psalms of the Festival of Bema* (Mercy Seat) and the *Psalms to Jesus* trace their origins back to this time; and, somewhat later, a sixth-century Gnostic work, *Codex Brucianus* from Upper Egypt, has examples of Gnostic hymns which echo the psalms ('... Hear me as I sing praises to thee, O Mystery who existest before every incomprehensible one ...'). It is clear that this type of imitation, defying the way the psalms were used as an increasingly important resource for the defence of orthodox Christian doctrine, was a popular way of offering an alternative belief – not of the hidden Christ redeeming mankind by his life and death, but rather, of human effort to reach the light of God. Both Tertullian and Hippolytus refer to such works, the latter explicitly. In *Philosophumena* V 10, which is a refutation of yet another Gnostic sect called the Naassenes who also denied the divinity of Christ, Hippolytus speaks of the ways in which they devised their own 'bible texts and psalms'. Hence the appeal by the Apologists to authentic biblical psalms is also in part to show up the counterfeit versions. It is small wonder that the Synod of Laodicaea in Phrygia, some time between 341 and 381 CE, stated that it was not permitted that privately composed psalms be read out in church, but only those in the canonical books.

²⁴ See www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-05/anf05-17.htm#P2768_891774 (a general work on the psalms) and www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-05/anf05-17.htm#P2773_892838 (commentaries on Psalms 2, 23–24 and 110).

Alexandrian Commentators

The early Apologists were constantly searching for hidden meanings which highlighted in varying ways the presence of Christ in the psalms. This is not such a large step from the ways in which the so-called *Alexandrian commentators of the eastern churches evince an allegorical reading of Scripture. Relevant writers include *Clement* (150–215), *Origen* (184–254) and *Athanasius*, Bishop of Alexandria (296–373). The real difference is one of emphasis – not so much ‘proof-texting’ from the psalms as using them as illustrations for a now more established body of Christian doctrine. Yet again, Philo of Alexandria’s allegorical exegesis was an influence, and these writers applied to the psalms (and so to Christ) what Philo applied to the Pentateuch (and so to Moses). Greek philosophy was also of paramount importance: although there was still a small Jewish community in Alexandria, the most influential opponents of the Christian faith were Gnostics.

Clement spent most of his time in Alexandria, although he had to flee to Caesarea in his later years to avoid persecution. Like Justin Martyr, *Clement* uses the idea of Jesus as the eternal word (the ‘*Logos*’), and thus assumes that in the ancient psalms (more ancient even than Platonic philosophy) Jesus is eternally present. Ps. 78:1–2 (‘... I will utter my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old’ – a verse also used in Matthew’s Gospel) is a key text in *Stromata* 5.32, which is a collection of miscellaneous sayings, for *Clement* sees that the reference is to the *Logos* opening up his mind to unlock the enigmatic truths of Scripture. There is, however, an important difference from Justin: when using familiar psalms such as 2, 45 and 110, *Clement* sees them as ‘witnesses’ to Christ, by David, rather than spoken by Christ himself, the inner meaning of which Christ the *Logos* can make clear. *Clement* understands that the eternal meaning (relating to Christ) is found in the temporal words of a psalm (spoken through the mouth of David). The psalms illustrate Christian doctrine and Christian living, rather than the reverse: thus *Clement* provides an important bridge between the essentially prophetic use of psalmody and the more allegorical use which succeeded him.²⁵

Origen of Alexandria wrote some nine homilies on the psalms and commentaries on probably three of them (although Jerome reports the number to be some 120 homilies on sixty-three psalms and forty-five commentaries on forty psalms). From what limited extant material there is, it is clear that *Origen*’s real gift is his ability to combine a textual, philological approach to the psalms (he was conversant in Hebrew, as his work on the **Hexapla* reveals) with a philosophical, *Logos*-based doctrine which was a development of *Clement*’s allegorical approach. *Origen* was concerned on the one hand with the way that Judaism had failed to see the ultimate reality of Christ within the psalms; and on the other, with the way the Greeks still failed to see within the whole Old Testament the revelation of a God greater than their way of thinking. So in addressing Jews, *Origen* can compare the different readings in the Greek and Hebrew texts of Ps. 2:11–12 (‘serve the Lord

²⁵ For *Clement*’s writings in *Stromata*, see www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.vi.iv.i.v.html.

with fear, with trembling kiss his feet') where he writes in detail as to what the expression 'kiss his feet' means, and he can speak about the Greek misquotation of Ps. 91:11–12 in Lk. 4:10–11 as 'the devil's exegetical blunder' (for how could Christ need the help of angels if he were the Son of God?); and in addressing Greeks, he can take Ps. 16:10 ('for you do not give me up to Sheol ...') and Ps. 68:18 ('You ascended the high mount ...') as witnesses to the resurrection and ascension of Christ respectively (*Homil. in Lucam* 10 and 27). Another significant aspect of Origen's studies of the psalms is his writing on the changes of speaker (an approach whose roots are already in Justin's and Tertullian's works), and he argued that the 'I' could be the human Christ identifying with humanity as well as the divine Christ vindicating his church. This way of reading became known as 'prosopological exegesis', influencing Augustine's interpretation of psalmody some 150 years later.²⁶

Athanasius' exegetical use of the psalms is best seen in his *Letter to Marcellinus*, whose subject matter is how to interpret the Psalms. (This text was, by a strange sequence of events, included as a preface to the Psalter in the *Alexandrian Codex, and this popularized the work more than might have been expected.) In the letter, Athanasius outlines two categories of psalms – those which echo the movements of the soul (for example, Pss. 3; 11; 12; 51; 54; 56; 57; 142) and those which announce the coming of Christ (Pss. 87; 45; 2; 22; 88; 69; 138; 24; 47; 110; 72) (*Letter to Marcellinus* 27). Athanasius contends that the psalms are different from any other Old Testament book in this respect; firstly, they alone can take us through the voice of David to Christ himself, and secondly, they alone can help us recognize in them our own voice: they are like a garden, containing in one place everything necessary for our salvation, the human and the divine (*Letter to Marcellinus* 2, 10, 11, 12). Hence both the moral and prophetic qualities of the Psalter are emphasized together; if there is a search for inner meaning, this is for personal, spiritual instruction. Athanasius concludes that no extraneous alterations are to be made for the Psalms: they are to be chanted and sung in all their simplicity (*Letter to Marcellinus* 31). Furthermore, the personal piety of the psalmists, addressing our human needs, anticipates the Incarnation: this approach, demonstrating how the Incarnation was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, served Athanasius well in his stance against *Arianism. In brief, Athanasius saw the 'skopus' (or goal) of all Scripture to be the person and work of Christ, to whom the Psalms, more than any other book in Scripture, bear witness. This has similarities with Origen's approach, but with a more spiritual and personal slant because it is seen through one particular letter.²⁷

²⁶ For Origen's general works, see www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-04/anf04-40.htm#P6085_1027786. For his works on the psalms, see *Excerpta in Psalmum I, VI, XV, XVIII* MPG 12:1076–84, 1092–96; also *Libri in Psalmos (Praefatio et Fragmenta in diuersos Psalmos in catenis)* MPG 12: 1053–76, 1409–1686; MPG 17: 105–49.

