Psalms 1 and 2: The Prologue to the Psalter

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Psalm 1, with its singular verbs and its solo voice, is about any individual who is devoted to the study of the law. By contrast, in Psalm 2 the subject is a specific individual, namely the king, and addresses three audiences—the Gentile nations (twice), the nation of Israel, and the king. In Psalm 1, God is found wherever the Torah is read; in Psalm 2, God is found in Zion and the Temple. Psalm 1 has been influenced by the moral teaching found, for example, in Deuteronomy and Proverbs, with the emphasis on personal responsibility; Psalm 2 has echoes of the teaching of the eighth century prophets, with the emphasis on divine retribution on foreign nations.[1] So why should such different psalms be read together as one composite psalm?

There are in fact several thematic connections between Psalms 1 and 2. In Psalm 1, the model individual meditates by day and night on the Torah of the Lord (*be-torat yhwh*) and is contrasted with the wicked people around him; in Psalm 2, the ideal king is invited to trust in the decree of God (*ḥoq yhwh*) and is contrasted with the *hubris* of the Gentile nations surrounding him. A sequential reading of the psalms suggests that the king, too, should be subject to the Torah.[2] Psalm 1 ends with the judgment on all the wicked, and Psalm 2 ends with the judgment on the hostile nations. Furthermore, the fate of the godless is described in eschatological terms: Ps. 1:4 offers the image of chaff, with

[1] See P.J. Botha 2005: 518; also Cole 2012: 88.
[2] See Deut. 17:19; also Daly Denton 2010: 54.

Psalms Through the Centuries: A Reception History Commentary on Psalms 1–72, Volume Two, First Edition. Susan Gillingham.
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its associations with harvesting at the day of judgment, whilst Ps. 2: 4–5 depicts God, seated on his heavenly throne, judging the nations.

Throughout their reception these two psalms have frequently been read as a composite unit. One example is a *Qumran psalms scroll, 4Q174, where both psalms are cited together with their apparent interest in the Temple as a conjoining theme.[3] Similarly in several manuscripts of Acts 13:33, Psalm 2 is cited as 'the first psalm'.[4] Early commentators such as *Justin Martyr, in *1 Apol.* 40.8–10 (c. 150 CE) read Psalms 1 and 2 as one continuous narrative of salvation, seeing the first psalm about Christ crucified 'on the tree', and the second psalm as the reason for this—the conspiracy against Christ by Herod, Pilate, and the Jews.[5] Similarly *Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235) views Psalm 1 as a prophecy about the birth of Christ, 'the blessed Man', and Psalm 2 as a prophecy about Christ's passion and death.[6] Jewish commentators similarly read the two psalms together: in *Berakot 9b–10a*, in the Babylonian **Talmud* we read: 'Happy is the man' and 'Why are the nations in an uproar' which form one chapter.'[7] Similarly **Midrash Tehillim* views Psalms 1 and 2 as both referring to the enemies of the Jewish people.[8]

The 'prayers of David' do not begin until Psalm 3, leaving Psalms 1 and 2 out of the sequence. So when were these psalms added to the Psalter? Psalm 2, untitled, has correspondences with Psalms 41 (at the end of Book One), 72 (at the end of Book Two) and 89 (at the end of Book Three). It is likely that Psalm 2 was chosen to introduce Books One to Three, *before* the addition of Psalm 1. Its purpose was to announce the rise of the Davidic dynasty and so give the first three books, which end with the demise of David, a royal focus.[9]

Once the Psalter had further evolved into five books, imitating the five books of the Law, Psalm 1 was probably added, giving the Psalter overall a complementary 'Torah' emphasis.[10] Additions were probably made to Psalm 2 (in

[3] See Gillingham 2013c: 17–22 and pp. 12–14, 26 following.

[4] These include fifth century Latin manuscripts, the sixth century D Codex, and some eighth century Latin manuscripts associated with *Bede: see Gillingham 2013c: 42–3.

[5] See http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.xl.html#-_Ps_1_0_0_0.

[6] The citation is taken from Waddell 1995: 512. See Gillingham 2013c: 48–9.

[7] Psalms 1 and 2 are in fact united in several Kennicott manuscripts (Mss. nos 17, 37, 216, 409 and 505) and in some of the de Rossi versions (mss. nos. 17, 37, 216, 505 [again)], 554, 596 and 782); they are separated in, for example, the Codex Leningradensis, a seminal version for BHS.

[8] See Gillingham 2013c: 68–9, 76–81.

[9] See Barbiero (1999: 50–5 and Rösel (1999: 89–91). On Books 1–3 as an independent collection, see Wilson (1985: 209–28) and Flint (1997: 168–70), who notes that 4QPs^{a}, 4QPs^{c} and 11QPs^{c} each testify to Psalms 2–89 as a separate collection of psalms.

[10] See Hartenstein and Janowski (2012: 4) and Kratz (1996: 1–2 and 8–12). Another possibility is that Psalm 1 was added earlier, at a point when Psalm 119 completed the Psalter, before Book Five was extended up to Psalm 150, thus giving the Psalter an 'inclusio' based on psalms 1 and 119, emphasising the Torah.

verses 10–12, whose textual difficulties suggest some redaction) to create a clearer correspondence between these first two psalms. Three of the linguistic similarities between Psalms 1 and 2 actually occur in 2:10–12 (*derek* ['way'] in 1:6 and 2:12; *ʾabad* ['perish'] in 1:6 and 2:12; and *ʾashere/ ʾashre* ['blessed'] in 1:1 and 2:12). 2:10 and 2:2 have clear correspondences in their concern for the foreign kingdoms and Israel's God, so verses 10–12 create a good conclusion.

Psalm 1: Who is the 'Blessed Man'?

Because Psalm 1 is one of the latest psalms in the Psalter, it has links with earlier texts but has not influenced any other biblical texts.[11] Its primary relationship is with *Psalm 2*: as well as the links between 1:1, 6 and 2:10–12 referred to above, we may also note the use of the root *y-sh-b* to depict the seat of the scoffers in Ps. 1:2 (twice), echoed in Ps. 2:4 which describes God sitting 'enthroned' (*yashab*); the use of *hagah* to describe the reflective murmuring on God's Law in Ps. 1:2 and to depict the sinister growlings of the nations in Ps. 2:1; the use of *yomam* ('by day') in Ps. 1:2 and *ha-yom* ('this day') in 2:7. As with the correspondences noted above, it is difficult to know whether these affinities were due to coincidence or redaction; all we can conclude is that the compilers intentionally connected these psalms together.

An early stage of reception of Psalm 1 is the **Septuagint* translation.[12] At least one shift in theology is visible: an emphasis on a future eschatological hope.[13] This is evident in verse 5, where the Hebrew *lo'-ya**qum**u resha'im ba-mishpaṭ* ('the wicked will not stand') {is translated as *ouk **anastēsontai** asebeis en krisei*. The Hebrew *qum* suggests the idea of the wicked not 'standing up'—in the sense of 'not enduring'—at the time when justice is meted out; the use of *anistēmi* in the Greek suggests the idea of 'rising' (from the dead) when judgment comes.

In **Targum Psalms* one notable difference is in verse 1 ('Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, *nor sit at table in the company* of scoffers') where the verb *s-ḥ-r* ('sit') has been used instead of *y-sh-b* and this implies an idiom 'sit around to dine'.[14] This is

[11] One example of an indirect influence is Jer. 17:5–8, with its extended simile of the tree by the waters: see Gillingham 2013c: 13–17.

[12] On the use of this term for the Greek version, see Gillingham 2013c: 23–4.

[13] On eschatology in the Greek Psalter, see Schaper (1995: 26–30), and for Psalm 1 in particular (pp. 46–8 and 155).

[14] See Edwards 2007: 43.

about shunning 'table fellowship' with those who 'scoff' at the Torah: it suggests the fragile Jewish/Gentile relationships at a later time.[15]

Another difference is in verse 5 where a future interpretation is evident in the phrase 'the wicked will not be acquitted *in the great day of judgement*'. Like the *Septuagint*, *Targum Psalms* makes the fate of the wicked (Gentiles) clear: they will not only fail to be acquitted in any human (Jewish) court of justice, but they also will not be acquitted in the divine judgement, in the Last Days.

In **Midrash Tehillim* over half the commentary on Psalm 1 offers different answers to the question: '*Who* is the blessed man?' (Ps. 1:1). Seven models of 'blessedness' are given.[16] The first is Adam, before he sinned in the garden of Eden; then Noah, who is called righteous (Gen. 6:9) and who (according to *Gen. Rab*. 16:6) mediates the seven laws even the Gentiles are to live by; another is Abraham, 'who did not walk with the sinners of Babel, nor stand with those at Sodom, nor sit with scornful Abimelech…' Moses, however, is not the 'blessed man'. Instead, he imparts blessings: 'Moses blessed Israel with the words *Blessed art thou, O Israel* (Deut. 33:29), so David blessed Israel with the words *Blessed is the man*.' Two other examples of 'blessedness' are the Levites and, surprisingly, the sons of Korah. The seventh figure of blessedness is unnamed, for it is any righteous, law-abiding Jew (Ps. 84:13) for whom the Torah is the Tree of Life.

*Rashi reads the first psalm in the light of the entire Psalter.[17] Much of his commentary uses *Midrash Tehillim:* for example, Abraham exemplifies true obedience (verse 1), even though he lived before the age of the Torah of Moses. Rashi's comment on verse 6 clarifies earlier tradition: this refers not only to the judgements in the synagogues ('the Assembly of the Righteous') but also, ultimately, to God's coming 'Day of Judgement'.[18]

A more expansive example of disputation with Christian readings is found in the commentary of David *Kimḥi. His two objections to Christian exegesis were their doctrines of Law and Messiah: so Psalms 1 and 2 were particularly pertinent.[19] The Law in Psalm 1 is the Torah, transmitted from Moses to David, which has eternal validity for all Jews. Those who neither respect nor keep the Torah are, primarily, Christians.[20]

Christian reception of Psalm 1 started with a very different premise. *Jerome's **Vulgate*, which was the basis for later commentators and *glosses

[15] Stec (2004: 2–3). We might compare this with the use of Psalm 1 to legitimise the Jewish community at *Qumran over and against the Jewish priesthood in the Temple.
[16] See Braude 1959:3–34.
[17] See Gruber 2004: 45–6.
[18] See Gruber 2004: 50–1.
[19] See Gillingham 2008b: 86–7.
[20] See Box and Finch 1919: 10–11.

and manuscript illuminations, is a critical work. We see, for example, an allusion to doctrinal controversies in the phrase in verse 1 '*et in cathedra pestilentiae non sedit*', which evokes an image of teachers in session imparting harmful Christian heresies to their students.[21] In verse 3, the use of '*lignum*' ('wood') and '*aquarum*' ('waters') is significant because this suggests the 'wood' of the cross and the 'waters' of Christian baptism—a point already being made in earlier commentaries and illustrated Psalters, as will be seen below.

