Torah and Psalms: Reading Psalms 1, 19 and 119 as indicative of a torah hermeneutic in the Psalter

MAHER, JOHN,KIERAN

John Kieran Maher:

Torah and Psalms: Reading Psalms 1, 19 and 119 as indicative of a torah hermeneutic in the Psalter

ABSTRACT

This work seeks to establish the presence of a "*torah* movement" in the Psalter through a reading of Psalms 1, 19 and 119. It situates itself in the tradition that sees a shaping of the Psalter for personal study and devotion, but it also respects the insights of earlier genre- and worship- focused exegesis.

A survey of samples of recent research establishes the currents of study on the Psalter, from historical reconstructions of date and author to the genre-based insights of Gunkel and the worship settings of the Mowinckel School. It then traces more recent study (Childs, Wilson, McCann) which seeks to understand the shaping of the Psalter and the move from "performance" to private study and devotion.

This work seeks to establish categorizations of the "*torah* movement" as exemplified in these psalms, particularly what each of these psalms might contribute to the understanding of this movement. Each psalm is examined in terms of its genre, literary analysis and its canonical relations. Psalm 1 is recognized as an entrée into the Psalter and the categorization of "didactic piety" of the *torah* movement is proposed. Ps 19 offers a categorization of "creational interpretation," whereby the *torah* is understood as the interpreter of the unheard voice of creation. Ps 119 offers a possibility for "unmediated *torah* reception," whereby *torah* is seen to offer guidance for the ethical and spiritual life of the individual in a personal and immediate manner.

In a final moment, the manner in which this *torah* movement, as exemplified in these three psalms, serves as a hermeneutic for the reading of the Psalter is examined. Framed within the format of the reproductive, explicative and normative interpretations which this hermeneutic offers, a number of psalms are examined in order to ascertain how this hermeneutic might function and where it enriches their interpretation. Understanding how the Psalter can be read under the guidance of the angel *torah* allows for a sense of eschatological thrust, security and ultimately the memory of praise.

Torah and Psalms:
Reading Psalms 1, 19 and 119 as indicative of a torah hermeneutic in the Psalter

John Kieran Maher
(Seán Ciarán Ó Meachair)

Thesis submitted in pursuit of a PhD.

Department of Theology and Religion
Durham University
2019

Table of Contents

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BEATAJ	Beitrage zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
Bib	*Biblica*
BN NF	*Biblische Notizen. Neue Forschung*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
CBiPa	Cahiers de Biblia Patristica
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
ETR	*Etudes théologiques et religieuses*
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner. *A Bilingual Dictionary of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament.* Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1998.
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBQ	*Jewish Biblical Quarterly*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSRI	*Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KB	Koehler Baumgartner
LXX	Septuagint
LumVie	*Lumière et Vie*
MT	Masoretic Text
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Old Testament Message
PdV	*Parole di Vita*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RTL	*Revue Théologique de Louvain*
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
TOB	*Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible*
TEBC	*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*
TOTC	*Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

INTRODUCTION

The term "*torah*" offers an interesting and even intriguing possibility of meaning. Often this term has been understood as being co-terminous with the Pentateuch, God's defining teaching word to the People of Israel. Yet *torah* is also offered within the family, within the prophetic tradition and as a Wisdom construct. More than regulation or teaching, broad in its perception and yet often specific in its exemplification, this concept can offer a hermeneutic that will open vistas for a better understanding of Scripture and reinforce a sense of the unity and purpose of Scripture, in its varied but united form, as a teaching, directing and consoling word of God for Israel and for humanity. Whether this understanding of scripture is in reference to the historical-descriptive category of Israel's sacred writings, or whether it has the enhanced confessional sense of the corpus of Sacred Scripture which continues to be a live theological resource within the Judeo-Christian culture, this term has resonances and impact.

Yet what is "*torah*"? Defining this term is not the express purpose of this thesis, yet two key understandings of the term are necessary before we begin to demonstrate how to read the Psalter from a *torah* hermeneutic.

Torah is often described as "teaching" or "law," yet one of the qal root meanings is the idea of an "arrow in flight."[1] The advantage of this meaning is that it offers an imaginative image of what *torah* seeks to be—it is focused, aimed, purposeful and graceful. This is one of the more refreshing images of what *torah* seeks to be: it offers a direction and a purpose to life, yet at the same time it holds within it the energy and the beauty of the sheer grace and power of what life can become. Beyond legalism or scrupulosity, this image of *torah* offers a possibility to recapture the art of living purposefully. The *torah* movement within scripture is the understanding that this concept of *torah* offers a hermeneutical construct for the crafting of the sacred texts of Israel, along with the related constructs of wisdom and promise.[2] Sheppard says of the term *torah* that it "functioned as a hermeneutical idiom or construct which designated the subject matter of both

[1] This is a particular connotation of the hiphil form, cf. *HALOT* 2: 436. Examples listed include: I Sam. 31: 3; II Sam 11: 20-24; II Kings 13: 17; Ps. 64: 5, 8.

[2] Gerald T. Sheppard, "Canonization. Hearing the Voice of the same God through Historically Dissimilar Traditions," *Int* 36 (1982): 21-33.

the first part and the whole of scripture."[3] This movement articulates itself through historical narrative, law, prophetic teaching, wisdom sayings and through the poetic-worshipful dialogue that is the Psalter. This has not been outlined with great precision with reference to the Psalter, which is unique in that all three hermeneutical constructs weave together here, which holds in dynamic tension these different but unifying factors.

Yet another aspect of *torah* is that it seems to be seen most vividly and to be heard most fluently in the "seams" of the scriptural pages. Just as the arrow in flight is most clearly seen when contrasted with a change in background, so *torah* is best understood when the structure and the form of the poems offer a suitable background and a "stepping-stone" in the current of the flow of reading these pages. Identifying the "extraordinary fact" of the *torah* movement is not always easy: yet the "seams" are often places where the cement of the *torah* movement becomes more obvious.[4]

The purpose of this thesis is to present an exemplification of how the hermeneutical construct of *torah* looks when viewed from the perspective of the three "stepping-stone" psalms which offer the construct a scaffolding for the reading of the Psalter,[5]---Pss 1, 19 and 119. In essence what we seek to do here is to present an image of how the "arrow in flight" appears at these particular instances in its swoop, when the background changes colour so as to allow a vision of where the arrow is going. The three psalms are stepping stones for the hermeneutical construct in that they allow a momentary glimpse of where the *torah* is flowing from the midst of the torrent but yet with the security and the stability of a form and a structure that checks its progress and gives a vision of where the current is leading. In recapturing the hermeneutical sensitivity

[3] Ibid., 26.

[4] The "extraordinary fact" of references to *torah* at critical junctures was first referenced by Sarna, but Blenkinsopp outlines how *torah* appears at the "seams" of canonical redaction. This is developed in Dempster's article. While the particular example of Pss 1, 19 and 119 are not included in the conversation as yet, by extension, we might see them as "stepping-stones" rather than "seams." C.f. Stephen Dempster, "An 'Extraordinary Fact': *TORAH AND TEMPLE* and the Contours of the Hebrew Canon, Part 1," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997):23-56 and "An 'Extraordinary Fact': *TORAH AND TEMPLE* and the Contours of the Hebrew Canon, Part 2," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997):191-218.

[5] This might be clarified by Sheppard's assertion: "My particular interest in these hermeneutical constructs lies in their power to assign a common literary function to unharmonized and historically dissimilar traditions for the purpose of religious edification." ("Canonization*",* 29). Our study seeks to identify how that "common literary function" works practically in these three psalms.

towards the *torah* movement, we may well enrich our understanding of this important aspect of the Psalter.

Formulating the method

Alonso-Schœkel clarifies the relationship between exegesis, exegetical method and hermeneutics in the introduction to his work on hermeneutics.[6] He offers an image of how the model of exegesis, exegetical method and then hermeneutical reflection might function—that of a three level building. On the first level comes "a complex and differentiated activity, which, in turn, is criss-crossed by multiple relationships and contacts"—this is exegesis. On a second level, a different vision is obtained of what happens below as this activity is explained organically, discovering "design and purpose, aim and means"—the method of exegetical activity. Yet there is still a third and higher plane, and from this position one can obtain "an ample overall survey of the whole building. It is the place where essential principles may be uncovered and stated. This is the level of hermeneutical reflection."

Once this model is applied to the study of the Psalms, and particularly to the three Torah psalms to be studied here, an interesting method of studying these psalms can be proposed.

- Initially, our work will look at the "complex and differentiated activity" with its criss-cross relations and contacts as we exegete the psalms and examine their meaning in an "act that transfers us to the reality which gave rise to the writing." For the psalms, this will include issues of genre, literary criticism, historical formulations, language, canonical placing and form. This can best be achieved by a discrete reading of these different aspects of the psalms. This is the initial moment of reflection.
- In a second moment, the various aspects of the psalms (design and purpose, aim and means) will be examined to see how they work together organically to open up "a systematic way of proceeding in comprehension."[7]
- In a third moment, we move into an interpretation of the texts which is **reproductive** (acknowledging that each time the psalm is "performed"

[6] Luis Alonso-Schœkel, *A Manual of Hermeneutics.* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). 13.
[7] Alonso-Schœkel, *Manual,* 16.

there is an act of interpretation), **explicative** (which demonstrates how the reproductive interpretation functions, making the text present and giving it life—examples might be explaining the impact of music to a deaf person or translating a stirring speech for someone who does not speak the language in which the speech is given) and finally **normative** (which seeks to explain what defines the meaning of a text with authority and how that meaning becomes normative in terms of understanding or action, an example being how a Biblical text might be seen as normative for a heresy or how the amendments to constitutional law are the subject of debate).

Applying this method to the three psalms (1, 19, 119) will be focused on how the idea of *torah* functions as a hermeneutic, not simply for these three but for the Psalter as a whole. This, then, suggests that our guide question will be: what is the vision of *torah* in this psalm and how does it function? In the final moment, we come to a synthesis of the vision of *torah* and we look at how this might guide a reading of the Psalter on the reproductive, explicative and normative levels, thus forming a hermeneutic for the reading of the Psalter.

CHAPTER I: SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a survey of the status quaestionis of Psalms Studies in recent scholarly literature. This seeks to offer an overview of the different debates and the new insights that have come into vogue in the last few decades and to offer a brief history of the debate, with particular reference to works over the last century.

Within the books of the Old Testament, we already have some indications of the use and the origins of the tradition of psalmody.[1] The Books of Samuel are framed by two psalms (1 Sam 2:1-10 and 2 Sam. 22:2-51, which is almost the same as Ps. 18). Interestingly, the first of these, the prayer of Hannah, is connected closely with worship and sacrifice.

Other occasions where the use of psalms and music are associated with worship and sacrifice are to be found in 2 Sam.: 6: 5, 13-15 (where songs and sacrifices accompany the rite of transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem), 1 Kings 10: 12 (where wood is provided to make musical instruments for those involved in Temple worship). Music and psalms, led by the Levites, accompany the transfer rites of the Ark in 1 Chron. 13:8 and 1 Chron. 15:15-16. The texts of Pss105: 1-15; 96:1-13; 106:47-48 are given in 1 Chron. 16:8-36, 1 Chron. 16:8-22; 1 Chron. 16:35-6, where they seem to be a token representation of the psalms that accompanied the solemn procession of transportation of the Ark. Other examples may be found. The essential point, however, is this association between psalms and worship-sacrifice. There seems to be an insistence on the essential link between psalmody and worship-sacrifice. Ezra and Nehemiah further complement our knowledge of the use of music in the worship of the reconstructed Temple (cf. Nehemiah 12:40-43), while no specific mention is made of what was sung. Once again in Maccabees, music and song are associated with the restoration of worship in the temple (cf. 1 Macc. 4:24; 4:53-54).

An interesting development is noted by Wenham with reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls community, where sacrifices do not take place but where there

[1] The following comments are based upon a good exposé of essential Jewish and Christian approaches is contained in Chapter 1 of Gordon J. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically.* (Studies in Theological Interpretation: Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012), 11-25.

is a strong emphasis on psalmody (there are more psalms manuscripts represented in the DSS than manuscripts of any other biblical book). One might assume that, in the absence of sacrifice, the use of psalms took on a new meaning.

Again, in the synagogue and in the early Christian Church, the psalms are used for worship and prayer but also as authoritative texts for teaching.

This brief outline of the biblical allusions to psalms and psalmody offers us a few simple but important indications that the Psalms were originally used in a situation of worship but that this was developed and renewed as they came to be used in different circumstances in the subsequent history of Israel and of the Church.

The tradition that preserved the Psalter was and continues to be a tradition of worship, prayer and music but a tradition that is continuously in development, discovering new aspects to its role and its function. The re-assessment of that fact in modern scholarship has led to different insights into the composition and the original context of the Psalms. However, even this movement of exegesis has undergone development and renewal over recent times as new theories emerged in turn and offered their own contribution to these studies.

Historical-Critical Research into the Psalter

James Luther Mays begins and ends his survey of the history of interpretation of the psalms with the simple question: "What is a psalm?" The answer is complex, as Mays notes, reminding the reader that "Any approach based on a single, simple answer will not be adequate to discern the rich and multilevel nature of a psalm."[2] While the Psalms have been the object of study and reflection within the Jewish and the Christian traditions for more than twenty centuries, the currents and the frame within which this study takes shape have changed considerably. Traditional interpretation stressed the attribution of the Psalms to David. This Davidic attribution influenced the understanding of the psalms in terms of how they were read historically, spiritually and theologically, associating them with

[2] James Luther Mays, "Past, Present and Prospect in Psalm Study," in *Old Testament Interpretation, Past Present and Future: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker.* (ed. James Luther Mays, David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 156.

the piety of David as he faced situations that were described in I-II Samuel. Mays says of this Davidic interpretation:

> For centuries the connections with David sponsored a rich and useful interpretation. The traditional approach did not think of David as a strict historical figure. Rather, David was a paradigm and a prototype in a canonical context. In the psalms, he exemplified prayer, praise and piety for Israel. He was the anointed king, the once and future messiah. The psalms as his prayer and praise provided instruction and prophecy. The best of traditional interpretation drew on the psalms for spiritual and theological purposes that enriched the life of Judaism and Christianity. The psalms' identity as scripture controlled their identity as expressions of David's piety.[3]

In the nineteenth century, studies on the Psalms began to look at some of the traditional claims about them with a certain skepticism, particularly claims of Davidic authorship. The assumption of a later date of composition took hold particularly in the nineteenth century and a key assertion of this period was that the Psalter was the hymn book of the Second Temple, into which some earlier psalms had been placed but which seemed to be dominantly the work of post exilic Temple musicians. So notes Wenham, having consulted Driver, Briggs, Kirkpatrick and Wellhausen: "However, by the end of the nineteenth century there was a wide scholarly consensus that the bulk of the psalms were composed after the exile and edited in the Maccabean period."[4] Early modern exegesis of the Psalms struggles with questions of how this book came into being and for what purpose these poems were assembled together into a collection. The conclusion is, as noted above, that earlier poems and hymns were collected with original compositions from the Second Temple period to form a hymnbook for worship in the Temple.

The real value of this early modern exegetical work lies more in the questions it seeks to ask than in the answers it offers.[5] While the general supposition of the origin and the composition of the Psalter might seem now to have been rather rash as a conclusion, these studies did begin a debate on the origin, composition, editing and usage of the Psalter. As noted already, the "question" that guides their interpretation is one of *when* psalms were composed and then edited into a collection. The response they offer is that most were

[3] Mays, "Past, Present and Prospect," 148.
[4] Wenham, *Psalms as Torah,* 28-29.
[5] One example of how this works is the question Driver asks in his *Introduction:* "Is it possible, upon independent grounds, to fix the dates or occasions of any of the Psalms?" in S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament,* (9th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 382.

composed in the post-exilic period and then gathered into a hymnbook collection for the Second Temple.

Gunkel-Mowinckel School

A definitive turning point in the development of psalms study comes with the pioneering work of Gunkel and Mowinckel. Gunkel's landmark work on the literary genres of the Psalms allowed for a new appreciation of the historical milieu in which these poems were originally composed and used based on the form of the psalms.[6] Gunkel's appraisal of the literary genres of the Psalms, their poetic nature and their *Sitz -im -Leben* (the situation in which they may have been originally destined for use) offered a fresh appreciation of these ancient poems and a new understanding of their significance and meaning.

Gunkel begins his *Introduction* with a frank acknowledgement of the special and unique place the Psalms hold in the interpretation of the Old Testament and in the affection of those who study Old Testament. Yet he quickly observes that there are some issues that need careful nuancing to allow a healthy appreciation of the Psalms. He notes the "*manner of speech*" of Hebrew poetry, which sometimes lacks the forensic clarity of some modern European languages. There is also what Gunkel calls an "*indeterminate means of expression"* which makes the Psalms less defined and less precise than modern prose but consequently allows for a more universal application of the words (i.e. that the lack of definition allows for more than one person to apply these words to his/her situation). The "*passion"* of Hebrew expression is also noted and its tendency to exaggeration which is sometimes difficult to interpret in modern parlance. The ambiguity of tenses in Hebrew, the brevity of the psalms (which forces the poet to express a depth of reaction in a constrained and narrow realm), and the lack of information about the poets and their context are all factors that Gunkel notes from the very outset of his research. He proposes a very ambitious venture: to try to rediscover the co-ordinates that relate psalms together. The essential principle of Gunkel's approach is that the poetry of the psalms should be read in

[6] Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen.* Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933. This book was edited and completed by Joachim Begrich after Gunkel's death. However, the structure and the inspiration come from Gunkel's own approach to research. The English translation is Hermann Gunkel, *An Introduction to the Psalms. The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel.* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998).

the context of Hebrew poetry in its entirety. It needs to be appreciated in the light of the poetry assimilated into historical narrative, the poetry that was used to communicate prophetic experience, the poetry of Wisdom works that seeks to instruct and to guide. As well as biblical poetry, the comparison with the cultic poetry of other traditions in the ancient near east also yields a perspective on the psalms and on their poetry.

Once the poetic nature of the psalms has been properly recognized, the next step is, in Gunkel's own terms, "to bring order and light" to the material.[7] This he seeks to do through a research of the *genre* of the poems. Once those that have a similar structure and theme are collated and examined, their common elements reveal that there could be a pattern to which the poet is complying. This is called *Gattung* (genre), which is not, in Gunkel's estimation a contrived observation but rather one into which the "original essence" of the poetry allows it to fall "seamlessly." [8] Gunkel's contention is that any appreciation of an individual psalm should properly see it in reference to others of the same genre so as to understand its agenda. This agenda comes from the "real life situation" that lies behind the genre. In real life, victory songs and dirges for the dead are automatic and have a familiar ring to them that will be easily understood by those that hear them. The observance of this "original essence" and the reconnection with the "real life situation," from which they derive, will be, for Gunkel, the key to understanding one of the essential elements of the psalms.

The "locus" for these psalms is the next question confronted by Gunkel. Here he suggests that the context for hymns is in the worship of Israel. Just as acts and ceremonies with symbolic meaning are connected with worship and prayer in different parts of the Old Testament, one might surmise that set forms of prayer, i.e. the psalms, often accompanied these acts. Occasions for this might be the "*todah*" (thanksgiving offering), where a thanksgiving song might well accompany the celebratory act. Other possible occasions are the festival procession, pilgrimages and vigils.

Gunkel notes that some psalms might well not fit into the sphere of public worship but rather find their usage in more personal meditation and private

[7] Gunkel, *Introduction,* 5.
[8] Ibid, 7.

piety. He suggests these may come from a later stage in the development of worship.

Gunkel's agenda is outlined in a number of steps:[9]

- The genres of the psalms are to be delineated, according to strictly observed stipulations, particularly occasion in the worship service, a common treasury of thoughts and moods and common language related to the form.
- Within the poems themselves, the motifs are to be designated. These motifs help to allow an identification of the structure of the psalms.
- The chief genres will be associated with acts of public worship, such as the celebration of sacrifice, lamentation of the community, confession or thanksgiving of the individual. The corresponding genres might be the "hymn", the "communal complaint", the "complaint" or the "song of thanksgiving."
- Gunkel also suggests there should be a study of the history of the genres, with attention to how these genres developed and changed as people used them. This also accounts for a mixture of genres in some psalms and a move from public worship to more personal spiritual poetry, allowing for the development of the wisdom psalm.

Gunkel asks people, very specifically, to change the question they had been asking. He suggests that the question of assigning a date to psalms is not the best point of departure for investigation but rather he calls for a fresh appreciation of the genre of psalms.

This work was further developed by the work of Mowinckel, his former student, and his insights into the use of Psalms in the worship and in the festivals of Ancient Israel, particularly his suggestion of the use of some of the Psalms at an Enthronement Festival in Israel have gained credence and recognition.[10] Mowinckel developed the ideas of Gunkel but added the anthropological element, marrying some of Gunkel's literary insights with the anthropology of a Danish

[9] Ibid. 15ff.

[10] Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Biblical Resource Series; trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas. Two volumes in one. Michigan/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004).

anthropologist, V. Grønbech, from whom Mowinckel drew the idea of the importance of ritual and the sense of a need for a participatory recitation.[11]

One fundamental premise for Mowinckel's study is a positive reappraisal of the role and function of "cult" (i.e. worship) which had been previously disparaged as an aspect of a primitive form of religiosity which was superseded by prophetic and reform influences in Judaism (as was a tendency in nineteenth century Protestant exegesis). Mowinckel takes Gunkel's study as his fundamental understanding of the Psalms but he develops from this stance in terms of his appreciation of cult.[12] Whereas he understands Gunkel's approach to have seen an origin for the psalms in the cult and then to have developed into a more personal form of prayer and worship, Mowinckel calls for a reappraisal of the original cult setting. He defines cult as "the socially established and regulated holy acts and words in which the encounter and communion of the Deity with the congregation is established, developed and brought to its ultimate goal."[13] Within this context the use of stereotyped phrases is more than a dry routine but, rather, these phrases can be used to evoke emotions, thoughts and experiences that allow the assembly or the individual to enter into a religious experience. These "words," then mean a great deal more than the apparent as they are charged with emotion, thought and experience. They are, as Mowinckel suggests and referring to Grønbech, "words saturated with experience."[14]

Mowinckel's approach to the psalms is underpinned by this theory of the importance of cult and how this functions as a context for the psalms. He adapts and develops the idea of type/genre proposed by Gunkel but he differs in his sense of what Gunkel calls the history of genres. Whereas Gunkel sees the psalms as having their origin in cult but gradually developing and moving beyond the cult setting to become the religious poetry of the individual and the expression of personal piety, Mowinckel sees the context of cult and particularly of festival, whereby the congregation presents itself and seeks life through its worship and prayer, as being essential to the understanding of the genres of the psalms. Thus Mowinckel defines his interpretation of the psalms as that of a "cultic interpretation." In this context, he identifies royal psalms, hymns of praise,

[11] Crenshaw, Foreword in Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* xxvi.
[12] Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* 13.
[13] Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* 15.
[14] Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* 15. (The alternative spelling of Grønbech is used here).

Enthronement Festival Psalms, National Laments in terms of the public genres that are used and then on more individual but still cultic level, psalms of lament, healing or thanksgiving that are used in the cult by individuals in their own circumstances.

Again, from this research, further insights into the text and the usage of the Psalms have been gained. Individual Psalms could be explained in the light of their usage in the cult and their "public function" as sacred words. Mowinckel sees it as important that the classification of psalms into forms or types should be complemented by a parallel classification in terms of the cultic setting, as he states:

> …the purely form-historical classification and interpretation of Gunkel, the pure 'examination of types', and grouping of the psalms according to the form categories found by the form critic, has to be enlarged and replaced by proper cult-historical ones. The formal point of view is only a provisional help.[15]

In essence, Mowinckel sees Gunkel as having completed only half of his set task. Certainly one should ask to what genre/type a psalm belongs, but this needs to be immediately followed by asking in what cult setting does this psalm find its original home.

These spheres of research were dominantly concentrated on the individual psalms as units and the historical reconstruction of possible situations in which they were used and how they could be interpreted from those details. As such they offered a new élan of study to the Psalms and a very different insight into their history. The essential contribution of the Gunkel-Mowinckel school is a renewed interest in the origins of the Psalms, the characteristics of composition and the possible original settings for their use.

This school of Psalm exegesis offered a new model and language for those who were to follow. Among the Gunkel-Mowinckel School, we might number Westermann, Crüsemann, Crenshaw, Gerstenberger, and Kraus. Not all of these might be classified as being in agreement with the classifications and delimitations of Gunkel and Mowinckel, but they do take them as a "point de repère" in their approach to the Psalms.

However, other debates and developments have emerged around the interpretation of the psalms and the psalter as a whole. While it is dangerous to

[15] Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship,* 33.

delineate arguments too neatly, for the sake of clarity, we offer the suggestion of there being a series of questions that succeed from those of the early scholars and those of Gunkel and Mowinckel:

- What is the relationship between the individual psalms, the Psalter and the formation of Israel's literary traditions? Within this, how do important themes such as Wisdom and Torah relate to the psalms individually and to the composition of the psalter as a whole?
- How is the Psalter structured? How does the idea of the over-arching principles allow the psalms to relate to each other and allow the Psalter as a whole to relate to the canon of the scripture of Israel?
- As well as the theological and religious themes, there is a renewed sense of the literary quality of the Psalms. This needs to be examined to see how poetry as we find it in the psalms compares with other poetic forms and other literary forms in the Scriptures.

These questions might form a criterion for our evaluation of subsequent studies of the Psalms and the Psalter.

Canonical Approaches to the Psalms

A parallel and complementary movement of study takes up the mantle from these scholars and seeks to examine how the Psalms come together in the form of the Psalter as a book and what this might mean in terms of the individual psalms, their position in the Psalter, their contribution to the entirety of the book and the over-all aims of the Psalter as it moves from obedience (Ps 1) to praise (Ps 150).

One of the first instances of this approach comes with Brevard Childs and his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture.* Childs's entire *Introduction* is an exposition of how the canonical reading of Scripture applies to each book in turn. With reference to the Psalter, he acknowledges the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel as being definitive in the recent interpretation of the Psalms. He comments that, while scholarship seeks to refine and re-evaluate aspects of Gunkel's theory, the impact of the Gunkel-Mowinckel school has definitively left its mark on Psalms studies. He identifies two lines of Psalms Study as being the heritage of this school—study of literary genre and study of sociological function.

While he acknowledges the impact of the Gunkel-Mowinckel school, Childs asks the pertinent question of how to broach the theological problem that is perhaps ignored in the approach of Gunkel and Mowinckel. In essence, Childs's approach to the Psalms, while acknowledging the heritage of historical criticism, seeks to reintroduce a particular theological element. Childs once again changes the question. This time he asks how the theological heritage of the psalms, as read in Church and Synagogue, can be reconciled with the historical-critical legacy.

Childs acknowledges that he is not the first to attempt this reconciliation. He lists Drijvers, Gélin and Barth as having attempted a similar reconciliation but his attempt seeks to be more "rigorous" in his attempt to offer a reconciliation. His contention is that the role of the canon as it has shaped this literature is to be neglected to one's peril.

In examining the role of canon as it has shaped the Psalter, Childs begins with a reference to the "canonical shape" of the psalter. The essential point here is that the Psalter has undergone editorial activity to take the shape that it holds today. Psalms from different origins and different contexts have been put together under the umbrella of the Psalter. Different collections are present (Davidic, Korahite, Asaphite), there is evidence of a fivefold structure, and there is explicit evidence also of editorial activity in 72:20. Ps 119 has a very specific role and it seems to "frame" an earlier form of the Psalter (cf. Westermann). All these different facts point to a very likely editing of the Psalter. The Psalter is not a casual casting together of different hymns and poems in an "ad hoc" manner, but rather a carefully crafted and purpose-driven editorial work.