²⁷ For the text of the letter, see www.athanasius.com/psalms/aletterm.htm. In addition to the general works referred to earlier, more particular studies on the use of the Psalms by Alexandrian Commentators include J.M. Auwers (1994) and J. Carleton Paget (1996) on the Greek fathers; R.P.C. Hanson (1959), E. Muhlenberg (1987), and M. Wiles (1970), all on Origen; and G.C. Stead and H.-J. Sieben (both on Athanasius).

THE CAPPODOCIAN FATHERS

Of the *Cappodocian fathers, only *Basil of Caesarea* (330–79) and *Gregory of Nyssa* (335–95) wrote specifically on the psalms. Basil wrote some fifteen homilies on the psalms which have much in common with Athanasius': the Law, the Histories and Proverbs offer a special sort of teaching, but the use and profit of all three was to be found in the Psalter (*Prefix to Psalm 1*). Basil has a particular, practical slant. His homily on Ps. 15, for example, is about right behaviour, particularly regarding usury, but this is directed to the Christian, not the Jew; the Christian's ultimate goal is not the earthly city (Ps. 15:1) but heavenly Jerusalem. At times Basil leans towards allegory: he reads Ps. 29:3, 'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters', as a reference to the baptism of Christ, and because Ps. 45:6 ('Your throne, O God, endures forever ...') is an address to Christ, the reference to myrrh in Ps. 45:8 refers to his birth and his burial. Nevertheless, overall the moral and spiritual appeal of the psalms is to the fore, with less evidence within the homilies, at least, of contending with the Christian heresies which so absorbed earlier Alexandrian writers on the Psalms.

If Basil is closer to Athanasius in his use of the psalms, *Gregory*, his brother, is closer to Origen. His work on the titles of the psalms (*In Inscriptiones Psalmorum*) is unique up to this point in time in the way it deals with the Psalter as a whole, rather than individual psalms. Gregory takes the five books of the Psalter and sees within the separate titles to each psalm a progressive account in five stages (what Gregory, following Greek philosophical terminology, calls '*akolouthia*' or sequence of changes) of the ascent of man's soul towards God (towards what is termed '*taxis*', or the given order of things). This progressive view of psalmody is not concerned with their chronological development in the history of Israel, but rather it is interested in a spiritual and mystical progression. For example, Psalm 1 concerns the quest for blessedness, with its sapiential teaching about the avoidance of evil; Psalm 2, so rich in Christian allusions since the time of the New Testament, is not developed in this way at all; according to Gregory, it is the consequence of Psalm 1 – what the one who seeks to be blessed can expect, namely victory over evil as promised by God. Psalm 3 continues this idea, in personal terms, and so on. Although Gregory never denies a specific Christian exegesis (indeed, his idea of '*theoria*' or meditation clearly points Christwards), his focus on the individual soul is very different from the prophetic proof-texting of some of the New Testament writers and early Apologists. His is a more mystical, neo-Platonist view in his sense that psalmody is about the origin and goal of the human soul: several scholars have noted shared concerns between Gregory and the later Proclus Diadochus (c.410–85), who was the last of the great Platonic teachers and was schooled in Alexandria before he taught in Athens. The Christian influences upon Gregory were undoubtedly Origen, Basil and to some extent Athanasius, in their mutual search for the *skopos* of psalmody (although for the other three this was expressed in relation to the person and work of Christ rather than the ascent of the soul to God). There may be rational difficulties in Gregory's expositions of some titles of the psalms;

but that he offers a unique contribution to the reception of the Psalter as a whole cannot be denied.²⁸

ANTIOCHENE COMMENTATORS

Although they too were writing mainly in Greek for the eastern church, the *Antiochene commentators represent a very different approach to psalmody. Of these, the church historian *Eusebius* (260–340), Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, offers an intermediate position, being less attracted to ‘speculative’ readings and more engaged with the textual and historical tradition. Origen had a great influence on Eusebius, the two having spent time together during the *Diocletian persecution when Origen had fled to Caesarea, and Eusebius was attracted as much to Origen’s philological approach as to his allegorical method. Being concerned to bring some order into the ways in which the psalms had been used in their references to Christ, Eusebius used Origen’s prosopological approach in order to identify, more analytically, the different speakers in the psalms. For example, in Ps. 2:7 (‘You are my son; today I have begotten you’), David could not be ‘begotten of God’; so this must refer to God addressing Christ. And in Ps. 16:10 (‘For you do not give me up to Sheol’) and in Ps. 30:3 (‘O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol’) David could not have returned from Sheol, so again, this must refer to Christ (*Demonstratio evangelica* II 16,1–8; III 2,71). By contrast, where the psalmist confesses his sin (Psalm 51) or his integrity (Psalm 26) the ‘I’ cannot be Christ: David is the speaker. Eusebius’ *Commentary on the Psalms* (of which only Psalms 51:1–95:3 are extant) is a combination of a prophecy/fulfilment reading with a more literal and historical analysis. Eusebius’s summary of the entire Psalter, by way of his reference to the titles of the psalms and their contents, became particularly well known owing to its inclusion in an introduction to the Psalms in the Alexandrian Codex, along with Athanasius’ *Letter to Marcellinus*.

Three other writers of the Antiochene school use a more thoroughgoing historical approach with respect to psalmody. The first, *Diodore of Tarsus* (died c.390) tutored the other two, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (350–429) and *John Chrysostom* (347–407) at Antioch. *Diodore’s* legacy (one which some scholars admittedly have doubted) is a critical commentary on some fifty-one psalms; these he saw as a poetic gloss on the history of Israel from the time of David to the time of Hezekiah, and so served as a kind of commentary on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Samuel–Kings. According to Diodore, the psalms are about Hezekiah, not about Christ; David is still seen as the author of the psalms, speaking prophetically – but about Hezekiah,

²⁸ On the use of the Psalms by Basil, see www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf208.vi.ii.iii.html and *Homiliae super psalmos* MPG 29: 209–494. For translated texts of Gregory’s commentary, see R.E. Heine (1995); for secondary literature, see W. Bloemendaal (1960); M. Canevet (1983); A. Meredith (1996); H.P. Nasuti (2005); J. Reynard (1997); M.-J. Rondeau (1974).

not about Christ. For example, Diodore (in *Commentarii in Psalmos I–L*) reads Ps. 29 against the backcloth of the Assyrian attack in Hezekiah's day, quoting 2 Kings 19:35–6 as its background (the reference to the waters in v. 3, the cedars in v. 5, the oaks in v. 9a and the Temple in v. 9b are all read in this light). Similarly Diodore protests that Ps. 22 cannot be about Christ, who needed no confession of sin, but (taking this further than Eusebius) can only refer to Hezekiah's guilt, as in 2 Kgs. 19. In fact, very few psalms apply to Christ: the only convincing examples are Pss. 2, 8, 45 and 110.