Although Psalm 1 was not used in the New Testament, the early church fathers used this psalm to establish Christian theology. One early writing, the *Epistle to *Barnabas 11* used Ps. 1:3–6 to show how the doctrines of the cross ('the tree') and baptism ('the waters') were prefigured in the Old Testament.[22] Similarly Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* 86 identified the tree with the cross and the waters with baptism, and *Origen of Alexandria argued in *Tomi in Psalmos* that 'the man' in Psalm 1 refers to Jesus Christ 'who was man in the Saviour'.[23] Origen read Psalm 1 in a *prosopological way, whereby one voice is Christ identifying with our humanity and the other, Christ vindicating his Church.

*Gregory of Nyssa, in *Inscriptiones Psalmorum*, usually focusses on how separate titles to each psalm form a progressive account of the ascent of man's soul towards God. Because Psalm 1 has no title, it serves as a title to the Psalter as a whole: its very first word 'blessed' is about 'becoming like God'. So the 'blessed man' is the Christian soul and not Christ Himself (for Christ is the one who is already blessed, in being One with God).

*Hilary of Poitiers also understood that the Psalter offered 'a detailed map for growth in Christian holiness'.[24] Dividing the Psalter into three stages of ascent, Psalm 1 is again the first and most formative psalm.[25] Christ is 'hidden' in this psalm, especially in the reference to '*the* tree of life'. The tree is wisdom, (Prov. 3:18), Hilary argues, so Christ, who is wisdom, offers gifts of immortality though its fruits and leaves.

In *Augustine's *Expositions on the Psalms* we find another Christian reading of Psalm 1. First, to identify Christ as the 'Blessed Man' is about a theology of the Incarnation (an important observation, given the *Donatist crisis in the north African churches).[26] Secondly, an engagement with a theology of works in the light of the grace of God allows the psalm a voice in the refutation of

[21] So Ladouceur 2005: 52.

[22] See the citation in http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.vi.ii.xi.html.

[23] See Daley 2004: 193, n. 11, referring to *Philocalia* frag. 2.4.19–24.; also p. 194, referring to *Philocalia* frag. 2.1.1–10.

[24] The phrase is from Daley (2004: 199).

[25] See *Hilary, *Tractatus super Psalmos Ps.* 10–11 (CCSL 61.10) on the threefold division of the Psalter.

[26] See Hegbin and Corrigan (1960: 21).

*Pelagianism: '… It is one thing to be in the law, another to be under the law. Whoso is in the law, acteth according to the law; whoso is under the law, is acted upon according to the law; the one therefore is free, the other a slave.'[27] Thirdly, Augustine developed the *prosopological approach of Origen, hearing the human and divine voices of Christ in the psalm.

This approach was also developed by *Cassiodorus in his *Explanation of the Psalms*, where much of his commentary is a defence of *Chalcedonian orthodoxy and a polemic against *Nestorian heresy.[28] Cassiodorus was also interested in the psalms' titles. 'The reason why this psalm has no heading is because nothing is to be put before the Head of our Lord Saviour… for undoubtedly He is the Beginning of all things'.[29] This led to observations on this being the *first* psalm: '… the placing of the Lord Jesus Christ at the beginning of the collection is no idle arrangement. He is the unique Oneness, simple and perfect, having need of nothing…'[30] So this offers Cassiodorus the opportunity to teach against Nestorian heresy on the Oneness of the Two Natures of Christ.

A very different approach is found in the Abbreviated Psalter usually attributed to *Bede. This selects a few verses which epitomise the meaning of an entire psalm: this was to help the less learned monks who needed a more easily memorable book of instruction and prayer.[31] For Psalm 1, a comparatively short psalm of six verses, Bede actually selects the first three—and so, unusually, uses half the psalm. But for Bede this was a critical psalm. He saw the 'Blessed Man' not only, following Cassiodorus, as Christ, but as everyman—or rather, every monk in his monastery at Jarrow. The central part of his selection is in verse 2, where the emphasis on meditating on the law of the Lord 'by day and night' could also include the **Opus Dei* which is a summary of the monastic ideal.

Thomas *Aquinas also wrote his *Postilla super Psalmos* for a monastic community. In Psalm 1 the blessed one is 'a man who is lifting his eyes to the entire state of the world and considering how some do well, and others fail'; yet it is also 'Christ… the first among the blessed ones…'[32] So Christ is our Exemplar for faith.

Two commentators sought to bring the best of the Hebrew tradition to serve the church. In *Psalterium cum commento* *Herbert of Bosham focusses on the meditation on the 'Torah' in verse 2, referring explicitly to the **Midrash Tehillim* and to *Rashi.[33] *Nicholas of Lyra, who wrote *Postilla litteralis*, applied his skills

[27] See http://ccel.org/ccel/scaff/npnf108.ii.I_1.html.
[28] See Walsh 1990: 43, 45.
[29] Walsh 1990: 45.
[30] Walsh 1990: 56–7.
[31] See Browne 2001; (trans) 2002. See also Ward 2002: 12–14.
[32] See Waddell 1995: 509, n. 36. The English translation used above is taken from http://www4.desales.edu/~philtheo/loughlin/ATP/Psalm_1.html.
[33] See Loewe 1953: 55 and de Visscher 2009a: 264–5.

in the Hebrew language to engage with the Jews on their own terms. Also citing Rashi, Nicholas makes it clear that the 'Blessed Man' of verse 1 is every pious believer who seeks to study Scripture. He never refers to the Blessed Man as Christ, and he never assumes the Law to be anything other than the words of Scripture—shared by Jews and Christians. The tree by the waters, bearing fruit, represents the *doctores*—again, Jewish and Christian teachers alike.[34]

By contrast, Desiderius *Erasmus Roterodamus was unsympathetic to a Jewish exegesis of the psalms.[35] His commentary on the first four psalms arose out a concern that those who recited them should do so with a considered understanding of their Christian meaning.[36] *Enarratio in Primum Psalmum* (on Psalm 1, in 1515) argues that temptation can be overcome with due meditation upon Christ who gives us the supreme example of the practice of virtue. His commentary also criticises those in authority in church and state who substitute an empty religiosity for true blessedness and true virtue. 'The church is full of those who, day after day, mumble their way through psalms they don't understand… those who approach the mystic writing seeking ammunition for their frivolous debates…'[37] This was written just before *Luther's Reformation; it undoubtedly illustrated the signs of the times.

Martin *Luther gave his first lectures on the psalms between 1512 and 1513. Here the appeal is to the eternal but hidden voice of Christ in Psalm 1. A second series of lectures was published in 1519 and there his reading of Psalm 1 has more social and political comment, as Luther worked out his antithetical theology of 'Law' and 'Gospel'. The key problem was how a Christian could 'delight in the law': it encouraged the alleged works-righteousness of the Roman church which resulted in both the suppression of the laity and indeed of the true voice of Scripture itself. So Luther first identifies the wicked and the sinners in verse 1 as the Jews. Stressing, as did *Erasmus, the 'seat of pestilence' as an example of wrong teaching, Luther's reading places the full blame on the Jews, whose errors have been passed on to the church today. Their teaching is like the chaff that the wind takes clean away (verse 4); and on the Judgment Day they will meet the fearful storms of God's wrath (verses 5–6). Thus 'the law' has been 'lived under' rather than 'lived in'. Like Erasmus, Luther uses this psalm to voice the concerns which were leading to the break with Rome.

John *Calvin also uses Psalm 1 to reflect on the relationship between the Old Testament Law and the New Testament Gospel. Noting its place as a Preface to the entire Psalter, Calvin applies the attainment of 'Blessedness' not to David,

[34] See Gross-Diaz 2000: 120–4.
[35] See Heath (1991: 367), referring to *Erasmus' use of *Nicholas on Psalm 2.
[36] See Rümmel 2008: 219–30.
[37] See Heath 1997: 30.

nor to Christ, but to his own congregation. What follows could not be more different from *Erasmus's or *Luther's reading of this psalm. The antithesis implied by 'the righteous' and 'the wicked' is not between Jews and Christians, nor between corrupt and genuine leaders of the church in teaching and in practice; the antithesis is between the church and world. By learning a joyful and constant meditation on the Law (i.e. Scripture), they will receive the blessing from God and it is this which will make them flourish like a tree. This is a practical, contemporary application of Psalm 1.

As for the liturgical use of this psalm, it is found in more popular Jewish liturgy. One is a New Year tree-planting found in *Tu B'Shevat*.[38] The citation of Ps. 1:3, with its motif of the Tree of Life, was used both literally and metaphorically to encourage obedience to the Law. A second more magical use is found in **Shimmush Tehillim* and is to prevent a miscarriage. The threefold occurrence of the Hebrew letters *aleph* and *shin* in the first verse create an incantation; the first three verses of the psalm were written down and a prayer made to *'El Kad* (meaning 'the only strong God, with letters taken from various verses in the psalm). The prayer is placed in a small bag and hung around the woman's neck, so it rests against her body with the prayer against miscarriage.[39]

In Christian liturgy, because of its first place in the Psalter, Psalm 1 is often used at *Prime on Mondays. In the Roman Rite it was apparently a *Proper Psalm at the *Nocturne for Corpus Christi, and the Feast of Agnes and Agatha.[40] The commentary tradition also influenced its use: it is prescribed, along with Psalm 2, at *Matins on Easter Day, at the Feast of the Invention and Exaltation of the Cross, and again at the Feasts of the Crown of Thorns and of Spear and Nails: here the 'tree' is the cross and the Blessed Man is the obedient Christ. [41] The Roman lectionary prescribes Psalm 1 on the second Friday of Advent and the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, because of its teaching on the two ways (Deut. 30:15–20 being the Old Testament lesson). So here the one blessed is the obedient Christian.