In attempting this canonical reading of the Psalter, Childs refers to some issues that are "clear" in terms of the interpretation of the Psalter.[16] The Psalter is divided into five books, each ending with a doxology (the last psalm is a doxology in its entirety). Psalm 1 is considered to be an introduction to the Psalter, parallel to the "conclusion", which are the last five psalms in their entirety. The superscriptions, which are supplied to all but 34 of the psalms, have an interesting role. Some are used for musical instructions, some distinguish category, some are attributed to David, while others are attributed to Moses, Asaph, Korah, Solomon, Ethan (89), or attributed anonymously (or

[16] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 512.

prescriptively) to "one afflicted" (102). In some cases, the type of psalm is defined. Childs's perspective on the importance of these superscriptions for a canonical reading of the Psalter is developed in an article where he examines these in the light of midrash as a means of offering a structure and shape to the Psalter. [17]

Childs offers a more detailed examination of some aspects of the Psalter. He particularly recognizes the role of Ps 1 as an introduction to the Psalter, which highlights the significant fact that the psalmist understands Israel's prayer as "not simply spontaneous musings or uncontrolled aspirations, but rather an answer to God's word which continues to address Israel in his Torah."[18] This psalm is critically important in offering a key to reading the psalter as it offers a rationale for what follows—the psalter is a means of responding to the divine word. Another aspect of this is what Childs calls the "anthological style" of the psalter. By this he means the process by which the psalms have been loosed from their original contexts and have been given a new form and context in the psalter. This is the process of "relecture", whereby texts which were initially applied to specific settings are loosed from that setting to be used whenever deemed relevant and appropriate in a new setting. Just as the student anthology (e.g. of poetry) could contain different texts from different times and contexts that have been chosen, collected and assembled to give an overview of poetry, so the psalms have been chosen and drawn together into a collection from different sources to offer Israel the formulae necessary to respond to God's word in different moments and contexts. In so doing, they have gained a new significance as "scripture", as part of the great collection of works that belong to the religious literature of Israel.

Another aspect of Childs's new approach is to re-assess the role and the function of the royal psalms. He acknowledges that the "original occasion" for these texts is the honouring of a reigning king and is clearly distinct in origin from the messianic expectancies of the prophetic literature. Childs offers another perspective on this, however. As there is no single collection of royal hymns and as they are scattered throughout the psalter, Childs asks the question of what might be *their meaning in the context of the psalter.* The editors chose to preserve them in this context and, in so doing, they have removed them from their original

[17] Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (1971): 137-150.
[18] Childs, *Introduction,* 513.

context. The question is whether their rationale for so doing was to place them into a broader context than that which was their original context, possibly even a context with an eschatological impetus. In support of this suggestion, he notes the particular situation of Psalm 2, which is a royal psalm but seems to function as a model for the pattern prescribed by Psalm 1.[19] In further support of his opinion, he situates Ps 72 in the context of II Sam. and he concludes that this psalm is to be read as a prayer for royal obedience to the divine law with an eschatological dimension. He further situates Pss 89 and 132 in this context, as both refer to the prophecy of Nathan. Childs further develops this idea beyond the royal psalms to the structure of the psalter in its totality, which he describes as having a highly eschatological nature, which "joins with the prophets in announcing God's coming kingship."[20]

One of the more developed ideas proposed by Childs in support of his argument is the use of the psalm titles. This argument was previously outlined in his article of 1971.[21] Childs sees the psalm titles as a form of midrash, i.e. that these titles are meant to direct a reading of the psalms in a context of Scripture. In some cases, the titles will seek to situate the psalm at a particular moment in the life of David. This connection with David, in Childs's opinion, opens the psalms to a wider and more inclusive application. They are not necessarily hereby bound to a specific historical setting but, rather, they are adopted to make sense to people in similar settings at different times in history. In his article, Childs draws comparison between the titles as we find them in the Psalms and titles to be found elsewhere before poems and hymns in the canonical texts and in the LXX and the Qumran documents. His conclusion from these surveys is "the Psalm titles do not appear to reflect independent historical tradition but are the result of an exegetical activity which derived its material from within the text itself."[22] In essence his theory is that the attribution of titles to the poems in the text is an example of a canonically-conscious editorial work within the text itself that seeks to situate poems and psalms, which come from a cultic situation, in an historical situation. The rationale for pairing a psalm with an historical context is often due to some common phrase or to a sentiment expressed in the psalm that

[19] Cf. Childs, *Introduction,* 516 (Note: there seems to be an error in the text here. Lines 15-16 should invert references to Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. The text as it stands does not make sense).
[20] Childs, *Introduction,* 518.
[21] Childs, "Psalm Titles," 137-150.
[22] Childs, "Psalm Titles," 143.

matches the circumstances of the historical personage. This is developed further in the *Introduction*, where he suggests that this process of historicizing the psalms into situations in the life of David has a specific function. It takes the psalm out of the realm of the cultic and into the realm of the "common troubles and joys of ordinary human life in which all persons participate."[23]

Childs' work has opened a new perspective on Psalms studies. We have so far described the different steps of development of the study of psalms in terms of the questions posed by each. We have moved from a focus on the individual psalm and its possible original historical context, to a study of the common features and forms in some psalms that demonstrate their common *Gattung* or genre, to the cultic context that gave birth to these genres. Now the question changes again: the focus is on how the individual psalms work together in a canonical context, i.e. in the context of the book of the psalter and in the broader context of the entirety of the Hebrew Bible.

Wilson

One of the heirs to Childs's approach in terms of the Psalms is Wilson and his *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter.* [24] The book is based on the author's doctoral work in Yale University under Professors Robert R. Wilson and Brevard Childs. Thus we might understand how he develops the potential in Childs's approach through working under Childs. In essence the author seeks to examine the structure and the shape of the Psalter as it is found in its canonical form. This he seeks to examine with reference to external evidence (parallel categories of texts from the ANE and variations found in Qumran manuscripts) and then with reference to internal criteria (psalm headings, the single, but important, subscript of Ps 72:20, the use of untitled psalms, the position of some texts as keys for the structure of the Psalter).

In his first chapter, Wilson proposes his change of direction in a culture of psalm studies which, under the influence of Mowinckel and Gunkel in particular, had grown to examine texts as units on their own, with no reference to the book in which they were to be found. With the possible exception of Proverbs (and

[23] Childs, *Introduction,* 521.
[24] Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBL Dissertation Series 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985).

even here recent study has shown an importance of the place of each text within the shape and structure of the book), this is a unique situation in Scripture studies and a deviation from the general rule of looking to a text's place in the book as a key to interpretation of that text (while one must also acknowledge that the Psalter is a unique work in the ensemble of the Hebrew Bible and is without parallel as a collection of 150 discrete works). He challenges this presupposition. He credits the work of Niemeyer who began to look at how collections were integrated into the Psalter, with reference to Talmudic and Midrashic arrangements, but fails to identify a single consistent editorial principle and continues to uphold the assumption of there being no unifying principle to the Psalter.

In essence, Wilson seeks to challenge any supposition that the shape of the Psalter is the "accidental product of an extended collection process." [25] He proposes to offer a rationale for a more serious editing of the Psalter from a study of parallel hymnic literature, from a study of the arrangement of psalms manuscripts in Qumran and then from an in-depth examination of the editorial signposts within the Psalter itself.

Wilson firstly offers a comparison from two ancient extra-biblical texts, collections of Sumerian Temple hymns and Mesopotamian catalogues of hymnic incipits. Wilson examines the structure of the various hymns and the insistence on a connection with Sargon's daughter. Some changes in form occur at places of strong editorial significance, noticeably in a final doxology and a structure that includes colophons rather than one which simply appends them to texts. The original function seems to have been praise of Sargon but this seems to have been nuanced and developed over time as the collection was shaped in the culture of Temple worship. Two techniques evident here are of use in study of the Psalter—the transmission of texts and their adaptation for use other than their initial function, and the gradual integration of colophons as part of the hymn.

Wilson lists 22 catalogues of incipits. These are important as evidence of how editorial activity was pursued. Genre identification is an important aspect in these catalogues. While he clearly states that any conclusions from these can only be tentative, [26] he does draw the conclusion that those who drew up these

[25] Wilson, *Editing*, 2, reference to footnote 3. Wilson seems to be drawing this term directly from Gunkel.
[26] Ibid, 27

catalogues did so with an editorial agenda based around genre, deity addressed, but also with reference to similarities in phraseology or a series to be categorized together for some liturgical purpose.

One of the more important comparisons that Wilson makes is that with the psalm texts to be found in Qumran. An important key to understanding his line of thought here is to be found in Appendix A, which is a useful tool as it lists the psalms in their canonical order and then compares this to which mss contain the same psalms in Qumran, which allows for a good overview of what his line of argumentation is. Anyone who wants a clear and definitive verdict on the value of seeking editorial principles in the Psalter or lack thereof will be disappointed. The Qumran Psalm manuscripts bear evidence to a situation in evolution. Wilson lists the two tendencies in interpreting evidence from the Qumran Psalm manuscripts—on the one hand the view that these bear witness to an alternative psalter structure held as authoritative by its adherents (typified by Sanders), on the other hand that this bears winess to a Psalter structure dependent on MT150, typified by Skehan. Scholarly arguments on both sides are presented. However, the clearest presentation of the argument is on p. 82 in the quotation from Skehan. In essence, this suggests that all psalters are liturgical and the manuscripts that preserve them are based around the needs of the worshipping community. In this light, the "order" of the psalms in the manuscripts is not necessarily a set structure but an *ad usum* text that is not necessarily indicative of a closed, authoritative structure. The process by which MT150 came to be edited and set is through this practice of use of the psalter in different circumstances and occasions until a set structure is eventually agreed. Wilson concludes his survey of the field of observance of the order and form of the Qumran psalter with a discussion of canonicity, authority and priority.

In essence, the main addition of the Qumran manuscripts is that they witness to the complex and varied process by which the psalms journey from being cultic prayer to their entry into the public prayer and worship of Israel, to their role in reminding the people of their relationship with the Lord, to their being brought together in whatever context with other forms of poetry and prayer, to their being cast into an order that has some rationale and structure wherein the overall effect is greater than the sum of the parts. The Qumran manuscripts are witnesses to a moment in this process-- a moment when these

psalms, along with other texts, were appropriated by a community to be used in their liturgy and worship. This was not done in a haphazard manner, as the manuscripts witness, but individual prayers and texts are chosen and matched to form a whole in the prayer and the formation of the community.

In the chapter on the presentation and analysis of the text, Wilson presents an exhaustive description of the manuscripts and what psalmic texts they contain. An important analysis is on p.116 where he lists both evidence that supports the Masoretic arrangement and evidence against. Some of his discussion of the structures and the format of the manuscripts is also enlightening. He also discusses some of the pairings that occur in the Qumran texts but which are not reflected in the Masoretic text order.

The survey of evidence of editorial shaping is one of the more interesting and incisive chapters in this work. Wilson lists the vestiges in the MT text of editorial shaping, including the superscriptions and the one post-script (72:20), which is of great importance as a clue to the shaping and the rationale of the Psalter. However, he warns against reading too much into the various editorial indicators. With the exception of the above mentioned postscript, no other explicit indicators of segmentation are to be found.

P. 143 contains an excellent summary of the usage of Ps 1 as both an entrée into the entire book and a pair of "hermeneutical spectacles" through which to view the contents of the Psalter. He makes the point that, whatever the *original* context of the psalms were, they are now to be read in the light of that psalm as a means for the individual to search for the path of obedience to the Torah of the Lord. He discusses the editorial usage of the superscriptions and how they compare with parallel forms in other literature.

He discusses in some detail thematic and genre groupings of psalms and how the arrangements may well work to try to include different collections and to bring them together in the collection. This section is best understood in his later essay "Shaping the Psalter*:* A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Psalms."[27] In this essay, Wilson develops his thought around the positioning of psalms to discuss how this might come to allow for a framing of the Psalter. He discusses how the five-book structure is framed by a careful positioning of key

[27] J.C. McCann, (ed.) *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOT Supplement Series, 159; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 72-82.

psalms to allow for an integration of different collections into the two dominant motifs, those of royal covenant and of Wisdom. He concludes by noting how the Psalter is not to be regarded as a hymn-book, but rather as a musical score, a harmony of diverse instruments and melodies.

On another level, Wilson examines the "tacit" arrangement of psalms in the Psalter. On this level, he examines how and why some psalms have been placed together and what this means. He reminds the reader that while no *explicit* editorial markings are present, there is an editorial activity to be "divined" from internal considerations. These include the doxologies and the arrangements of superscriptions and the thematic collections. Some of these "internal organizations" seem obvious and the sequence between the psalms is to allow for a gradual progression in thought and idea.

In his final chapter, Wilson goes beyond the technical and organizational arguments and the comparisons to ask the question as to whether there is an underlying rationale to the final form of the Psalter in MT 150 and, should there be so, what are its guiding principles. Here again, the emphasis falls back on the pivotal role of Ps 1 as an introduction to the Psalter, not simply in a technical sense, but also as that which sets the tone of the book. He rejects the idea of the Psalter as an accompanying hymnal to the readings of the Pentateuch, offering a musical accompaniment to the reading of each pericope. However, he sees great value in the way that the Psalter is modelled on the Torah. He explores the *cursus* of the books, with particular reference to the seams that mark the joints between the various books. He notes how, in Books 1-3, the arrangement of Davidic psalms at key-points frames these books with a strong emphasis on the Davidic Covenant and its symbolic value—how it is established, preserved, challenged and broken. Book 3 ends on a cliff-hanger, with a dramatic and impassioned plea to the God of the Covenant to remember and to have mercy. Wilson suggests that the function and purpose of Book 4 is to offer a reply, in a calmer and "wiser" tone, to the frenzied appeal of the end of Book 3. The large number of untitled psalms allows for a re-focus on Wisdom, which allows him to claim that this is the core of the Psalter as we find it, allowing for a calmer meditation on how the God of Israel has come to the help of his people in times past and will continue to sustain and bring happiness to those who trust in him (which might be a reference to Psalm 1?). The theological re-focus begins with a Mosaic psalm, which might well

function to cast the reader's mind beyond the crisis moment of Ps 89 and begin the calmer wisdom meditation that this book seeks to offer. Book 5 is built around the mammoth Psalm 119. The collections contained herein serve as a backdrop to this mountain which must be climbed so as to allow the pray-er a chance to appreciate the importance and the sheer privilege of being able to focus on the meditation of the Torah and how that can lead one into Wisdom. After this, one is led naturally into an ascent of praise.

The real value of Wilson's work is to refocus the argument on an over-arching rationale behind the editing of the Psalter. He moves the focus from an examination of the individual psalms as units to see how the *ensemble* works to bring the reader from the initial invitation to life and to delight in the Law through the drama and the intensity of human experiences of failure and suffering as well as the positive reflection in thanksgiving for the good things of life to more mature and exalted reflection on the Wisdom to be gained from meditation on the Law into a final act of praise. He offers a clear and constructive reflection on the role of Psalm 1 and of the doxologies. He emphasises the need to examine the internal criteria so as to discover the editorial rationale behind the canonical form of the Psalter.

The work is clear, precise and almost forensic in its pursuing of this stated aim. He seeks to present a solid argument for his thesis from external parallels and from credible internal insights. The most interesting sections are those on the Qumran documents and how these cannot be conclusive about the thesis but do bear witness to an attempt to organize the psalms in a manner that would be adaptable to the needs of those who want to use the psalms in liturgical settings and how they show some attention to a developing editorial concern. The final chapter, complemented by a reading of his later essay on the "framing" of the various sections of the Psalter around Covenant and Wisdom motifs, is also very interesting.

His anxiety to justify his thesis seems a little overwrought and the elaborated and in-depth forensic examinations of Sumerian and Babylonian texts are interesting but intense.

His examination of the micro-units of psalms is also sometimes laboured. For example, his conclusions around the relationship between Pss 32-33 needs more attention and a development of how and where the torah instruction,

pivotally set in Ps 32:8-9 might offer a rationale to the twinning of the two psalms. This may well be an important version in miniature of what the Psalter seeks to do on a macro-level. Ps 32 starts with a reflection on how the one who confesses sin is heard and forgiven, but this is interrupted by another voice in vv. 8-9. This "other voice" is a call to go beyond confession of sin to seek out real Wisdom. The response to this is not found in the concluding verses 10-11 but rather in the next psalm. This unexpected call of *torah*, breaking into the rhythm and the flow of the psalm, and then receiving a response in the next psalm seems perhaps to offer a hermeneutic for interpretation of the Psalter—the call of *torah* is there as a constant cementing of other ideas and sentiments. This may need greater development than that which Wilson has offered.

In sum, Wilson offers a fine work which illustrates that there is editorial activity behind the arrangement of the Psalter which has a focus and a rationale. The next step will be to identify an "arch" which will be the back-bone and the dominant feature of that architecture.

In his 2002 commentary, Wilson himself furthers this line of study. He proposes two "moments" of transformation for the Psalter, which effected the change from "performance" to personal prayer and study: the destruction of the first temple and the subsequent exile was the first event, where the Jewish exiles developed the idea of Scripture and the need for a more personalized and less "performatory" reading of the psalms. However, with the restoration of the Temple, the public worship element was resumed, with the addition of new psalms and pilgrim songs. This was accompanied by the more "personalized" form of Judaism represented by Yohanan ben Zakkai, which stressed the need for personal sacrifice and a waiting on the Lord to act. The second defining event, according to Wilson, was the demise of the second temple and the subsequent change in focus from public worship to personal piety. In this moment, the transformation of the psalter is complete: the texts once used for public worship become the backbone of this piety of spiritual sacrifices and personal meditation to discern wisdom for the ongoing needs of life. As Wilson says:

> In my opinion, the canonical arrangement of the book of Psalms preserves clues of these two formative historical events in its shaping. The core of the first three books (Pss 1--89), with their shared focus on authorship collections, reflects the response to the first cataclysmic event of the Exile. The final two books (Pss 90-150) and the final shaping of the whole Psalter are a later response to the events occurring toward the end of the first century A.D. [28]

[28] Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms I,* NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002. 30.

This is further developed in an article from 2005, "The Structure of the Psalter," wherein Wilson further develops this idea of the gradual redirection of the Psalter from public worship to private devotion, with some psalms specifically set for this new orientation and a "shaping" of the Psalter to encourage this individual approach. Here he says:

> It is, in my opinion, pre-eminently in this careful shaping and arrangement of psalms and Psalter that these very human words *to* God have made the shift to become God's words to *us.* This is where biblical theology intersects with a historical-critical reading of the psalms. Reading the psalms from beginning to end forces us to set aside our own preconceptions and calls us to lay aside our own perceived needs as the driving force of our encounter with the psalms. Such openness allows God freedom to challenge, confront and ultimately transform us in ways we do not control or even expect.[29]

McCann

The discussion continues in the work edited by J. Clinton McCann, "The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter." McCann is a doctoral graduate of Duke University and professor at Eden Theological Seminary. His interests lie in a canonical and theological reading of the Psalter. This work represents the fruits of a "program unit" of the Society of Biblical Literature which was formed in 1989 to examine the shape and the shaping of the Psalter. This first part of this work, entitled "A New Approach to the Psalter," consists of five essays which represent different positions and perspectives to the canonical approach to the Psalter.

The first essay, from James L. Mays, is entitled "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation."[30] This essay becomes the reference point for the others that follow. It is a sequel to an earlier article by Mays, delivered as the Presidential Address at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1986. In that article, he suggests the possibility that the three *Torah*-psalms (1, 19, 119) which eschew definition in terms of genre and *Sitz im Leben*, may well have an important hermeneutical function in offering the Torah and prophetic eschatology as keys that ultimately lead to a "piety that used the entire book as prayer and praise."[31] In this article, he re-addresses the very question of whether it is possible and/or useful to try to understand the character of the Psalter as a book**.** He insists that

---

[29] Gerald H. Wilson, "The Structure of the Psalter," in *Interpreting the Psalms. Issues and Approaches* (ed. Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth. Leicester: Apollos, 2005). 245.
[30] James Luther Mays, "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation" in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann; JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 14-20.
[31] James Luther Mays, "The Place of Torah-Psalms in the Psalter", *JBL* 106 (1987):12.

the suggestion of trying to understand the Psalter as a book does not mean a deviation from the position of understanding the Psalms individually in terms of genre and also in terms of their cultic usage and *Sitz im Leben*. What Mays seeks to offer is an outline of whether the argument that the individual psalms come together in some coherent shape and with some unifying principle to form a book is a viable "third way" of approaching the Psalter. Mays clearly sees the difficulty of offering this kind of reflection on the Psalter and draws a parallel with the Book of Amos where, while the material may well be as disparate in form and meaning as the Psalter, the unifying principle of prophetic activity and wisdom reacting to concrete and specific historical situations is clear, unambiguous and evident, in comparison to the equally clear and certain "individuality" of the Psalms with reference to set and concrete historical circumstances. Nevertheless, Mays sees the possibility of drawing together five kinds of data that may be used to posit an understanding of the cement that might well hold together this "*geistige Heimat* of the Psalter":[32]

- An **interpretative ordering of the Psalms.**
- A **Shift in the Conception and Use of Genres**. Pss 30, 129, 51 are flagship examples of where the use of a Psalm is developed from an individual context of prayer into a representation of a broader and more generalized usage.
- **From Ritual Accompaniment to Instruction.** Consolidating the argument in the last point, Mays remarks how the Psalms don an instructional character. They can offer serious guidance on moral and spiritual formation of the individual and of the people. Some psalms will easily fall into this Wisdom or *torah* category, but it is an aspect of the Psalms that they become *de facto* instructional as they refer to the various moments and experiences that the individual and the people may encounter.
- **Combination and consolidation of Genres, Topics and Motifs.** The flagship examples here are Pss 19 and 119 which each consolidate a number of topics and themes. The essence of the argument here is that such a consolidation is not a simple "merger" of ideas and forms but rather a more developed and refined form of psalm that suggest that there is a parallel development in the structure and the shaping of the Psalter.

[32] James Luther Mays, "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation" in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann). JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993, 14.

- **Psalms in reference to the content of Scripture.** Mays concludes his study by drawing attention to how this mode of reading the Psalms may well offer new light on old questions of how to interpret aspects of language and imagery in the Psalms. He leaves the reader to choose how to react by simply re-posing his initial question as to whether or not this approach represents a useful "third way" of reading the Psalms.

Mays's essay represents the reference point for the next two essays which function as responses to the question he poses. Roland E. Murphy represents a different approach and school to Mays.[33] Coming from the generation of Catholic scholars that was first to use historical-critical method in the reading of scripture, he remains firmly attached to the historical-critical approach of Gunkel and Mowinckel and sounds a cautionary note with reference to an overly enthusiastic embrace of this potential "third way". He begins his essay "Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms" by acclaiming the general principle in Scripture studies that no passage should be interpreted without reference to its setting in the book from which it comes, although Proverbs and Psalms seemed traditionally to be exempt from this rule. His caution is based on a fear of forcing the text to comply with the principle. He proposes five theses of "caution" and a final thesis of continuity. I think what he essentially suggests (across all points) is that there should be an initial reading of any psalm in an historical-critical sense, i.e. in terms of its genre and *Sitz im Leben,* which might be followed by a "reception history" (although he does not use this term) as well as a "book context".

Many of Murphy's insights are very valuable. He cautions against any reading into the text of elements that are not there. This will be important for any canonical reading of the book. **He does not exclude a possible book context** but offers a firm and valuable warning of which pitfalls to avoid so as not to "force" the book context on an unwilling subject!

McCann's collection continues with the presentation of Walter Brueggemann's response to Mays. [34] Brueggemann begins with an acknowledgement that Mays has broached a subject in which the boundaries are

[33] R. E Murphy, "Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann;. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 21-28.
[34] Walter Brueggemann, "Response to James L. Mays 'A Question of Context,'" in *The Shape and Shaping* (ed. J. Clinton McCann;. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 29-41.

not clear. He concentrates his reflections around two central questions, those of "a context for interpretation from the book" (which means delving into the fabric of relationships between the psalms, the canonical shape of the book, the relationships of the parts to the whole) and then the dynamic process by which the psalms became the book of the Psalter (what he calls the canonical process rather than the canonical shape).

Brueggemann presents us with a word of caution about the dynamic process that saw the Psalms become the book, a process that is highly speculative and is also dependent upon historical reconstructons that can never be entirely proven. He accepts that this process did happen but he proposes a new reading of the dynamic that moved it. With Brueggemann, we discover the need to look again at the term "cult" and to examine what it might mean within the context of this dynamic. He also offers a model by which to interpret the Psalter as book from the interpretative keys (obedience, anguish, reassurance, ultimate praise) that the "pivots" (Pss 1, 72, 150) offer. This may also demand further reflection, particularly with reference to the Psalm titles as an alternative "pivot" to offer a hermeneutical key and perspective. He acknowledges that Mays has begun an important conversation. The step he takes is to challenge some of the historical presuppositions that may underpin Mays's initial propositions so that they can be developed and to further the examination of the interpretative clues within the structure of the Psalter that offer a reading of the Psalter as book.

McCann's collection continues with an essay from the pen of Gerard Wilson, whose major work, as described above, was a landmark in this approach.[35] In this essay Wilson looks at some of the applications of his initial theory that had been proposed in his 1985 work (quoted above). His starting point is a statement of his theory that the final two books (90-150) show evidence of a greater freedom in arrangement than the previous three (2-89). These earlier books show a greater influence of the previous collections to which the individual compositions belonged, a constraint less evident in the later books.

The question that guides Wilson's work is to what extent the individual psalms have been arranged within the structure of the Psalter. He was the

[35] Gerard H. Wilson, "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise," in *The Shape and Shaping* (ed. J. Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 42-51.

instigator of this movement of study and in this article he examines and evaluates the research of some of his heirs.

In his conclusion (on pages 50-1), Wilson outlines the path by which progress can be made in this project. He suggests that the best method for analysis of the arrangement of the psalms follows four steps;

- Recognition of clear indication of groupings as discernible (doxologies, author designations, genre indications)
- The examination of linguistic and thematic links between psalms in these groupings
- This allows for "judicious speculation" regarding the purpose and effect of the arrangement of the whole psalter
- In turn, once the above has been accomplished, then can any suggestion be made around the appropriate social/historical matrix that could illuminate the theological function and purpose revealed by the arrangement.

Thus does Wilson offer a methodology for this form of study.

In the next essay, David M. Howard offers a "state-of-the–field" survey of the studies into the editorial activity in the Psalter.[36] He begins with a reminder of the early Christian interest in messianic and christological interpretations of the Psalter, but moves quickly to the nineteenth century emergence of critical biblical scholarship. He notes the enduring importance of the Gunkel-Mowinckel School and how this mode of study has no modality for a study of broader editorial activity beyond noting the presence of the five books and the various assimilated collections.

The second half of the book (entitled "The Psalter: A Whole and its Parts") opens with another essay from Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Psalms*".*[37] Wilson begins by referring to the common assertion that the Psalter is a hymn-book but quickly calls this to task by pointing out the deliberate and careful editorial arrangement of the Psalms. He demonstrates that the first three books are centred around the idea of the Davidic Covenant and their structure is influenced by the collections that are amalgated

[36] David M Howard, "Editorial Activity in The Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping* (ed. J. Clinton McCann;. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 52-70.
[37] Gerald, H. Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Psalms*,"* in *The Shape and Shaping* (ed. J. Clinton McCann;. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 42-51.

into these books. The last two books (Pss 90-150) show a different editorial activity, marked out by the opening with *hwdw* psalms and the closing of segments with a *hllwyh* psalm. The evidence of Qumran seems to suggest that the formation of the first three books was earlier than that of the last two but that the editorial activity on these latter books was concluded before the closure of the Qumran Library.