Theodore of Mopsuestia, Bishop in Cilicia, also reads the psalms historically, but sees the fulfilment of David's 'prophecies' not in the time of Hezekiah and the Assyrians, but at the time of the exile in Babylon, and later still, in the days of Zerubbabel and the Persian restoration. Theodore's commentary on the psalms was his first work, and his comments on some eighty-one psalms are still extant. Refuting the neo-Platonic and allegorizing tendencies of the Alexandrian school, and following Diodore, his teacher, the historical context is thus all-important, although (with no knowledge of Hebrew, unlike his tutor) Theodore still sees that the meaning ('*dianoia*') of the psalms is as important as the bare text ('*lexis*'). The psalms are all inspired by the spirit of David; David is a prophet; but prophecy's fulfilment is within the confines of the Old Testament. Following Diodore, a Christological interpretation is found in only four psalms: Pss. 2, 8, 45 and 110.

Theodore differs from Diodore in his more extensive use of 'typology'. He argues that the historical 'types' are contained within the Old Testament (from David through to Hezekiah and to Zerubbabel) and only rarely can one move, typologically, into New Testament times. His dictum could have been 'clarify Homer with Homer' – i.e. the psalms must be interpreted within the bounds of the Old Testament itself. For example, of Psalm 22, he argues that those who, in the light of the opening verse ('My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'), apply it to Christ are 'guilty of no little rashness'. Hence the relevance of the psalms is in the light they shed on Old Testament religion; Theodore's rationale is to establish Christianity's roots firmly in Jewish soil, not in Greek religion. Accused of being too much of a Jewish sympathizer in this approach, Theodore responded by rejecting the Jewish titles of the psalms and replacing them with more fitting comments summarizing the contents of the psalm, following the tradition already initiated by Eusebius of Caesarea. Perhaps in the light of Gregory of Nyssa's commentary, Theodore vigorously refutes the value of the psalm titles (which at this stage were also discussed in a Syriac version as well as the Greek) in illuminating this quest. (Somewhat incongruously, Theodore's cautious, more literal reworking of these titles was used in the ninth-century Paris Psalter (containing some fifty psalms in prose) and so also became known in the western churches: it was even copied into early Irish Psalters as well, as will be illustrated in a later chapter.)

John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, also a student of Diodore, modified this approach. As well as offering information about Israel's history, the psalms had a unique didactic and spiritual value. In his homilies on over fifty-eight psalms, the historical context of the psalms is still a primary concern; precision of comment

is all-important, and Chrysostom uses typology much less than Theodore. Most of Chrysostom's works on the psalms (4–13, 44–50, 109–18, 120–50) were delivered as homilies on particular occasions for the church in Constantinople, and their homiletic and practical bias is very clear. Chrysostom's concern with finding precepts for Christian morality in the psalms was in part a reaction to the more mystical and allegorizing approaches of the Alexandrians, and he avoided, as much as possible, the Christianizing of psalmody: in fact Ps. 110 was the only psalm where he offered some Christian application through typology, advocating that Christ must be the Lord spoken of by David in verse 1 (*Expositiones in Psalmos 110*). Having a strong incarnational theology, whereby he believed that God in Christ accommodated himself to our human weakness, his pastoral, homiletic stance, with its emphasis on the importance of good works, resulted in his being accused of *semi-Pelagianism.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393–460), Bishop in Syria, was in part responsible for the abolition of Tatian's **Diatessaron* in the Syriac church (c.423). This resulted in the increasing use of the *Peshitta* (Syriac) translation of the four Gospels and the Psalter. The Psalter had been translated into Syriac from the Hebrew, probably in Edessa, by the second century CE – whether by Jews or Christians is unclear, because it shows influence of the Jewish *Targums* and rabbinic sources as well as of Christian commentators in the eastern churches. The *Peshitta* became the standard Syriac text for the Psalms from the fifth century onwards and this promoted Theodoret's commentary on all 150 psalms. This has survived, but it is the prologue, explaining his method, which is the most interesting. Trying to avoid both an overly historicizing approach and too much of a moralistic bias, both of which claimed too much Jewish history and Jewish morality for the Christian cause, Theodoret (arguing against Theodore here) contended that the psalms must be interpreted not as a case against the Jews, but rather as prayers and prophecies for the household of faith. He sets out clear divisions between the literal and the typological approaches, although the literal/historical is still most important: Psalms 29, 30 and 33 pertain to Hezekiah, for example. Typology is only allowed when the speaker could not possibly be a human Davidic king (i.e. again, in Pss. 2, 8, 45, 110 – and, surprisingly, Ps. 22 and 72). Much of Theodoret's ministry was clouded by the divisions between orthodox Christianity and *Nestorianism, and his interpretations of the human and divine Jesus in the psalms led to his being accused of semi-Nestorianism.²⁹

²⁹ Studies on use of the psalms by the Antiochenes include a general work by J.J. O'Keefe (2000), with specific works by Eusebius such as *Commentarius in Psalmos* found in MPG 30:81–104; MPG 23:441–1221. See also secondary literature such as Theodore's reading of psalmody by R.A. Greer (1961); R.C. Hill (2004); M. Wiles (1970b) and D.Z. Zaharopoulos (1989). Studies on Chrysostom and psalmody include R.C. Hill (1997; 1998a, 1998b). Works on Theodoret include B. Croke (1984) and J.N. Guinot (1994). Studies on the Syriac Psalms and the Peshitta include W.E. Barnes (1904); W. Bloemendaal (1960); S. Hidal (1996); R.J. V. Hiebert (2005); J. Lund (1988; 1995); L. van Rompay (1996); H.F. van Rooy (2005); A. Vogel (1951); and M.P. Weitzman (1982; 1999).

OTHER COMMENTATORS OF THE EASTERN CHURCH

Three other significant contributors to the reception of psalmody, whose works in different ways influenced commentators in both the East and West, deserve mention here. The first represents that growing trend in new compositions imitating psalmody; the second is significant for his mystical yet practical work on how to pray the psalms; and the third is important for a commentary of the psalms which quotes and draws from the accumulative wisdom of the past.

Ephraim the Syrian (306–73) became a member of the church at Edessa, which, since the second century, had been heir not only to the Aramaic culture, but was also as close to the Graeco-Roman world in the West as it was to the Persian culture in the East. Hence the eclectic nature of Ephraim's hymns and prayers, which were popularized before the *Peshitta* translation of the psalms was established and before the Synod of Laodicaea which banned privately composed psalms for church use. Ephraim's compositions were designed to be sung by alternating choirs of nuns, as a means of countering the *Arian heresy of Bardesanes (a Syrian Gnostic poet) through Christian verse. Many of these compositions imitated psalmody in their use of strophes and refrains, of experimentation in rhythm and accent, rhyme and assonance, and acrostic forms. Ephraim's liturgical and doctrinal adaptation of psalmody was an important inspiration for western writers of hymns such as Ambrose of Milan, as will be seen shortly. One example, echoing the style of first two verses of Psalm 1, and illustrating how one could find the two natures of Christ in the psalms, reads:

Blessed is the one who has not tasted
the bitter poison of the wisdom of the Greeks.
Blessed is the one who has not let slip
the simplicity of the apostles ...
Nature and Scripture
together carry
The symbols of his humanity
and of his divinity.