Psalm 1 offers an interesting challenge for liturgical revisionists because of its 'gender-specific' reference. Those against any revision would read the 'Blessed Man' as Christ; others prefer a more inclusive tone. **Common Worship* reads verses 1–2 in the third person:

> Blessed are they who have not walked
> in the counsel of the wicked,
> nor lingered in the way of sinners,
> nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.

[38] See Gillingham 2013c: 136.
[39] See Gillingham 2013c: 90–91.
[40] See Neale and Littledale I (1874–79: 89–90).
[41] Quoted in Neale and Littledale I (1874–79: 89).

The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) uses the second person format:

> 'If you would be happy: never walk with the wicked, never stand with sinners, never sit with cynics, but delight in the Lord's teaching and study it day and night.'

We now turn to the depiction of Psalm 1 in art. In Christian Psalters, because Psalm 1 serves as a gateway into the Psalter, it has a particularly rich history of illumination. Often just the letter 'B' (for '*Beatus*' [Blessed] in Latin) is illustrated to encapsulate a key theme in the psalm.[42]

In the **Utrecht Psalter* Psalm 1 (fol. 1v) is presented on a full folio and the psalm is illustrated as a continuous narrative.[43] The 'blessed man' sits at the top left outside a small circular temple. The sun and moon above indicates he is reading 'by day and by night'. The angel standing behind marks him out as blessed. Opposite him is the ungodly man, seated on a 'chair of pestilence', surrounded by soldiers and demons. Below the temple structure is the tree planted by the waters, and the wind is personified so that it blows about the soldiers as if they were chaff (verses 3–4); as they are propelled downstream, their eventual destiny is the pit in the bottom right (verses 5–6).[44]

The *Carolingian **Stuttgart Psalter* has by contrast one multi-coloured image to encapsulate the 'story' of the entire psalm. In Psalm 1 (fol. 2r) the 'blessed man' is no longer the typical Christian but the crucified Christ, who hangs on the tree of life (verse 3), which is the cross; this is 'guarded' by a Roman centurion; the 'ungodly men' turning from the cross are depicted as the 'wicked Jews'.[45]

The Byzantine**Khludov Psalter* offers a clear anti-Jewish stance in Psalm 1 (fol. 2r). The blessed man is David, studying the law; two wicked men, also apparently studying the law, are set to his right; a haloed Christ observes their fates. The rest of the illustrated margin depicts the effects of the wind as it blows figures across the surface of the page. And those who suffer most, driven into the pit, are no longer armed soldiers, or even peasants: they are three Jews, evidenced by their attire, which matches that of the figures studying the law in the image at the top of the page.[46]

In the **Theodore Psalter*, Psalm 1 is preceded by a '*Makarios*' ('Blessed') page (fol. 1r) suggesting again that the entry into the Psalter as a whole is through the words of Psalm 1. The Greek text of Psalm 1 starts under this; to the left is an

[42] Gillingham 2013c: 163–81.

[43] Bibliotheek der Universiteit, Utrecht, MS 32/484 fol. 1. See http://psalter.library.uu.nl/page?p=9&res=1&x=0&y=0.

[44] See Van der Horst, Noel and Wustefeld 1996: 56–7 and 85.

[45] The image of the crucifixion for Psalm 1, used initially by *Justin Martyr (see pp. 139–142, 192) was a popular motif in Christian art.

[46] An illustration of this psalm is found in Gillingham (2013c) plate 9.

image of Christ and Blessed Virgin facing each other, with their arms creating the latter 'M' for '*Makarios*'). Above is Christ, with white hair, in a *mandorla, with a book on his knee: so he is also the 'Blessed Man'. Further illustrations are on fol. 1v. Here the tree of life dominates; a figure reaches up to take fruit from the tree, standing between two rivers running from urns, echoing various myths of the Paradise Garden. Under this is the wind, personified as a figure with a cape: it blows some sort of pipe so that the three figures on the ground are blown away. In the very bottom right are three figures; the two standing are dressed as Jews, gesturing as if disputing what is being said.[47]

The later English **Gorleston Psalter* offers a good example of the *Tree of Jesse alongside the *Beatus* of Psalm 1. The bottom of the 'B' shows Jesse sleeping, and the top part shows Christ enthroned. The three upper sides around the B are filled with kings and prophets, and the bottom border has scenes from the annunciation, nativity, and the Presentation in the Temple. A distinctive image—one used in other illuminated Psalters as well—is of some huntsmen chasing a stag at the top of the illustration; this is a symbol of the soul being attacked by the huntsmen (who are the ungodly in the psalm).

One early Jewish example is the **Parma Psalter*. The illumination of Psalm 1 is unusual because the entire psalm is bordered, its four frames containing flora and foliage. The four foliate borders may be an oblique reference to the tree planted by the waters in verse 3. At the top of the frame the word *'ashere*, taking up the space of three lines, is enclosed in a wider foliate frame. Another most unusual Jewish image, from fifteenth century Italy, is of David, depicted as Orpheus, playing his harp. This is a preface to a selection of psalms: King David is surrounded by wild animals, apparently singing the words of Psalm 1, as evidenced by the opening word *'ashere* ('blessed') at the top of the picture. The words of the rest of the psalm are written in Ashkenazic script under the image. [48]

There are several contemporary images of Psalm 1. Arthur *Wragg depicts Psalm 1 in a pen and ink drawing which reflects the social setting of the Great Depression.[49] The caption is, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night'. The image is of an old man, watering a withering plant, surrounded by factories and tenement blocks. The only thing of beauty is the plant, and to water this is the only act of piety which the man can perform. His face is resigned; he is not looking at the plant, but beyond it, as if

[47] An illustration of this psalm is found in Gillingham (2013c) plate 14.

[48] This is from the Rothschild Miscellany, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Rothschild *Ms 24*, dated around 1470. The image can be seen in Gillingham (2013c), plate 22.

[49] *The Psalms for Modern Life* (1933). For an illustration of this image, see Gillingham (2013c), plate 25.

he is trying to summon up a vision from outside the scene around him. So here the 'Blessed Man' is anyone struggling to find God in the midst of oppression and suffering.

In the **Saint John's Bible*, the Psalms present one of the most unusual books in the whole project because their six illustrations encourage 'hearing' as well as 'seeing' the psalms.[50] The singing and chanting are represented technologically, using black 'oscilloscopic voiceprints' on the vertical axis, with wavy gold bars, echoing musical notations, on the horizontal axis. The actual notes are represented as gold squares, suggesting neumes in *Gregorian plainsong: they ascend and descend a four-line staff, sometimes drifting out to the borders. Psalm 1 is illustrated down the left hand margin and across the bottom border, in undulating gold and blue calligraphy, echoing again the rise and fall of the voice in chanting.[51] It is extraordinary how one can capture sound by sight: golden musical notations travel across the page, and the black voiceprints undulate alongside them: the reds and golds and blues add to the richness of the tone. At the top of the illustration are three **menorah* lights: the middle signifies an entrance to the Temple, thus suggesting Psalm 1 is a gateway to the Psalter as a sacred place.

Marc *Chagall's sketch of Psalm 1, entitled 'The Two Ways', depicts the 'Blessed Man' lying in a tree, literally 'like a tree planted by the waters'. In the sky is an angelic figure, blessing the Man. But he is not studying the law: the Torah is placed on another tree, just below him: the Torah is thus the tree of life.[52] A female figure under the tree suggests Eve, thus alluding to the Blessed Man as Adam (as in **Midrash Tehillim*).

A Jewish artist we shall refer to frequently is Moshe Tzvi HaLevi *Berger[53] Psalm 1, with the dominant hues of turquoise, purple and green, is based upon verses 2 and 3 (parts of which are written in Hebrew in the sky to the right of the tree): the key motifs are thus the Torah and the Tree of Life. The tree resembles a **menorah*, and seems to be planted within a stream of water: fishes swim in it to signify its life-giving properties. Surrounding the tree are plants flicked with red, reminiscent of the Burning Bush: the scene is thus infused with the mysterious presence of God. The rushing wind which blows across the image picks up the theme of the dispersal of the wicked at the end of verse 3.

[50] See Jackson 2006; Sink 2007. See http://www.saintjohnsbble.org/Explore.aspx?ID=4.

[51] The Psalter version is the NRSV. Psalms 1 and 2 are both the work of one calligrapher, Brain Simpson. The illumination of the frontispiece and of Psalm 1 are also the work of one hand, Donald Jackson, who has been the director of the whole project. See Plate 1.

[52] Just as the Tree becomes the Cross in some Christian art (see for example the Stuttgart Psalter, p. 19) so here in Jewish art the Tree becomes the Torah. See Gillingham (2013c), plate 32.

[53] See http://themuseumofpsalms.com/the-museum/ See the image in Gillingham (2013c), plate 34.

When it comes to the musical arrangements of the psalms it is most frustrating that although they were clearly sung from early times, little is known about how this sounded. Over the last fifty years or so several Hebraists, also trained musicians, have offered different theories about what the psalms sounded like in their original, by trying to 'decode' the various *sigla* in the Hebrew text as musical annotations as well as signs of punctuation.[54] Rather like the *St John's Bible*, it is possible that the musical representations from the Hebrew are intended to fit aesthetically with the words. Psalm 1 is considered an excellent example of 'word-painting'.[55]

Jewish arrangements of Psalm 1 are not really in evidence until the twentieth century.[56] Lazar *Weiner's version of Psalm 1 was, appropriately, a composition in Yiddish.[57] *Ashrei ho-ish asher lo holach* was actually first performed as a concert piece, in New York, in 1956. It was written for a cantor solo, a mixed chorus, accompanied by the organ. Being not so much a prayer as a reflective poem, Psalm 1 was an ideal example of bridging the two worlds of the theatrical and liturgical, yet in each case providing a marker for a distinctively Jewish ethnic identity.