Patrick D. Miller's essay, *The Beginning of the Psalter,*[38] explores a subject that has already been broached and that has entered the bloodstream of Psalms studies, the nature of Ps 1 as an introduction and as a tone-setter to the entire Psalter, and particularly to Book 1. The particular reference of this essay is the juxtaposition of Pss 1 and 2 as a joint introduction to the Psalter, with the particular nuances of each and eventually the impact of both. Miller begins with an interesting observation of how often the beginning and the end of books are indicators of the subject matter and how they set a tone for the entirety of the material (Job, Proverbs, Qoheleth and some of the Prophets are cases in point). Ps 1 functions as such for the Psalter but its connection with Ps 2, while recognised, has not been clarified in terms of the tone that they set as a joint introduction to the Psalter.

Whybray

This is the immediate context into which speaks also the work of Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book.*[39] Whybray acknowledges the trend in Psalms studies to read the Psalter as a book. He examines the thesis from the perspective of a question, i.e. what is the original purpose of the Wisdom Psalms and what role they play in the Psalter. They seem to be unique in the *ensemble* of genres and are less inclined to follow a specific pattern. Their authorship is also less easily ascribed than elsewhere. In this light he examines different theories of the role of the Wisdom Psalms and the idea of "private psalmody" or use of the psalms for personal meditation. Some use them as evidence that the editing of the

[38] Patrick D. Miller, "The Beginning of the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping* (ed. J. Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 83-92.
[39] Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book* (JSOTSup 222; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

Psalter had this dimension of meditation and personal prayer in mind. Whybray surveys the field to see what might be the evidence around this.

His review of the recent views of the Composition of the Psalter delineates many of those scholars whose work we have examined here already. In essence, as we noted, the suggestion that the Psalter has a composition geared around a purpose, first mooted by Childs, has developed around the idea of what might be the goal, be it Wisdom training, eschatological, rationalization of the Exile in the light of the Covenant, pilgrim prayers for meditation in private and for study. An interesting addition is that of Millard, who sees the composition of the Psalter on a micro-level moving from the over-arching composition to the building blocks of units of psalms.[40] His general conclusion is that the Psalter is "post-cultic" (even though this use may have begun while the Temple Cult was still using the psalms for worship). The individual psalms were associated and then cast into a composition that is used for study and prayer, particularly after the Exile and in the Diaspora. He sees apparent contradictions as being rather evidence of a considered juxtaposition that moves the reader on the journey from Lament to Praise.

Whybray offers an interesting summary of points of convergence between scholars and differences of method (p.32-33). As points of agreement, he note that there is a general consensus that the Psalter is not a random collection but a carefully composed and coherent book, that the original usage of the psalms in worship is adapted (perhaps while this usage is still prevalent) to serve as instruction and personal reading, that some psalms seem to be positioned to facilitate this structured reading, that early groups of psalms were integrated into this structure. As points of dispute, he notes how little certainty there is around the scope of the composition, how few of the structuring psalms are recognised definitely as such and how many scholars have concentrated on the coherence within a group of psalms rather than a general thrust of the Psalter. His own comments echo those of Murphy about the need to establish criteria around this that will stand historically to demonstrate the method at use here. One might assert that Whybray sounds a note of caution as regards the deliberate composition of the Psalter with a specific scope. He seems to be more inclined to a judgment of a composition that adapts itself to the scope as a consequence

[40] Whybray, *Reading the Psalms,* 29-30.

rather than as a deliberate intention. He concedes as the only certainty around composition that the Psalter ends with a very deliberate note of praise in the last five psalms but he is sceptical about claims around the compositional purpose in the superscriptions and the Wisdom/Torah psalms serve to structure the ensemble.

In this light, he begins to examine material present in the Psalter and different interpretations offered as guides.

He discusses the role of *torah* and Wisdom material in the Psalter. As these psalms differ from the two dominant genres of lament and praise, which could easily be situated in the worship setting, the Torah and Wisdom material is less inclined to have been part of the staple diet of worship. He establishes his criterion around this. Firstly, the role of the *purely* Wisdom/*torah* psalms in giving an orientation towards devotion in reading the Psalter needs to be established. Secondly, the use of Wisdom interpolations to recast psalms from the worship setting into a new scope for Wisdom reading will be examined.

Ps 1 is given particular attention in his investigation. He acknowledges the currents in research that see Ps 1 as an introduction to the Psalter and the variety of opinions around what "meditating the *Torā"* might have. He remains aloof from the suggestion, however, that this psalm, or any of the *torah*/Wisdom psalms, might be strategically placed so as to form a structure to the Psalter that allows for the material to be re-interpreted in a new light. Rather he suggests that this re-interpretation happens spontaneously, in the new light of circumstances, without there being a structured and devised framework to assist this. Ps 19 in turn is used as an example of a direct attempt to refocus the understanding of a once independent psalm, celebrating the role of the sun and its prominence for human life as a sign of God's glory, towards a new understanding of the *torah*, once again in its broadest sense and not necessarily confined to the Pentateuch, as a parallel entity to the sun in its importance for genuine human life. Both give life, shed light, enable human existence and yet both can burn and be a source of majesty and awe. Whybray examines the different theories proposed around the structures and the intent in placing 19B as a theological comment to 19A. This he sees as a more deliberate, post-exilic attempt to direct the reading of an earlier hymn to a *Torah*/Wisdom understanding. He continues to study Pss 37, 40 and 78 for Torah interpolations and, in each case, sees an original text as being

structurally altered to include *torah* material which set a different tone to the interpretation of the poem. Wisdom material is seen to be interpolated into Ps 18, where vv 21-28 seem to offer a rationale for the protection that the Lord has offered. The psalmist (putatively David according to the title) has acted in accord with the Law and is blameless, resulting in this protection that is offered to him by the Lord and in the great deeds that the Lord has enabled him to accomplish. The psalm of thankgiving is, allegedly, given a Wisdom hue by this interpolation so as to offer a rationale for the protection offered and received: the Lord protects the psalmist specifically because he has been true and faithful, even blameless, in the sight of the ways and ordinances of the Lord. In like manner, Whybray examines and discovers Wisdom interpolations that re-orientate fifteen psalms towards a Wisdom/*torah* theology. He asserts that this could be a series of sporadic incidences by different hands and he somewhat insists that there is no pattern to the interpolations and that they not serve to offer a structure to the Psalter as an ensemble. Whybray's next step is to examine how psalms with a Wisdom element have been set in groups of psalms with natural linkage so as to offer a direction of *torah*/Wisdom theology to that group.

In an important section, Whybray asks directly whether the Psalter can be read as a Wisdom book, composed of a systematic placement of psalms and for a consecutive reading. In this light, he revisits the discussion on the relationship between Pss 1 and 2.

As the relationship between Pss 1and 2 is almost a flagship for scholars who seek to identify the structured order of the Psalter for a consecutive and meaningful reading, this point is decisive. Two key arguments are the common vocabulary between the two psalms and the thematic affinity. While Whybray reviews the scholarly consensus both in favour of reading these psalms together and against such, he comes to the conclusion that it is "unwise to use the hypothesis of the unity of Psalm 1 + 2 as a basis for an understanding of the composition of the Psalter."[41] He also surveys the arguments for grouping psalms in the literature of Reindl, Howard and Lescow, again to arrive at the conclusion that he is not convinced of the suggestions of deliberate linkages.

In his conclusion to this section, Whybray affirms the presence of *Torah* and Wisdom motifs in the Psalter. However he concludes that there is no evidence

[41] Whybray, *Reading the Psalms,* 81.

of specific editorial activity in the Psalter towards a reading of the Psalms from a *torah*/Wisdom perspective. He rather draws an analogy with Proverbs and sees the Psalms as being re-cast between an opening and a closing that allows for the recognition of Wisdom-*torah* elements that are essentially already there but for which we have now been given the hermeneutical spectacles necessary—a "spiritualization" of the Psalms, as he calls it.[42] He ends by posing the question of whether the Psalter shows the hall-marks of an eschatological interpretation and where the evidence of this redactional activity might be seen, a question to which he gives attention in his next section.

Whybray discusses a number of psalms under the rubric of the eschatological interpretation. He prefaces his argument with references to McCann and his note of the future orientation of some psalms and also the the work of Wilson, who saw a dialogue in tension between a Wisdom reading of the Psalter and a Davidic Covenant reading, where the Wisdom reading would eventually gain prominence. In that schema, the reading that suggests an ultimate, decisive direct rule of God alone may well have coloured a possible re-interpretation of the Psalms.

Psalm 2 does hold a prominent position and as such will probably affect the reading of other psalms, Whybray concedes in this discussion. Its language seems hyperbolic as the king will be exalted to a place where no ruler of Judah or any other contemporary state could have hoped to accede. Yet such may have been more than simple hyperbole but rather the deliberate attempt to offer a hope for Israel of a definitive rule of the Lord that would be decisive and dominant. Hope is introduced—in the immediate for a new ruler coming to the throne but also in the remote for the ultimate hope of Israel in the definitve reign of God. Ps 18 is, in turn, examined and elements of the super-human therein are highlighted as the Psalm might seem to offer an image of what a "New David" might achieve for his people. Messianic interpretations of Psalm 45 began quite early in both Jewish and Christian readings. However, the over-identification of an obviously human king with God would probably have sat ill with orthodoxy in Judaism. Psalm 72 holds a prominent position, coming as it does at the end of Book II and with its important subscription. Its hyperbolic descriptions of how the king's reign might last forever and how he might attain dominion from sea to

[42] Whybray, *Reading the Psalms,* 84.

sea may have begun in court pageantry but certainly add fuel to any possible later messianic re-orientation. In parallel fashion, Psalm 89 at the end of Book II holds a prominent position. Its double-edge of, on the one side, a confidence in the steadfast love of the Lord and, on the other side, a description of lamentable circumstances, allows for the reading that, ultimately, this steadfast love will triumph and offers at least an openness to messianic readings, even if there has not been an editorial re-casting for this deliberately. Ps 110 with its reference to the Lord's "day of wrath" and Ps 132 with its strange *mélange* of themes (David, the Ark, Zion) can be seen as a messianic prayer that the anointed one might come quickly.

In an interesting twist, Whybray suggests, in his conclusion, that Pss 2, 72 and 89 have been "placed in prominent positions which support the notion of an orientation along messianic lines,"[43] while later he claims there is "no *systematic redaction* of royal psalms."[44] Presumably, he means by this that there is no systematic redaction of all the royal psalms, but demonstrably he has shown that there has been a systematic redaction in conceding the special positions of Pss 2, 72 and 89.

In his conclusion, Whybray revisits the different themes he has examined and concludes that, while the influence of Wisdom currents, *torah* features, eschatological outlook or attitudes toward sacrificial worship account for "silent reinterpretations" of "obsolete or distasteful features," he claims there is no evidence of "*textual* manipulation."[45] He revisits the diverse models that he has surveyed and concludes that no single principle can be said to underpin editorial activity. In that, he may be correct. It will be difficult to single out one single principle that underpins the whole. That, however, does not nullify the possibility of there being any editorial activity. No single colour can be singled out as the underpin of the tapestry, yet that does not necessarily mean that the tapestry is without pattern!

[43] Whybray, *Reading the Psalms,* 99.
[44] Ibid., 99.
[45] Ibid., 119.

Conclusion

The questions that have inspired the research here documented have been varied and enriching. These scholarly works represent the current discussion on the Psalter as a book. Other strands of investigation, including the Reception History of the Psalms, a messianic hermeneutic or the new appreciation of the stylistics (particularly in the Francophone tradition) develop in a parallel movement to this, yet these still remain representative of the current trends in reading the Psalter as a book. From the historical fascinations to the literary and socio-cultic settings to the questions of where and how worship and instruction intersect or succeed one another, each has given rise to enriching insights. The present environment invites us to understand the "book context" of the Psalter as an important factor, while there is still need to respect the individuality of each psalm and to recognize its complex but enriching "tradition" of interpretation and how it comes to interact and relate to other psalms. The "strands of reference" also need to be included within the matrix of interpretation, particularly the cultic-instructional strand of reference that forms part of the movement to scripturalize these texts in a current of formative worship, which we might call the *torah* strand of reference.

Outside of this current of research, there is need to mention two related spheres of interpretation and use of the Psalter which also colour this enquiry into the functionality of the "*torah* movement": the need to understand the particular enrichment of the Psalter from its *reception history* and the need to understand the particular place of impact and influence of the Psalter on Jewish and Christian mental and imaginative furniture from the affection that has grown towards this particular book from daily interaction over three millenia.

The reception history of the Psalter includes musical, artistic, poetic, literary and spiritual patrimony, as different aspects of the Psalter were appropriated and given fresh expression in those imaginative milieux, each taking words and images from the past to give expression to questions about, and perceptions of, what it is to be human and in relation with one another and with God.

Within the religious tradition, the Psalter has a daily impact in the life of Judaism and Christianity as it has been the staple of prayer for both traditions. One of the aspects of that prayer is the formative reality, the fact that through the

prayer of the psalms, people are invited to grow in their understanding of their relationship with God and with one another. One of the clearest articulations of this comes from the monastic tradition, where Rupert of Deutz teaches:

> Among the spiritual gifts with which the Holy Spirit enriches His Church, we should lovingly cultivate the one which consists in the power to understand what we say in prayer and psalmody: this is no less than a manner of prophesying.[46]

That sense of the importance of psalmody, even to raising it to the level of prophecy, is indicative of the important role it has played in the worship tradition, where it confronts the worshiping community with the living word of God and becomes their daily encounter with that reality. The prophetic image demonstrates how this needs to be a teaching and correcting experience in the life of faith. It is an element of the study of the Psalter that is difficult to define but that has extraordinary and powerful impact on the experience and the affective aspect of the study of Scripture. Wilson summarizes it thus:

> There is something about reading the psalms from the beginning of the Psalter to the end, day after day, that does not allow us to master them---picking and choosing what suits us, shaping them to *our* will, fitting them to *our* perceived needs and moods. Instead such daily and continuing familiarity with these texts---- more than any other, I believe--- ultimately *masters us and shapes us to the will of God* in ways we can hardly anticipate. That is the fearsome challenge of the psalms: In exposing ourselves to them for the long term, we discover that God knows us and our "way" far better than we know ourselves.[47]

That elusive but ever-present "fearsome challenge" of the psalms, that sense of how they can daily challenge and shape the life of the believer, and that they have been so doing for more than two millennia, means that the "material" with which we deal is far more than a wisdom or instruction text, but a text that has formed an essential element of the believer's imagination and self –perception.

---

[46] Quotation from Rupert of Deutz, found in:
Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God. A Study of Monastic Culture* (trans. Catherine Misrahi. New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), 290.
[47] Wilson, *Psalms I,* 100.

CHAPTER II: PSALM 1

Translations and Critica Textus

אַשְׁרֵי־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ֮ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד וּבְמוֹשַׁב לֵצִים לֹא יָשָׁב׃
[2] כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חֶפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה׃
[3] וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שָׁתוּל עַל־פַּלְגֵי מָיִם אֲשֶׁר פִּרְיוֹ֥ יִתֵּן בְּעִתּוֹ וְעָלֵהוּ לֹא־יִבּוֹל וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה יַצְלִיחַ׃
[4] לֹא־כֵן הָרְשָׁעִים כִּי אִם־כַּמֹּץ אֲשֶׁר־תִּדְּפֶנּוּ רוּחַ׃
[5] עַל־כֵּן לֹא־יָקֻמוּ רְשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט וְחַטָּאִים בַּעֲדַת צַדִּיקִים׃
[6] כִּי־יוֹדֵעַ יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ צַדִּיקִים וְדֶרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים תֹּאבֵד׃

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the evil, nor does he take his stance in the way of sinners, nor sits upon the bench of scorners!
But rather his delight is in the *Torah* of the Lord, and upon his *Torah* does he meditate by day and by night.
So then he is like a tree planted by the streams of water, that gives of its fruit in due time, and its foliage does not wither,
And all that which he does will prosper!
Not so, indeed, are the unjust! But they are like the chaff which the wind scatters,
Thereforefore, the unjust do not rise up in the court of justice, nor do the sinners in the assembly of the just,
For the Lord knows the way of the just; but the way of the unjust leads astray.

Critica Textus

v.1:

- While there is no textual incongruity, the opening macarism deserves comment. The macarism is an opening not only to the psalm but to the entire psalter. Kraus describes this as a "secular" form, in comparison to the liturgical formula of בָּרוּךְ (e.g. Jer. 17:7).[1] Van Gemeren comments on this: "The word 'happy' is a good rendition of 'blessed' (*'ašrē*), provided one keeps in mind the condition of this 'bliss' is not a mere feeling. Even when the righteous do not feel happy, they are still considered 'blessed' from God's perspective. He bestows this gift on them. Neither negative feelings nor adverse conditions can take his blessing away."[2] Kidner notes that this formula occurs 26 times in the Psalter, and outside it is used in the exclamation of the Queen of Sheba in I Kings 10: 8, but it is based on "sober choice."[3] Terrien distinguishes strongly from the liturgical usage and identifies its derivation from a root meaning "to go forward," "to walk on," "to march steadily." He describes it as "a hortative felicitation for blazing a trail." [4] Gerstenberger, in turn, traces the origin of the

[1] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 115.
[2] Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms* (TEBC (Vol. 5); Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 53.
[3] Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (TOTC. London: Intervarsity Press, 1975), 47.
[4] Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms. Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 71.

'congratulation' (his term) to the educational context, from where it entered into the language of liturgy, "with its new emphasis on religiously motivated happiness, especially with regard to observing the Torah."[5] Wilson comments on the Wisdom aspect of the term, saying that it is "common enough in the Wisdom teaching of the Old Testament to recognize it as a characteristic method of the sages to exhort hearers to right action." And that it "conveys the idea of happiness that flows from a sense of well-being and rightness."[6]

- The Syriac transposes עצת with דרך : this is of little real importance. Dahood notes that עצת could be translated either as "council" or "counsel."[7] Craigie introduces another idea: that it might be translated as "fellowship."[8] In support of the sequence as found in the MT, Kidner notes: "*Counsel, way,* and *seat* (or 'assembly' or 'dwelling') draw attention to the realms of thinking, behaving and belonging, in which a person's fundamental choice of allegiance is made and carried through; and this is borne out by a hint of decisiveness in the tense of the Hebrew verbs (the perfect)."[9] Kraus suggests that it should remain as we find it in the MT with a translation of "to follow the advice."[10] Terrien resituates the argument in the nomadic culture, where choosing the right way was the responsibility of the head of the household (הָאִישׁ). Here he notes that the Syriac might read "walks in the way" and "stands up at the command of," of which he says "The flexibility of the language suggests that the early singers were conscious of the nomadic imagery."[11]

v. 3:

- The BHS notes the possibility of a gloss in 3b (וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה יַצְלִיחַ). Craigie notes that the syntax is ambivalent and it is not easy to determine whether the phrase refers to the man or the tree, but he concludes that the reference is to the man and that this concludes the first section (v.1-3) with a final reflection on הָאִישׁ. Kraus suggests that it is a supplement from Josh. 1: 8 (as noted in BHS).[12] Rofé develops the significance of this Joshua text parallel (linking it to v.2:וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה) as a testimony to "the process of democratization of Torah study."[13]

---

[5] Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms: with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry.* (Vol I. FOTL XIV. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988*),* 41.
[6] Wilson, *Psalms I,* 93-4.
[7] Mitchell Dahood, Dahood, Mitchell. *Psalms 1-50.* (Vol.1, AB. New York: Doubleday, 1965), 1.
[8] P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (First edition. WBC 19; Waco, Texas: 1983), 57.
[9] Kidner, *Psalms 1-72,* 47-48.
[10] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59,* 113.
[11] Terrien, *The Psalms,* 72, n. 7.
[12] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59.* 113.
[13] A. Rofé, "The Piety of the Torah Disciples at the Winding-up of the Hebrew Bible: Josh. 1: 8; Ps. 1: 2; Isa 59:21," *Bibel im jüdischer und christlicher Tradition. Festschrift für Johann Maier zum 60. Geburtstag.* Edited by Helmut Merklein *et al, '*Bonner Biblische Beiträge 88. Frankfurt-am-Main: Hain, 1993', 81.

- Briggs suggests that this verse is based upon Jer. 17: 5-8 and Ezek. 47:12. He describes it as an "intermediate gloss." [14] Terrien reaffirms the affinities with Jer. 17: 7-8 but he suggests that Ps 1 is the original piece.[15]
- Kissane offers a different suggestion. He is also concerned with the apparent difficulty of incorporating v.3 into the poetic and metrical structure of the Psalm. He offers a different solution to the entire omission of the verse in Briggs' model. He observes that the metre would be restored to a more regular pattern of three strophes with three verses each if we suppose a corruption. Kissane suggests there may be a missing line and even offers a possible reconstruction of the absent line.[16]
- Oesterley suggests a suppression of פַּלְגֵי in order to preserve the metre and because this term is not to be found in the Jeremiah text or in the *Teaching of Amen-em-ope,* to which he traces the Jeremiah text.[17]

v. 4:

- Barthélemy remarks on the emphatic effect of לֹא־כֵן and suggests a "redoubling" in the translation ("rien de tel") might best reflect the possiblity of an epizeuxis (repetition of οὐχ οὕτως in LXX). This might be best rendered in English as "not so, indeed are the unjust, not so!" [18] References are made to a similar situation in Ps 108:2 and Ps 57: 8. The effect is stylistic and does not have any real effect on the meaning: such is the conclusion of Barthelemy. The BHS critical apparatus notes the possibility of a redoubling of the לֹא־כֵן. Oesterley notes that the LXX version, when reverted to Hebrew, would restore the metre.[19]
- On another level, Waltke comments on the dramatic effect of the term לֹא־כֵן, which he describes as having the dramatic effect of "a pulpit-thumping bang."[20]
- The Greek offers an appendage to this verse (ἀπὸ προσώπου τῆς γῆς), which is remarked in the critical apparatus of BHS. Kraus describes this as a "decorative appendage."[21]

v. 5:

- LXX reads ἐν βουλῇ for בַּעֲדַת: possibly this is an error due to dittography from v. 1 (בַּעֲצַת).
- Terrien continues his "leader of the clan" perspective on this, as he describes the "just one" as "a pioneer, faithful to the the traditions of the past but willing to take the risks of the unknown future," in contrast to the

[14] Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms.* (Volume I. ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 3.
[15] Terrien, *The Psalms,* 74.
[16] Kissane, E.J.: *The Book of Psalms* (Vol. 1. Dublin: Brown and Nolan Ltd., 1953), 1-2.
[17] W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Psalms.* (Vol 1. London: SPCK, 1939), 120-1.
[18] Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament. Tome 4. Psaumes.* (ed. Stephen Ryan and Adrian Schenker. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 50/4, Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2005), 1.
[19] Oesterley, *Psalms,* 121.
[20] Bruce K. Waltke, "Preface to the Psalter: Two Ways," *Crux* 43 (2007): 7.
[21] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59,* 113.

"amorphous horde" of the ungodly (expressed in a plural that carries the force of the adversative). [22]

- Dahood translates as "the congregation of the just" and remarks that this might be "an ethical adaptation of a mythological phrase which originally described the council of the gods in Canaanite religion."[23]
- VanGemeren also lends credence to the MT as he notes that "the word 'assembly' (*ēdāh*) is a collective term for the people of God…, used here in a more spiritual way to indicate that the judgment of God also comes on circumcised Israelites who did not love God or keep his commandments."[24]

Defining "torah" from within, from without, from the whole: Ps 1.: Is torah seen as the Just one's "*ḥapeṣ*" and the object of the just one's "*hagah*"? What does this mean for the Psalter and for the reading of the Old Testament?

Ps 1 presents the person opening this book with the two ways: the reader now has to choose. He can choose the way of the unjust, which will involve "walking", "standing" and "sitting" with "wicked", "scorning" and "scoffing" company. The other option is the way of making *torah* his "*delight*" and the object of his "*hagah*", which will ultimately lead him to stability, security and prosperity, as expressed in a fairly elaborate simile (v.3).

The initial object of our study is to examine how this ostensibly simple psalm with its straightforward and clear presentation of the choice between the two "ways" serves within a larger framework. Mays remarks on how the Psalter opens not with a prayer, nor with a hymn, but with this statement about human existence. He goes on to claim:

> This opening beatitude also serves as an introduction to the book. Its location as the first psalm is not accidental; the psalm is there to invite us to read and use the entire book and play a fundamental role in its theology. So the psalm needs to be book.[25]

Thus we see how scholarly consensus sees this as an *ouverture* to the Psalter. Our study seeks to broaden that supposition by adding a third aspect, a canonical value to the text of Ps 1 which seeks to situate its place in the canonical reading of Scripture. In this light, we offer three distinct readings of this psalm as an introduction to our reading of the psalter through the lens of *torah*:

---

[22] Terrien, *The Psalms,* 74.
[23] Dahood, *Psalms I, 1-50,* 5.
[24] VanGemeren, *Psalms,* 57.
[25] J. L. Mays. *Psalms.* (Interpretation—a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 40.

- Firstly, seeking to understand this in the light of the Canon as a whole,
- Then, reading Ps 1 in order to evince a hermeneutical principle to guide the "just one's" course through the Psalter
- Then to examine what attitudes and dispositions this psalm seeks to inculcate in the potential reader, vis-à-vis the *torah* reading of the Psalter.

Hermeneutical Framework

Reading Psalms in the light of the Canon

Initially, we deal with the question of the shaping of the Old Testament as a whole and the crystallization of Israel's traditions around core hermeneutical principles. Disparate texts, from different times come together in the Psalter, and in the Old Testament as a whole, which gain a theological value to those who read it as a teaching (*torah*) from God to guide his people. How these different traditions and forms of literature coalesce and complement each other is the first item of our study. In essence, the Psalter is a microcosm of the Old Testament, where different and somewhat independent texts are brought together under a banner to form a body of work that leads the "just one" on a journey from the call to obedience, through the vagaries and vicissitudes of lament, through the joys and gratification of beneficience, into a final moment of praise.

Thus we begin with a reflection on how this microcosm of the Old Testament demonstrates to us what is happening within the canon as a whole: How do these texts come together in a journey that leads into the Linguistic Temple of praise?

Seeking a hermeneutic of continuity for the Old Testament

An immediate and necessary step in our study is to credit a principle of unity for the amalgam of disparate traditions which come together to form the Old Testament. We might begin by peering through the density of expression to see the principles that guide the way to see a clarity and a guiding principle within these sacred pages.

Sheppard: "Canonization" [26]

In his work, Sheppard offers a reflection on how unity can be seen more in the hermeneutical principles around which the texts are crystallized than in the material itself. He begins his study with a reminder of the simple quest, of both Jews and Christians, from earliest times and in different ways, to "hear a coherent Word of God from their Scriptures." [27] He demonstrates this by references to Midrash and to canon-conscious redactions. With reference to Midrash, he alludes to the "anthological style" of midrash with its aim of constructing mosaics around particular themes, that ultimately show how "the entire Scripture illuminates the Torah." [28] In turn, the elements of canon-conscious redaction demonstrate a need to place these texts in dialogue with each other. Joel and Amos might seem to contradict each other, yet by representing some of the Joelian hope in an Amosian "sideswipe"we have the beginnings of a dialogue. Psalm titles are also an indicator for this attempt to read texts in dialogue around central questions, where some of the events in the life of the democratized king, who comes to be the "everyman" of the Scriptures, depict both the grandeur and the baseness of humanity. This leads to a reflection on the classical distinctions of "*torah*", "Prophets" and "Wisdom", which are the products of historical circumstances and which lead, in each case, to a distillation of text within a hermeneutical construct. In the case of the "*torah*," this ultimately led to a distillation of at least two Law Traditions, if not more, into a codified and unified format. In the case of "Prophets," it leads to a reformulation of the essential element of "promise" in new and challenging circumstances. Finally, in the case of "Wisdom," it leads to a reflection and an interpretation of circumstances and situations of life in the light of the religious tradition. In essence, the core thesis of Sheppard's work is that *torah*, promise and Wisdom function as the guiding hermeneutical constructs to the Old Testament (as "Gospel" serves as an analogous principle for the New Testament).