The second commentator is perhaps the best known of the Desert Fathers for his writings on psalmody and prayer. *Evagrius Ponticus* (345–99) spent time with the Cappadocians such as Basil in Caesarea and Gregory in Constantinople, and from there, via Jerusalem, with Alexandrians such as Origen, until he eventually joined a monastic community in northern Egypt. There he completed his *Scholia* on the Psalms. Evagrius assumed the Psalms summarized the whole of Scripture, and saw Christ the Creator and Jesus the one created present throughout them. Tradition has it that he prayed the psalms 100 times daily, each time followed by a period of silent prayer; *Scholia* is an exposition of the relationship between these two aspects of prayer, and Evagrius offers a dialectical relationship between an active engagement with the language of psalmody, with its rich imagery and vivid, diverse

life-settings, and a more passive and receptive period of silent, apophatic prayer. Despite his being condemned of semi-Pelagianism by Justinian some 150 years later, Evagrius' work on the healing properties of psalmody was a huge influence on Christians, both monastic and lay, in both East and West, who used his writings as instruction on psalmody as a way of fighting temptation.

Hesychius of Jerusalem (dates uncertain: died c.433? 451), wrote in the midst of the Nestorian and Arian controversies, and continued an Alexandrian approach to psalmody. Although much of his life and works are shrouded in obscurity, *Fragmenta in Psalmos* is attributed to him. This is essentially a mystical commentary, showing the mystery of Christian dogma hidden in the psalms. Hesychius' greatest contribution was in the way he used other Christian commentators to interpret and give authority to his own works. This type of expansion to a commentary became known as the *'Gloss', and Hesychius was among the first to use it in a Greek work on the Psalms. It is most likely that he is the 'Hesychius' referred to frequently by writers using a more extensive (Latin) Gloss in the Middle Ages.³⁰

Thus by the fourth century, the Christian use of the psalms, at least in the eastern churches, was becoming quite diverse. Most writers still agreed that the psalms were 'prophetic', but they understood 'prophetic inspiration' in different ways, and by the end of this period, a prophetic interpretation of the psalms was simply another way of offering a 'Christocentric' reading of them. It is nevertheless possible to identify three specific emphases. The most cautious one, exemplified by the Antiochenes, who were wary of the excesses of allegorical readings, was to see prophetic inspiration contained within the limits of the Old Testament alone; in this case, a more historical bias and practical application was given, with little emphasis on Christianizing the psalms. A second approach, begun by some of the New Testament writers, was to see prophetic inspiration within both the Old and the New Testaments, and to allow typology as the bridge between the two, whereby 'types' from the life of Christ (his birth, baptism, temptations, transfiguration, passion, death, resurrection, ascension) were prefigured in verses in the psalms. A third emphasis, seen especially in the Alexandrian approach, is to argue that the Old Testament is a temporal shadow of the eternal reality encapsulated in the New Testament. Here, a more allegorical approach dominates, and very little historical empathy is required: the Christocentric reading is primary, and this thus allows for a 'prophetic approach' in the broadest, neo-Platonic sense.

COMMENTATORS OF THE WESTERN CHURCH

Most of the Alexandrian, Cappodocian and Antiochene commentators belonged to that part of the Roman Empire which by 330 under Constantine represented

³⁰ On Ephraim, see S. Brock (1983²; 1998); S. Griffith at syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/vol1No2/HV1N2Griffith.html; also K.E. McVey (1989). On Evagrius, see L. Dysinger (2005); J. McKinnon (1994); M.-J. Rondeau (1960); C. Stewart (2001). On Hesychius, see *M. Aubineau (1978–80)*.

Greek-speaking eastern Christianity, with Constantinople as the centre, and patriarchies in Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria, as well as in Rome. When we move across to Rome and to the Latin fathers of the western church, less diverse interpretations are evident. In part this is because of a prevailing pastoral and instructional emphasis throughout the western churches, still dominated at this time with the controversies related to the Arian heresy, a response to which resulted in emphasizing the spiritual meaning of psalmody in the life of the church. The best way of illustrating this is to take in turn the four great commentators of the western church (Hilary, Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine – the latter three later known as amongst the fathers of the western church, along with Gregory the Great, to be discussed later).

Hilary of Poitiers (315–67) wrote several homilies on the psalms. His paramount concern was the need for careful exegesis. Thus different psalms are expounded in different ways. Here Hilary develops Origen's prosopological method concerning the different speakers of the psalms. For example, in his introduction to Psalm 1, he speaks of the need to attend to the 'voice of the prophet'; this is quite different from the 'voice of the Father' in Ps. 89:19 ('I have exalted one chosen from the people, I have found my servant David') or the 'voice of the Son' in Ps. 18:43 ('... people whom I had not known served me ...'). In his *Homilies on the Psalms*, it is clear from a reading of Psalms 1, 53 and 130 that Hilary uses the psalms not to create doctrine, but rather, to illustrate it. In *Tractatus super Psalmum*, his actual commentary on the Psalms, of which Pss. 1–2, 9, 15–16, 53–71, 93 and 120–50 remain, his exegesis of Ps. 137 ('By the waters of Babylon, we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion') is a good illustration of the way he sought to combine both literal and allegorical readings (again, following Origen). First, Hilary gives attention to the questions about the meanings of the Babylonian irrigation system, the nature of the musical instruments and the types of willow trees; but then he moves on to reflect upon the spiritual longing for a secure resting place with God, a longing which is then applied to the Christian community in Hilary's day (perhaps a response to the uncertainties evoked during the reforms of Justinian, in which period Hilary is probably writing).

Jerome (342–420) represents a more cosmopolitan background, having been influenced by centres of Christianity in the East as well as the West. Born and brought up near Rome, his time in Antioch and Caesarea influenced his views of the literal and historical approaches to psalmody, whilst a period in Constantinople brought him under the influence of Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappodocians. From there he travelled to Egypt, where he was taught by an Alexandrian exegete, Didymus the Blind. It was his time in Bethlehem that saw the culmination of his works on the psalms, amongst which were three revisions and one translation of the Psalter and two commentaries on selected psalms which each reflect the eclectic nature of his theological method. For example, concerning translation, Jerome identified with Origen in understanding the inspiration of the psalms to be in the meaning they convey, not in the single words: 'sense for sense not word for word'. In Rome, between 382 and 385, he had revised the old Latin version of

the Psalter (the 'Vetus Itola', a second-century text from North Africa, which became known as the 'Psalterium Vetus'), and then made a second revision by using the Greek versions, creating the 'Psalterium Romanum'. In Caesarea, between 386 and 387, Jerome had made use of Origen's *Hexapla, and from this had revised the (Latin) liturgical text of the Roman church, which became known as the 'Psalterium Gallicanum'. In 391–3, almost certainly in Bethlehem, he provided a new translation in Latin by use of the Hebrew (the 'Psalterium Hebraicum' or 'Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos'): this was for popular use, although the 'Psalterium Gallicanum' became the best known because of its liturgical value, and, despite the plethora of other Greek and Latin versions at this time, this was the version which was included in Jerome's *Vulgate. Jerome's translation was a remarkable feat at a time when there were no vowels in the text, no guides to pronunciation, no grammars, dictionaries or concordances to help with the Hebrew.