It is not until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that complete versions of Psalm 1 are in evidence in Christian music. Thomas *Tallis used Archbishop Matthew *Parker's *The Whole Psalter translated into English Metre* (1567), intended as a devotional exercise rather than for public use; this metrical version of Psalm 1 was a way of experimenting with four-voice harmony and psalmic forms. Its title is '*The first is meek: devout to see*'. Compared with his arrangement of Psalm 2, this is a more sustained and reflective composition.[58]

Metrical psalmody, because of its paraphrase of the text, allows for a good deal of 'Christianisation'. Isaac *Watts, for example, ends with an explicit reference to Christ as Judge:

> How will they bear to stand
> Before that judgement-seat
> When all the saints, at Christ's right hand,
> In full assembly meet.

Psalm 1 was also composed for more theatrical purposes. One example is by Sergei *Rachmaninov whose setting of parts of Psalms 1–3 is in his *All Night*

[54] Scholars include Werner 1959; Haïk-Vantoura 1976, ETr 1991; Weil 1995; and Mitchell 2012a and Mitchell 2012b. See also http://www.musicofthebible.com/teamim.htm.

[55] For a representation of this music, see David Mitchell's score Gillingham (2013c): 196–97.

[56] Salamone Rossi from Mantua (whom we shall refer to frequently later) did not, it seems, compose anything on Psalms 1 and 2.

[57] A selection of Weiner's psalms was produced in 2006 as 'Psalms of Joy and Sorrow': see http://www.allmusic.com/album/psalms-of-joy-and-sorrow-mw0000561687.

[58] For the music of both psalms, see Gillingham (2013c): 218–19 and http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/profiles/tallis.shtml.

Vigil, also known (somewhat inaccurately) as *The Vespers*. Composed in 1915, it was initially given as a fund-raising concert in Moscow in aid of the war against Germany. Through the use of ancient liturgical cantillation (Jewish, Slavonic, Greek) the whole performance is a way of affirming Russian nationalism, and the stability of tradition at a time of chaos. There is no musical accompaniment, because Orthodox liturgy prohibited it, so the impact depends totally on the contrasting tones of human voices: although a four-part harmony is the most common, the harmonies increase up to eleven parts in places. Verses from Psalms 1, 2 and 3, each important parts in the Easter Liturgy of the Orthodox Church, create the third movement: the chant used is Rachmaninov's own, with an easily memorable melodic refrain. The movement is sung mainly by alto and tenor, with the Alleluia refrain between each verse sung by a full chorus, effecting a sense of expectation by repeated changes of key. Using the theme of blessing, words from the beginning of Psalm 1 ('Blessed is the Man…') are followed by the verse at the end of Psalm 2 ('Blessed are they that put their trust in the Lord') and then a further verse from the end of Psalm 3 ('Salvation is the Lord's: Thy blessing is upon Thy people').

It is interesting to see the place of Psalm 1 in contemporary musical culture through the motif of the tree by the waters. One example is the American folk song, 'We Shall Not Be Moved', which probably goes back to protest songs about the slave trade, although it has been adapted many times by other activists and has been popularised since the 1960s by, for example, Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Joan Baez, and Judith Durham. The lyrics are defiant; but the image of the tree is stable and unchanging: 'We shall not, we shall not be moved… Just like a tree, that is planted by the waterside…'[59] This image of the tree is central to another interpretation by composer and presenter Howard *Goodall. His 'Lyke a Freshly Planted Tree/ *iuxta rivulos aquarum*' (2010) uses Philip *Sidney's sixteenth century version of Psalm 1.[60] The theme of water and its refreshment for faith is found in many of the psalms in this collection. This arrangement opens with the third verse:

> He shall be lyke a freshly planted tree,
> To which sweet springs of waters neighbours be;
> Whose braunches faile not timelie fruite to nourish,
> Nor with 'red leafe shall make it faile to flourish:
> So all the things whereto that man doth bend
> Shall prosper still with well-succeeding end.

[59] See, for example, the performance by the Seekers on www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYtytxc-m-4.
[60] This is the final psalm in a collection of thirteen, recorded as *Pelican in the Wilderness: Songs from the Psalms*, with the 'Enchanted Voices' female choir and the Tippett Quartet Classic FM 2010: CFMD13. Part of this psalm can be heard on http://www.classicfm.com/shop/cds/listen-pelican-wilderness/

The theme of judgement on the unrighteous so dominant at the beginning and ending of this psalm has been modified not only by the use of Sidney's gentler version but also by the focus on this third verse. In Howard Goodall's own words, 'the anger is softened'; instead of defiance we hear a more wistful and poignant interpretation, especially because of the haunting female voices, on the refreshment God may give those who trust in him.

As for poetic imitations of this psalm, John *Milton's version was a private exercise, as his blindness worsened; his knowledge of Hebrew meant that he translated directly from original. Like Sidney, he used heroic couplets, imitating the binary nature of the righteous and wicked in the psalm. Its regular aa-bb rhyme and 10-10-10-10 rhythm fit the reflective nature of the contents: it has a universal appeal, and it is not surprising that this was later set to music.

> Bless'd is the man who hath not walk'd astray
> In counsel of the wicked, and in th' way
> Of sinners hath not stood, and in the seat
> Of scorners hath not sate. But in the great
> Jehovah's Law is ever his delight,
> And in his Law he studies day and night…[61]

Music and poetry give the psalm space for a more universal adaptation. Against this, however, some biblical scholars often display an anti-Semitic bias, sometimes fuelled by a Lutheran faith. Several commentators have castigated the poet of Psalm 1 for his arrogant and exclusivist (Jewish) view of community, not least his assumption that reading and obeying the 'Law' can make him righteous and bring about his own salvation. Examples include German commentators Wilhelm de Wette, and Bernard Duhm, who both read Psalm 1 as representing the 'stultifying Jewish legalism' which Jesus Christ had to come to redeem.[62]

It is interesting that more contemporary imitations of Psalm 1, often from Jewish poets, reflect on the integrity of the faith of the psalmist and so, again, its universal appeal. One striking example is David Rosenberg's *Blues of the Sky* (1976).[63]

> Happy is the one
> stepping lightly over
> paper hearts of men
>
> and out of the way
> of mind-locked reality
> the masks of sincerity

[61] See http://www.cgmusic.org/workshop/milton/milton%201.htm.
[62] See for example Bauer 1997: 13–15, and the discussion in Gillingham 2013c: 263–66.
[63] See Rosenberg 1976: 1–2.

he steps from his place at the glib café
to find himself in the world
of the infinite…

while bitter men turn dry
blowing in the wind
like yesterday's paper

unable to stand
in the gathering
light

they fall
faded masks
in love's spotlight…

but My Lord opens
his loving one
to breathe embracing air.

Here we see a clear shift in metaphors: 'the paper hearts of men' are those termed 'wicked' in the original psalm, whilst the 'glib café' is the place where the 'scoffers' meet. Instead of referring explicitly to the Torah, the poet encounters now 'the world of the infinite'. The agrarian metaphors are converted into a more urbanised symbolism, and now the wicked blown like chaff in the wind are 'bitter men turn[ed] dry' 'blowing in the wind like yesterday's paper'. Their 'hearts of paper' burn up, whilst the poet's experience of salvation is to find he is breathing 'embracing air'.

Perhaps this is the best place to end these observations on Psalm 1: a psalm which has fuelled controversy between Jews and Christians has, over recent times, recognised that what unites the two faiths is more than what divides them. A similar trajectory is evident in the reception of Psalm 2.

Psalm 2: Who is 'My Son'?

We have already seen how the first stage of reception history is the literary placing of a psalm in the Psalter, which affects its meaning, impact and future reception. This is why we examined the thematic and linguistic correspondences between these first two psalms, including possible additions to Psalm 2 (verses 10–12), because these represent a very early stage of reception history.[64]

[64] See pp. 11–12 previously.

As with Psalm 1, other early stages of reception include the **Septuagint* translation and the use of the psalms at *Qumran. Starting with the *Septuagint*, we can see how the Greek here plays down messianic expectations and emphasises more its didactic elements.[65]

The most important change is in verses 6–9. In the Hebrew these comprise a speech by God to the king (verse 6), followed by a citation by the king (or a cultic official on behalf of the king) concerning the promises of God (verses 7–9); in the Greek, however, this has become one long speech by the king himself. So verse 6 is read as reported speech: *egō de katestathēn basileus hup' autou epi Siōn oros to hagion autou* ('I was established as king by him/on Zion, his holy mountain'); this is continued in verse 7 by the introduction 'declaring the decree of the Lord'. Hence this is no longer addressed *to* the king *by* God but *by* the king *to* the rebel rulers. Any suggestion of a dialogue between God and the king has been erased. Taking away the direct divine authority of the promises which are evident in the Hebrew thus diminishes the impact of any Messianic expectations.

The other notable change is in verse 12. The difficult phrase *nashequ-bar* (often translated as 'kiss the son!') is in the Greek *draxasthe paideias* ('seize upon instruction!'), thus eradicating a royal role and emphasising instead the didactic impact of the psalm. Another important change to verse 12 is *kai apoleisthe ex hodou dikaias* ('and you will perish from the righteous way'): the Hebrew reads, simply, 'the way', but the Greek addition links this with the same phrase concerning the righteous at the end of Psalms 1 ('for the Lord watches over *the way of the righteous*'). This, along with the deliberate repetition of 'blessed' in the use of the singular *makarios* (Ps. 1:1) and plural *makarioi* in Ps. 2:12, heightens the instructional element in this psalm, and so draws it closer to the same elements in Psalm 1.

The most significant use of Psalm 2 at *Qumran is in 4QFlor I (lines 18–19), after the quotation from Ps. 1:1 in line 14. Verses 1–2 are used to show how the whole community are now the recipients of these promises once made to David. The Hebrew word 'anointed one' is now in the plural, and is followed by 'the chosen ones of Israel'. Hence the entire community, oppressed by the raging of the 'nations' (probably an allusion to Rome), are the inheritors of the messianic hope.