The real merit of Sheppard's argument is that the "unity" of the Old Testament can be defended not from a demonstration of how the material is inter-connected but rather from how the traditions preserved in this material

[26] G.T. Sheppard, "Canonization: hearing the voice of the Same God through Historically Dissimilar Traditions," *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 21-33.
[27] Ibid, 21.
[28] Ibid, 22.

relate to these key hermeneutical principles of *torah*, wisdom and promise. This he demonstrates from extrabiblical and intrabiblical references as well as from the traditional "categories" within the Old Testament. The challenge inherent in his work, then, is to look at the diverse units of literary texts and to demonstrate how these "shy children" peep from within them. When one approaches the Canonical text, in Sheppard's model, one begins by asking the question of what this might mean in terms of *torah*, i.e. a teaching that leads to life, or in terms of "promise," i.e. a visionary hope, or in terms of "wisdom," i.e. a practical balanced attitude to life. Once these texts are seen from the perspective of these questions, then they begin to dialogue naturally and to relate in ways that are both naturally harmonized and strategically constructed.[29]

Seitz: Royal Promises in Canonical Books[30]

Moving to the level of recognizing the unitary sense of the Psalter and its relationship with the "canonical aspiration" of the Scriptures, Seitz draws a comparison between the Book of Isaiah read as a unit and the Psalter. He begins by referring to the Qumran text of 4Q285, which, he seems to suggest, is a compilation of Isaian texts with references to a Messiah who is either killed or killing. He draws from this evidence that the Book of Isaiah was seen by the compilers as a literary unit, crystallized around the idea of a Messiah. One suggestion for the adaptation of the texts is around a proposed messianity of Cyrus but another, more acceptable, proposal is that this bears witness to a transfer of promises from David to the people as a whole. Seitz sees the monarchy and the development of the idea of a democratization of the monarchic role as a unifying factor to the Book of Isaiah. He then draws a comparison with the Psalms, as he regards the theology of Isaiah to be dependent upon a similar move in the Psalter, i.e. the movement from the persistence, to the apparent

[29] Bonhoeffer's famous quotation from his letter to his brother-in-law on the reading of Scripture helps to focus this point:

> "One cannot simply read the Bible, like other books. One must be prepared really to enquire of it. Only thus will it reveal itself. Only if we expect from it the ultimate answer, shall we receive it. That is because in the Bible God speaks to us. And one cannot simply think about God in one's own strength, one has to inquire of him. Only if we seek him, will he answer us."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word.* Translated and edited by David McI. Gracie; 2nd edition (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). 35.

[30] Christopher R. Seitz, "Royal Promises in the Canonical Books of Isaiah and the Psalms," in *World without end: the Old Testament as abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 150-167.

disappearance and finally to the transfer of messianic hopes. He traces this in the Psalter and demonstrates that the theology of Isaiah shows a certain assimilation, if not dependence, on this Psalmic theological paradigm. He makes reference to the strong Davidic overtones of the First Book, lessened and eventually eclipsed in the Second Book, which has the claim that the Prayers of David are here ended. In the Third Book, there is one Psalm with Davidic overtones, Ps 86, which functions as a cry for help and deliverance. This functions to remind the reader that God's promises are not ended and despite the apparent eclipse of the Davidic Tradition. Pss 90-91 of the Fourth Book refer back to the deeds and marvels of God as sung by Moses and an exultation of God's kingship. Hints of restoration in one form or another are given with Davidic references in the Fifth Book, but these may refer to a restoration of the promises and the ideas rather than the monarchy itself, as the people function as the royal presence to the world of God's enduring power.

This is interesting as it offers a parallel with the same development of ideas around the role and the importance of the Davidic promises in Isaiah which could serve to unify the Book. The royal motif in the psalms is an interesting suggestion for the unity of the Psalter. The origins of the royal motif are in Ps 2, but this needs to be read in strict correlation with Psalm 1. The "royal way" is nothing more than the perfect exemplification of the way of the just one in Psalm 1. Ultimately, this hermeneutic also depends on our first psalm and on the idea of *torah*. Kingship and worship, deliverance and promise are all stages of this "way" that is the way of the blessed in Psalm 1.

This text again serves to remind us of the importance of the psalter and the paradigms that the psalter offers for the reading of the Old Testament. In the subtleties of theological suggestion that emerge from these pages, we find some of the answers and, indeed, some of the questions that help the reader to see the underlying web of interconnected and interdependent themes that unite the searchers of "a coherent word of God."

From the presentation of the theories of Sheppard and Seitz, we might reformulate our own perspective on the reading of the Psalter. Two questions guide us as we read these pages:

- What is the teaching and the direction that these psalms seek to offer the reader—what is their *torah?*

- What keys and theological paradigms are subtly or explicitly offered to those who seek this coherent word of God in these pages and more widely in the Scriptures?

Psalm 1 as a Hermeneutic for the Psalter

Read in the light of the Psalter as a whole, Psalm 1 aims to give a rationale to the collection. There is no unity of opinion on the origins of these poems, hymns and prayers. Interesting theories abound about where they came from and how they were used initially. It would seem ludicrous to suggest that they are casually thrown together. Psalm 1 with its brusque and clear presentation of the choice between the two ways, either the company of the wicked, sinners and scoffers or the way of finding delight in the Torah of the Lord and making his *torah* the object of one's "*hagah*", gives a possible hermeneutic—this book will be a guide to one's "*hagah*" of the *torah*.

Our study will seek to examine this relationship between the Psalter and the "*torah*" which is to be the just one's "delight" and the object of meditation. The communication will be examined in terms of the poetic structure of the Psalm and how this sheds light on the idea of meditating on the *torah* and cultivating delight in it. It will seek to situate this in the broader ambit of the theme of *torah* as a guiding principle to allow a coherent reading of the written tradition of Israel and then more particularly in the shaping of the Psalter. The next step will be a study of the two positive definitions of *torah* as the just one's *ḥapeṣ* and the object of *hagah,* leading to the way that is known to the Lord.

Psalm 1 as an "Ouverture" to the Psalter

In reading the Psalter in its canonical form, the immediate and imminent impact of Ps 1 comes from the fact that it is the first psalm to be encountered. While the tendency of research has been to read the Psalter in a spliced manner, the refocusing on a canonical form invests this psalm with a hermeneutical weight and interpretational value that may not have been appreciated totally within the previous research of the Psalter.

What then is the hermeneutical purpose of this psalm? The psalm equips us with a framework and a purpose for the reading of the Psalter which we might call "didactic piety". Blenkinsopp refers to the traditions that seek to read

Wisdom and *torah* together in an academic and intellectual way, referring particularly to Job 28, Proverbs 8: 22-31, Ecclus. 24:1-29 and the Wisdom of Solomon. Yet he also credits a pious and worship setting as a locus for the phenomenon of how Wisdom and Law coalesce to face the challenges of life. Here he sees the importance of Ps 119 and its reflection on *torah* as "divine gift" as the masterpiece of this current, but he remarks how Ps 1 plays an important role in setting the tone for this particular theological tendency in the worship and piety of Israel, where a metaphor used in Ben Sira, that of the river with its tributaries and canals, that brings life wherever it flows (cf. Ecclus. 24: 25-9), comes into play.[31] This situates the psalm in that current of Wisdom reflection that sought to understand how Wisdom was more than a secular prudence but rather a form of God's instruction and direction (*torah*). Yet here there is more involved than reflection. Psalm 1 invites the reader into the realm of prayer, piety and worship, where the realities of life are brought into the temple of interior contemplation and into the spoken dialogue with the God of Israel in public worship. As the pilgrimage of prayer begins, however, we have this initial poem, built around the structures of a macarism with nuances of welcome and congratulation along this road of worshipful reflection. Taking this beginning seriously offers us a perspective and a hermeneutic, as noted by J. Clinton McCann Jnr.:

> But having made the decision to take seriously the canonical shape of the Psalter, we shall begin at the beginning—Psalm 1. The effect is to elevate the concept of *torah* to one of central significance in understanding the Psalms…..the Psalms are to be heard as God's instruction to the faithful.[32]

It might be important to match this with a note on the specificity of the Psalter in comparison to the other texts of the Old Testament that deal with this merry dance of Wisdom and *torah*. This is not an invitation to speculative and semi-secular reflection, but rather, as Seitz has put it, to dialogue with the God of "holy unveiling."[33] As God comes to be known and as his presence is seen in the realities of life through the prayer of these psalms, a *torah* is given, a direction for life that brings one to the happiness of the just one. Piety is not here an end in

---

[31] J. Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament. The ordering of life in Israel and early Judaism* (Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 144-5.

[32] J. Clinton McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms. The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 25.

[33] The entire quotation is:

> Unlike the presentation of the Book of Job, the God addressed in the Psalter is not a veiled YHWH. Rather, the God of the Psalms is Israel's God in holy unveiling.

Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out. Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture.* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 172.

itself, but its function is didactic—to offer a *torah* to those who begin this way of praise and worship. Yet it all begins here, with this psalm, where the choice of the way of *torah* obedience is the opening to the world of the just one, as Mays notes:

> As introduction to the book, Psalm 1 invites us to expect and receive *torah* from the Psalms, that is, to read them as Scripture. The reader will come upon the two other great witnesses to *torah* piety in Psalms 19 and 119. Scattered through the psalms are recurrent references to *torah* and its constituent elements and forms that show how fundamental it is to the religion the Psalter represents and nurtures. Indeed, Psalm 1 wants the whole to be read as instruction--- instruction in prayer, in praise, in God's way with us and our way under God. The division of the Book of Psalms into its five component books doubtless expresses the same view of the Psalter by giving it an analagous shape to that of the first five books of the biblical canon, which came to be called "the Torah" in the Jewish tradition.[34]

Mays here summarizes the theory that Psalm 1 functions as a theological pointer, opening the door to the Torah of the Psalms. Yet there is a hint of an even broader function within the paramenters of the psalm. Some commentators voice discomfort at the claustration of the psalm solely into the Wisdom sphere, thus metaphorizing the possibly cultic setting of v. 5 "in the assembly of the Just" (בַּעֲדַת צַדִּיקִים). [35] Resituating this in the sphere of worship means also re-designating the nature of this psalm and how it functions as a hermeneutical and theological pointer. Gerstenberger sees the cultic context offering an even broader scope to this thelogical pointer function of the psalm as he notes:

> Presumably, then, Psalm 1 was read in communal services of *tôrâ*- abiding groups, possibly as an introduction to scripture reading or as an opening of the service.[36]

Gerstenberger goes on to suggest a close affinity to Gen 1-2 (important to be noted as the parallel opening of the textual Torah) and possibly a parallel reading of these texts in the communal service. This broadens the possible scope of the hermeneutical function of Psalm 1 from simply being an interpretative key to the Psalter to a broader narrative of worship and a function within that cultic context of reminder and refocusing the reading of Scripture as a form of worship within the broader spectrum of seeking *torah*. Just as Mays notes that the way may be qualified in many ways,[37] so too the "many ways" of reading this psalm will serve to point the way back to the the unifying factor of *torah* meditation.

---

[34] James L.Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation—a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 42.
[35] Michael LeFebvre, "Torah Meditation and the Psalms: The Invitation of Psalm 1" in *Interpreting the Psalms. Issues and Approaches.* (ed. Philip S. Johnson and David G. Firth. Leicester: Apollos, 2005), 215.
[36] Gerstenberger, *Psalms. Part 1.* 43.
[37] Mays, *Psalms,* 43.

Høgenhaven proffers another perspective on the psalm that situates it within a more eschatological framework. While he holds a different view on the linguistic connections between Pss 1 and 2 to those who propose these as a proof of unity (see discussion below), he still sees how these psalms work together to offer an opening and an introduction to the Psalter. He situates this in the context of the double blessing (opening Ps 1 and closing Ps 2) which he sees as a "reference to an eschatological future as the necessary corollary to the statements made about the present which unite the two first Psalms."[38] In this perspective, the psalm proposes a vision of the future to those who begin with the journey of *torah*: present difficulties will be resolved and overcome if they hold true to the direction offered to them and they will overcome. Ps 1 offers a contrast of the fates of the righteous and the wicked but Ps 2 broadens the perspective to "encompass the great drama of the messianic age to come" when kings and leaders will be brought to recognise the authority of the anointed one who is also an exemplar of *torah* obedience:

> The troubling present is viewed in the light of the eschatological future, and in this light the proper attitude and the proper conduct for the present is laid out and prescribed. Such a theology is characterized by addressing itself to the pious, who consciously distinguish themselves from those elements within the Jewish people who do not share their zeal for the *tora* or their emphasis on messianic expectations. When read as a whole, Psalms 1 and 2 would seem to form an excellent introduction to the Psalter, making clear to the reader from the beginning …the theological key motifs that should guide and govern one's understanding of the Psalms as one reads along.[39]

Yet in another perspective, Vesco outlines how this psalm presents a form of *dramatis personae.* Present for the drama that will be in every page of the Psalter are the characters: the just one, the Lord, a series of villains in the form of the godless, the sinners and the scorners; *Torah* is also a character as is the verdant tree and the chaff. In the drama of the Psalter, there will be an unfolding of the plot as these characters, often in various guises, interact and interplay until the great dénouement: that the truth of the opening statement is not the obvious mechanical promise of a prosperity and protection, but rather a growing consciousness that this very proximity to the *torah* is *in se* the promised prosperity: " Le psalmiste présente peu à peu que le Bonheur accordé par Dieu

[38] Jesper Høgenhaven, "The Opening of the Psalter: a Study in Jewish Theology," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 15 (2001): 178.
[39] Ibid, 179.

aux justes dépasse la simple prosperité materielle. Le souverain bien que Dieu accorde n'est autre que lui-même."[40]

Childs also proposes this psalm as an introduction to the entire psalter. In doing so, he also confronts a possible question that could emerge: are these humanity's words to God, in praise and prayer, or are the Psalms God's Word to humanity? In confronting this question, Childs begins with a reflection on what Ps 1 invites the reader to do:

> Certainly in its final stage of development, Ps 1 has assumed a highly significant function as a preface to the psalms which are to be read, studied, and meditated upon. The Torah of God which is the living word of God is mediated through its written form as sacred scripture. With the written word Israel is challenged to meditate day and night in seeking the will of God. Indeed, as a heading to the whole Psalter the blessing now includes the faithful meditation on the sacred writings which follow. The introduction points to these prayers as the medium through which Israel now responds to the divine word. Because Israel continues to hear God's word through the voice of the psalmist's response, these prayers now function as the divine word itself. The original cultic role of the psalms has been subsumed under a larger category of the canon.[41]

In this way, Childs suggests that the importance of the psalm as an introduction has another effect: that of reinterpreting the psalms that follow as part of the *torah*, the "living word of God." This represents another aspect to this psalm: not alone does it give new function to the psalms as they are no longer simply worship material but also didactic devices, but the psalms themselves are to be seen as *torah*, as the living word of God. Childs offers a theological re-orientation of the Psalter, expanding the vision and purpose of the entire psalter into a voice of worship that is an echo of the very voice of God that calls into being:

> The redactional position of Ps. 1 testifies that this hermeneutical shift did actually take place within Israel. The prayers of Israel directed to God have themselves become identified with God's word to his people. Israel reflects on the psalms, not merely to find which comes from obeying the divine law and is now communicated through the prayers of Israel.
>
> The Psalter bears the title in the Hebrew Bible of *t^{e}hillîm,* songs of praise. This is not a literary classification and does not accurately describe the various genres of prayer songs and liturgies which the Psalter contains, but it does accurately reflect the theology of Israel. The psalms have to do with the praise of God. The title correctly bears witness to the conviction that the voice is that of Israel, but it is only an echo of the divine voice which called his people into being. The introduction to the Psalter testifies to a new theocentric understanding of the psalms in the continuing life of the people of God. The introduction is, therefore, the first hint that the original setting has been subordinated to a new theological function for the future generations of worshipping Israel.[42]

[40] Jean-Luc de Vesco, *Le Psautier de David, traduit et commenté* (vol. I; Lectio Divina. Paris: Cerf, 2006), 57 and 61.
[41] Childs, *Introduction,* 513.
[42] Ibid., 513-14

This insight sees a large theological impact from this psalm's position and the direction it proposes. In essence, Childs defines didactic piety as a means of engaging in the drama of the relationship between God and Creation. In "*hagah*" (to be developed below), the just one will not only be devout and prayerful but also engaged in the great theological dialogue that began with the speaking of God's word in Creation (and which will be developed in Ps 19) and which sustains individuals and communities as they seek to hear that word and be taught and directed by it as a word that offers them direction and guidance (as will be elaborated in s 119). The word of God will be echoed in the "*hagah*" of the just one and that means the reality of worship is of greater import as it becomes the locus for a creative and sustaining *torah*, in turn a "delight" and a way of being known onto the Lord.

Le Febvre proposes a different opinion to that of Childs (and of Wilson, whom he also quotes as developing this theory).[43] LeFebvre suggests that this is best read with reference to the Mosaic *Torah* and he quotes the work of Watts, who examines a number of places where psalms are placed in narratives so as to appropriate to the narrative a religious sense. In this light, he suggests that the function of Psalm 1 is to invite the reader to read the Psalms in relation to the Mosaic *Torah* rather than as a *torah*. He does not present any example of how this is to be accomplished. His essential point is to stress the idea of *torah* over *hagah* and to give *torah* the exclusive meaning of Pentateuchal text. In essence the fundamental rationale does not change: any resuming of these ancient liturgical and wisdom texts with a new hermeneutic will be a case of *relecture.* If a focus on the Pentateuchal text can assist that *relecture,* this does not challenge the fundamental rationale of *relecture.* However, any insistence on applying the term "*torah*" solely and exclusively to Pentateuchal texts may well be anachronistic and might come into difficulty in many Wisdom and prophetic texts where the term is also used.

[43] Michael LeFebvre, "'On His Law He Meditates': What is Psalm 1 Introducing?" *JSOT* 40 (2016): 439-450.

Psalm 1 read alongside Psalm 2 and the final doxology.

One final aspect of the introductory nature of this psalm needs to be added: its relationship with Psalm 2 and with the final *Hallel.*[44] While this psalm stands as a title to the entire psalter, it has a special relationship with Ps 2, with which it functions as a unit. Neither of these two psalms carries a title, which suggests that they might be working together as a preface and title to the entire collection. While Ps 1 uses many wisdom categories and structures (e.g. the opening word begins with *alef,* the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the last word beging with *Tau*, the last letter—a typical Wisdom construction), the second psalm sounds a messianic note and has a sense of demonstrating the truth of what was claimed in the first psalm: those kings who laugh and scoff at the Lord's anointed will be scattered as the chaff of Ps 1.

Structurally, a number of links exist between the two psalms.[45] The ensemble is framed between the two macarisms of 1:1 and 2:12. Within the themes, there may be a parallel between:

Opposition of the Just one and the evil (Ps 1a)	Opposition between the nations and the Lord and his anointed (Ps 2:1-3)
Conduct and Prosperity of the One allied to the Lord (1:2-3)	Covenant between the Lord and his anointed (Ps. 2:4-6).
Vanity of the evil (1:4)	Defeat of the Nations (2: 7-9)
Opposition between the "lost" evil ones and the saved just one. (1: 5-6)	The nations have to come to the Lord or face defeat (2:10-12)

In addition to the thematic correspondences, there is also the lexical connection. The term דרך occurs in Ps 1: 1; 6 and then again in 2:12. The same verb (*hagah*) is used in 1:2 (see discussion below) and in a disparaging way in 2:1 (where it is used of those murmuring in revolt). Wénin sees an analogy between the wind that will sift the chaff (1:4) and the anointed one who will scatter the rebels (2: 9).

Once the structural connections have been recognized, there is also the need to recognize the theological and hermeneutical consequences. Zenger

[44] One important study of how these two psalms have been read together, under the the influence of the shared theme of the Temple, is Susan Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms: the Reception of Psalms 1 & 2 in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2013). Two authors have developed the idea of the connection with the final Hallel—Brueggemann and Wénin.

[45] André Wénin, *Le Livre des Louanges: Entrer dans les Psaumes.* (Second edition: Collection Écritures, 6. Brussels: Éditions Lumen Vitae, 2008), 81-2.

recognizes the importance of the structure of these constructions, which he calls "Rahmenpsalmen."[46] He sees the role of these "framing psalms" as giving a particular hermeneutic to the collection. From these framing psalms, which he regards as functioning as a preface, is given the double emphasis of *torah* and the messianic-Zion-eschatological divine lordship.[47] In essence, Ps 2 functions as an immediate exemplification of the theory of Ps 1: the kings of the nations rumble and murmur, as did their counterparts in Ps 1:2, but the Lord, through his anointed, is victorious. The rumblings of the nations and their kings stand in counterpoint with the meditation of the *torah*. There is the reinforcing of the eschatological aspect but also the emphasis on the human-divine collaboration, in the person of the anointed one, which is central to the understanding of the psalms. The anointed one, and therefore by extension Israel, becomes a "type" of the just one of Ps 1.[48] Likewise, Zion, or the Jerusalem Temple, becomes important as the place of the Covenant, a stepping stone on the way of the just one.[49]

Wénin adds two other theological considerations. One is the addition to the drama: the anointed one is immediately presented with a situation of conflict. In Ps 1, he was simply called to avoid the company of the evil, but here we see the drama begin, as the just-anointed one becomes the object of the plots of the evil ones.[50] This is the beginning of the drama that will play out in the psalms, until the *dénouement* at the end of the Psalter, where the reality of praise is victorious. Within this framework, Wénin sees the call to serve of 2:11 as a call to conversion and worship, in essence a call to begin the "way" that will lead to that final all-encompassing reality of praise. A final observation is that this completes a parallel with the content of the entire Old Testament corpus—there is the presence of a *wisdom* structure and imagery concerned with the *torah* (Ps 1), followed by a messianic *prophecy,* with details of a *history* of how the Lord and

[46] Erich Zenger (ed.). *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Seventh edition: Studienbücher Theologie. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 352.
[47] Zenger, *Einleitung,* 356.
[48] Wénin, *Louanges,* 82.
[49] Ibid., 83.
[50] Wénin suggests this struggle motif may be the opening to the alternation of lament-supplication and praises in the Psalter, "Ce Ps 2 confirme à sa façon qu'une lutte est bien engagé entre Dieu et les partisans du bien, d'une part, et les fauteurs de mal et de violence, d'autre part. De ce combat, bien des psaumes témoignent. Il constitue même le cadre de l'alternance de supplication et de louange qui est comme le substance du Psautier." (André Wénin, "Le Psautier comme livre: Quelques signes d'unification" in *Psaumes de la Bible, psaume d'aujourd'hui* (ed. Jean-Marie Auwers *et al.* Lire la Bible. Paris: Cerf, 2011), 54).

his anointed interact with the nations. In this framing-psalm context, one finds the elements of the entire corpus of the Old Testament.[51]

Miller adds one more consideration on the correlation between the two psalms that is interesting. If Ps 1 proposes *torah* as a means to achieve a blessed way known to the Lord, then Ps 2 suggests a practical structure that will achieve the reality of *torah* living. The Lord's anointed is not merely another king among the many of the nations but one who has the *torah* as his guide. In this, he can be an instrument to build up this reality:

> The dominion of the anointed one over the kings and rulers of the earth is not an exchange of one tyranny for another. It is the creation of God's kingdom, a human community not left on its own or potentially victim to whatever strong forces seek to control and dominate others, but rather truly shepherded and secured by God's rule through the human ruler.[52]

Yet one of the reflections that Wénin offers, credited to Beauchamp, is that a clothes line is useless unless it is strong at both ends. The beginning of the Psalter needs to be connected with the end, simply to understand how this "way" proceeds and comes to fruition, as Wénin says: "Bref, ne pourrait-on déceler, aux deux extrémités du psautier, des traces d'une sorte de narration dont les deux premiers poèmes presentent les acteurs et le cadre, et les trois derniers le dénouement?"[53]

In this light, Wénin suggests that the drama that begins with two ways in Ps 1 converges in the final three psalms into a symphony of praise. In this light, he suggests that the end of the psalter is an opening to a new way, a world of praise. The object for that praise lies in the wonder of Creation and the history of salvation. There is also a sense of the victory of the battle, which was first announced in Ps 2. The sound of the *hagah* of Ps 1 now becomes a song of praise, a sword in the mouth of the faithful which brings them to praise and victory (Ps 149:6).

Another perspective on this framing nature of the Psalter is represented by Brueggemann.[54] He examines the two extremes, Ps 1 (obedience) and Ps 150 (exuberant praise). He recognizes this arc as the mechanism that many have used

---

[51] Ibid., 85.
[52] Patrick D. Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 91.
[53] André Wénin, "Le Psaume 1 et l'encadrement du Livre des Louanges," in *Ouvrir le Écritures; Mélanges offerts à Paul Beauchamp à l'occasion de ses soixante-dix ans* (ed. Pietro Bovati and Roland Meynet; Lectio Divina, 162. Paris: Cerf, 1995), 151.
[54] Walter Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon," in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (ed. Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 189-213.

to identify the "canonical structure" of the Psalter but he sees the next necessary step of outlining the "existential drama" of the poetry of the psalms. While obedience is the necessary prerequisite to begin the track of this drama, it will eventually lead to praise but by some peculiar pathways. These pathways include candour around suffering but also gratitude for hope. Ps 73 is in a key position for this itinerary and he notes the pivot of v.17 where the disappointment is transformed by the experience of the presence of God. The bitter experience of apparent failure in obedience is remedied by communion with God. So the dramatical itinerary, which the canonical shape of the Psalter chooses to present, is the existential test of the role of obedience to the way of God's *torah*, visiting both the depths of protest and the remedies of communion as the one who takes this way, little by little, comes to the reality of exuberant praise. As he states:

> Thus it is my thesis that Israel's struggle with God's *hesed*--- in suffering and hope, in lament and in hymn, in candor and in gratitude--- and eventual acceptance of God's *hesed* as the premise of life permit Israel to make the move from the obedience of Psalm 1 to the doxology of Psalm 150.[55]

Psalm 1 as "poem"—alternating patterns and parallelism.

While the function of Ps 1 as an "ouverture" to the Psalter may well represent an important aspect of the psalm, the psalm itself is carefully composed and uses some of the key literary structures of Hebrew poetry, particularly parallelism and word pairs.

The text of our Psalm, as noted by some authors, is irregular in its present form for a strict poetic reading. Bullough suggests that this is not poetry at all, but rather "plain rhythmic prose." [56] He suggests this is rather a prosaic introduction to the Psalter and that it should be read as such. On the other hand, Auvray describes it as an "a school-boy's decent work" which displays some of the key principles of Hebrew poetry.[57]

As a structure, we follow the suggestion of Willis, defined as an "alternating pattern".[58] He suggests that there is an initial strophe ("A:"vv.1-3) which is "a description of the character and succes of the righteous man," followed by "B" (vv. 4-5) which is "a description of the character and success of

[55] Ibid., 202.
[56] Bullough, S. "The Question of Metre in Psalm 1," *VT* 17 (1967) 45.
[57] Auvray, P. « Le Psaume 1. » *RB* 53 (1946) : 365-371. The psalm is described as "honnête travail d'écolier".
[58] John T. Willis, "Psalm 1—an entity," *ZAW* 91 (1979): 399.

wicked men." This is then patterned with A' (v. 6a), where we find "the reason for the success of righteous men: Yahwe's care and concern," followed by B' (v. 6b), where we find the description of "the fate of wicked men."