The fragments of Jerome's *Commentarioli* comprise annotations of psalms, which illustrate, like his translations, a concern for philology as much as interpretation. His *Tractatus* – a composite work on the psalms – reflects a more spiritual approach. The several different comments on the same psalm show his diverse emphases and methods: for example, in the *Commentarioli* on Psalm 1, Jerome asks why the psalm has no title, and, writing in Latin, compares it with the Hebrew and Greek. In *Tractatus*, his comments on Psalm 1 compare the psalm to a door of a great building, where the Holy Spirit gives the key through which the 'righteous man' can enter and so learn to be like Christ through acquiring the gift of wisdom (the 'tree' in v. 3 symbolizes wisdom). Hence Jerome not only avoids the Alexandrian reading, which identifies the ideal figure as Jesus Christ, but he also refutes the Jewish (and indeed Antiochene) belief that the ideal figure within this psalm might be King Josiah: rather, for Jerome, the saint is anyone and everyone who has been saved by Christ.

Ambrose of Milan (339–97, at one time tutor of Augustine) combined a more pragmatic reading of psalmody (like Hilary of Poitiers) with a neo-Platonist and more allegorical approach (like Origen), both of which enabled him to Christianize the psalms as much as possible. As Bishop of Milan (which by 352 was the capital of western Europe), his *Expositio Psalmi* sets a different trend in its attempt to give the psalms a 'sacramental discourse' within the teaching of the Roman church. For example, his *Expositio Psalmi* cxviii (Ps. 119 in our English versions), dating from about 388 CE, is a work of twenty-two addresses to his congregation, each one consisting of one psalm division. It is read both in a practical human-centred and theological Christ-centred way, with a concern throughout for its place in the life and teaching of the church.

Ambrose's ecclesial concerns resulted in his most distinctive contribution to the reception of the psalms: that of their role within liturgy. Although the eastern churches, represented by Diodore of Tarsus and Theodoret of Cyrhus, had encouraged antiphonal singing, a tradition which seems to have been passed via Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 11:19–30), and although Ephraim the Syrian established the tradition of singing hymns based upon psalms, its real development

in the West is credited (at least, by Augustine) to Bishop Ambrose. He initiated a tradition which became known as 'Ambrosian Chant', and the psalms played a central part within it. Both congregation and choir were used, creating a **schola cantorum*, where music – often elaborate and ornate – was learnt and preserved. The music in Milan, composed in the context of the ongoing battle against Arianism, often had an eastern influence, adopting anti-Arian hymns from the East (like those of Ephraim) in order to protect the community at Rome from Arian heresy. (This is a curious reverse situation of the ways in which earlier the Gnostic heretics at the time of Justin, Irenaeus and Tertullian had composed their own copies of psalms – '*psalmoi idiotikoi*' – to detract from the Christian use of authentic psalms.) Several hymns today trace their origins back to Ambrose: of these, '*Aeterne rerum conditur*' ('*Eternal Creator of the World*': HAM No. 17) has clear overtones of Psalm 12; whereas '*Deus Creator Omnium*' ('*Lord, Creator of All Things*'), '*Iam surgit hora tertia*' ('*Now as the Third Hour begins*') and '*Veni Redemptor Gentium*' ('*Come Redeemer of the Nations*') are full of psalmic allusions from hymns of creation (for example, Psalms 8, 19, 33, 101 and 139) and the enthronement psalms (93–9). But authentic psalms were also used: in the Eucharist, they were sung antiphonally, in what has since been termed the Ambrosian Rite, between each of the readings from the Old Testament (usually the Prophets), Epistles and Gospels; often a further psalm was read, and other psalms were usually sung before and after the Lord's Prayer.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) was born near Carthage, and after becoming a Christian, served the North African churches for most of his life. During his time in Milan (from about 387 onwards) he was baptized by Ambrose and his mentor's allegorical and Christianizing approach to the psalms undoubtedly influenced his own interpretation. Augustine's interest in psalmody was inspired by the comfort he had gained from the psalms shortly after his conversion from *Manicheism in 390: it was precisely their suspicion of the Old Testament, and so of the psalms, which drove Augustine towards psalmody: 'My God, how I cried to you when I read the Psalms of David, songs of faith, utterances of devotion which allow no pride of spirit to enter in! ... How they kindled my love for you!' (*Confessions* 9.4.8.) His great work *The City of God* opens with a quotation from Ps. 87: 3 ('Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God'). Not only the *Confessions*, but also letters and sermons, resound with explicit and implicit references to the psalms, which, in terms of his commentaries and works overall, were second only to the Gospel of John: on his account, Augustine made his own revision of the Psalter, probably using the Gallican Psalter.

Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* is the only collection of expositions on the *entire* Psalter from any of the fathers of the western church (this includes no fewer than thirty-two sermons on Ps. 119, all around 422, which coincided with his refutation of Pelagianism). Most of these expositions are from sermons preached at Hippo (Pss. 1–32, from some time between 392 and 396; Pss. 111–18, from c.400; and Pss. 120–34, c.406–7) although some are from his time at Carthage.

Hence the liturgy in which the sermons were preached gives them a distinctive church-based application. Many were influenced by Augustine's refutation not only of Pelagianism but also of *Donatism, and here, Augustine was able to use the psalms to illustrate a more universal ecclesial base for the Christian Gospel. He does not defend the old arguments of looking for *either* literal readings *or* inner meanings of the psalms; instead, he holds together a moral and Christological reading of the psalms and sees that the bridge between these two interpretations is the Christian church.