In **Targum Psalms*, we find a different adaptation of the 'messianic' elements in this psalm. This is best seen in verses 6–7; here the Aramaic borrows the Hebrew format, so God is speaking:

[65] Schaper (1995: 72–6) sees the psalm as a 'messianic hymn' by the time of the Greek translation (p. 75), but Cox (2001: 289–311) and Janse (2010: 40–4) see little evidence of it.

> 'But I have *anointed my king and installed him* on Zion, the mountain of my sanctuary.' I will tell of the decree of the LORD; he said to me, 'You are *as dear to me as a son to a father, pure as though I had created you this day*.' [66]

The 'installing' as well as 'anointing' of the king in verse 6 is an interesting 'double translation', emphasising divine authority. In verse 7 the avoidance of the Hebrew word *yalad* ('to give birth') may be to circumvent an anthropomorphism, for this is replaced by the Aramaic word meaning, simply, 'create'. Given that Christians had been using this verse since New Testament times to claim that here was a prophecy about the Father/Son relationship fulfilled in Jesus, the choice of this Aramaic translation is significant. The figure referred to in both verses 6 and 7 is not, literally, God's Son: he is certainly beloved, like a son, but he has not been physically 'begotten' by God.[67]

In **Midrash Tehillim* a similar question is posed as was seen in Psalm 1: instead of 'Who is the blessed man?' this time we read: 'Why do the nations rage?' Again, various figures of the past are recalled, and all ten are enemies of the whole people. They include Pharaoh, Sisera, Nebuchadnezzar, and Gog and Magog who typify all the pagan nations.[68] Thus here we find a political reading which speaks to diaspora Jews in the Middle Ages. The commentary on verse 7 is interesting in this light. After the briefest of references to God's promise in verse 6 to 'install the king on Mount Zion', the next question which needs an answer is—'*Who is the 'son*'? One answer is 'the children of Israel are declared to be sons in the decree of the Law, in the decree of the Prophets, and in the decree of the Writings'.[69] Then, as in **Targum Psalms*, a discussion follows about whether the Hebrew verb meaning 'give birth to' is really correct. The conclusion is the same: this cannot be read literally. The Christian reading of this text as Jesus 'begotten' of the Father is again, by implication, refuted.

Finally, from verse 8 onwards, the commentary begins to refer to a figure termed 'the Messiah'; much of the discussion implies this is Israel. So the reading 'Do homage to ("kiss") the son' in verse 12 is again Israel: 'Go and sing (a song of homage) to Israel.' The final verse is thus interpreted: '*Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him*, is spoken of the children of Israel, for they are the ones who take refuge in the Holy One, blessed be He'.[70] Just as the idealised figure ('the Blessed Man') in Psalm 1 is the law-abiding Jew; the idealised figure

[66] Stec 2004: 29–30. Italics again denote 'unequivalences'.
[67] Behind this also lie the debates about Israel, not Jesus, as God's Son, developed, in the **Midrash Tehillim* and other Jewish commentators. See Edwards (2007: 151–5) and Stec (2008: 30, n. 7).
[68] Braude 1959 I: 35.
[69] Braude 1959 I: 40.
[70] Braude 1959 I: 48.

('My Son') in Psalm 2 is the people as a whole; each is seen through the prism of King David.

As with Psalm 1, Jewish commentaries in the Middle Ages used philology to refute Christian exegesis. This is clear at the very beginning of *Rashi's commentary in Psalm 2.[71] The psalm is about the historical David and historical Israel; its context is 1 Sam. 5.17–25, when the Philistines heard that David has been made king over all Israel, and they came up to attack him. This explains verse 1: 'Why do the nations assemble…' The anointing of David as king was ratified by the prophetic ministry of Nathan and so verses 6–7) are from 2 Samuel 7; so because David is king he is now able to be called God's Son.

This way of reading Psalm 2 might be termed **peshaṭ;* Rashi also applies another hidden level of meaning (*midrash) by seeing also a reference to the future of Israel; this is especially evident in his comments on verse 7 which speak of the Messiah being chosen *by* Israel and *for* Israel. This use of the literal and the hidden meaning in the text show the reaction against Christian interpreters.[72]

Jacob ben *Reuben's *Milḥamot ha-Shem* (*The Wars of God*) was written in about 1170. The third chapter concerns the Psalms, and the first psalm to be considered is Psalm 2. This is another refutation of the Christian interpretation of this psalm, especially of verses 7 and 11–12: if David is God's first-born, and if Israel is God's son, Jesus is hardly God's unique and only son. He is but one of many sons of God. Van Reuben thus turns the Christian method on its head: it might claim to use allegory and typology, but it is in fact over-literal.[73]

*Kimḥi's reading of Psalm 2 is more literal, for like Rashi he reads it in the light of King David's experiences in 2 Samuel 5 and 7. So, of verse 7, Kimḥi observes: 'And the Nazarenes interpret it of Jesus; and the verse they adduce by way of proof and make it a support of their error is really their stumbling block.'[74] Kimḥi argues that to speak of God 'giving birth' to a son divides the unity of the deity; this is a metaphor, in the same manner as speaking of the mouth and eyes and ears of God.[75] Kimḥi rebukes Christian commentators for not following through their non-literal approach with enough rigour.[76]

For medieval Jewish scholars, Psalm 1 is an inspiration for Jewish piety, and Psalm 2 is a commentary on Jewish identity. So their complaint was about Christian *supersessionism: just as in Psalm 1 the tree had become the Cross

[71] See Gruber 1998: 10.
[72] See Gillingham 2013c: 81–84.
[73] Jacob bar Reuben's approach is found in Chazan (2004: 236–8).
[74] Finch and Box 1919: 18.
[75] See Gillingham 2013c: 85–7.
[76] See Chazon 2004: 238–41.

of Christ, so the Davidic covenant in Psalm 2 had been replaced by new ideas of Jesus as 'Son of God'. Hence these 'unrighteous' and the 'heathen nations' referred to in both psalms had taken their Scriptures and re-used them as their own.

Unlike Psalm 1, Christian interpretation of Psalm 2 begins with the New Testament itself. Psalm 2 is frequently cited or alluded to in the Synoptic Gospels and in Acts, Hebrews and Revelation as a prophecy in the process of fulfilment.[77] There are four clear citations of Psalm 2: one is of verses 1–2 and three are of verse 7.

In Peter's prayer in Acts 4:24–31, recalling the hostility against Christ within the city of Jerusalem, Ps. 2:1–2 is cited in verses 25–26, using it to refer generally to the hostility of the Gentile peoples but (in verse 27–28) applying this to Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews. The parallels are clear. The geographical setting in each case is Jerusalem and in each case the opposition is against God's anointed one (termed *christos* in both the psalm and Acts).[78]

Acts 13:32–27 is a speech of Paul at Antioch, and the focus is now on the resurrection. Here Ps. 2:7 is used as part of a **catena* of psalms to demonstrate that Christ has fulfilled the 'prophecies' of David and Isaiah. It is claimed that the one addressed as God's Son is not in fact David (who 'experienced corruption' and only received the promise) but Christ, hidden in the words of the psalm. It is an unusual use of the verse of this psalm: perhaps what is intended is an image of the 'enthronement' of Christ, through his resurrection.

Two other **catenae* which cite Ps. 2:7 are found in Hebrews. Heb. 1:5–13 is part of a longer passage (1:5–2:18) demonstrating Christ's superiority over the angels. Ps. 2:7 (along with 2 Sam. 7:14, or perhaps Ps. 89:26) is used in verse 5:

> For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'?

Several other texts are interwoven here, reminding us of 4Q174 in the *Dead Sea Scrolls.[79] Psalms 2 and 110 are particularly important: each psalm speaks of a Davidic king and the intimate relationship between God and king refers now to Christ. The same two psalms are cited again together in Heb. 4:14–5:14, where the writer seeks to demonstrate Christ's superior role not only as King but also as the great High Priest. Here, Heb. 5:5–6 cites Ps. 2:7 alongside 110:4. This seems to have been influenced by the tradition of two coming Messiahs, one

[77] See the chart of references in Janse (2009: 80).
[78] See Weren 1989: 197.
[79] See Brooke 1985: 209–10.

royal and one priestly: so this shows Jesus' royal rule and sacral role which is now located in a Heavenly Court and a Heavenly Temple.[80]

There are also several allusions to Ps. 2:7 in the accounts of the Baptism and Transfiguration. Here this verse provides an echo for the celestial voice which ratifies the authority of the Son and his intimate relationship with God. In Mk. 1:11 ('and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my Son, the beloved: with you I am well pleased"'). The verse is alluded to again in the Transfiguration, near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, thus forming a fitting commentary on Jesus' earthly ministry.[81]

Other allusions to Psalm 2 are found in the book of Revelation; these take up the theme of the hostility of the nations expressed in verses 1–2 and 8–9 of Psalm 2. Revelation 2:26–27 uses the imagery in Ps. 2:8–9 in its references to the 'rod of iron' and the shattered pots: this is in the context of God's vindication of those who remain faithful in the church of Thyatira, alongside a promise that they will rule over the Gentiles.

So in the Synoptic Gospels Psalm 2 serves as a commentary on Jesus' earthly ministry; in Acts, it serves to interpret the cross and resurrection; in Hebrews, it illustrates further Christ's eternal Sonship; and in Revelation, it is used to illustrate God's coming kingdom through Christ his Royal Son.[82]

After the New Testament period, Psalm 2 is often used to establish a particular point of doctrine. The apologist *Irenaeus in *Proof of Apostolic Preaching* 49 (c. 180), uses verses 7–8 alongside Ps. 110:1–2 to demonstrate Christ is the Son of God and King of all:

> 'These things were not said of David; for neither over the Gentiles nor over the utmost parts did he rule, but only over the Jews. So then it is plain that the promise to the Anointed to reign over the utmost parts of the earth is to the Son of God…'[83]

Similarly in *Hippolytus' use of used Psalm 2 the words of the psalm almost disappear and what we see and hear instead is the suffering and death of Christ.[84]

We now turn to *Jerome's Latin translation of this psalm. Given the more muted Messianic emphasis in the *Septuagint*, which was one of Jerome's key

[80] See the discussion of this passage in Janse (2009: 119–224).