Within this, some words stand in relation to others in a form of "pairing" which is meant to call to mind comparison and contrast. There is a delicate balance which is best understood by an examination of the verbs contained in each section:

A: vv.1-3: The Character and Success of the Righteous:
This represents the presentation of the thesis, that the one is blessed who does not "walk," "take a stand" or "sit" (יָשַׁב/עָמַד/הָלַךְ) with the wicked. Jacobson notes how these verbs present a sequence of sinfulness, or a "verbal progression" which depicts a "regression from moving" [59] —from the dynamic walking which demonstrates an interest, to the standing that shows one is being accustomed and has stopped in the dynamic motion, to the settledness of habit or lifestyle depicted by sitting. Alter also suggests this sequence shows how "first walking, then standing, then sitting, with the attachment to the company of evildoers becoming increasingly more habitual from one verse to the next."[60] Jacobson also refers to the possible allusion to Deut. 6: 4-9, where these verbs are indicators that one is to keep the commands at home or away, coming or going.

This is then complemented by the image of the tree, with its rootedness and stability, offering fruit, producing foliage and sustained by gentle waters. In a summary moment, we are told that all that the just one undertakes will be brought to success.

B: vv. 4-5. The Character and Success of the Wicked.
In parallel to the negative description of the righteous comes the description of the wicked. While the anti-thesis opens with a negative exclamation, the first verbal description is interesting in that the image is that of the wind that sifts and scatters the chaff-- תִּדְּפֶנּוּ רוּחַ.

Ravasi has an interesting comment on this as a possible eschatological image: the wind is "a sign of the great anger of the supreme judge, abandoning

[59] DeClassé-Walford *et al, The Book of Psalms,* (NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 60-1.
[60] Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms—A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2007), 3.

the wicked to the whirlwind."[61] This may have resonance of the eschatological image of the great sifting, and it may also have echoes of the opening lines of Genesis (Gen. 1: 2), but with the reverse effect as the *ruah* now returns the wicked to תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ (Gen 1:2). Whether or not these allusions are deliberate, the image is one of instability, in contrast with the "negative stability" of the verbs in vv.1-3. Likewise, Alonso-Schœkel contrasts the gentle movement of the flowing waters that sustain the tree of v.3 with the abruptness of the breeze that sifts the chaff. This comes to be complemented by the courtroom imagery of v. 5 and the use of the verb יָקֻמוּ. Brueggemann notes that this verb again points to the rootlessness of the wicked, who have no place "to stand."[62] Ravasi reinterprets this in an eschatological light (as noted above, he sees the notion of the scattering of the chaff as part of the image of the harvest, an eschatological metaphor), and he notes that there will be no place for the wicked to stand among the community of the just (cf. Dan 7:22).[63] Goldingay refers to this interpretation but also proposes the alternative of this being a gathering to make a decision among the people, from which the evil-doers are now excluded.[64] Alonso-Schœkel notes how the just one was to avoid the company of the wicked in the first part of the psalm, but now this company is excluded from the company of the just.[65]

Both verbs in this section demonstrate the rootlessness of the wicked. In parallel and contrast to the thesis, there is here a lack of rootedness. The complementary images of chaff and the courtroom drama, with the image of exclusion from the assembly, offer a spectrum of superficiality and instability.

A' and B': v.6

V. 6 represents one of the purest and most balanced instances of parallelism. Kugel offers a reflection on parallelism which defines the concept as "a feeling of correspondence between the two parts,"[66] which needs a "sharpness"[67] rather

[61] Gianfranco Ravasi, *Il Libro dei Salmi: Commento e Attualizzazione.* (vol. I. Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1985), 83.
[62] Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, *Psalms* (NCBC. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 30.
[63] Ravasi, *Salmi I,* 84.
[64] John Goldingay, *Psalms.* (Vol. 1. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006-8), 87.
[65] Luis Alonso-Schœkel, *I Salmi.* (Translated from the Spanish edition to Italian by Antonio Nepi. Vol. I: Roma: Borla, 1992), 149.
[66] James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), 18.
[67] Ibid, 15.

than a synonymity, and which demonstrates a sense of "differentiation."[68] Within these parameters of parallelism, this verse is a fine example. Alonso Schœkel calls it the moment of *dénouement* in the psalm.[69] The structure is chiastic: verb-way of the just//way of the wicked-verb (A'//B'). The contrast between the two ways is clear and acute: one is known to the Lord, while the other will "go astray" (in a term which will intriguingly also be used at the end of Ps 119).

The entire structure of this psalm is built on the contrast between the two ways: the way of *torah* obedience, which is the just way, or the way of the wicked, leading to instability and ultimately to annihilation. The invitation is clear: the reader is invited to *torah* meditation and the discovery of that way "known to the Lord" which will be a "delight". This will be the next subject of our study.

How *torah* is described positively

In v. 4, we discover what the way of the happy/blessed is defined positively: it is in finding in *torah* one's delight, and in making that the object of one's "*hagah*". Later, in v. 6, while *torah* is not mentioned specifically, we hear that this way of making *torah* one's delight and the object of one's "*hagah*" is a way "known to the Lord."

These three elements will be the object of our semantic study.

Torah as one's "delight"

The one who takes the right path will have *torah* as his *delight.* So translates the NRSV and the NJB.[70] Between verbal, adjectival and nominal forms, this term occurs 123 times in the Hebrew Bible. The particular nuances of this term are described by Botterweck with reference to its usage in the Psalms as a "desire" or a "striving after higher nonmaterialistic values."[71] Of this usage in particular he says that it is "more than emotional delight: it stands rather for the joyous existential commitment of one's entire life."[72] In the verbal form the subject can be either God or a human who can "take delight in" individuals, actions or objects. The noun form can have several meanings, as we derive from its different usages.

---

[68] Ibid, 16.
[69] Alonso-Schœkel, *Salmi I,* 149.
[70] The various translations are interesting. In NAB, it is translated as "joy", the Vulgate translates this as "voluntas",
[71] G.J. Botterweck, "חָפֵץ" *TDOT* 5: 97.
[72] Botterweck, *TDOT* 5: 97.

This can be a human delight in another person, a material object or an idea. It can be a natural inclination towards a course of action, either divine or human once again. It can be a "stand-alone" and non-subjective sense of real joy in something. The different usages allow us to see this word as an expression of a profound interest in something and attraction towards it.

One of the more interesting usages of this word occurs in the Book of Qoheleth. In Qoheleth 12: 10, we read:

10בִּקֵּשׁ קֹהֶלֶת לִמְצֹא דִּבְרֵי־חֵפֶץ וְכָתוּב יֹשֶׁר דִּבְרֵי אֱמֶת׃

Here we have another use of the term with the meaning "words of delight". Many commentators see this as a means of showing that Qoheleth sought an elegant literary form, a means of expressing his message that had a certain elegance and style to it, rather than a *message* of delight (which it manifestly is not, but it is, as we read in parallel, "words of truth"!), it is the form of words here which seeks to bring delight. This is interesting. The Wisdom Schools obviously have an interest in literary style and good composition. There may be a hint of this in Psalm 1: is the use of *ḥapeṣ* here an invitation to the reader to find delight in the literary form of the words that will follow? Is there a very subtle suggestion here that the truly just one will not only find a direction in the *message* of *torah* but will also be able to appreciate the elegance of style and expression? The use of the word is interesting. If our just and honourable one is to find delight in the *torah*, it is not just the message but the form and style that must attract. This is further evidenced by the LXX and Vulgate translations. The words here are **θέλημα** and ***voluntas***: each expressing a willingness in accord with one's desires. The delight of the just man is more than an affection but an existential attitude of goodwill.

Ravasi, in his commentary, adds two other aspects to the notion of "*ḥapeṣ*" from the usage of the term in Is. 46: 10 and 55: 11. From these he argues that there is also an element of engagement ("impegno") and plan added to these words. Having found that these words are more than duty but real delight for our just and honourable one, he suggests the next step is that *torah* becomes a norm for life which will lead the person into a sense of fulfilling God's plan, as he says

"this is the contentedness of a personal communion with God, of the attachment to his will which can become 'our food' (Jn 4: 34; cf Lk 11: 28)."[73]

This then complements the purpose of the psalm. It wants to catch the natural inclination of a reader to explore a beautiful literary form and lead from that into a sense of actively engaging in this, being guided by it and allowing it to help him in fulfilling God's plan.

At this stage, we have entered into the realm where Wisdom and Law cohabitate, or better perhaps we have moved to the point where Law becomes a doorway to Wisdom. This simple word "*ḥapeṣ"* possibly offers the reader more than would be immediately assumed. André Wenin suggests that this term reflects the interior life of the just one, which grows as the Law of the Lord becomes one's own Law, indicative of a metamorphosis in this "one":

> C'est la "vie intérieure que connote ce terme, et elle est faite du désir d'une vie épanouie, ce vers quoi mène la Loi. Le début du psaume ne parle-t-il pas d'un homme qui marche vers la Bonheur (verset 1a)? Or la Loi du Siegneur peut plaire, elle qui donne vie, sagesse, joie et plaisir au point d'en faire son désir, une metamorphose se produit: la Loi du Seigneur devient sa Loi…[74]

It seems to begin with offering a sense of enjoying the natural beauty of something. Discovering more and more of this *ḥapeṣ* will lead one into a sense of engagement with it which will lead eventually to the "contentedness of a personal communion with God," until the metamorphosis is complete and the Law of God becomes an instinct and an internal compass for the just one. *Torah* unlocks the deepest desire of this heart and also gives it the means to allow that desire to become a pathway to peace.

How to "hagah"

Yet the invitation is to "*hagah*" this *torah.* For the purposes of translation, we have left the standard and acceptable term "meditation", but there is a need to develop the richness of this term. LeFebvre suggests that this term offers a hermeneutic for the entire Psalter and for an attitude of how the *torah* might be "vocalized" in response to the stipulations of Deuteronomy (e.g. Deut. 6:7).

In discussing this, LeFebvre begins with a study of the term "*hagah*." He remarks on how this form of meditation is always vocal, in contrast to the sense of a silent reflection. He uses the example of Prov. 8:7, where "*hagah"* is used of

[73] Ravasi, *Sami I,* 81.
[74] André Wénin, "Le Psaume 1," 159.

the cry of Wisdom. Yet he notes that this is not simply a declarative but it has the three-fold aspect of reciting, reading and "inarticulate groans, sobs and murmurs in the midst of deep emotional thought."[75] Another usage also is focused on aspects of singing. In an interesting observance, he notes how *hagah* indicates a quality of speech rather than a kind: it is used to reveal the speaker's whole-hearted sentiments.[76] Thus, the term is a description of a vocalized act but one which is not superficial or performatory, but rather a communication of deep thought.

In this context, LeFebvre refers to Deut. 31, where Moses commands the people of Israel to be strong and of good courage and to remember the Law. He gives them two methods of remembering the Law—one is the written form, to be read ceremoniously but the second is more immediately accessible as it comes in the form of a song to be sung, a song to be known to the people even when the book is not accessible to them. Thus LeFebvre concludes: "Psalmody served as a means of torah-meditation."[77]

In this light, LeFebvre reads the text of 1:2 in the light of Josh. 1:8:

לֹא־יָמוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ וְהָגִיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה
This book of the law (*torah*) shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night…

The obvious lexical similarity is matched by the sense of the importance of a continuous *hagah* of *torah*. However, there are two differences:

- The Joshua text is directed specifically at an individual, Joshua, whereas 1:2 is directed towards the "generic individual."
- The Joshua text refers to the book, to a written *torah*: the term *torah* in 1:2 is not so limited and allows for a broader understanding than the "book."

These differences aside, the coincidence in terms allows for an understanding that the *torah* is to be remembered through book reading but also through a wider understanding of "*hagah*" of *torah*, which includes singing and poem. Placed at the beginning of the Psalter, this text may well propose that the *hagah* of the psalms, the verbalization of them in a self-conscious and reflective

[75] LeFebvre, *Torah Meditation,* 218.
[76] Ibid., 219.
[77] Ibid., 223.

manner, will be one of the means of fulfilling the precept to hold the torah continuously in mind, or as LeFebvre says in conclusion: "It may be that it was this song-as-torah-surrogate ideal that the editors had in mind when they placed this psalm at the head of the book of songs."[78]

A way that is "known"

This *hagah* of the *torah*, in the psalms that come, and the pleasure (*ḥapeṣ*) that one gains from them secures for the individual a particular end: the way will be known to the Lord. The interpretations of what is meant by this are varied. Goldingay translates this as "the Lord acknowledges the path of the faithful"[79] and he uses the example of a king who recognizes and rewards the honest efforts of his people. There is an implication in this of taking notice of the way of the just and committing to it on the part of the Lord.[80] Stuhlmueller refers to this as "an unusual, even intriguing combination of practical common sense (very visible in the wisdom books) and the mysterious guidance of the Lord (prominent with the prophets)."[81] Jacobson remarks that the verb conveys "a more intimate and internal care" and that it is important that the subject here is the Lord.[82] This way is defined by the Lord, in contrast to the parallel way of the wicked, where it is the wicked themselves who are the subject, suggesting that the wicked are their own guides, but the just have the Lord who knows their way. Boylan presents another perspective, when he says: "God's knowledge implies interest and approval…The just will live in the light of God's face."[83] Interestingly, he refers to Ps 36: 18 (MT 37:18) with the parallel sentiment of how the Lord knows the "days" of the just. Similarly, Alonso-Schœkel claims that the sense is in the paradox: the way known is that way to follow, the other way will simply lead to abandon.

This way known to the Lord is the way of the Psalter, the way of praise and reflection, the way of pleasure and Wisdom that open up before the reader, the way of echoing God's voice in the *torah* by means of worship and praise. This psalm is an invitation to intimacy and, as Davidson suggests, "a confession of faith,

[78] Ibid., 225.
[79] Goldingay, *Psalms 1,* 88.
[80] Ibid., 591.
[81] Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Psalms 1* (OTM 21. Winnington: Michael Glazier, 1983), 60.
[82] DeClassé-Walford *et al, The Book of Psalms,* 63.
[83] Patrick Boylan, *The Psalms: A study of the Vulgate Psalter in the light of the Hebrew Text* (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1920), 3.

not a description of life."[84] This is the opening salvo in a dialogue and a pathway that will sometimes critique and even challenge that sense that the Lord "knows" this way, but which opens with that premise and that engagement. The way now begins, as the psalmist launches into the drama of worshipful dialogue.

Conclusion

By means of conclusion, we return to the image of the "tree planted by the streams of water" (v. 3). This image seems to hold a common heritage with Jeremiah 17. However, there is a slight difference that might have a subtle but important effect: the addition of the term "פַּלְגֵי". This subtle addition means that the image here is not simply of a tree growing in the wild, but by the banks of a human-made canal, and so the image suggests divine and human collaboration. The essence of "didactic piety" is in that image: humanity, represented by the just one, can find the means to co-operate with Creation for the good of all in the gift of *torah* living. This co-ordination and complementarity are at the heart of the gift of *torah*. By means of *torah*, the just one enters into the beauty and peace of the gift of Creation, but it does demand effort and attention. This will be developed in Ps 19, where *torah* becomes the interpreter of the silent voice of Creation, and in Ps 119, where *torah* can be communicated in an unmediated manner for the good of the individual. This will colour the attitude of the reader of the Psalter: discovery of *torah* is a pathway to that beautiful harmony with Creation.

In terms of the "complex and differentiated activity" that makes up the first step of our framing of the *torah* hermeneutic, Ps 1 represents an initial and defining statement of how *torah* functions as a hermeneutic. Within this "complex" there are tones of delight and stability associated with *torah* meditation, in contrast with the doom and transience of those who scoff and scorn. The carefully crafted presentation differentiates between these realities as it also introduces the notion of the "way"—a term that will govern how this book will be read as a pathway through praise and meditation to the wisdom that leads one to the ultimate praise of entry into the Temple of God's presence. As a "performed reality," it will be reproduced as a prayer for those who seek to begin this journey to wisdom to remind them of how to use words as a pathway to that

[84] Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1998), 12.

wisdom. Yet on an explicative level, it will also remind them that this is ultimately a journey of delight that will lead them to the freshness and stability of the tree by the water's edge. Normatively, it equips them with a rule for words that will show them the path to follow and allow them to avoid the pit-falls that may lead them astray. It immediately forms bridges and arcs of meaning with other psalms and with groups of psalms that allows for a "scaffolding" to be created as the individual prayers come to form the building blocks of a book.

CHAPTER III: PSALM 19

Methodology

In general, the study of the psalm will follow a methodology of "distilling" discrete readings and approaches to Psalm 19. This means that different "models" of reading and approaching the psalm will be presented independently, even though they do not and cannot exist independently but as an ensemble. However, to discover the effectiveness of these different "models," they will be envisioned independently and discretely so that they might be appreciated for their distinctive contribution to the ensemble.

The presentation will fall into two sections. Initially, an "ad intra" presentation will look at issues of text, translation, unity and disunity, genre and prayer. This will be complemented by an "ad extra" examination of the psalm which will present the psalm in relation to other psalms, other biblical texts and some of the "arches" and movements of Old Testament literature.

Section I: "Ad intra" Readings and Approaches of Psalm 19

The initial study of Psalm 19 will be based on a reading of the psalm *ad intra.* This section will focus on issues "in" the psalm, translation issues, text critical issues, questions of unity and disunity, genre and how the psalm is situated within the dynamics of prayer and the drama of divine-human dialogue.

I:1: Psalm 19: Versions and Translation

לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃
הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֵל וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מַגִּיד הָרָקִיעַ׃
3 יוֹם לְיוֹם יַבִּיעַ אֹמֶר וְלַיְלָה לְּלַיְלָה יְחַוֶּה־דָּעַת׃
4 אֵין־אֹמֶר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם׃
5 בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ ׀ יָצָא קַוָּם וּבִקְצֵה תֵבֵל מִלֵּיהֶם לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ שָׂם־אֹהֶל בָּהֶם׃
6 וְהוּא כְּחָתָן יֹצֵא מֵחֻפָּתוֹ יָשִׂישׂ כְּגִבּוֹר לָרוּץ אֹרַח׃
7 מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם ׀ מוֹצָאוֹ וּתְקוּפָתוֹ עַל־קְצוֹתָם וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מֵחַמָּתוֹ׃
8 תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נָפֶשׁ עֵדוּת יְהוָה נֶאֱמָנָה מַחְכִּימַת פֶּתִי׃
9 פִּקּוּדֵי יְהוָה יְשָׁרִים מְשַׂמְּחֵי־לֵב מִצְוַת יְהוָה בָּרָה מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם׃
10 יִרְאַת יְהוָה ׀ טְהוֹרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לָעַד מִשְׁפְּטֵי־יְהוָה אֱמֶת צָדְקוּ יַחְדָּו׃
11 הַנֶּחֱמָדִים מִזָּהָב וּמִפַּז רָב וּמְתוּקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וְנֹפֶת צוּפִים׃
12 גַּם־עַבְדְּךָ נִזְהָר בָּהֶם בְּשָׁמְרָם עֵקֶב רָב׃
13 שְׁגִיאוֹת מִי־יָבִין מִנִּסְתָּרוֹת נַקֵּנִי׃

14 גַּם מִזֵּדִים חֲשֹׂךְ עַבְדֶּךָ אַל־יִמְשְׁלוּ־בִי אָז אֵיתָם וְנִקֵּיתִי מִפֶּשַׁע רָב׃
15 יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי־פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי׃

1. For the overseer, a psalm of David.
2. The Heavens are making known the glory of God,
   while the vault of the sky is announcing the work of his hands
3. Day pours forth saying unto day
   while night gives instruction to night!
4. There is no saying, there are no words
   not at all is their voice heard,
5. But in all the earth, their utterance goes out
   their tellings at the extremities of the world
   For the sun, he has placed a tent in them
6. And he, he is like a bridegroom coming from his chamber
   like a valiant warrior, who will rejoice in running his way!
7. His place of rising is from the extremity of the Heavens,
   the end of his circuit is as far as their extremities,
   --- there is no hiding from his heat!
8. The Law of the Lord is blameless, refreshing the soul;
   The exhortation of the Lord is verified, making wise the clueless.
9. The statutes of the Lord are straight, bringing joy to the mind,
   the Command of the Lord is pure, lighting up the eyes.
10. The fear of the Lord is brilliant, standing firm forever
    The judgments of the Lord are truth, they are righteous, together,
11. They are more to be desired than gold, more even than lots of fine gold,
    and as for sweetness, they are sweeter than honey, even sweeter than honey dripping from the comb.
12. Even though your servant is made mindful by them, and in keeping them there is great benefit,
13. Yet who can understand sins of ignorance? From those that lie hidden, acquit me!
14. So, from presumptuous sins hold back your servant, lest they take me over; then I should be at peace and I shall be held innocent of great revolt.
15. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing before you, O LORD, my rock! my redeemer!

I:2 Textual Criticism

The text of the psalm is subject to a small number of possible emendations due to minor scribal errors and there are some genuine variants from expected forms. Some minor differences from the LXX text and other witnesses are also in evidence but, for the most part, these would not suggest a radical difference in meaning (in v. 5, there is no term in Greek which corresponds to בהם ; in v.6, ארח is translated in the LXX as ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ which suggests a suffix in the Hebrew text that is not found in MT, but rather understood). Other issues might simply be attributed to possible scribal errors (v. 3, where some witnesses omit the ו in front of ולילה ; v. 7, where על is best emended to עד). None of these makes any significant challenge

to the integrity of the text, nor to the meaning. However, we list here the textual variants, with some comments on their importance or their possible origins.

Massoretic Text	**Septuagint**	**Vulgate**	**Comment**
Verse 2: וּמַעֲשֵׂה	ποίησιν	opus	Some mss omit the initial וּ; Others replace final ה with י .
Verse 3 וְלַיְלָה	καὶ νὺξ	et nox	Some manuscripts omit וְ
Verse 4: pronoun does not occur in Hebrew	ὧν	quibus	A pronoun in the genitive (LXX)/dative (Vulgate) occurs in the versions but not in the MT. This may have been an addition to facilitate translation, perhaps even originally a gloss (?). On the other hand, the emphatic negation present in the Hebrew is not present in LXX or Vulgate.
Verse 5 קוֹמָם	ὁ φθόγγος αὐτῶν	sonus eorum	Crux: See discussion below
וּבִקְצֵה	είς τὰ πέρατα	in finibus orbis	Both LXX and Vulgate have plural for a singular form in Hebrew: είς might suggest a prefix of לְ. The BHS critical apparatus refers to Aquila (in Greek), where we find a singular form.
לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ	ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ	in sole (or soli) Transferred to the beginning of v.6	The context is difficult. Some of the Hebrew text may have been omitted and the versions sought to correct the awkward reading or there may be genuine variants. Any reading is difficult.
בָּהֶם	Missing	Missing	As above, the reading is difficult.
אָהֳלָ	τὸ σκήνωμα αὐτοῦ	tabernaculum (suum)	The MT does not have the possessive pronoun, while LXX mss contain it, as do some Vulgate mss.
Verse 6: אֹרַח	ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ	viam (suam)	Some of the Hebrew witnesses (Cairo Genizah) and some of the Latin mss contain the possessive. There may be a case of scribal error (even

			homoiarcton, c.f. supra)
Verse 7: עַל־קְצוֹתָם	ἕως ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανου	usque ad summum eius	Two issues: על could be replaced by עד The plural possessive suffix does not match the genitive singular in LXX (although the sense is the same, "οὐρανου" agreeing with הַשָּׁמַיִם, as both refer to "sky")
Verse 10: יִרְאַת	ὸ φόβος	timor	See below
Verse 12 גַּם	καὶ γὰρ	unde et	See verse 14: This is possible parablepsis.
Verse 13: מִנְסְתָּרוֹת			Some mss include a conjunctive: this may be a homioiteleuthon from the ending of יֵרֵין
Verse 14: מְזֵדִים	ἀπὸ ἀλλοτρίων	ab alienis/ a superbis	A slight change will conform the reading but it is difficult to see which reading is best. The MT reading seems to suit the tone and theme of the passage best.
אָל	ἐὰν μη	si...non	Some mss include a conjunctive prefix. This could be justified by the use of the conditional in the LXX and Vulgate. Alternatively, this could be a scribal error: homioiteleuthon from the preceding word עַבְדֶּךָ
בִּי			According to KB (576), the use of the preposition with the verb is a normal construction.
אִיתָּם			Some witnesses have אֶתָּם. This is a valid variant form. The alternative does not change the meaning.

Crux: Verse 5

קָוֻם

Specific interest has been paid to one possibly significant textual difficulty in this psalm. This occurs in v. 5, with the word קָוֻם . Early witnesses seem to have emended this to read קוֹלָם whereby the LXX translates this as ὸ φθόγγος αὐτῶν;

the Vulgate as "sonus eorum". This bears witness to an old problem of interpretation and either early attempts at a correction or genuine textual evidence of a variant reading. This presents a *crux* for the interpreter. The ancient witnesses seem to have dealt with this by making an emendation to the text. It is necessary to evaluate the importance of reading the MT as it stands or reading the text from the LXX and other witnesses who chose to make the emendation.

The emendation has its advantages for the reading of the text and might seem to be well-founded. However, it might be best to examine it more closely.

Pro, in favour of this emendation is the witness of some of the early versions (LXX, Syriac, Vulgate). In the logic of the verse (the unit of vv. 4-5), this reading seems to make sense. The emendation to allow for the repetition of the term קוֹלָם, which is already found at the end of v.4, is theoretically possible in a poetic text with its tendencies towards parallelism (although one might expect variation for stylistic reasons). It seems to be the preferred option of most translators (who either follow the LXX term or simply repeat the translation as "voices"), as it allows for simplicity in the flow of the text.

Sed contra this emendation, and in favour of the retention of the text as it stands, is the argument that the terms in Greek do not correspond to a repetition of the same term but rather two different, if synonymous, terms are used. In terms of the LXX text, it is interesting that the term used in v.5 (ὸ φθόγγος αύτῶν) does not correspond with the term used in v. 4 (αὶ φωναὶ αύτῶν), which suggests that two distinct terms were in the background of this text.

Another aspect of the argument is the need of an emendation for translation purposes. Two possible meanings of the term are offered by Koehler-Baumgartner. The first, which is the most common usage of the term and is attested in several biblical texts, is "line". This has been adopted by some translators (e.g. North American Standard; the NJB extends the meaning to "design"), often based on a reading of Job 38:33 with the idea (and possibly the cognate phrase) of the "ordinances of the Heavens" (חֻקּוֹת שָׁמָיִם). This translation has some currency.

The medieval Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra extrapolated a meaning of "writing" from this term:

> *Kavvam* (their line) is similar to kav la-kav (line by line). The reference is to their writing. The *mem* of the word *kavvam* refers to the heavens.

> The meaning of our verse is that the writing of the heavens is read in all places. Intelligent people all over the world will understand it.[1]

In Ibn Ezra's understanding the "line" is the line of writing. The reference then is to the "writing" of the heavens, which is meditated and studied throughout the world by those who "read" it. The message of the heavens is written and legible to the wise and the intelligent. Across the heavens is "written" a message of the order of Creation, there for those who choose to read it (mariners who "read" the heavens for guidance, those charged with keeping calendars for festivals, the very practical "reading" of the skies to forecast the weather will all fall into this category). Yet even in this can be seen a possible initial reference or parallel to the reading of the *torah* for guidance and Wisdom, which will be explicitly extolled later.