Taking the now developed prosopological reading, with its interest in the different speakers and different addressees in the psalms, Augustine proposes there are only two participants: Christ speaking as himself, as it were, as the 'Head', and Christ speaking on our behalf, as the 'Body', thus holding together the human voice (the voice of Christ through the Church) and the divine voice (the voice of Christ as the risen and ascended Lord). Hence Psalm 22, for example, with its cries for help, can be seen as '*Christ the Body*' speaking through the church (although in another sermon he notes that this could be Christ himself, 'whole Christ, man and God'). By contrast, Ps. 2:8 ('Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage' is '*Christ the Head*' speaking, gathering together all the Gentiles into the one universal church. This is both a mystical and a homiletic approach to psalmody; it could be argued that its minimal attention to details literal and historical, and its thoroughgoing Christocentric approach, take it more in the direction of Alexandria than Antioch. Indeed, Augustine's unusual use of numbers in *Enarrationes in Psalmos* also takes him in an allegorical direction. For example, 'The Sheminith' in the title to Psalm 6 is interpreted as 'the octave', whereby the number eight signifies the day of Judgement, whilst his preoccupation with the numbers 3 (standing for the soul), 4 (the body), 7 (the human being), 10 (the Creator) and its multiples and additions (12, 40, 50, and even 153, as in Ps. 50) in other psalms further illustrate this bias. But overall, it was his method of using the psalms as the voice of Christ and the church working together which took the reading of psalmody into an altogether new direction.³¹

³¹ On Hilary and psalmody, see A.G.S. Anyanwu (1983); for selected texts from Hilary's *Homilies on the Psalms*, see www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf209.ii.vi.ii.i.html. Jerome's commentaries on psalmody are mostly in fragmentary form: see www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.iv.IV.html; for *Commentarioli in psalmos* see G. Morin (ed.) *CCSL 72* (1959) and *CCSL 78* (1968); and for *Homilies on the Psalms* see M.L. Ewald FC 48, 57 (1964, 1967); also C.M. Cooper (1950); J.C. Howell (1987); R. Kieffer (1996); D.P. McCarthy (1992); A.S. Pease (1907); *H.F.D. Sparks* (1970). On Ambrose's works as they relate to psalmody, see www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf210.iii.vi.html; also *H.J. auf der Maur* (1977); M. Petschenig CSEL 62 (1919) on Psalm 119; T.K. Carroll (2000) and H. Leeb (1967). For Augustine's expositions of psalmody, see www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf108.ii.i.html and www.newadvent.org/fathers/1801.htm; also V.J. Bourke (2001); P. Bright (1997); D.E. Dekkers and I. Fraipoint (eds.) (CCSL 38, 39, 40, 1956, 1990); E.T.S. Hegbin and F. Corrigan (eds.) (ACW 29 1960); S. Poque (1986); J.W. Wiles (1995); D.F. Wright (1996).

Liturgical Adaptations of the Psalms

Christian Liturgy

Thus far the interpretation of the psalms since New Testament times has been assessed only from the contributions of significant Christian thinkers, noting in particular the trends of using the psalms didactically, polemically, and (in the cases of Origen, Jerome, and Augustine) as revisions or translations. Another important aspect of psalmody in this period – referred to briefly in the discussion of Ambrose – is the increasing emphasis on the psalms in Christian liturgy, and the practice of psalm-singing by ordinary believers, whether in Greek, Syriac or Latin.

It is all but impossible to trace any clear development of the standardized use of psalms in Christian liturgy throughout this period. That there were set hours of prayer in the morning and evening in some Christian communities is clear from the time of Clement of Rome (*1 Clem 40:1–4*) at the end of the first century, and Tertullian of Carthage, over a century later (*On Prayer* Ch 25). By the beginning of the third century, Hippolytus of Rome's *Homily on the Psalms* makes a plea for the churches to use the Psalter as a whole (the emphasis is very much on Psalms 1–2 as a Prologue to the Psalter) rather than individual psalms from here and there. By the middle of the third century, Eusebius of Caesarea (*Commentary on Psalm 64*) refers to the regular use of Psalm 141 for evening prayer and Psalm 63 for morning use. John Chrysostom (*Commentary on Psalm 140*) also speaks of Psalm 141 being chanted daily, as also Psalm 63 in morning prayer. He speaks of all types of worship having 'David first, last and midst', whether in church, at home, in the forum, in monasteries, or in the desert, a theme echoed by Jerome (*Epistle 46*) who speaks of the psalms being used in the fields as well as in the church, showing just how much the psalms were both memorized from liturgy and used in everyday life. The Greek *Apostolic Constitutions* (regulations for church order in Syria in about 380 CE) also prescribe the use of Psalm 63 for the morning and Psalm 141 for the evening. In the western churches, the Latin *Ordo Monasterii* (c.395 CE) describes regular psalms in the morning service (Psalms 63 and 90), whilst the travelling monk, John Cassian, notes in his *Institutes* that in the western monastic tradition, Psalms 63 and 119 were always used at the sunrise service, and Psalms 148–50 (known as 'lauds', from the Latin, 'hymns of praise') along with Psalm 51 were used at the first morning service. The use of Psalm 119 for morning prayer is further illustrated by Ambrose of Milan (*Expositio Ps. 119*), as also Psalm 141 at evening prayer (*Hexameron V 12:36*).

Clearly these practices were not uniform, but they give interesting information about the early use of psalms in liturgy. In terms of daily worship, the 'controversial' psalms, such as 2, 8, 45, 72, 110, 118 and 132, are hardly evident. Instead, the more personal psalms, whose 'themes' correspond with the everyday rhythm of prayer, are more prominent. Ps. 141:2 ('Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice') thus suits evening

worship; whilst Ps. 63:5 ('I meditate on you in the watches of the night') fits with early morning prayers, as do the complementary moods of praise (Psalms 148–50) and confession (Psalm 51) at the beginning the day. Each of these psalms was of course given a Christian 'overlay' in the additions of antiphons, doxologies and the '*Gloria Patri*', so that the overall effect, albeit less polemical than in the writings of the fathers, was still the 'Christianizing' of psalmody.

By the fourth century, monastic communities were fully established in the desert regions of Egypt, Cappodocia and Syria. The *monastic office* grew out of these communities, with different emphases in different places. In Scetis, near Cairo (according to John Cassion, who stayed there 380–99 CE, recorded in his *Institutes Books II and III*) there were two main offices, morning and evening, when, at each office, twelve psalms were read by a soloist, whilst the monks sat and prayed; after each psalm, they stood, prostrated themselves, and stood again, all in silent prayer. With the increasing number of psalms on Saturdays and Sundays, the whole Psalter would have been read in a week; some Syrian communities are known to have recited the whole Psalter even in a day, and, as we have seen, ascetic monks such as Evagrius Ponticus apparently achieved this 100 times a day. Of all the citations from and allusions to Scripture in Egyptian works such as *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* from Egypt, the Psalms occur almost three times as many as any other Old Testament book (Isaiah and Genesis being the next most frequently used), only to be succeeded within Scripture as a whole by references from the Gospel of Matthew. And within the Syrian tradition, a work such as Theodoret of Cyrrihus's *A History of the Monks in Syria* reveals a similar phenomenon: the constant use of psalmody – often reciting some fifteen or twenty at a time – and the rumination upon them throughout the day armed the monks in their struggle against evil and in the formation of a holy life dependent only on God in a way no other biblical text could do. 'Prayer succeeded prayer, prayer succeeded psalmody, and both again were succeeded by reading the divine oracles ... (and so) he put to sleep desire, anger, pride, and all the other wild beasts of the soul' (*Cyrrhus*, on the monks Marcianus, Publius and Zenon: pp. 38, 59 and 90).