[81] Other occurrences are in Luke 3.22 (the Baptism) and 9.35 (Transfiguration) and in Matt. 3.17 and 17.5. For a further discussion of these verses see Gillingham 2013c: 39–43.

[82] See Watts (1990: 82) for a similar summary to this; also Bons 1995: 168–71.

[83] Taken from http://www.ccel.org/ccel/irenaeus/demonstr.toc.html.

[84] Taken from http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iii.iv.i.v.ii.html. For an extract of the text, see Gillingham 2013c: 48–49.

sources, Jerome made a theological compromise in some parts of the **Vulgate* translation of this psalm. This is best seen in verses 6–9, which in the Hebrew is a dialogue between God and the king, but in Greek is flattened to become reported speech by the king about God.[85] The Latin follows this reading, so that in verse 6 he speaks on his own authority: '*ego autem constitutus sum rex ab eo super Sion montem sanctum eius*'. The adherence to the Greek follows throughout the rest of the psalm. The odd expression in verse 12 (literally, from the Aramaic, 'kiss the son') which in the Greek is read as 'seize instruction!' is the same in the Latin which reads '*adprehendite disciplinam*' or 'accept instruction [discipline]').

Despite this, *Augustine applies a thoroughgoing Christological approach to Psalm 2.[86] Verses 1–3 are about 'the Lord's persecutors' raging against Christ the Messiah; verse 4 concerns God's laughter—in pleasure of those saints who will partake in the future victory achieved by Christ, and (verse 5) in derision of those refuse to know him. Verse 6 'is obviously spoken in the very person of our Lord Jesus Christ': Zion is the Church, and Christ announces Himself as King over His Church.

*Cassiodorus starts his commentary on Psalm 2 in a similar manner to Psalm 1. First, the classification of the psalm: this is in his second category of psalms which offered insights into the nature of God the Father. Then, the number two: just as Psalm 1 spoke of the *Oneness* of the Two Natures of Christ, so Psalm 2 speaks of *two* monads, the one who is Creator, the other who is created.[87] In this way Cassiodorus instructs the faithful about *Chalcedonian orthodoxy.[88]

*Bede's selection of verses for his Abbreviated Psalter is made with the instruction of the monastic community at Jarrow in mind: only the last three verses are selected—the instruction to the Gentile nations to learn wisdom and to serve the Lord in fear—thus omitting all the controversial elements about Christ's two natures earlier in the psalm.[89]

*Aquinas's commentary on Psalm 2 sees the psalmist is speaking about Christ.[90] Accepting the (lesser known) tradition that Psalm 2 has the title 'psalm of David', Aquinas notes how David's kingdom is a prefiguring of the kingdom of Christ. So the tribulations described in the psalm can be read on two levels—literally, against David, and typologically, against Christ. In the context of the

[85] See p. 26 (on **Septuagint* for Psalm 2).
[86] The following summary and citations are taken from Quasten and Burghadt (1960: 25–30).
[87] See Gillingham 2013c: 96–99; also Walsh 1990: 56 and 67.
[88] Walsh 1990: 68.
[89] See Ward 2002: 12.
[90] Taken from http://www4.desales.edu/~philtheo/loughlin/ATP/Psalm_2.html.

more blatantly anti-Jewish exegesis in other commentaries at this time, this is a different approach.[91]

*Nicholas of Lyra's approach to Psalm 2 is in effect a dialogue between *Rashi and of the New Testament. So, first, the psalm is about David and the wars with the Philistines; and because David was the first ruler of Israel he could rightly have be understood as 'the firstborn' (verse 7). But then, using the fact that in Hebrew tradition this psalm does not have a title, Nicholas then suggests that the psalm was never seen in Jewish tradition as referring to David, but to one greater than David. This then leads to a citation of Acts 4:25–28, where the first two verses of this psalm are seen to concern not David, but Christ.[92]

Psalm 2 offers us a good example of the progression in *Luther's thinking: in his first commentary (1513–1516), Psalm 2, following Augustine, is applied to Christ alone, as Luther worked out systematically his theology of redemption within the psalms.[93] The second commentary (1518–1519) is more specific on verses 1–2; based upon Acts 4, this refers to Herod, Pilate, the Jews and the Gentiles as 'enemies' of Christ. His experiences with the church's leaders at Worms only two years previously is evident here: 'Anyone who wishes to be a sincere Christian… will suffer his Herods, Pilates, rulers, kings, Gentiles, and other people who rage against him, meditate vain things, set themselves against him, and take counsel together… But he who sits in heaven laughs at them, and the Lord has them in derision…'.[94] His comments on verses 6, 7 and 12 make a clear distinction between the empty power of a monarchy and the spiritual power of the kingdom of Christ.[95]

By March 1532, when Luther turned again to Psalm 2, the tone is notably harsher. In the short preface the enemies are now named as priests who make impious sacrifices, including the 'reprobate pope along with his doctors'. So through this psalm 'David… "console(s) and teach(es) the church about the spreading of Christ's kingdom in spite of the powers of the world…"'.[96] Verses 1–2 of this commentary focus especially on the adversaries of the sixteenth-century church.[97] Luther's overall view of this psalm is that if what the psalm says is true, then the allegations and aims of the papists are stark lies and folly.

*Calvin's reading starts with the psalm's context of the life of David, so making a break with earlier Christian exegesis. Calvin has a very different response

[91] See http://www4.desales.edu/~philtheol/loughlin/ATP/Psalm_2.html.
[92] See Gross-Diaz 2000: 123–34.
[93] See Goldingay 1982: 47–8; Holladay 1993: 192–3.
[94] See Oswald 1974: 321.
[95] See Oswald 1974: 328.
[96] See Pelican 1955: 4–6.
[97] See Pelican 1955: 41–2.

to Jewish tradition, using both Hebrew and *midrashic exegesis to highlight the importance of a historical David-centred reading, but is not dependent either upon rabbinical tradition or any Christological exegesis. Furthermore, Luther tends to see the Jews as enemies of the church; Calvin actually promotes Jewish exegesis and sees its emphasis on David as vital in feeding the faith of the Christian church. It becomes clear that Calvin *identifies* with the figure of David:

> '… As that holy king was harassed by the Philistines and other foreign enemies… so I can say as to myself, that I have been assailed on all sides… but have always had to sustain some conflict either from enemies without or within the Church… For although I follow David at a great distance, and come far short of equalling him … yet if I have any things in common with him, I have no hesitation in comparing myself with him.'[98]

But only half way through this section does Calvin start to write about David's temporal kingdom as a shadow of Christ's eternal kingdom. So the sonship declared in verse 7 first belongs to David 'who could with propriety be called the son of God on account of his royal dignity', but this also pertains to Christ, because he has been given a kingdom (as in verse 8) far greater than that of David. This approach continues to the end of the psalm.

Turning to Jewish liturgical reception, the use of this psalm is surprisingly more personal. For example, it is alluded to in *Berakot* 30b in the context of appropriate behaviour and posture in synagogue worship, remembering that one is 'standing before the King'. And, like Psalm 1, it is also used for quasi-magical purposes in **Shimmush Tehillim*. It is to be written on a potsherd and thrown into the raging sea for deliverance from a storm: verse 9 ('you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel') is the pertinent verse here. Here the holy name *Shaddai* ('mighty God') is found by extracting the consonants from verses 1, 2 and 9 of the psalm. The psalm is also deemed to be a remedy against headache. The first eight verses (aptly finishing with God's calming of the raging of the nations), along with the Holy Name and the appropriate prayer, are to be written on pure parchment and hung around the patient's neck.[99]

In early Christian liturgy we may note the use of Psalm 2 in the Roman Rite, for use at *Matins on Christmas Day, where the *antiphon is from verse 7 ('The Lord said unto me Thou are my Son, this day have I begotten Thee…'). Another use is for Matins on the Feast of the Epiphany, in celebration of the Baptism of Christ, where the antiphon is taken from the way the Gospels used 2:7 at

[98] See 'The Author's Preface' at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom08.i.html.
[99] See Foder (1978: 67–71) and for a citation of the prayers see Gillingham 2013c: 92.

Christ's Baptism: 'The Holy Ghost came in the form of a dove; the voice of the Father was heard, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'.

The Roman Rite also associated this psalm with Easter: it is prescribed for the *Nocturne on Good Friday and on Easter Day. For Good Friday the Easter antiphons use Ps. 2:2 ('the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed…'). whilst on Easter Day verse 7 is used: 'I desired of my Father, Alleluia… He gave me the Gentiles, Alleluia… for an inheritance, Alleluia.'[100] It is also prescribed for *Nocturne at the Feasts of the Invention of the Cross and the Exaltation of the Cross, the Feast of Spear and Nails, and the Feasts of Agnes and Agatha.

A contemporary liturgical use of Psalms 1, 2 and 3 being prayed or sung together is at the Additional Liturgy of *Tenebrae*, on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Saturday of Easter Week. This is a tradition of both Catholic and Anglican worship.[101] Together the psalms witness to the battle between light and darkness, goodness and evil, and the final judgment of God over darkness. The three psalms are also read together at the *Nocturne for the Exaltation of the Cross in Orthodox and Catholic liturgy.

We start our assessment of the artistic reception of Psalm 2 with the **Utrecht Psalter*. Here the image is on fol. 2r, opposite Psalm 1 which is on fol. 1v.[102] So the two images are seen alongside each other, and it is possible to see shared themes. Here the key figure is in the middle of the image, with a halo, standing on Mount Zion (verse 6), ruling over a group of people who stand to his right, as armed men, ready for war. This kingly figure is marked out as Jesus Christ, and the hand of God raised in blessing in the top right corner refers to the words addressed to this figure: he is God's 'son' (verse 7). On the left of the king, the Gentiles (also dressed as soldiers) conspire and rage (verses 1–3) and the demons in the top left of the illustration are laughing at their audacity (verses 4–5), shooting arrows into the sky and throwing down spears, routing the Gentiles and forcing them into some sort of pit (in the bottom left). The Christ figure is holding a rod which is about to break open an already cracked cooking pot, symbolising what will happen to the peoples on the left (verses 8–9). In the bottom right corner is a tree (not referred to in the psalm) and this denotes the words of blessing for the king found at the end of the psalm (verses 10–11, especially 11b).