One modern commentator has followed this line of interpretation. [2] Tournay offers a very broad survey of different translations for this term to be found in many of the ancient witnesses and in modern language translations, from musical notes to spittle. Yet he returns to the original idea of "line" as the meaning of this word but, in the acknowledged line of thought of Ibn Ezra, he interprets this as "writing" he places this in parallel with Job 38: 33

הֲיָדַעְתָּ חֻקּוֹת שָׁמָיִם אִם־תָּשִׂים מִשְׁטָרוֹ בָּאָרֶץ׃

which he translates as:

> Connais-tu les lois des cieux? Réalises-tu sur terre ce qui y est écrit?

Here, Tournay understands the *hapax* מִשְׁטָר as a cognate of an Accadian term for "inscription." In this context, he makes reference to Mesopotamian literature, which refers to the "brilliance" of the writing of the heavens, particularly temple inscriptions which remark how the sanctuary will be "brilliant as the writings of the heavens." He refers to several instances from Annals of Sennacherib and other inscriptions and records, which have similar phrases to the "writings of the heavens." [3] Tournay also refers to another

---

[1] Abraham Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on the First Book of Psalms* (trans. H. Norman Strickman. The Reference Library of Jewish Intellectual Faith. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 145.

[2] Raymond J. Tournay, "Notules sur les Psaumes," in *Alttestestamentliche Studien [Friedrich Nötscher Festschrift]* (ed. Hubert Junker and Johannes Botterweck; Bonn: Hanstein, 1950), 271-80.

[3] D.D. Kuckenbill, *Ancient records of Assyria and Babylonia, II: From Sargon to the End.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926-7). Senacherib's decision to build the royal palace is described thus (Page 165-6):

tradition from the Mesopotamian world, that of the "valiant Šamaš" (*le preux Šamaš*) bridegroom of the goddess Aya, who comes forth each morning from the gates of the East, which may lie behind the image of the Sun-bridegroom in vv.4-5. In essence, he suggests that these ideas are adopted from the Mesopotamian world but are "de-paganized" by the succeeding section with the hymn to the *torah*. In comparison to this he cites Job 31: 26-7 and Sirach 43 as similar texts which "de-paganize" traditional Mesopotamian practices. Thus, this psalm takes some of the arresting imagery of the Mesopotamian world and uses it to demonstrate the splendour and brilliance (a term with particular weight here) of the *torah*, according to Tournay, who says

> En contemplant le ciel étoilé, tout homme peut y lire facilement le silencieux, mais éloquent message, qui lui révèle la gloire et la toute-puissance du Créateur.[4]

As a possible interpretation, this has the advantage of offering a potential link to the second part of the psalm with the suggestion that the *torah* becomes the "writing of the heavens" (de-paganizing and superseding the Mesopotamian imagery) to be read and understood throughout the world.

However, this translation is, at best, complicated and fits poorly with the sense of parallelism that we expect from Hebrew poetry. There is another possible meaning of the term, as witnessed in Is. 28: 10; 13. In this Isaiah text, the context would allow for a possible meaning of the term as the "uttering" of false teachers who are mimicked in their speech. Twice, this term is used as a sound imitation used of prophets in ecstasy.[5] There is here, then, evidence of this term being used as a form of prophetic utterance. In this case, the original text can be preserved, without emendation, to be translated as "utterance" which can be integrated into the parallelism of the poetry.

Dahood also supports the integrity of the MT and this line of translation but from a different set of related terms.[6] He translates the term as "call" and he

---

> At that time Nineveh, the noble metropolis, the city beloved of Ishtar, wherein are all the meeting places of gods and goddesses; the everlasting substructure, the eternal foundation, *whose plan had been designed from of old, along with the writings of the constellations*, and whose structure had been made beautiful; the beautiful (artistic) place, *the abode of divine law*, into which had been brought all kinds of artistic workmanship, every secret and pleasant plan,…

The emphases are mine but they demonstrate two interesting facts:

- That the idea of *writings of the constellations*, seen to be ancient and solemn, was current in Mesopotamian culture
- The interesting coincidence that the *abode of divine law* is seen to have been designed contemporaneously with the *writings of the constellations*, somewhat paralleling Ps 19.

[4] Tournay, "Notules sur les Psaumes", 274.

[5] K.B. 830.

[6] Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I,* 120-125.

justifies it by making reference to related terms such as קוה found in Ps 40: 2 (קוֹה קִוִּיתִי יְהוָה), which he translates as "to cry." He suggests there is a Ugaritic term for "voice" which is linguistically similar and may be cognate.

Igitur: Retention of the MT as it stands is, therefore, preferable: the text is comprehensible and legible, as well as conforming to the norms of Hebrew poetry. Translation of the term is difficult but, as we have noted, there seems to be a growing consensus among scholars that this refers to some form of "uttering" (the Vulgate translation, "sonus," might also be an early witness to this). Barthelemy attributes a grade "A" to the text as it is but goes on to list the variety of translations that have been offered, including "lignes (lines)" in the *Bible de Jérusalem,* "music" in the *New English Bible,* "harmonie (harmony)" in the *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible,* before finally proposing the translation "appel (call)."[7]

While the term seems rare and difficult to translate, it is not without parallel and is best read as we find it in the MT. I choose to keep the MT as it stands and the translation I offer is "uttering."

Crux: Verse 10:
יִרְאַת

V. 10 presents another problem. As we read it, the meaning is clear and logical. However, some suggest that in place of יִרְאַת a slight emendation would allow us to read אמרת as found in Ps 119: 38,

הָקֵם לְעַבְדְּךָ אִמְרָתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר לְיִרְאָתֶךָ׃

The advantage here would simply be the use of a synonym for תּוֹרָה with which we have a certain familiarity and allows for a closer parallel reading with Ps 119. Briggs[8] chooses to emend it immediately, justifying this simply by the fact that he feels it cannot be otherwise. Alonso Schökel sounds a word of caution, however, quoting Agellius, a seventeenth century scholar, who considers this to be *timor Domini, quo nomine legem significant.*[9] There are no textual witnesses to

[7] Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle, Tome 4: Psaumes,* 117-8.
[8] Briggs, *Psalms*, 168.
[9] Alonso Schökel, *I Salmi,* 394. This comment might be based on the Wisdom adage that "Fear of the Lord" is linked, if not equated with, *torah*, e.g. Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Job 28:28; Sir 1:11-13.Within the Psalter, there is a parallel in the acrostic psalm Ps 111:10 .

challenge the term as it stands. It may be a very early scribal error or it may be a deliberate choice of word to instil a broader theological framework. Eaton refers to the debate in his article but his ultimate reasoning is that, whatever term is used, the key concept is in the second part of the line, where the religion commanded by the Lord is described as being brilliant and clear, in direct reference to the brilliance of the sun imagery in the earlier part.[10]

In this psalm, the term יראת יהוה is not inappropriate. As a reaction to the glory of the Lord seen in Creation, the reader feels the "fear of the Lord", which includes a sense of awe at the wonder and majesty of Creation but one which necessarily inspires a reaction of choosing to comply with the ongoing act of Creation by adhering to the Law of the Lord. Thus, it is not only an appropriate term but it could serve as a valuable link with the first part of the psalm.

In the absence of sound textual witnesses to justify the emendation, and given a firm theological coherence in the term that is used, the preference is to allow the MT text to stand as it is. While one might be attracted by the idea of a closer parallel with the terminology of Ps 119, the term as it stands is certainly not illogical and it does have its own merit in the development of the attitude of the reader towards the Law as an appropriate reaction to the wonder of Creation.

I:3 Unity of the Psalm

The question of the unity of the psalm has engendered serious debate with varied and divergent opinions on the subject. The discussion centres on the fact that the theme and the style of the poem change from the first part to the second part. Other issues around unity are the possibility that v. 4 is a gloss and the final prayer (v.15) is another addition.

The proponents of each side of the argument base their reasoning on literary and thematic principles, as there are no versions that divide this psalm into two. The principle arguments for the division of the two psalms are based on theme, metre and vocabulary.

Proponents of "Disunity"

As an example of those who would argue that this is the amalgamation of two psalms, we look at the commentary of Briggs.[11] Briggs's approach to the Psalter

[10] Eaton, J.H.: "Some Questions of Philology and Exegesis in the Psalms" *JTS* 19 (1969) 603-609.
[11] Briggs, *Psalms I,* 162-175.

in general is that of "higher criticism"[12] (historical-critical method). He seeks to re-establish the "archaeology" of the psalms, i.e. to establish the original usage of the psalm, where and when it first came to be collected and what additions or modifications were made in a final redaction. In reference to this psalm, Briggs begins by reiterating that the psalm is a composition of two different poems, the first part (v. 2-7) being a morning hymn and the second part being a didactic poem in praise of the Law (v.8-15). This seems obvious, according to Briggs, not only from theme but also from form and metre. The purpose of the conjunction, he believes, is to emphasize the fact that the glory of the Lord in the Law transcends his glory in the heavens. The composition of the first part of the psalm then, might be dated to the Babylonian period and may be representative of a time when the worship of the sun was a practice among the Hebrews, in common with other traditions of the ancient Near East. The second part, which is a poem in praise of the divine Law, uses six different terms for law (as we noted above, Briggs chooses to emend the text to read אמרת in place of יראת), all of which (with an additional two) are also used in the more elaborate Psalm 119. Briggs places the origins of this psalm in the Greek period and sees the influence of the Priestly writer and his formulations as the backdrop to this psalm. In addition, v. 4 is considered a gloss (in terms of its supposed lack of coherence with the previous and following verses).

Briggs does give a certain rationale for the amalgamation of the two psalms into one, as he sees it, in that the proclaiming of the glory of *El* (to be seen in the choral chant of day and night, yet not to be heard, but again to be seen in the all-embracing race of the sun) is in parallel with the praise of the Law with the explicit mention of the benefits it can bring.

Another representative of this school is J. Wellhausen.[13] In his translation of Ps 19, he places a divider between vv. 1-6 and vv. 7-14, which clearly indicates his preference for reading a strong difference between these two sections.[14] Moreover, in his note on this psalm, he states:

> The praise of God's revelation in Nature is now suddenly followed by the praise of his revelation in the Law. No connecting link is supplied; the second theme is not taken up as a complement to the first; the first breaks off at v. 6 without having been exhausted. On this account, it is supposed that the psalm has been formed out of two fragments which

[12] Briggs, *Psalms I*, liv.
[13] Julius Wellhausen. *The Book of Psalms.* (trans. Horace Howard Furness, John Taylor and J.A. Patterson; London: James Clark & Co, 1898).
[14] Wellhausen, *Psalms,* 16-17.

> had no original connection with each other. But the language and the contents agree in proving that both portions belong to the same late period.[15]

Briggs and Wellhausen represent the classic position of seeing the differences between the two strophes as evidence of amalgamation. Briggs suggests there might be a theological rationale behind it; Wellhausen sees them as belonging to the same period. Others have followed this line. Kraus deems the assertion so obvious as to make explanation unnecessary but proceeds to remark that, as tradition has welded them together, there is an obligation to examine their connections and inter-relation.[16] Weiser suggests the differences are so great that there must be two different authors and offers no rationale for their juxtaposition, as he states

> Verses 1-6 are a Nature psalm arising from a poet's profound vision and expressed in forceful language. Verses 7-14 comprise a psalm whose theme is the Law and whose thoughts and language are characterized by homely simplicity. Why these dissimilar poems were united in one single psalm cannot any longer be established with any degree of certainty.[17]

These authors represent the reading of the psalm that holds the two parts as being two individual poems or fragments of poems. While some offer a rationale for their juxtaposition, others see it as accidental and, in general, they have a difficulty in offering a reading of the psalm in its unity.

Movement towards a "literary turn": Alternatives modes of reading a unity in the Psalm

More recent scholarship challenges this view. Wellhausen, Briggs, Weiser and Kraus all belong to a school of exegesis and critical biblical scholarship which, in the words of Childs, "has effected a sharper rupture with the traditional interpretation of the Psalter than with almost any other book."[18] Other more recent commentaries have moved from the "two lines of study" (Gunkelian thrust toward form critical analysis or Mowinckelian sociological function study) toward an appreciation of the literature, theology and style-structure of the psalms and their canonical function. Childs, as discussed above in Chapter 1, noted a development in biblical scholarship to bridge the gap between critical exegesis and the appreciation of the psalms as Scripture. He calls for more than a

[15] Wellhausen, *Psalms,* 170-171.
[16] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 268-9.
[17] Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms- a Commentary* (O.T.L.; London: SCM Press, 1962), 197.
[18] Childs, *Introduction*, 508.

theological interpretative addendum to the Gunkel-Mowinckel school, but rather a real engagement with the role of canon as it has served to form this literature. I hope now to demonstrate how some commentators go beyond "metre, theme and vocabulary," or expand the horizons of these, to offer different perspectives on the unity of the psalm in its literary and canonical context.

English Language studies on "literary unity" of the Psalm: C.S. Lewis and "the greatest poem in the psalter."

One of the early proponents of this "literary turn" in appreciation of this psalm comes from a scholar who defines himself as being outside of the circle of those who would normally have approached study of the psalms. C.S. Lewis defines his approach to the psalms at the beginning of his work *Reflections on the Psalms* as writing for the unlearned about things in which he was unlearned himself.[19] He compares his approach to that of two schoolboys helping each other, as they cannot understand the master who simply knows too much to be able to appreciate their difficulties. In relation to this psalm, he begins with a query as to how anyone might call Law a "delight" and how a poet can wax lyrical about a set of precepts that might well work against his impulses and desires, even those that are quite justifiable. Around this, he comes to two conclusions:

- That in the context of the ancient Near East, this "Law" and the wisdom it expounded delighted the one who tried to appreciate it as a manifestation of the order that was in the mind of God and a means to discover that order reflected in daily life.
- Yet this had the propensity to become legalism and professionalism, leading to priggery, unless there were to be a means of constantly recharging that humble sense of "delight" which is meant to be almost childlike, like the child's "delight" in being offered something "as sweet as honey".

In order to prevent the development of this sense of legalism and professionalism, this psalm, along with Ps 119, helps to keep that sense of "delight" in the wisdom of the Law and the discovery of the order that comes from the mind of God that it offers. The constant rediscovery of the beauty and wisdom

[19] C.S. Lewis. *Reflections on the Psalms.* (Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1958), 9.

of the Law, against the backdrop of other ways that lacked the "truth", needed the poet's plundering of language to express this delight.

Lewis holds that that is what the poet who wrote Ps 19 seeks to do. He says:

> I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world. Most readers will remember its structure; six verses about Nature, five about Law, and four of personal prayer. The actual words supply no logical connection between the first and second movements. In this way its technique resembles that of the most modern poetry. A modern poet would pass with similar abruptness between one theme to another and leave you to find out the connecting link for yourself. But then he would possibly be doing this quite deliberately; he might have, though he chose to conceal, a perfectly clear and conscious link in his own mind which he could express to you in logical prose if he wanted to. I doubt if the ancient poet was like that. I think he felt, effortlessly and without reflecting on it, so close a connection, indeed (for his imagination) such an identity, between his first theme and his second that he passed from one to the other without realizing that he had made any transition. First he thinks of the sky; how, day after day, the pageantry we see there shows us the splendor of its Creator. Then he thinks of the sun, the bridal joyousness of its rising, the unimaginable speed of its daily voyage from east to west. Finally of its heat; not of course the mild heats of our climate but the cloudless, blinding, tyrannous rays hammering the hills, searching every cranny. The key phrase on which the whole poem depends is "there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." It pierces everywhere with its strong clean ardour. Then at once, in verse 7 he is talking of something else, which hardly seems to him something else because it is so like the all-piercing, all-detecting sunshine. The Law is "undefiled", the Law gives light, it is clean and everlasting, it is "sweet". No one can improve on this and nothing can more fully admit us to the old Jewish feeling about the Law; luminous, severe, disinfectant, exultant.[20]

While Lewis is not an exegete, his literary eye, turned to this psalm, allowed a new appreciation for its unity. The master of letters sees something in the raw poetic beauty that may have been lost to the stricter delineations of critical scholarship, particularly in the Briggs school. His remarks on the literary unity of the psalm have been the starting point of some more recent commentators of the psalm, as we will now examine.

Peter Craigie: "literary movement for literary unity"

We continue our survey of the proponents of the unity of the Psalm with the work of Peter Craigie.[21] This commentary, while still in the Anglophone tradition, marks a very different approach to the Psalm to that of the "Briggs School". He makes allusion to the problem of defining the psalm's genre between a nature hymn and a wisdom poem but his concern with the question of origin is less marked than that of Briggs. He proposes the possibility of the original nature

[20] Lewis, *Reflections,* 56.
[21] Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50.* (WBC 19. Waco, Texas 1983), 177-184.

hymn being expanded, but he asserts that the psalm in its final form is a unity and eventually suggests that it is best classified as a wisdom hymn.

In his discussion of the first part of the hymn, he comments on how the world of nature and in particular the heavens are seen as giving God praise but also as communicating knowledge. The heavens themselves, by their silent action of moving from day to night and in their huge expanse, communicate a sense of the wonder and glory of God (which is itself praise) and draw humanity into reflection and praise of God. The heavens, the firmament, day and night are all personified and they all participate in this act of worship and this declaring of knowledge. This is an implicit invitation to wonder and praise, which he calls the "inaudible noise", and he says that the invitation is really only clear to those who have the sensitivity to hear it. The highpoint of this hymn is in the personification of the sun, who rises jubilantly from the tent that God has pitched for him and from whose heat nothing can hide.

Thus far we have a clever and intricate poem, which has some stimulating language and some arresting images. The sun hymn catches our attention with its apparent paradox and its personifications of aspects of nature. Nature and the natural world are powerful teachers of how to praise God and inspire implicitly a reflection on the vastness and the ubiquitous influence of God.

Just after this lofty reflection, the poetic form and theme change dramatically, from the ruggedly structured and somewhat mystical reflection on the sun and the heavens, to a much more structured and calmer paced reflection on the Law (vv.8-15). This is written in a Wisdom style and Craigie duly compares it to Ps 119. Six synonyms of *torah* are used to demonstrate in turn how this is all-embracing, and completely good in different ways for human beings, until we come to the very aim of the Law in v.10, when the Law is seen as being "entirely righteous" and capable of leading humanity to that same condition. Craigie quotes Clines in comparing the Law to the Tree of Knowledge only to find that the Law is superior to it. Gen 2-3 may prove a key to this psalm as the progression seems similar—a movement from the greatness of Creation to something greater, i.e. the *torah*, which does not only indicate the glory of God as nature does but which *reveals* the Lord, even in the name by which he chose to reveal himself to Israel. Hence, while the sun, the climax of the glory of nature,

might rise jubilantly and have an effect on all nature, the *torah* is even more potent, as it enlightens the eyes and illumines the servants of God.

This leads in turn to another change in perspective as the psalmist is led to recognition of his own unworthiness. In front of the glories of the firmament, which point to God, in view of the call of the *torah* to discover the Lord, he prays for forgiveness. In the final phrase, the God, whose praises the heavens proclaim, becomes the psalmist's hope as his personal rock and redeemer.

Susan Gillingham: "difference but interdependence"

Another model is offered, if somewhat laterally, by Susan Gillingham, as she studies this psalm as a "most interesting example of 'two psalms in one.'"[22] Gillingham's interest is in demonstrating how Psalms 1 and 2 can and should be read together and she proposes Psalm 19 as a model of how this is to proceed. She begins with a short survey of psalms that seem to be "meant to be read together" (either psalms that are compilations of other psalms, e.g. Ps 108 or "twin psalms", e.g. Pss 9-10). Of these she draws a conclusion and asks a simple question:

- The conclusion is that this is evidence of "some sort of deliberate editorial process,"[23]
- The question is whether, when these were so composed, each was meant to be a commentary on the other.

Gillingham continues her study of Pss 1-2 with a view to showing how these, like the two sections of Ps 19, can be "different but interdependent."[24] She draws several parallels between Ps 19 and Pss 1-2. In each case, the move is from the general (in the case of Ps 19, the general order of Creation; in the case of Ps 1 the general principle of the way of *torah* obedience leading to health, happiness and wholeness) to the specific (in the case of Ps 19, the specific example of this order becomes the *torah;* in the case of Ps 2, the king, the Lord's anointed, becomes the specific example of one who has chosen the way of *torah* and prospers). Similarly, there are connections between the two psalms (1-2) in terms of the motifs used (two ways (Ps 1) and two destinies (Ps 2); an

[22] Susan Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 & 2 in Jewish & Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.
[23] Gillingham, *A Journey,* 3.
[24] Gillingham, *A Journey,* 4.

eschatological rather than an immediate perspective; a fundamental motif of trust in God). Likewise, between the two sections of Ps 19, we see a similar connection of motifs (the enlightening influence of the sun and the *torah*; the regularity and order; the sense of delight). Finally between both Pss 1-2 and the two sections of Ps 19, there are also linguistic and vocabulary connections.

Gillingham's approach is interesting. While her concern is to demonstrate the tightness of association between Pss 1-2, in choosing Ps 19 as her "most interesting example of two psalms in one," she offers another perspective on the unity of Ps 19. She suggests that the key to unity between the two sections that are "different but interdependent" is a shared theme. In the case of Ps 19, she identifies this shared theme as "order":

> We saw earlier how Psalm 19 is a useful model for understanding how two separate psalms could be read as one. We might now ask: what was the overall *theme* which might have brought together such different psalms as 19A and 19B—one a hymn of praise to El, creator of the sun (vv. 2-7, EV vv. 1-6) and the other, a psalm of thanksgiving to Yahweh, the giver of the Law (vv. 8-15, EV vv. 7-14)? The fact that, like Psalms 1 and 2, each part shares similar but distinctive vocabulary…. shows some interconnectedness. One obvious theme is their shared concern about *order*: just as El brought order into the cosmos through the creation of the sun, so the individual Israelite must bring order into his community through the keeping of Torah.[25]

Gillingham's approach is different to that of Craigie and Brueggemann-Bellinger (see below), who both traced a progressive literary development between the sections of the psalm, in that she acknowledges "difference but interdependence" that eventually finds unity in the idea of a shared theme. One other interesting aspect of Gillingham's approach (which is a reception history approach) is a rabbinical tradition of the eighteen psalms between Ps 1 and Ps 19 (obviously backing Gillingham's argument for unity of Pss 1-2), corresponding with the Eighteen Benedictions, which begin with and end with a *torah* psalm.[26] This reiterates the connection between Pss 1-2 and Ps 19. In both cases, the Torah meditation is combined with other themes, Creation in Ps 19 and Messiah in Pss 1-2. Read in this way, there is a literary precedent for the unity of the psalm in the "difference but interdependence" of the two sections.

[25] Gillingham, *A Journey,* 7. (Gillinghham goes on to suggest Temple as a shared theme that unites Pss 1-2).
[26] Gillingham, *A Journey,* 3-4.

Brueggemann & Bellinger: "a structure of intensification"

Another approach towards literary unity is offered in the commentary of Walter Brueggemann and William Bellinger.[27] They begin their commentary on this psalm with the above-mentioned quote of C.S. Lewis whose appreciation of the literary merit of the psalm as "the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world" sharply contrast, as they note, with the history of critical scholarship. They propose an exposition of the psalm that treats the two parts of the psalm but with an approach that suggests the psalm is a literary unity and that endeavours to be in dialogue with Lewis' appreciation of the psalm.

Their exposition seems to rely on two essential elements of the psalm. The first is *theme.* They suggest that the theme is announced in the opening verse of the psalm: the revelation of God. This theme is then developed on two fronts, the revelation in Creation and then in divine instruction. "In that sense, the psalm is thematically unified and offers readers appetizing food for thought."[28] Yet the key for this development lies in a "structure of intensification."[29] The sequence moves from revelation in the vast expanse of the heavens, to the sun and its daily ordered course, to the more specific revelation of order and brilliance of *torah*, to the climax of familiarity with the prayer of the individual worshipper. This has a parallel in terms of the designation of God, from El, the God of Creation, to the Tetragram, the God of the *torah* and of Israel, to the familiarity of the terms צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי. As Brueggemann and Bellinger note:

> The description suggests that the psalm is a structure of intensification and thus a remarkable unit. The description suggests the possibility of considering the psalm in three parts rather than two. The movement is from the skies of creation to the divine instruction and finally to the worshipper. The heavens display knowledge; God reveals the *torah* that brings wisdom; and the speaker petitions that spoken words will be pleasing to God. [30]

This literary structure has been used elsewhere, particularly in nineteenth century French realist novels, where a broad picture is initially presented, which is then narrowed down to an individual and his/her situation. The structure of intensification allows for a realism, a movement from the larger spectrum to an appreciation of the individual and his/her participation within this reality. Yet there is a thread that holds all together in terms of imagery—light (from the sun

[27] Brueggemann & Bellinger. *Psalms*, 101-103.
[28] Brueggemann & Bellinger, *Psalms,* 101.
[29] Brueggemann & Bellinger, *Psalms,* 101.
[30] Brueggemann & Bellinger, *Psalms,* 101.

and the *torah),* joy (as the sun rejoices, so the *torah* brings rejoicing and delight) and "universality" (nothing escapes from the sun's heat and no hidden fault goes unseen). Bellinger and Brueggemann consider this psalm, therefore, as a "journey in divine revelation."[31]

Final Word on English language scholarship on the question of unity

We have surveyed some of the recent English-language commentators that propose a literary unity of this psalm, in discontinuity from the "higher-criticism" (historical-critical) school that stressed the division. At the end of this survey, one lesson seems clear: recent English-language commentary on the psalm has taken a definite slant towards a reading of the psalm in its unity. Whether based on literary unity, a structure of intensification or a theme that unites, the psalm offers the reader a perspective that sees the development of image from the vastness of the heavens to the unspoken word, from the day and night chorus to the bridegroom sun, from the all-pervasive heat to the unblemished Law, from the decrees that enlighten the mind to the precepts that make glad the heart, there is a unity.

The question that next arises is one of what difference this makes to the study of the psalm. Briggs and Wellhausen offered an insightful and coherent reading of the psalm while proposing disunity. They base this on what would appear to be sound empirical evidence, difference in theme, metre and vocabulary. This does not stop them from appreciating the beauty and the delicacy of each of the two sections and offering some ideas of their origins and reconstructions for their historical settings. The reading of the psalm in terms of the Babylonian poetry to Šamaš, which is adopted to be a morning him of praise, and further coupled with a more typically Hebrew hymn of praise, almost in protest at possible pagan readings, seems a plausible and even a theologically sound model.[32] The second part serves to bring the theologically tendentious earlier part, which is beautiful but possibly prone to pagan overtures, into the mainstream of the praise language of Israel.[33]

---

[31] Brueggemann & Bellinger, *Psalms,* 102.

[32] Oesterley, *Psalms* I, 170.