Other monasteries were established near cities, where the practice was quite different: for example, near Bethlehem, where Cassion also stayed (382–3), there were offices at cockcrow (nocturn), sunrise (matins), then at the third, sixth and ninth hours, and in the evening, making six 'hours', with selected psalms, and a continuous reading of other psalms, at each. Basil of Caesarea refers to the seven hours of prayer in the monasteries of Cappodocia – one less in the morning, but three in the evening (Vespers, Compline, and the Midnight Vigil), where again selected psalms were read along with the continuous reading of other psalms; together these formed the main part of the office. 'Seven hours of prayer' was becoming the norm, with traditions differing in terms of one or two morning or one or two evening offices: hence the significance of Ps. 119:164 ('Seven times a day I praise you ...'). The practice in monastic communities was to memorize the psalms by heart; postulants – many of whom would be illiterate – were required to learn as many as they were able, before being admitted. The assumption here was

that the psalms embraced all Scripture, and therefore to learn them by heart (along with parts of the New Testament) was to embrace the essence of the Gospel.

After the so-called 'Peace of Constantine' in 312, with the gradual building of new churches and the burgeoning of public worship, the daily **cathedral office* became more important in churches both eastern and western. This office was clearly influenced by the monastic tradition, but it modified the seven or so hours of prayer to two – morning and evening prayer, thus encapsulating the rising sun and lighting of the evening lamps as symbols of Christ, the light of the world. The cathedral office was different in its emphasis on ritual, ceremony (with lights, incense, processions) and chant (with responsories, antiphons and hymns, usually performed by 'cantatorii') and it had a variety of ministers (bishops, presbyters, deacons, readers, psalmists). The selective use of a few appropriate psalms was more central than the continuous reading of a series of psalms in the monasteries, although it is clear that psalms were read continuously in some traditions: the Ambrosian rite, itself a combination of the monastic and cathedral offices, completed the Psalter overall once every two weeks, and the Roman and Gregorian rites, usually once every week. Throughout the western churches, by the third and fourth centuries, the tradition of hymn-singing – testified to as early as Tertullian, but better documented by the time of Ambrose – allowed the congregation further access to the psalms by way of imitated forms. Furthermore, the psalms were read in the cathedral eucharists through the liturgy of the word, after which the congregation often heard a homily on the psalms, as seen by Augustine's sermons, which were preached on the lectionary psalm.

As for the cathedral office in eastern churches, an intriguing fourth-century account of the liturgical use of the psalms in Jerusalem (in the early 380s) is given by a travelling Spanish nun named Egeria, who, in her description of an entire liturgical year, refers, for example, to the many liturgies of Holy Week, when psalms were both read and sung to depict dramatically the sufferings of Christ, after which the Gospels were read to explain how the psalms had been fulfilled in the life of Christ. Another example from the fourth century is from the church in Ethiopia, which divided the Psalter into fifteen parts, reading thirty psalms each day from Monday to Saturday, and the entire Psalter and New Testament canticles on Sunday. There was an emphasis on the reading and singing of psalms *per se*, rather than imitations of psalmody: Canon LIX of the Synod of Laodicea in 363 actually pronounced that 'No psalms composed by private individuals ... may be read in the church'. It is no overstatement to conclude that, in both East and West, monastic and cathedral traditions together bear witness to the ways in which the Psalter pervaded worship in ways more diverse than any other biblical book.³²

³² Works which have informed this survey, both generally and specifically, include *D. Burton-Christie* (1993); G.P. Braulik (2004); P.F. Bradshaw and L.A. Hoffman (1991a); R.T. Beckwith (1995); H. Buchinger (1995); *D.J. Chitty* (1995); *J. Daniélou* (1956); C. Jones, G. Wainwright and E. Yarnold (1978); J.A. Lamb (1962); *J. Mateos* (1967); R.E. Murphy (1992, 1994); K.S. Pedersen (1998); A. Stewart-Sykes (2001); W.F. Storey (1977); R. Taft (1986, 2004); Theodoret of Cyrrhus (ETr R.M. Price 1985); R.J. Tournay (1988); B. Ward (1975); and G. Wolfenden (1990).

Jewish Liturgy

Thus far it might appear that the only vibrant use of psalmody was in the Christian tradition. This is obviously not so: indeed, the tradition of morning and evening prayer has its origins in Judaism, both in the practice of the two daily sacrifices (probably before the Temple was destroyed), but certainly in later synagogue Sabbath practice. Not surprisingly, Jewish communities, having survived the fall of the Temple in 70 CE and their final expulsion from Jerusalem in the mid-130s, and then having been dispersed through the same regions as Christian communities, were seeking to re-establish their own identity. They, like the Christians, had suffered dreadfully during periods of persecution – for example, those of Trajan (111–13) and Marcus Aurelius (161–80), particularly in Gaul, Rome and North Africa, but especially those of Decius (249–51) and Valerian (253–60), when they were ordered to sacrifice to the Roman gods or be killed, and Diocletian (284–305), when their books and buildings were destroyed, and leaders of the community were deprived of their rights. Indeed, the Jews fared worse than the Christians. After the conversion of Constantine (312), the position of Christians in society gradually strengthened (with one notable exception in this period being Julian the Apostate's restoration of Hellenistic pagan practices between 361 and 363), whereas Jews, like pagans, were constantly disenfranchised and under attack. In these times, Jewish practices of prayer based upon their psalms were almost as important as the teachings from the Torah and Prophets; and, given that the Christians were appropriating these sacred prayers above all other texts as *their* sacred literature, the practice of keeping psalmody alive in the Jewish tradition was vitally important.

So although there were no particular Jewish commentators of the psalms throughout this period (Jewish exegesis being more of a developing process, in that it was beginning to amass abundant rabbinic literary traditions, but without the series of independent writings which exemplified the Christian tradition), the Psalter nevertheless had a prominent place in the liturgical traditions of Jewish communities. The psalms were used not only in Hebrew but also in Greek. They were also accessible by the end of the period under discussion in Aramaic, through the Targums, whose date of compilation is probably somewhere between the fourth and sixth centuries CE; this vernacular translation and explanatory commentary on the Hebrew text provided a unique resource for Jewish exegesis, for it was a vernacular edition of the Psalter which was not used by Christian writers in the same way that the Septuagint was.³³

One of the best ways of understanding the use of psalmody in Jewish liturgical practices is by reference to the Mishnah. As a Hebrew commentary on the Torah,

³³ Because the date of the Targums on the Psalms is more likely to be sixth century at the earliest, a fuller discussion of the contribution of this translation to our understanding of psalmody has been left until the following chapter, and a list of the relevant literature is offered there.