[100] See Neale and Littledale I 1874–79 : 97.

[101] See Neale and Littledale I 1874: 14–15.

[102] http://psalter.library.uu.nl/page?p=10&res=1&x=0&y=0. Both psalms are found in Gillingham (2013c), plates 1 and 2.

Like Psalm 1, the **Stuttgart Psalter* (fols. 2v and 3r) has an anti-Jewish reading. Here there are two images.[103] The first, illustrating verses 1–2, and reinterpreting traditional Christian commentaries with the enemies as Herod and Pilate during the trial of Jesus, takes us not to the trial of Jesus but to the passion in the Garden of Gethsemane, where the betrayers nevertheless are still both Romans and Jews. The second image depicts Christ after his resurrection (illustrating verses 6–7 and 8–12), ruling over all those who had betrayed and opposed him.

The Byzantine **Khludov Psalter* (fol. 2v), illustrates how the images have been as much influenced by the **Gloss* as the text itself. That next to verse 7 is of the Nativity, and this is followed down the page to the bottom, where a stable, with an ox and ass, illustrate that the one pronounced Son of God is the incarnate Christ. But the image goes one stage further: the inscription across the top of the folio reads 'woe to the sinful nation', taken from Isa. 1:4, and is clearly an allusion from this verse to the ox and ass 'who know the master's crib', whereas the disobedient people of Israel do not. The two figures at the very bottom suggest another two Jews who (like the rebellious nations in the psalm) do not know Christ, as Isaiah prophesied.[104]

The **Theodore Psalter* (fol. 2r) shows, in the top right margin, two groups—one of two kings (presumably Herod and Pilate) addressed by a Jew, and one of three figures below, who appear to be Annas, Caiaphas and Christ.[105] This is again linked to the Christian commentaries on Ps. 2:2, where the nations who once threatened God's anointed one are now the Jews and Romans opposing Christ. At the bottom right is a depiction of the nativity. Mary is on a bed, with Joseph next to her, and two protecting angels are hovering above. The empty manger is bathed in light, and close to it are a donkey and an ox: to the left, the baby Jesus is being bathed by two midwives. Further left is another angel announcing this birth to two shepherds.[106]

One unusual depiction of Psalm 2 in art, not within a Psalter, is by the early Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca. The original frame of *The Flagellation* had the words '*convenerunt in unum*' ('they assembled together') taken from Ps. 2:2, echoing the debates in Christian exegesis of this verse, that those who put Christ to death were Herod, Pilate and the Jews. The figures at the back, around the cross, certainly suggest this interpretation: Herod is wearing a turban and Pilate is seated, with some sort of staff. The conspiracy against Christ is mirrored in the three figures in the foreground: one is the Count of Urbino, also

[103] fol. 2v https://goo.gl/PGxFC3 and fol. 3r https://goo.gl/3MUQvc. See also Gillingham (2013c), plates 7 and 8.

[104] See Plate 2.

[105] http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_19352_f002r. See Gillingham (2013c), plate 14.

[106] This composition is shared in the **Bristol Psalter*, and the **Barberini Psalter*.

conspired against and later murdered, and those with him are two of his betrayers. This is one of the few 'narrative' accounts of Psalm 2 in art, and it is an unusual one.[107]

There are two important contemporary Jewish depictions of this psalm. One is by Marc *Chagall, in his *Psaumes de David*, a sketch which seems to be an intentional echo of Psalm 1.[108] The psalm has the title 'The Lord and His Anointed'. Here a figure, dressed as a Jew, but also a royal figure with a crown on his head, stands on a hill overlooking Jerusalem: this is represented by the Dome of the Rock and a church spire (or possibly a minaret). Coming towards him, out of the sky, is what seems to be an army on horseback driven by some demonic host. Above the figure is the sun, and in the middle of the sun is, again, the Torah: the figure stands resolute against an impending attack, because he is protected by the light of the Law (from Psalm 1). There are hints here, therefore, of the restoration of Jerusalem. Chagall has made both psalms speak of the struggles for Jewish identity through the Temple and Torah.[109]

The depiction of Psalm 2 by Moshe *Berger is also linked to Psalm 1.[110] Psalm 2 picks up some of the blue and purple hues of Psalm 1, but blends them with tinges of pink and ochre which frame the base of the image, giving the impression of a smouldering fire. Verse 6 ('I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill') is the key text, and although there is no figure in this image, the Hebrew calligraphy which both ascends from the base of the picture and descends in a thick cloud from the sky suggests a theophany: the letters, in purple and turquoise, are dense and jumbled, but the impression is of various oracles of assurance uttered from above which answer the cries of anguish from below. At the centre of the illustration are many thinly pointed turrets and towers, suggesting Jerusalem, and these reach up to the heavens, receiving the words which are descending upon the city. The verdant warmth of Psalm 1, with the Torah and Tree of Life at its heart, contrasts with the sharper images of ice and fire in Psalm 2, with Zion, the city of God, at its heart. So, albeit in a very different way, the complementary relationship of these two psalms is again implied.

Psalm 2 has been re-created by using words and well as images. One of the best examples of a more literal re-creation is by Philip *Sidney. Here, because the subject matter was the king, Sidney uses rhyming hexameters and trimeters to create 'heroic couplets' in order to imitate a royal style, emphasising the victory of the righteous king over the wicked nations. An extract of the first half

[107] This is now in the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche in Urbino, Italy. See http://www.italian-renaissance-art.com/Piero-della-Francesca.html for a copy of this painting.
[108] On Chagall and Psalm 1, see p. 21.
[109] See this image in Gillingham (2013c), plate 33.
[110] See this image in Gillingham (2013c), plate 35.

of the psalm makes this clear; the enjambments between almost every pair of lines in each psalm is particularly effective in stressing the relentless continuity of the psalm:

> What ails this heath'nish rage? What do these people mean
> To mutter murmurs vain?
> Why do these earthly kings and lords such meetings make
> And counsel jointly take
> Against the Lord of Lords, the Lord of everything
> And his anointed king?
> 'Come let us break their bonds,' say they, and fondly say
> And cast their yokes away.
> But he shall them deride, who by the heav'ns is borne,
> He shall laugh them to scorn…[111]

John *Milton set Psalm 2 to Italian tercets, with a *terza rima* beginning in the fifth line, which speaks of the deposition of kings and powers. The poem has an internal continuity, being set in a 10-10-10-10 rhythm.

> Why do the Gentiles tumult, and the Nations
> Muse a vain thing, the Kings of th'earth upstand
> With power, and Princes in their Congregations
> Lay deep their plots together through each Land,
> Against the Lord and his Messiah dear?
> Let us break off, they say, by strength of hand
> Their bonds, and cast from us, no more to wear,
> Their twisted cords: he who in Heaven doth dwell
> Shall laugh, the Lord shall scoff them, then severe…[112]

Again the use of enjambments, a notable difference from the Hebrew, Greek and Latin, is an effective way of maintaining the unremitting flow of the psalm.

Musical adaptations of Psalm 2 lack detailed evidence before the sixteenth century. We know of a version of the introit *antiphon from Ps. 2:7 for the night before Christmas ('The Lord said to me: You are my Son, this day I have begotten Thee…') in *Gregorian plainchant, but there is little else documented.[113]

[111] Hamlin (ed.) 2009:11–12.
[112] Taken from http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/psalms/psalm_1/index.shtml and http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/psalms/psalm_2/index.shtml.
[113] For a fuller account, see Gillingham 2013c: 200–204.

But from the sixteenth century onwards there are many examples, not least in metrical form. Thomas *Tallis used Psalm 2 as his third choice, after Psalm 68: its title is '*The third doth rage: and roughly brayeth*'.[114] The contrast between the first two psalms is deliberate: Psalm 2 undoubtedly 'rages' in forceful rising fourths, whilst Psalm 1 ('*he first is meek*') is more sustained and reflective.

Like Psalm 1, metrical psalmody allows for some explicit Christianising, and again Isaac *Watts offers a good example. Just as Psalm 1 ended with a specifically Christian appropriation, so too does Psalm 2:

> Be wise, ye rulers, now,
> And worship at his throne
> With trembling joy, ye people, bow
> To God's exalted Son.

Hymnody can be even more free in its adaption of an ancient text. Charles *Wesley, who acknowledged his debt to Watts' *Psalms of David*, wrote a hymn 'The Kingship of Christ', but it requires some detailed knowledge of Psalm 2 to recognise its influence. This version is sung frequently in Methodist churches, associated mainly with the Feasts of Ascension and Transfiguration, but few would know its source:

> Jesus, the conqueror, reigns,
> In glorious strength arrayed,
> His kingdom over all maintains,
> And bids the earth be glad.
> Ye sons of men, rejoice
> In Jesus' mighty love,
> Lift up your heart, lift up your voice,
> To him who rules above.
>
> Extol his kingly power,
> Kiss the exalted Son
> Who died, and lives, to die no more,
> High on his Father's throne;
> Our Advocate with God,
> He undertakes our cause,
> And spreads through all the earth abroad
> The victory of his cross…[115]

[114] See Gillingham 2013c: 219 and http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/profiles/tallis.shtml.
[115] Taken from www.ccel.org/w/wesley/hymn/jwg0277.html?scrBook=Ps&scrCh=2-2&scrV=0-0.

Other musical versions of this psalm are not intended for congregational participation. Henry *Purcell, who served both the royal court and, from time to time, the secular theatre (especially during the Commonwealth when his musical career both at the Chapel Royal and at Westminster Abbey was interrupted) composed 'Why do the Nations?' between 1683 and 1684, just before the accession of James II. Although this was a sacred anthem for the royal court the political overtones are all too clear.