[33] T.A. Perry sees this unity between the two parts as indicative of a greater sense of unity—that the God of Creation (El) and the God of the *torah* are one, and that all humanity is called to this unity through the gift of the *torah*, which allows for authentic living in synchronization with Creation:

This theory seems plausible and even enlightening. However, if we suspend this "neatness" and look at the psalm as a unit, following the model of Lewis, Craigie and Brueggemann and Bellinger, the perspective changes. The imagery of the first part, exuberant and fresh in its sense of wonder and marvel at the glory of the Lord revealed in every aspect of nature but above all in the majesty and splendor of the sun, runs naturally and seamlessly into a reflection on the *torah* and its wonder and splendour. This extra dimension of the study of the psalm gives the reader another sphere for its appreciation. It demonstrates a particular attitude to the *torah*, which is not that of a necessary imposition nor a social structure but the gift that allows Israel to live in that dialogue of day onto day and night onto night, that gives the possibility to arise like a bridegroom from his tent and run like a strong man with sheer joy. As nothing is hidden from the heat of the sun, neither is any part of creation outside this dialogical relationship with the Creator, but, while the response is the same, the form for different elements of creation is different. The perspective changes dramatically with this reading. The heavens and the sun, the dialogue of night and day do not need to be "brought into" the sphere of the Law. If the psalm is read as a unity, they are already in that sphere and they can be viewed, with the mystical eye, as companions of Israel on the pathway to Wisdom, which, for humanity, is the *torah*. In essence, this "unity" reading of Ps 19 refocuses the psalm on the sense that the divine-human relationship is fundamentally dialogical.[34] However, here, the particular setting is the continuous dialogue between creation and Creator, which takes the form of the "unheard word" for the heavens, the firmament, day and night; then it takes the form of emergence and race for the warrior and bridegroom sun; then the form of *torah* for humanity; and finally it takes the form of prayer for safekeeping and innocence for the individual. This psalm reflects not only a human response to the dialogical reality, but, once read in its unity, situates that human response (*torah*) in the greater setting of the response of all creation.

> Psalm 19 presents a unification theory according to which the two gods El and Yahweh are the one and only Lord-God, the purpose of humanity is to work in concert with the rest of creation, and the author, David, stands for every single human being. And it is the clear realization of possible unification that is, at the ground level of everyday existence and into the foreseeable future, an ultimate cause of reflection and jubilation: One God, one humanity, one ongoing creation and recreation. Psalm 19 is how, in his universalistic *and* Jewish mode, the God of Genesis dreams the forever ongoing creation of the world.

T.A. Perry. *Psalm 19. Hymn of Unification.* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2016). Xiii.

[34] C.f. Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: the Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993), 261-2.

We continue our study now by examining the perspectives offered from other language study. These provide other models for reading the psalm as a unit, from stylistic, liturgical and canonical-theological perspectives.

Germanophone Scholarship

Within Germanophone scholarship, two scholars also pursue a reading of the psalm based on its unity. Other theories have been proposed which we examine in summary form.

Hossfeld: "Wisdom and Davidic unity"

Hossfeld begins his comment on the psalm with a defence of its unity.[35] He recognizes the traditional position of there being two separate psalms put together, one a Creation hymn, the other a Law poem. He also acknowledges the rationale for asserting this in the difference in form and metre. The summary statement of this tradition is that two psalms were put together, one a Canaanite hymn and the other a much later (exilic or post exilic) Law poem.

Hossfeld wants to see what proof there might be for the unity of the psalm. He proposes a tripartite division (vv. 2-7; 8-11; 12-14), whereby the first two parts are poetic soundings that come to settle down in the third part, a hymn addressed to God. The first part mentions *El* only once but the idea of the deity is then understood. The first section is dominated by the opening line, as all the following statements are made in reference to it until the new central protagonist of the sun emerges in v. 5. In contrast, the second part gains its momentum not from a series of images but from the repetition of the divine name and the staccato style. The entirety of the contents has some widely found imagery and ideas, which are brought together in one composition that is pervaded with exilic and post-exilic material and concepts. The over-all emphasis is recognition of the indirect revelation of God in nature and creation that becomes a more direct revelation in the *torah*. In this manner the image of the sun and of the *torah* are complementary—just as the sun is the culmination of the work of his hands, so the *torah* is what brings light to human action. Also, in the terms used one sees a possible consistency. While in the first part, terms such as speech, wisdom and

[35] Franz-Lothar Hossfeld & Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen I* (Die Neue Echter Bibel: Kommentar zum Alten Testament mit der Einsheitsübersetzung, 29; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993).

word are used, these are paralleled in the second part by the synonyms for Law. In a similar way, the heavens proclaim the glory of God as people do by their ordered conduct. This overarching view of Wisdom as an overall order in the scheme of nature *and* in the conduct of life is to be found elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures (Job 28: 20-28). The Psalm sees the ordering of nature and the ordering of human conduct as one concept of Divine Wisdom.

The third part sees another change. The pray-er will be rewarded for his adherence to this wisdom—he will be protected from sinners and he will be awarded good things.

Finally, Hossfeldt enlarges the vision of this psalm by placing it in the framework of the Psalter. He sees a connection with Ps 18 in the concept of the servant of the Lord. There is a common theme and some common language with Ps 18:26. David, the one who prays in thanksgiving for God's help in Ps 18 is now the one who recognizes the order and the wisdom in nature and then in the Law in Ps 19. The God who is recognized as his "rock" at the beginning of Ps 18 comes to be so recognized also at the end of Ps 19. In this way, Ps 18 might be read in conjunction with Ps 19 as the experience of fidelity that has brought benefit and safety in Ps 18 is recognized as fidelity to this wisdom and law in Ps 19.

Hossfeldt brings the argument one step further. He not only offers a reading that allows for an inherent unity to the psalm but he also situates this in the context of the prayers of the first book and the recognition of God's protection for those who respect his laws and who live in the order of wisdom.

Hossfeldt's proposal offers an alternative outlook on the psalm. If we decide to read the psalm in its unity, this implicit comparison between the Wisdom that is to be seen in the balance and beauty of nature will become more explicit in the gift of the *torah* to direct human life to fulfillment. The speech that goes forth without being heard from day to day (v.4) and without word but to the end of the earth (v.5) takes the form of word and is articulated fully in the word, precepts, decrees, commands and ordinances in the second part of the poem. Theologically, this situates the Law and Wisdom as a means of participating in the glory of the Lord, which fills the earth and which permeates all things. The effect of both then is to move the pray-er, in the final part, to a sensitivity of how he must keep clear of what sullies the Law and the image of God's glory to the

point where his final prayer is that *his* words and *his* silent meditation should become part of this great ensemble of Wisdom and nature.

Gerstenberger and the "liturgical unity" of the psalm

Also within the Germanophone Tradition, but with a different emphasis, is the work of Erhard Gerstenberger,[36] whose particular approach is to set the psalm in its role as cultic poetry. Gerstenberger prefaces his comment with the observation that the unity of the psalm has been questioned. However, his particular perspective for his commentary of the psalms stresses their role as cultic poetry. In that context he makes some interesting observations.

He has a very clear idea of the structure of the psalm. He divides the psalm into three main sections—the Creation Hymn, the Hymn to the *torah* and the Petition. He also suggests that there are some subsections, which serve an interesting purpose.

In examining the first part, the Creation hymn, he reminds the reader that the idea of a Creation hymn, and particularly the eulogy of the sun-god, is to be found in different cultures of the Ancient Near East. Elements of this are to be seen in the first part of the Creation hymn but his suggestion that the second part, (vv.5c-7) may represent an even older layer is interesting. Another interesting observation is the fact that, while this contains hymnic statements, essential elements of the hymn, such as a direct address of the deity are missing. This leads Gerstenberger to describe its outlook as "very objective, distant and meditative."[37]

The second part of the psalm, the *torah* poem, is again descriptive and meditative but lacks the formal liturgical essentials. The third section, which he calls the Petition, shows more in common with prayer language and Gerstenberger refers to it as the "congregational anchor" [38] of the psalm—addressing God and identifying the speaker, confessing sin and affirming confidence until it eventual closes with a personal prayer.

In this light, Gerstenberger argues for a "liturgical unity" of the psalm. While he does not pronounce definitively on the origins of the psalm and the unity

[36] Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms: with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry, I* (FOTL XIV; Grand Rapids Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988).
[37] Gerstenberger, *Psalms,* 101.
[38] Gerstenberger, *Psalms,* 101.

of its literary components, the final form makes a liturgical unit, which could have been used in a liturgical framework of community worship.

This offers a different but complementary perspective to that of Hossfeld. Gerstenberger's perspective does not seek to re-establish an architecture of the literary unity of the psalm. Rather, he looks towards its final form in the framework of the believing community. He demonstrates that the "objective and meditative" early sections lead to a petition and a prayer that affords a unity in the liturgical setting.

French School Structuralism and the Unity of the Psalm

Some other recent work will also argue for the unity of the psalm as a literary unity. From a structural perspective (which incorporates elements of vocabulary and metre), two Francophone structuralist scholars, Auffret[39] and Girard[40], have proposed structures for the psalm. While their proposals differ in some aspects (Girard concentrates on polarities, inclusions and on parallelism whereas Auffret bases his argument on word-pairing), they are unanimous on the fact that the structure of the psalm demonstrates that the psalm is a unit.

Marc Girard: "une synthèse bipolaire"[41]

Girard's structural analysis offers a model of structure based on linguistic and vocabulary techniques but open to thematic issues.[42] He divides the poem into two main sections 19A (vv. 2-7, ET VV.1-6) and 19B (vv. 8-15, ET vv.7-14). Each of these sections is divided into subsections, 19A (I) (vv. 2-4, ET vv. 1-3) and 19A (II) (vv. 5-7, ET vv. 4-6); 19B (I) (vv. 8-10, ET vv. 7-9) and 19B(II) (vv.11-15, ET vv.10-14). Girard describes how each of these sections functions as an entity, with an identifiable structure based on inclusions, formulae and theme, and then how the ensemble functions, also based on a demonstrable (according to Girard) over-arching structure. This can be outlined thus:

---

[39] P. Auffret: "De l'oeuvre de ses mains au murmure de mon coeur – Etude structurelle du Psaume 19," *ZAW* 112 (2000): 24-42.

[40] M. Girard: *Les Psaumes. Analyse structurelle et interprétation, 1-50*, (Récherches. Nouvelle Série-2; Montréal: Éditions Bellarmin, 1984). This is developed in a later work:
Les Psaumes redécouverts: de la structure au sens. (3 vols.; Québec: Éditions Bellarmin, 1996).

[41] Girard, *Les Psaumes*, 169-178.

[42] Terry Eagleton defines this type of literary analysis as one which is primarily interested in the relations between various items of the text, in terms of parallelism, opposition, inversion, equivalence and so on. Cf. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 83. Eagleton is not enamoured of this form of literary criticism.

לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמ֥וֹר לְדָוִֽד׃
הַשָּׁמַיִם֮ מְסַפְּרִ֪ים כְּבֽוֹד־אֵ֑ל וּֽמַעֲשֵׂ֥ה יָ֝דָ֗יו מַגִּ֥יד הָרָקִֽיעַ׃
3 י֣וֹם לְ֭יוֹם יַבִּ֣יעַ אֹ֑מֶר וְלַ֥יְלָה לְּ֝לַ֗יְלָה יְחַוֶּה־דָּֽעַת׃
4 אֵֽין־אֹ֭מֶר וְאֵ֣ין דְּבָרִ֑ים בְּ֝לִ֗י נִשְׁמָ֥ע קוֹלָֽם׃
5 בְּכָל־הָאָ֨רֶץ׀ יָ֘צָ֤א קַוָּ֗ם וּבִקְצֵ֣ה תֵ֭בֵל מִלֵּיהֶ֑ם לַ֝שֶּׁ֗מֶשׁ שָֽׂם־אֹ֥הֶל בָּהֶֽם׃
6 וְה֗וּא כְּ֭חָתָן יֹצֵ֣א מֵחֻפָּת֑וֹ יָשִׂ֥ישׂ כְּ֝גִבּ֗וֹר לָר֥וּץ אֹֽרַח׃
7 מִקְצֵ֤ה הַשָּׁמַ֨יִם׀ מֽוֹצָא֗וֹ וּתְקוּפָת֥וֹ עַל־קְצוֹתָ֑ם וְאֵ֥ין נִ֝סְתָּ֗ר מֵֽחַמָּתֽוֹ׃

8 תּ֘וֹרַ֤ת יְהוָ֣ה תְּ֭מִימָה מְשִׁ֣יבַת נָ֑פֶשׁ עֵד֥וּת יְהוָ֥ה נֶ֝אֱמָנָ֗ה מַחְכִּ֥ימַת פֶּֽתִי׃
9 פִּקּ֨וּדֵ֤י יְהוָ֣ה יְ֭שָׁרִים מְשַׂמְּחֵי־לֵ֑ב מִצְוַ֥ת יְהוָ֥ה בָּ֝רָ֗ה מְאִירַ֥ת עֵינָֽיִם׃
10 יִרְאַ֤ת יְהוָ֨ה׀ טְהוֹרָה֮ עוֹמֶ֪דֶת לָ֫עַ֥ד מִשְׁפְּטֵֽי־יְהוָ֥ה אֱמֶ֑ת צָֽדְק֥וּ יַחְדָּֽו׃
11 הַֽנֶּחֱמָדִ֗ים מִ֭זָּהָב וּמִפַּ֣ז רָ֑ב וּמְתוּקִ֥ים מִ֝דְּבַ֗שׁ וְנֹ֣פֶת צוּפִֽים׃
12 גַּֽם־עַ֭בְדְּךָ נִזְהָ֣ר בָּהֶ֑ם בְּ֝שָׁמְרָ֗ם עֵ֣קֶב רָֽב׃
13 שְׁגִיא֥וֹת מִֽי־יָבִ֑ין מִֽנִּסְתָּר֥וֹת נַקֵּֽנִי׃
14 גַּ֤ם מִזֵּדִ֨ים׀ חֲשֹׂ֬ךְ עַבְדֶּ֗ךָ אַֽל־יִמְשְׁלוּ־בִ֣י אָ֣ז אֵיתָ֑ם וְ֝נִקֵּ֗יתִי מִפֶּ֥שַׁע רָֽב׃
15 יִהְי֣וּ לְרָצ֨וֹן׀ אִמְרֵי־פִ֡י וְהֶגְי֣וֹן לִבִּ֣י לְפָנֶ֑יךָ יְ֝הוָ֗ה צוּרִ֥י וְגֹאֲלִֽי׃

19A as a section is marked off by an *inclusio* (the term הַשָּׁמַיִם) between v. 2a and v. 7a. In turn, this section is divided into two mini-structures:

19A (I) runs from v.2 to v. 4 (ET vv. 1-3) and is built around the terminology of speech/word. This section is composed of six hemistichs, each of which contains one root term of oral expression. This section is a thematic unity around the idea that the lights of the heavens say that God is Creator and that knowledge is offered "*day and night*" (two poles that suggest a totality) but that it is silent. This section has to do with the internal communication between the Heavenly bodies, the direction being from the heavens to the heavens, not yet a communication between heavens and earth, which is the "bipolaire" of the next section.

19A (II) runs from vv. 5-7 (ET vv. 4-6). This time the terminology that punctuates the form is a successive triple usage of the terms יצא (19: 5a; 6a; 7a) and קצה (Ps 19: 5b; 7a; 7b). The polarity ("bipolaire") here is heaven and earth and the relationship between the stars is marked by a sense of their mobility and the universal bearing of their influence. There is also a polarity between East and West, the two extremes of the sun's course, which also serve to suggest a totality.

Links between the two mini-structures are obvious from both a linguistic and a thematic perspective. Just as the first mini-section opens with a reference to the heavens (v.2), the second opens with a reference to the earth (v. 5). Again,

the polarity between the two is defined from the beginning. That polarity is the principle of their unity. Heavens and earth, day and night, east and west, all combine to demonstrate how the unspoken word "goes out" to the "extremities" of all things. Linguistically, the term אין is to be found in the final verse of each of the sub-sections (v. 4a; 7c), forming an *inclusio*.

Girard makes a potentially important theological point on this section. He remarks how the vestiges of an Assyro-Babylonian myth about an invisible divine hand that traces a mysterious script in the skies, the movement of which can be detected by studying the movement of the stars, may be influential here. This may have been assumed into Judaism here, as the unseen hand that writes in the skies is that of the Creator God.

19B (vv. 8-15, ET 7-14) is composed of two sections also, 19B (I), vv. 8-10, ET 7-9, and 19B(II), vv. 11-15, ET 10-14. Again the entirety of the section is enclosed by an *inclusio* between v. 8 (תָּמִימָה) and v. 14 (אֵיתָם). Thus is the principal idea of this section announced: the Law is perfect and it makes perfect. In this context, Girard also extends this idea to the term גֹּאֲלִי as the sense of being bought back corresponds to being brought back to the perfection that is offered by the Law.

19B (I) (vv. 8-10, ET 7-9) is the "neatest" section. It is delineated by an *inclusio* in 8c (נֶאֱמָנָה) and 10c (אֵיתָם). There are six stichs of almost identical format: a synonym of Torah, followed by and attribute and then by a further qualification. The central idea is that the Law is good and can effect good.

19B (II) (vv. 11-15, ET 10-14) is punctuated by the triple usage of the term in vv. 11b; 12b; 14d. There is a particular parallel of similar terms and ideas between vv. 12-13 and v. 14, both prefaced with the same term (גַּם). Girard regards this as a diptych, where the ideas of preserving and purifying the "servant" from all sins and errors is presented dramatically. Of this he says: "Le mini-diptyque développe un peu l'idée que la Loi sert d'antidote contre le péché, surtout le péché commis par ignorance…et le péché d'orgueil."[43] This section centres on humanity's reaction to the Law (in comparison with the absolute attributes of the Law described in the previous section), which is to be savoured, kept, meditated and which becomes an antidote to ignorance and to pride.

[43] Girard, *Les Psaumes*, 173.

The argument for the unity of both parts and their cohesion is from their complementary themes but also from an interesting use of the Tetragram, which is repeated seven times (symbolically). Girard also comments on an *inclusio* between v. 9b and v. 15b (לֵב). The themes of purity, ignorance and enlightenment also serve to unite the entire section thematically. The emphasis here moves in a similar fashion to how it moved in Section A: from an over-arching view of the greatness of the Law and its effect, it focuses in the second part on the very definite effect it can have on "the servant" who reads this poem.

The unity of the ensemble is likewise built on some of these linguistic and structural apparati. Girard comments on the apparent dichotomy between the two parts, one hymnic, the other didactic. There are differences in terminology, metre and theme. In order to propose a structural unity, he proposes two arguments:

- The first argument is based on words. The principle argument for this is the inclusion between in אֹמֶר in v.3a and אִמְרֵי in v.15a. This *inclusio* forms a link between the unheard saying of Creation and the prayer spoken by the pious reader. Girard also proposes an "inclusion synonymique" between the term *El* used of the divinity in a cosmic setting in the first part and the Tetragram used of the God who gives the Torah in the second. He says: "Car ce n'est pas sans raison que le Tout-puissant est appelé *'el* dans la première section, en context cosmologique, et *Yhwh* dans la seconde, en context d'alliance. L'originalité du Ps 19 consiste justement dans l'association de ces deux contextes théologiques pour en montrer la continuité parfaite."[44]
- The second argument is the structural similarity between the two parts, each divided into two mini-sections governed by an over-aching *inclusio*, built around thematic and linguistic sub-structures, as demonstrated above. The mirror imaging of the two structures (even if there is a difference in form) suggests a unity. The polarity between the God who is Creator and the God who is Law-giver is the over all balance, but the mini polarities within (day/night; east/west; clarity/hidden faults; unheard voice/ words of mouth) all contribute to a sense of totality.

[44] Girard, *Les Psaumes*, 176.

In conclusion, Girard suggests that the most likely scenario for the origin of this psalm is that it is the work of a single author.

Auffret: stereotyped pairs and the unifying function of verse 15

Auffret offers a critique of Girard, essentially dividing the poem into different sub-sections based on other connections between terms and words; although his analysis is more strictly linguistic (essential parallels of stereotyped words, as assembled by Avishur). [45] He divides the poem into two sections, as did Girard, but his subsections run differently: 19A is divided into vv. 2-5b/vv5c-7; 19 B is divided into vv. 8-11/ vv. 12-15. His division is based on the internal parallelism in the verses, with the uses of stereo-typed parallels marking the mini sections (these are words which could easily be paired together, e.g. הָאָרֶץ/הַשָּׁמַיִם .) These stereotyped pairs govern the internal structures, in a similar manner to the polarity used by Girard but in a more set manner.

He sees a particular role for v. 15, which is said to be a "replique" (retort) to the works of God and to the Laws of the Lord. "Le murmure de son Coeur répond à l'œuvre des mains divines…, réjouit qu'il est par le don des precepts (9ab), ces préceptes dont on dirait qu'ils viennent en retour de ce que décrivent…les cieux de la gloire de Dieu." [46] This final phrase (v.15) has an important unifying effect over the entirety of the poem, according to the logic offered by Auffret. His ultimate conclusion remains the same, that structurally the poem is a unity, as he says: "L'articulation entre 2-7 et 8-15 est donc assez puissante pour dissuader de séparer ce que l'auteur a uni pour nous découvrir ce qui, à coup sur, est le fond de sa pensée et ce qu'il nous propose en definitive de chanter."[47] He suggests that the contemplation in the psalm of the vastness of Creation is matched with the contemplation of the grandeur of the Law, so as to bring the servant to a sense of humility, conscious of his limits but also conscious of what the world and the Law can make of him.

[45] Auffret, "De l'oeuvre."
[46] Auffret, "De l'oeuvre," 37.
[47] Auffret, "De l'oeuvre," 40.

This mode of critique is still relatively new (Girard offers a history of the methodology in his introduction).[48] However, it does offer some interesting perspectives. As Girard says, he is interested in looking at the back-bone of the psalm to see how the structure holds the entirety of the poem together. His insights offer that perspective. Auffret's recognition of the use of v.15 as one of the key elements to unity seems more convincing than that which Girard offers. This methodology in general has been suspected. Eagleton calls it a "calculated affront to common sense" which is "analytic" and not "evaluative."[49] Yet this type of analysis is worthwhile as often the "common sense" opinon cannot necessarily remark structures and frameworks that can hold a poem together. The arguments are developing constantly. Of Auffret and Girard, we can say that they have offered a wholesome attempt to identify the structure upon which this poem hangs.

Final Comment on Unity

> Because of the marked difference in subject matter, this psalm is generally regarded as a liturgical composition in which fragments of different date are joined together. Some maintain that the author of 8-15 made use of an older fragment as an introduction to a poem on the Law. But, as already pointed out, the same author may have combined the two themes in a single poem. For if a compiler felt that two fragments dealing with two different subjects could be combined to form a single poem, there does not seem to be any valid reason why a poet could not compose a poem on these kindred themes.[50]

Kissane's reflection might serve to offer a starting point in analysis of the various positions. Above, we examined what difference the unity of the psalm might make for its theology. In the study of its structure and its possible historical setting, other perspectives have offered a different and complementary insight into the question of unity.

While the question of unity might never be definitively resolved, the very debate it has engendered and the interest in issues that it has enlivened by themselves offer perspectives on the psalm that might not be appreciated in a solely empirically-minded atmosphere. Questions of the stylistic and structural "backbone," while quite possibly in need of greater refinement, offer a perspective that would be outside the remit of "higher criticism" (historical-

[48] Marc Girard. *Les Psaumes redécouverts: de la structure au sens. 1-50* (Vol. 1.; Québec: Éditions Bellarmin, 1996), 16-30.
[49] Eagleton. *Literary Theory.* 83
[50] Edward J. Kissane. *The Book of Psalms* (Vol 1; Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1953), 83.

critical method), while the Wisdom-theological and liturgical perspective, both of which situate "anchor phrases" as the hermeneutical key to the unity of the psalm, in turn offers a valuable reading of the psalm.

Returning to Kissane's reflection, we might deduce that there are two distinct possibilities around the unity of this psalm. Either an author composed a poem around two different but related themes or a compiler combined two fragments to form a single poem. In either case, the end result is the same: a poem that can reasonably be read as a unity. The perspective here changes from author to reader and the reader hermeneutic is a serious and credible starting point for the unity of the psalm. From the reader hermeneutic, there can be, and evidently is, a unity to the structure and the purpose of the psalm, as the unheard voice that speaks to all the earth is interpreted and understood in the light of *torah.* Whatever the debate on authorial origins or the literary archaeology of the psalm might suggest, the simple fact remains that, from a reader perspective, this psalm can be read as a unity. This perspective, which has gained momentum as a credible and reasonable manner of reading in recent years, allows an appreciation of the psalm in terms of its self-presentation. For the reader, the psalm moves from the majestic and splendid realm of the heavenly warrior to the structured and formal meditation on the *torah,* to the final simple prayer of trust and confidence. If the "theme, meter and vocabulary" vary, from the reader's perspective this is more likely to be enrichment, a tease and challenge to keep the reader's attention and to make him wonder. Analogies might come from certain musical scores, such as Miss Alexander's setting of *Saint Patrick's Breastplate* (commonly known as "I bind") or Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin's *Idir Eatharthu* (commonly known as "Between two Worlds"), where the musical score begins in one fashion, and then abruptly changes, only to merge in a third moment and demonstrate the, previously unrecognized, harmony. In a similar manner, the reader of Ps 19 is presented with a harmony, a symphony of words which, when blended, allows for perspectives of how Creation and Torah are intimately bound.

I:4 Genre

Categorizing this psalm in terms of genre will offer a similar dilemma and opportunity for understanding various models. There are elements of the hymn of praise, the creation psalm, the wisdom psalm (didactic poem) and the *torah* psalm. The question of unity also has important repercussions here, as

proponents of disunity will offer two genres, while those who support the unity of the psalm will likewise have to grapple with the question of offering a different view.

It is important to note that the classification of psalms into genres is meant to be a didactic aid to allow students of the psalms to appreciate the fact that these poems are not simply lyrics randomly joined together but rather that there is a cohesion and a consistency in the style of poetry chosen and how themes are presented which related originally to distinct life settings in ancient Israel. It is good to remember Gunkel's discussion of this (as discussed in Chapter 1). Gunkel prefaces his remarks on genre by stressing that all poetry prefers "an indeterminate means of expression."[51] As Gunkel holds that there is no ordering principle determinable from the individual psalms for the organization of the whole, the search for genre is important as it allows psalms that belong together internally to be co-ordinated and classified. Gunkel seeks to bring "light and order"[52] to the diverse material by this classification. This classification is to be based on "self evident principles"[53] and the "innate natural division of this type of poetry."[54]

One of the key elements in the differentiation of genres will be the "real-life events which formed their setting". Gunkel traces the development of psalmody from the prayers that accompanied actions in worship settings, into the sphere of personal piety where they came to be more developed and separated from their accompanying actions, into the moment where they adopted different motifs and where they could be delineated by their main element, and finally into an individualism where they became spiritual poetry. In this final life setting (that of the individualism and of spiritual poetry), there was a movement from the rawness and brevity of expression to more reflection, in which Wisdom psalms came to be developed. At the same time, these were often based upon the earlier forms, which allowed for the categorization of "mixed psalm," which is how Gunkel categorizes this psalm. He says:

> The mixture in Ps 19 is even stronger (than Ps 33). The ever recurring mention of the commands are praised more highly than all creation, including the sun. The recurring mention awakens ideas how the pious person stands in relation to these commands. Since he follows these commands, he turns to the individual complaint song. He asserts

[51] Gunkel. *Introduction*, 1.
[52] Gunkel, *Introduction,* 5.
[53] Gunkel, *Introduction,* 6.
[54] Gunkel, *Introduction,* 7.

> that he walks in the commands (19:12, innocence motif). He confesses unknown transgressions (19:13a, confession of sin). He asks for forgiveness, protection, and the gracious acceptance of his words (19: 14b-15, petition).[55]

Classification into genre has become commonplace in more recent studies. That said, unanimity on classifications is not to be take for granted. In the case of this psalm particularly, a variety of opinions on categorization is held.