possibly dating as early as the third century BCE, its six parts contain over forty references to psalms, mainly of prescriptions for reciting psalms in daily life and – somewhat arbitrarily – in times of drought (e.g. Psalms 120, 121, 130 and 102). Services are prescribed three times daily (adding afternoon prayer to that of morning and evening); appropriate psalms (what in Christian tradition became termed ‘proper psalms’) are prescribed for the entire day. Interestingly, these prescriptions are the same as the additional headings in the LXX: Psalm 23 (Hebrew 24) was for the first day of the week, Psalm 47 (Hebrew 48) for the second day, Psalm 93 (Hebrew 94) for the fourth, Psalm 92 (Hebrew 93) for the sixth, and Psalm 91 (Hebrew 92) for the Sabbath. Although the Septuagint has no headings to other psalms for the third and fifth days, the Mishnah also records Psalm 82 for Tuesday and Psalm 81 for Thursday. Although eastern and western traditions varied, Psalms 19, 33, 90, 91, 92, 93, 135, 136 and 145–50 were jointly used in Sabbath liturgy. Ps. 119:12a (‘Blessed be thou, O Lord’) is a repeated refrain in the eighteen Daily Benedictions. The daily liturgy of the *Amidah* (a prayer offered whilst standing) illustrates the way that other psalms were also used in morning prayer (Psalm 30, parts of Psalms 145–50 and Psalm 100 are the most frequently quoted) and in evening prayer (for example, Psalm 134). And for the annual festivals, the Hallel (Psalms 112–18) is designated for the Feast of the New Moon (along with Psalms 98 and 104, owing to their creation themes), Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles (Psalm 12 is to read on the eighth day of this Feast) and the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (along with Psalm 30). In addition, Psalm 7 is to be used at the Feast of Purim, Psalm 47 for the New Year Festival, and Psalms 103 and 150 on the Day of Atonement. Individual psalm verses are to be recited during Sabbath services: for example, whilst putting on the prayer shawl, Ps. 36:7–10 is read (‘How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people take refuge under the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights ...’); and when the Torah scroll is taken from the ark and presented to the people, Ps. 34:3 (‘O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together’) is recited.³⁴

Several observations arise from this list of psalms. Firstly, rather like the Christian use of psalmody in liturgy, the controversial psalms, both within Jewish tradition itself and within the discourses between Jews and Christians (e.g. Psalms 2, 8, 22, 26, 45, 51, 68, 69, 72, 82, 89, 110, 118, 132), receive little attention: clearly liturgical occasions address different needs from polemical concerns. Psalms 2, 72

³⁴ A particularly useful resource on Jewish use of psalmody in this period has been W.L. Holladay (1993), pp. 134–60. More general works on psalmody, prayer and liturgy at this time include P.F. Bradshaw and L.A. Hoffman (eds.) 1991 (a) and G. Wolfenden (1990), both referred to previously; also D. Barthelemy (1996); A. Bastiaansen (1989); M. Bernstein (2005); W.G. Braude (2 vols., 1959); H. Danby (1933); H.H. Donin (1980); I. Elbogen (1993); P. Fiedler (1988); A. Green (ed.) (1986); C. Kessler (1991); J.C. Kugel (1987); R. Loewe (1957); M. Maher (1994); J. Maier (1983); E.M. Menn (2004); J.J. Petuchowski (1972); R. Posner (*et al.* eds.) (1975); S.C. Reif (1983, 1993); G.F. Willems (1990).

and 110, all avowedly Messianic psalms in Christian tradition, hardly receive mention. Secondly, there is very little obvious overlap between Jewish and Christian psalmody in liturgy: although there is no common consensus in Christendom concerning the use of specific psalms for daily use, and although the Christian use of psalms revolves around the seven or more daily offices rather than constant weekly psalms, Psalms 24, 48, 82, 94, 81, 93 and 92 just do not appear frequently in Christian liturgy; the only real correspondence is the use of Psalms 148–50 in the morning prayer of the cathedral office. Thirdly, most of the psalms in Jewish liturgy are taken from the hymns (almost all of them are represented), in addition to psalms of confidence and thanksgiving and the wisdom psalms; very few individual and communal laments are represented – no more than one-sixth, overall. Jewish psalmody in daily, weekly and festival liturgy thus seems to be more about praise and rejoicing than about lament. Fourthly, taking the proportion of psalms used on a weekly basis, those listed above (psalms for one day of the week, or for one day of the year) are far less in number in Jewish tradition than in Christian liturgy. In the latter, the Psalter was read through if not once a week, then once a fortnight or once a month, but this was not a practice in Jewish communities.

A final word needs to be said about Jewish exegetical and didactic studies on the psalms, for from the first to fifth centuries CE they do not appear to have been as pervasive as in Christian communities. It is clear that many, indeed most, of the Christian commentators referred to previously were very much aware of a Jewish audience as well as the Gentile one – hostility to Jewish readings has been evident in the writings of Apologists (for example, Irenaeus and Tertullian), Alexandrians (particularly Origen) and Cappodocians (for example, Basil). The evidence of a large Jewish community at Antioch provoked hostility in the writings of Chrysostom, whilst the works of other Antiochenes such as Theodore and Theodoret often reveal a greater concern for dialogue. And in Jerome's works, the collaborative approach is more evident in his translation work, although a confrontational style is apparent in his expository work. So Jewish-Christian discourse about psalmody was a continuous issue throughout this period. The problem is that most of what we have is from the letters, tractates and commentaries of Christians, so our knowledge of the dialogue, in this period at least, is somewhat one-sided. As far as Jewish rabbinical works were concerned, from the second century onwards the compilation of *Midrashim was proliferating, but, as with the Targums and the Palestinian and Babylonian *Talmuds, the focus in each of these interpretative traditions was undoubtedly on the Law – and to a lesser extent, the Prophets. Although it is clear from the above works that a good deal of study and reflection on psalmody went on, it was not until the thirteenth century that the *Midrash Tehillim*, an important homiletic and liturgical commentary containing Jewish traditions concerning the psalms, was eventually produced: although its origins may be traced back to the third century, it took some thousand years of tradition before its authority was fully recognized. And although by the tenth century onwards Jewish tractates and commentaries (often highly vitriolic, as will be illustrated in a later

chapter) begin to abound, in this earlier period, the evidence for it, as far as the psalms are concerned, is remarkably scanty.³⁵

Concluding Observations

This chapter has shown how the reception psalmody, once focused in the earlier centuries BCE within Syro-Palestine, Egypt and Babylon, becomes increasingly diversified. By the beginning of the fifth century CE, not only had both Jewish and Christian communities spread through all the Mediterranean seaboard as far as Spain to the West and Byzantium to the East, but they had also settled further inland, into Gaul and Ireland, Italy and Greece; centres such as Rome and Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch, Jerusalem and Carthage, Lyons and Caesarea, Edessa and Milan were all significant, testifying to the prominent and abundant use of the psalmody in both faith traditions. This diffuseness, as well as the growing differences between the two faith traditions, will become increasingly evident in the following chapters.

³⁵ Pertinent works on Jewish-Christian controversies during this period include *H. Bietenhard* (1974); *R. Devresse* (1939); *M.J. Edwards* (ed.) (1999); *P.W. Haskins* (1979); *C.H. Kraeling* (1932); *S. Krauss* (1894); *N.R.M. de Lange* (1976a and 1976b), *M. McNamara* (2000), pp. 239–301; *W.A. Meeks and R.L. Wilken* (1978); *M. Simon* (1986); and *S.G. Wilson* (1995);