By the eighteenth century performances of Psalm 2 started to take place in the concert hall rather than the synagogue or church. The psalm was set, a number of times, uniquely for theatrical purposes, by George Frideric *Handel. It was after 1711 that Handel, as composer for the Hanoverian English court, used this 'royal psalm' in a more theatrical way. The *Brereton Psalm 2* ('a Protestant Version of the Second Psalm') was written in 1715 as a response to the Jacobite rebellion against George I.[116] Psalm 2 was again used at the end of the fourth Act of his oratorio *Athalia*, taken from Jean Racine's play *Athalie*, which was performed in Oxford in 1733, on the occasion when Handel was recommended for an honorary doctorate by the University. This time the psalm, as part of the whole oratorio, served implicitly to support the more Jacobite sentiments in that city: Athalia, daughter of the wicked king Ahab (2 Kings 8) is presented as a tyrant queen who usurps the throne, but whose reign comes to an abrupt end when a rightful heir replaces her. The choral interlude using verse 2 fits the appropriate theme of the wicked attempting to oppose God's reign on earth through his 'anointed one': the psalm again serves a political purpose more than a theological one.[117]

Psalm 2 was also used politically in Handel's *Occasional Oratorio* performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden in 1746, in response to the 1745 Jacobite rebellion against George II: set in three Acts, with forty-four movements, Psalm 2 'Why do the Nations Tumult?' is the fourth movement of Act 1, set as a Bass Solo (with appropriate militaristic woodwind interpolations followed by trumpets and drums). It is hinted at again in the commanding Bass Aria of the twelfth movement of Act 1, 'His sceptre is the rod of righteousness'. Its final appearance is in the last movement of Act 3, sung by the full Chorus: 'Blessed are they that fear the Lord'. Much of this oratorio actually re-used older material—some from *Israel in Egypt* and some from *The Messiah*. The reception was not as rapturous as the then impecunious Handel had hoped.[118]

[116] See Smith 1995: 216–7; Rooke 2012: 53–73, especially pp. 65–6.

[117] Rooke 2012: 53–73, especially pp. 65–6.

[118] New College Choir, Oxford with Robert King (conductor) and the King's Consort Choristers have recorded a version of *Handel: The Occasional Oratorio* on the Hyperion label B000002220 (2000).

By far the best known of *Handel's versions of this Psalm is from his *Messiah*, performed in Dublin in 1741. Psalm 2 is used continuously in Part Two, Movements 40–43. The first two verses ('Why do the nations so furiously rage together…') are a Bass Aria; verse 3 ('Let us break their bonds asunder…') is sung as a Chorus; verse 4 ('He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn…') is a Tenor Recitative; and verse 9 ('Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron…') is a Tenor Aria, anticipating the jubilant mood of the Hallelujah Chorus (from Revelation 19) which brings Part Two to its fitting climax—that the Messiah has conquered death and has risen.[119] So the previously political appropriation of Psalm 2 is here replaced with an overt Christological reading: it is somewhat ironical that the subsequent reviews which hailed this as Handel's greatest oratorio were reflections on a work which was as much personal and cathartic for the composer as designed to please others.

Another example of the use of Psalm 2 in the concert hall is by Felix *Mendelssohn. This is in one of his choral works, and his Jewish-Christian background meant that large-scale choral cantatas of psalms were an obvious choice. Mendelssohn's version of Psalm 2, as part of a composition of three psalms (also 43 and 22) designed both for soloists and a double chorus, was composed between 1843 and 1846, published in 1848 and performed in 1849, shortly after his death. This was an ambitious arrangement of *Luther's version of Psalm 2, moving between an animated eight-part *antiphonal composition to a more simple arrangement for single voices, and ending with a confident four-part Canon in the final *Gloria*.[120]

The arrangement of Psalm 2 by the English composer Ralph *Vaughan Williams could not be more different. Originally a composition for the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester Cathedral in 1910, Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, using two string orchestras and a string quartet was an interpretation, in three movements, of the third mode on Psalm 2 by *Tallis himself. This arrangement had already been used by Vaughan Williams in 1906 when he was editing *The English Hymnal*, as the accompaniment to Joseph *Addison's *When Rising from the Bed of Death*. *Fantasia* was revised again in 1913 and 1919. The melody has been used as a theme tune for a number of films since the 1990s, including *The Passion of Christ* (2004), where the

[119] For a website with access to *Handel's compositions of psalms see http://www.classicalarchives.com/handel.html It is impossible to list just one recording: see http://www.classicalarchives.com/work/11524.html which lists some of the best. To hear a full performance, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=imLgyjxTLqo (June 2012: accessed September 2012).

[120] See http://www.classicalarchives.com/work/93610.html.For a critical performance of these three psalms, see 'Mendelsson: Sacred Choral Works' by the choir of Trinity College Cambridge (conductor Richard Marlow) Chandos Records 2006 CHAN 10363.

militaristic and nationalistic elements in the psalm served a more sceptical theological purpose.[121]

Another secular performance of Psalm 2 is by the American Jewish émigré, Leonard *Bernstein. The invitation to compose a piece for the Chichester Cathedral Festival 'with a hint of West Side Story' was an interesting challenge, and Bernstein almost certainly used *Stravinksy's *Symphony of Psalms* (composed in 1930) as a prototype.[122] The first four verses of Psalm 2 are at the end of the second movement: they create an aggressive and discordant piece, with an agitated, percussion-dominated, increasingly frenzied beat, sung only by a male chorus. This piece had actually been discarded from the opening of *West Side Story*—it was originally called 'Mix'—but here the words, in Hebrew, narrated the crisis of Jewish and Christian faith which was now so clearly apparent in post-war Europe and America, and the musical medium evoked not so much the hope of peace as the ongoing threat of war.

The last few musical examples illustrate the way Psalm 2 was used to echo universal concerns about war and peace. A reaction against this use is found in the same kind of historical-critical scholarship which refuted the more universal adaptation of Psalm 1.[123] The nineteenth-century German commentator, Wilhelm de Wette, for example, argues that the contents of Psalm 2—especially references to the oppressive world dominion of the king—have no correlation with the reigns of any known Jewish king, and certainly not David nor Solomon; but, unlike Psalm 1, this psalm cannot be given a Christian interpretation either, as Jesus Christ was a suffering Messiah 'whose kingdom was not of this world'.[124] Similarly another nineteenth-century commentator, Bernard Duhm, argues that the 'world rule' in Psalm 2 contradicted all known experience: it was not even fulfilled by 'christliche Rom'. Hence an 'eschatological' reading is the only one which takes any real meaning from the exaggerated claims of this psalm with its imagined utopia.[125]

So is Psalm 2 relevant at all in contemporary reception? Here David Clines offers a most provocative response. Applying his well-known 'hermeneutics of suspicion', he questions both the 'world of the text' and the scholarly tradition which has uncritically accepted it. The 'world of the psalm' is about a conflict—'between Yahweh, his anointed one and the poet on the one hand, and the nations and rulers on the other hand'.[126] Looking at the psalm through the eyes

[121] For the performance of this psalm, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RCZFwDbFko.
[122] On *Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, http://www.proarte.org/note/*Bernstein.html.
[123] See de Wette and Duhm on Psalm 1 on p. 24.
[124] de Wette 1929: 89.
[125] Duhm 1922: 6–13.
[126] D.J.A. Clines 1995: 245.

of those nations who in the imagination of the psalmist have been subjected to an Israelite king, Clines notes how the Israelite king has a divine imprimatur to deal ruthlessly with any possible rebellion. Clines asks why we view this psalm only through the eyes of Yahweh and his anointed one, assuming it was the Israelite king's right to dominate rebellious foreign nations: we rarely question this as an appropriate ideology.[127] Christians are as guilty of condoning the world-view of the psalm as are Jews; indeed, by identifying Christ with the Israelite king, the problem is exacerbated. Clines asks: 'What is an appropriate response to assertions of national dependence and claims to national self-determination…'?[128] He offers a partial answer: '…while Israel is very happy to have been liberated itself, this psalm does not want anyone else to be liberated.' The result is the perpetuation of a political nationalism and religious exclusivism: 'The text has been chanted by millions of the faithful over two millennia, sublimely supporting, *inter alia*, papal authority, the divine right of kings and the British empire too…'[129] Clines thus challenges readers who unthinkingly accept the ideology within Psalm 2, without considering the political and social consequences.

Alistair Hunter also raises questions about the world view of Psalm 2:

> 'The messiah indicated by Psalm 2 is clearly a powerful military figure, merciless towards his enemies, but a source of succour to his friends. Vengeful and despotic, he is as careless of his defeated victims as a potter of damaged vessels: they are fit only for scrap… There is no suffering messiah here, no gentle victim blessing his enemies and praying for his persecutors.'[130]

Hunter observes, somewhat differently from Clines, how the psalm was originally about a Jewish sect within a pagan world, but has since also been used by 'the secular power which is Christendom', which in turn results in the forging of an alliance with the nations whose hatred for the Jews culminated in the Holocaust.[131] Hence violence turns back on itself: the perpetrators become the victims: so 'Zion' in the psalm later becomes 'Zionism' and a reborn Israel, but also the *Al Quds* of Muslim tradition as imagined in the rhetoric of Hamas, and the vision of Jerusalem in Christian apocalyptic.[132] Like Clines, Hunter asks what can therefore be taken from this psalm. He concludes with a pertinent question: 'Am I the problem, or part of the answer?'[133]

[127] D.J.A. Clines 1995: 257–60.
[128] D.J.A. Clines 1995: 268.
[129] D.J. A. Clines 1995: 275.
[130] A.G. Hunter 1999: 111.
[131] A.G. Hunter 1999: 114.
[132] A.G. Hunter 1999: 115–6.
[133] A.G. Hunter 1999: 117.

So, like Psalm 1, the reception of Psalm 2 also reflects a more recent tendency to transcend the more disputatious uses of the psalm, affirming a more radical and universal message. As these psalms provide a combined entry into the Psalter, this suggests that other psalms might also be read in this way. Whilst recognising the importance of integrity in the history of Jewish and Christian responses to different psalms, this third approach, which seeks creatively a way of 'universalising' the message of the psalms, is an important theme in what follows.