Westermann: A "Creation Psalm"

We might begin by using an example of how this use of genre can help to highlight aspects of the form of the psalm. Westermann, as noted above, proposes that this is an amalgam of two psalms. He categorizes the first part as a "Creation Psalm" [56]. His particular perspective is a simple return to the idea that the Heavens are telling God's praise. He contends that this is not a natural revelation but that the very existence of Creation is an act of praise of God, "whose existence and activity is presupposed as the most real of realities." [57] Creation's very existence is, therefore, not a sign of God's existence but, in itself, an act of praise. The expanse of the Heavens, the sequence of day and night, and the daily course of the sun are not simply random aspects of material realities but a praise of "the most real of realities." This offers the reader a new perspective on the drama of nature as it unfolds before him/her. If these powerful and mysterious bodies participate in the act of praise of God in their very being and in these most dramatic and beautiful ways, then the reader also must find how he can be and act so as to give praise to God in everything. The ultimate meaning of the existence of the stars, the atoms and the earth is the praise of God's glory, which is also, by extension, the ultimate meaning of human existence. While Westermann does not explicitly mention this, his reflection on the ultimate meaning of Creation might well raise the question of the reader as to how humanity can participate in this act of giving glory, a question to be answered in the second part of the poem. This will be explored further as a unifying theme of the psalm.

---

[55] Gunkel, *Introduction,* 307.
[56] Claus Westermann, *The Psalms—Structure, Content and Message* (trans. Ralph D. Gehrke; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 94.
[57] Westermann, *Psalms,* 94-5.

Cox: A "Hymn of Praise in a process of Dialectic"

That question of how humanity can participate in this act of giving glory is the starting point of Cox in his reading of the genre of Ps 19.[58] Cox also remarks on how the first part is easily classified as a Hymn of Praise and establishes the dominant motif. Yet he immediately remarks that the normal function of a hymnic introduction is to initiate dialogue (c.f. Ps 8, where the hymnic introduction begins the dialogue on what man is). Therefore, he suggests that one might begin to read Ps 19 with the question of what end this psalm might serve.

He goes on to point out that the function and nature of Creation is to glorify God. Yet it has neither voice nor speech to be able to do so. Man is needed to definitively articulate that praise. Yet for man, there is the second part of the poem, the praise of the *torah*, inculcating observance of the Torah and respect for the "testimony of the Lord" (which he defines as "a definite moment of encounter with God in his act of self-revelation"[59]). This hymn of praise, therefore, is intricate and functions within a "process of dialectic."[60] The initial part remarks on how the "work of the Lord's hands" can impart knowledge of the artist that the Lord is (in the same way as any work of art will give a sense of the person the artist is). The sun in its daily course, acting according to its nature, is the highpoint of this imparting of knowledge. Man then, by parallel, must also act according to his nature and find his way of expressing this ongoing reality of the praise of God. How can he do so? Simply and clearly, he does so by acting in accord with *Torah*. As Cox says:

> So Ps 19 develops its dialectic from the same starting point as Ps 8, but reaches a different conclusion. The antithesis here is the sun, a creature whose light, though majestic of itself, serves merely to indicate the greater light of its creator. Man is a less 'glorious' creature perhaps, but he has been admitted to an intimacy denied inanimate creation. If the order of the world gives witness to God, how much more must man, God's intimate correspondent? Once again the emphasis comes on the implied question 'how?' The sun does so by 'running its course with joy' (v. 5) in the sight of humanity; that is, by acting according to its nature. So man must respond to God by acting according to *his* nature; and *Torah* represents the natural expression of God's created nature.[61]

This is a most interesting interpretation of the genre of the psalm. In essence, this is a hymn of praise, a normal genre category, but one which is highly developed in the process of dialectic. The hymn functions within that dialectic:

---

[58] Dermot Cox. *The Psalms in the Life of God's People* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1984), 56-60.
[59] Cox, *Psalms,* 58.
[60] Cox, *Psalms,* 56.
[61] Cox, *Psalms,* 59.

praise is given and knowledge is imparted by Creation in all its facets, majestically in the daily natural course of the sun, but also existentially by humanity in its daily natural course of life as an encounter with the Divine, as expressed in the *torah*.

Mays: "Crossing the Boundaries"

Another model for the genre of the psalm is presented by Mays.[62] In his discussion of Pss 1, 19 and 119, he mentions how these seem not to fit into the accepted genres of psalms. The term "wisdom psalms" seems too vague for these as they do have a unifying feature in their organization around the Law. In particular with reference to this psalm, Mays remarks how the categories are pushed beyond their limits to form a "mixed genre", described as "a type of literature whose generic characteristic is the gathering and combination of styles and materials into a new kind of unit." Two classes are deliberately juxtaposed here so as to allow the combined effect to emphasize the fact that the God who can be known through Creation is also the Lord who is known through the Law. Mays draws a parallel with another mixed genre psalm, Ps 33, where the praise of the Lord as Creator is juxtaposed with an exhortation to "fear of the Lord" as a means of security and trust.

The mixed genre psalm will, therefore, allow for a crossing of boundaries that serves to broaden the capacity of a fixed category psalm. Recognition of the power of God in the order and the majesty of Creation is a valid usage of the Creation hymn, but when it is juxtaposed with an exaltation of the Law as a means to enlightenment and Wisdom, then the overall effect is a recognition of the power of the *torah* which is equally as potent and majestic as the marvels of Creation. The unspoken word of Creation that goes out to the ends of the world is interpreted by the "words" that make up *torah*—and both can become "words of the psalmist's mouth"(אִמְרֵי־פִי) and "meditation of his heart"(הֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי) that will be acceptable to God (v.15).

This overall effect, greater than the effect of each of the parts, is achieved by the mixing of genres. By combining Creation hymn elements with praise of *torah* and personal supplication, the effect transcends the individual aspects of

[62] J.L. Mays, "The Place of the Torah Psalms in the Psalter," *JBL* 106 (1987): 3-12.

each to allow for a new appreciation of the importance of this "word" of God that can be understood and internalized by the psalmist.

A Wisdom Psalm?

Examining one other possible classification for this psalm may prove useful. Gerstenberger suggests that this might well be (in part, as he indicates 19B) a "sapiential psalm," which he defines as a grouping that is not cultic in origin but which shows a marked theological orientation and which focus on ethical issues, particularly the position of humanity as it grapples with the apparent injustice of God.[63] This classification is not unanimous, nor even well attested. (Later, in the context of Wisdom and Creation, we will revisit this subject and debate, if from another angle). Murphy does not include this psalm in his classification of Wisdom Psalms, although there is an indirect reference to its appartenance to a sapiential milieu.[64] One might suspect that the reason for Murphy's exclusion of this psalm from this category is based on his criterion (in turn based on Gunkel's principles of form criticism) of uniformity of style, structure, and recurrence of motifs, as well as the life-setting.[65] The key element of these, for Murphy, seems to be similarity with Wisdom Literature (interestingly, on these grounds, he also excludes Ps 119, which, he says, shows definite Wisdom influences but which is rather a collection of sayings that reflect *torah* piety).

Weeks and Trublet: the merit of the designation 'Wisdom Psalms.'

A necessary prelude to this discussion is a further allusion to the topic of "Wisdom psalms" and whether this is an appropriate categorization. Stuart Weeks represents one perspective in this topic.[66] He questions the criteria for the classification of a psalm as a Wisdom psalm and he suggests that lexical, thematic and didactic concerns are not sufficient criteria to allow a definite categorization of Wisdom psalms. He proceeds to define Wisdom itself outside of the usual categories but rather as an interest in the savoir-faire of everyday life from the perspective of the individual, as opposed to the broader, national issues

---

[63] Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "The Lyrical Literature," in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 430.
[64] Roland E. Murphy, "The Classification 'Wisdom Psalms,'" in *Congress Volume* (VTSup IX; Leiden: Brill, 1963), 157.
[65] Murphy, "Wisdom Psalms," 159.
[66] Stuart Weeks, "Wisdom Psalms," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (ed. John Day; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 292-307.

represented in monarchic or legal texts. In this context, a popular element is creation, which seems to be a recurrent motif (with the subtle nuance of the necessity to conform to the will of the Creator so as to prosper and survive) rather than a systematized theology. Once this definition of a search for the best means of living on an individual level is adopted, few psalms fit the category precisely (Pss 1 and 37 being those suggested by Weeks). He examines other psalms to determine the presence of this Wisdom interest and finds this to be the case in a number of psalms but reiterates that these remain psalms, with other characteristics woven into their structure. However, using Ps 37 as an example of a definite Wisdom-interested psalm, he further suggests that the presence of a Wisdom theme does not exclude other influences and an overlap in genre is common. He concludes with the suggestion that the divorce between cultic circles and Wisdom circles might well be artificial and that there is nothing remarkable in the presence of Wisdom motifs in the psalms as these simply "mark the point at which the interests of two types of writing coincide. In doing so, they remind us that all our distinctions and classifications are just a poor approximation to a vibrant and complicated literary culture."[67]

Jacques Trublet also surveys the development of the interaction between Wisdom and the Psalter.[68] He examines the different theories from Gunkel, Munch (who suggests the there are "prayer-school psalms" (*Schulandachtpsalmen)*), Mowinckel (who speaks of learned psalmography) to Gerhard von Rad, who held that these psalms were important as there were truths and elements of knowledge which could only be expressed in hymns and the pedagogical element works cohesively with the worship element. Having examined at length the work of Murphy and Kuntz, Trublet proposes another approach based on three presuppositions

- That there is a presence of Wisdom in the Psalter.
- That the means of ascertaining this is to begin with an examination of the texts rather than with a definition of Wisdom.

[67] Stuart Weeks, "Wisdom Psalms," 305.
[68] Jacques Trublet, "Le Corpus Sapientiel et le Psautier," in *La Sagesse Biblique de l'Ancien au Nouveau Testament* (Actes du XVème Congrès de l'ACFEB (Paris, 1993): ed. Jacques Trublet; Lectio Divina 160; Paris: Cerf, 1995), 139-186.

- That there are the methods available, between classic assumptions and multidimensional statistics, to recognize this Wisdom presence.

Specifically with reference to Ps 19, Trublet highlights some definite facts that link this psalm to Wisdom Literature. There are roughly the same levels of lexical correspondences (c. 10%) between this psalm and Prov. 10-31 and Job. There is also a significant lexical correspondence with Prov. 1-9. The other criterion is the fact that the semantics often show a dimension of correlation between psalms and Wisdom Literature that allow the reader to better understand some of the enigmas of the psalms. His conclusion is that, while it might be difficult to speak of Wisdom psalms in the strictest sense, there is a definite "rapprochement" between some psalms and some Wisdom literature.

As we noted above, different commentators hold widely differing opinions on the categorization of Wisdom Psalms in itself and then on the constituent members of that category. With Weeks, we might concur that a Wisdom element of a psalm need not exclude other elements and that any restrictive categorization does not do justice to the vibrancy and complicatedness of this literature. Yet his definition itself seems too restrictive, as in limiting Wisdom solely to savoir-faire, he excludes a necessary element of the Wisdom endeavour, which is the *drama of humanity's paradoxical sense of the presence and the absence of God,*[69] which is a mainstay of the prayer of Israel and of some of its finest literature (including Wisdom literature, e.g. Job). Trublet demonstrates lexical and thematic links to the broad sweep of Wisdom Literature, yet he makes the valid point that the best manner of proceeding is to examine the text itself, rather than a definition of Wisdom, and to see how this develops the "vibrancy" (to use Weeks's own term) of the theme. This, then, might guide the programme for considering the Wisdom influence in this psalm: a consideration of the motif of Creation and how it is present in this psalm, a comparison with some of the

[69] This point is key to the discussion on prayer in the Hebrew Bible to be found in the work of Balentine. He says:

> With these words the Hebrew Bible presents a confessional perspective that shapes all that follows: In the beginning God. Whatever criteria one uses to define prayer, prayer is also perhaps especially, shaped by this divine confession. All prayer is directed to God. In broad terms both the certainty of the divine presence and the uncertainty of this presence most often determine the human response to God.

Samuel E. Balentine. *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue.* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993). 33.

established Wisdom texts, and an examination of how Wisdom techniques might be subtly operative.

Genres from the Wisdom milieu

Situating the poem in the Wisdom milieu allows another perspective on the genre of the psalm. While Murphy rejects this as a Wisdom psalm in the strict sense, it is demonstrably, so he argues, conceived and nurtured in a Wisdom milieu. The genres of that milieu include the riddle/enigma (*ḥîdâ)* and the proverb/parable (*māšāl).* While these terms are not part of a fixed system, they are recognized literary genres within the mindset of ancient Israel.[70] Deurloo recognizes their presence in this psalm.[71] He suggests that vv. 4-5ab are a riddle, but that the answer is already in vv. 2-3, i.e. vv. 4-5ab suggest the question "What is it?" of that which has no speech, no words, no voice to be heard, yet which goes out to the furthest extremities of the earth. The answer lies in the earlier part (vv. 2-4), as it is the glory of God, attested in all creation. Likewise, in v. 7, he sees a riddle-enigma in the idea of a circuit from one end of the sky to the other. This time the question will be "Who is this runner?" The answer has already been given; it is the sun. However, Deurloo goes on to suggest that the entirety of the psalm can be read as a *māšāl*, a bi-polar proverb or parable, used to demonstrate the interaction of God with humanity. The action of the sun that is glorious and has an all-pervading effect is an analogy for the Lord who gives his *torah* to have effect on every aspect of the life of humanity. As Deurloo says:

> …in the second part of the psalm, the riddle (*ḥydh)* is interpreted in meditation as a parable (*mšl*). Here as elsewhere in the Old Testament, heaven and earth correspond with God and man. The heavens have a message for the earth: the "awe-inspiring mechanism, the work of the Most High (Sir 43:2), the glory of God. From its heavenly tent, the sun sheds its blazing light on everything on earth. Thus HWH gives his servant the *perfect* Tora (v. 8), which by its allembracing (sic) effect (v. 8-11) determines the servant, so that he shall be *perfect* (v.14b, *inclusio*).
>
> In v. 15, the servant offers his skillfully formulated words to YHWH, expecting that they will please him (cf. Ps 104: 34), in view of the beauty of this combination of riddle and arable, which moreover touches the heart of Israel's faith. The sun marks "the days of the heavens above the earth" (Deut 11, 21). To what can this matter be compared? To the Tora, given by YHWH, who gives life to his servant Israel.[72]

---

[70] Luis Alonso-Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (SubBi 11; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988), 8-9.

[71] K.A. Deurloo, "Psalm 19: Riddle and Parable" in *Goldene Apfel in silbernen Schalen: Collected Communications to the XIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Leuven, 1989* (ed. Klaus Dietrich Schunck and Matthias Augustin; BEATAJ 20; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 93-100.

[72] Deurloo, "Psalm 19," 96-7.

This proposal is not without parallel. Cox bases his reading of the Book of Job on the idea that the entire book is a bipolar proverb/parable, a *māšāl*.[73] He demonstrates how the book can be read as a presentation of man's point of view (in the speeches of Job) and then a presentation of God's side (in the Theophany). The resolution, according to Cox, is for the reader to decide, as this is the essence of the *māšāl*, that the reader should be allowed a new perspective so as to see things anew.

This is not an illegitimate model for our psalm. On the one side, we have the perspective of Creation, demonstrating the glory of God, proclaiming it silently. On the other, we have the perspective of *torah*, leading humanity into Wisdom. Yet here, the reader is offered a response in the final verse, where he pronounces a prayer that the words he speaks (complementing the unheard voice of Creation) and the meditation of his heart (on the *torah*) will be the acceptable balance that will lead him to Wisdom in God's presence.

I:5 Psalm 19 and the Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue

Wagner: Psalm 19 and the dynamics of prayer.

Another development of this perspective, but based solely on a reading of the Psalm, is in the work of J. Ross Wagner.[74] Wagner follows the line of scholarship that seeks to recognize the strands that form the psalm as a literary unity. His particular contribution is to highlight the importance of the focalization that occurs, from the grandeur of the immensity of the Heavens and Creation, to the multi-faceted *Torah*, to the final petition to the Lord as "Rock" from one who is his "servant" (which he holds as key to the unity of the psalm). He carefully examines the motifs that unite the psalm—speech, light, joy – and how they are developed in a manner that seems to gradually narrow the focus, while extending the key motifs. Yet one important development is the use of cultic vocabulary. In v. 8a, the term תמימה is used, a term which is normally reserved for an unblemished sacrifice (cf. Ex. 12: 5; 29: 1; Lev 4:28, 32) as well as for the moral quality of blamelessness. Likewise, the term טהוֹר which is used in v. 10a to describe the "brilliance" of the Law, is used of ritual cleanliness, as in Lev. 4:12;

[73] Dermot Cox, *Man's Anger and God's Silence: the Book of Job* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1990), 14-16.

[74] J. Ross Wagner, "From the Heavens to the Heart: The Dynamics of Psalm 19 as Prayer," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 245-61.

7:19; 10:10[75] (Note Eaton's remarks concerning this word and its connections with the brightness of the sun in the first part, which we have discussed above). He remarks that the *torah* is effectively described in three ways—as ritually pure and unblemished, as morally desirable but then as attractive and desirable (as it is compared to gold and honey). Another aspect of this section is that, while the term for God has changed from *el* to the Tetragram, at no previous point is the Lord addressed directly. That changes in the final section, where the focus comes to this petition from the servant directly to the Lord.

This petition is key to understanding the unity of the psalm, according to Wagner. He compares it to a "parabolic antenna," as it "collects the diverse waves of thought that resound throughout the poem and directs them toward the focal point of the psalm—the intense intimate encounter of the psalmist with YHWH."[76] Here the psalm loses that detachment that described the glory in the Heavens or the effects of the *torah* to become more relational and intimate. The psalmist addresses his Lord directly, referring to himself as "servant." The servant comes into the presence of the Lord so as to be "enlightened" (Dahood gives this meaning to נִזְהָר in v.12a). He pleads to be free of even hidden faults, so that he might be unblemished, where the word used echoes v.8a. He wants to be unblemished as a sacrifice (אֵיתָם). What had been predicated to *torah* is now applied to the psalmist. It has the double nuance of being of perfect moral integrity but also of being an unblemished sacrifice. He himself becomes the sacrifice in the existential "temple" of human conduct in keeping with the glory revealed in Creation and Wisdom.

The final verse is a plea that the words and the meditations of the servant will be acceptable. The language is, again, cultic but this time the term is deliberately one that is used for sacrifices (Ex. 28: 38, where the words written on the frontlet are to be pleasing to God as they remind him that Aaron is holy; Lev. 1: 3, where, as we noted above, the term תָּמִים occurs as well). In this final verse, where the Lord is also addressed as having the durability of a "rock" and the closeness and intimacy of a family member ("my redeemer"-- גֹּאֲלִי), there is a

[75] Wagner also includes Lev 6:11 (E.T) as an example. It may be an editorial error for Lev. 6: 4 (where the term occurs). Lev. 10:10 is particularly interesting as it occurs in a context of a command to distinguish between the pure and the impure, while at the same time to teach the laws of Moses.

[76] Wagner, "Psalm 19 as Prayer," 257.

sense of the sheer intimacy between the "servant" and the Lord. The focus has narrowed completely from the vastness and wonder of the Heavens to a personal encounter with the Lord. In a sense, he has entered the existential Temple, through the purity of his action and with a sense of the glory of God that pervades all Creation, to call upon the Lord who is *his*—*his* rock, *his* redeemer. As Wagner remarks, "no statement of faith is more simple, or more profound, than this."[77]

Here again, the psalmist intimates strongly, through the use of cultic and sacrificial language, that the experience of glory and purity available through the "sun" of the *torah* is akin to the pilgrimage to the Temple to make a sacrifice. With Brown, the inference came from the structure of the series of psalms but Wagner demonstrates that in the psalm, by means of cultic and sacrificial language, the glory of God, which dwells in the Temple, is accessible through the doorway of the *torah*. The sacrifice is in constantly speaking and meditating the words of *torah*.

Final Comment

Again, as noted above, the usefulness of categorization into genres is in the possibility of "idealizing" aspects of the poem to understand better its potential effect on the psalmist or reader and to allow an understanding of how the psalm functions by using modalities which are used in common with other psalms and poems. These models are presented here so as to demonstrate how this can be useful for the appreciation of different aspects of the poem. Each model that has been presented is, in a sense, valid as each "idealizes" some aspect of the poem (Creation, praise, Wisdom) to demonstrate how the poem functions as literature to highlight this aspect.

In the light of the initial reading of the psalm, some important aspects of the psalm are highlighted that will be important for the study of the psalm. The psalm moves from the grand panorama of Creation to the reflective and concentrated meditation on the Law to the final prayer of petition and trust. Yet there are important threads that run through this poem that push the reader to a reflection on the role of humanity in the vastness and sheer majesty of this Creation and on how the עֶבֶד יְהוָה might fulfill his role in the vastness and the beauty of this Creation by means of observing the Law that can make him firm

[77] Wagner, "Psalm 19 as Prayer," 261.

and joyful. There is a mystical element to this poem. The sheer intrigue of the unheard chorus of the personified heavens and firmament, and of day and night that goes out to all the world, matched with the drama of the daily circuit of the bridegroom-sun that runs from one extreme to the other, have an appeal to the imagination. The Psalm takes us to the heights and depths of Creation, where we find the *torah* in all its beauty and with all its power to bring Wisdom and joy to life. This moves the psalmist to a sincere prayer: now that he has seen the universe that is *torah*, he asks that he might be forgiven for the times he was blind to it and that his mouth might have the words and his heart have the meditation that be acceptable in this panorama.

Section II: Reading Psalm 19 "ad extra."

This section will seek to offer models of reading the psalm in the context of other psalms, other biblical texts and general biblical arching tendencies and movements.

The section will be divided as follows:

II: 1 The "Davidic model"for reading the psalms: Ps 18 and Ps 19: better together?
II: 2 Temple Entry and the structure of Pss 15-24.
II: 3 Creation as a motif: Ps 104 and Genesis in relation to Ps 19
II: 4 The Journey along the path of Wisdom so far: Ps 1-Ps 8-Ps 19.

II: 1 Davidic Model and Democratization.

The title ascribes this psalm to David, as is the case with the vast majority of psalms in Book 1. The use of servant language and the proximity to Ps 18 with its very strong Davidic overtones will also set a definitive Davidic theme for Ps 19. As noted already, the first psalm serves as an introduction to the entire psalter but also as an introduction to this first book that will be a meditation on what the "ideal" (and probably "royal" or Davidic) candidate will represent and embody. The greatness of the עֶבֶד יְהוָה (servant of God), epitomized by David, is in Book I expounded, according to Wilson's framework (see chapter 1). On that level, it is interesting to note how the title to Ps 18 refers to David as "servant of the Lord", a designation which is twice used in this psalm (vv.11 and 13) with the additional indication that the reward and the perfection mentioned in these two lines is the

result of a diligent following of the Law.[78] The image of this "perfect" follower who will receive his reward is therefore built up in these poems.

Yet this idea of a "perfect" follower needs to be situated in the light of a guiding principle and a thrust given to the editing of the Psalter in its final form. If Book I offers such an image, as Wilson and others suggests, one needs to ask what is the aim and the purpose of this. What purpose does offering "David" as a model serve? It may well be that it is to unify the psalms with a redactional purpose and a theological hermeneutic. In turn, the Davidic overtone will also place the psalm in a messianic and covenantal tradition. A further development is the imaginative leap from the David of biblical history to the sense of every person's possibility to apply the prayer of the psalm to an individual existential reality. "Davidization" of the psalm is therefore a necessary step towards "democratization" of the psalms but with the additional aspect of a life lived with a sense of messianic, eschatological promise and in a covenantal security.

Childs

Childs offered an initial thesis of the importance of the Davidic echoes, particularly in the psalm titles, for the theological formation of the Psalter as a book.[79] Childs' contributions have already been discussed in Chapter 1. Here, particular reference might be made to his understanding of the psalm titles and their usage. Childs suggests that the psalm titles "reflect an early reflection of how the psalms as a collection of literature were understood. The titles established a secondary setting which became normative for the canonical tradition."[80] Childs traces the form-critical issues in comparison to the insertion of poetic fragments into narrative, historical and prophetic texts. He remarks how in these texts a "transition sentence" was used to provide a narrative framework for the poetic texts, so that a seamless and frictionless juncture could be made so that the historical-narrative setting could be enhanced by the poetic perspective. However, the question remains as to whether this is truly a historical contextualization of the psalm or the product of an exegetical technique. Childs supposes the latter and traces the development of this technique in the Septuagint, the Qumran Psalm scrolls, then the Syriac Psalms and the Targumim.

[78] Vesco, *Le Psautier de David,* I, 205.
[79] Childs. "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (1971): 137-150.
[80] Childs, "Psalm Titles," 137.

He demonstrates a development of this exegetical technique. In examining some of the superscriptions for their historical settting, he sees how the associations made in the titles are based on the theme of the psalm which is then cast into the historical setting, without any necessary common vocabulary (although this is occasionally also an element). Thus, he suggests that the formation of the title was the work of a type of scribal school who sought to unlock the inner life of David to the reader of the psalms, in an attempt to cultivate a focus on the spiritual life in Jewish circles. In essence, Childs suggests that the titles function as a type of midrash and that ultimately the Davidic references can be seen as a means of reassigning the psalms in their order and in the shape of the Psalter to become the prayers of the "everyman" on his journey of faith and life who can identify himself with David, who, in one's imagination, used these same prayers in the midst of the victories and vicissitudes of his life.

Childs' theory may be applied to the juxtaposition of Psalms 18 and 19. Psalm 18 is the clearest and most precise Davidic reference in the Psalter, as it also occurs in II Samuel 22 as a hymn of thanksgiving *from the mouth of David.* This is the closest bind between the Psalter and the figure of David as presented in the books of Samuel. Its juxtaposition with Psalm 19 might well suggest a strong relationship between the servant of the Lord, David, who found strength in the Lord, refuge from his persecutors, and the pathway to Wisdom and to joy that is offered by the Law, as described in Psalm 19. When we apply the *logic* (as the methodology will not strictly apply) of Childs' theory to this juxtaposition, we see in Ps 18 a hermeneutical key for Ps 19. The servant of the Lord, David, who extols the Lord who saves him and who is his rock and his strength is the same servant who ponders the majesty of Creation that achieves its climax in the gift of the Law that offers a refuge to humanity.

James Luther Mays: The "David" of the Psalms

Another important reference point in this is the work of James Luther Mays.[81] The figure of "David of the Psalms" might not be historically verifiable but does have a weight for the literary and the theological cohesion of the Psalter. Mays refers to the three constituent elements of the amalgam that is the "David of the

[81] James Luther Mays. "The David of the Psalms." *Interpretation* 40 (1986): 143-155.

Psalms"—what is learned from I-II Sam., from Chronicles and from the Psalms themselves.

In the context of I-II Sam, we see many of the contexts and usages of material that might become the psalms. David uses *music to soothe* the tormented Saul and *to banish the evil spirit*, he uses *laments* (over Saul and Jonathan) and *thanksgiving hymns* (II Sam 22, as noted above).[82] He uses the psalms *liturgically* in the translation of the Ark. This context then allows for a setting of poems and songs that might become the psalms and a sense of usage of Davidic poems as *inspired* songs that come from the Lord.

The Chronicles context allows for a clear criterion. David supports the usages of psalms for the worship of the Lord **in the Temple**. He is a "provider" for the Temple and establishes a precedent for those who will follow him. There is also a prophetic aspect as the worship in psalms has prophetic overtones. As will be demonstrated in the next reading, the symbolism of the Temple and the sense of its role as the place where there is a paradigm of the order of Creation (the place where prophetic justice is achieved and effectively the seat of Wisdom) is important.

The third context is the context of the Psalms themselves, where psalms are attributed to David, settings from his life are offered as headings of certain psalms, and there are references to him in the Psalms. An essential point is that the Psalms attributed to David are all prayers in a situation of need or else thanksgiving statements for help received. In particular, Ps 18 has a poignancy attached to it, as its title does not specify an event but rather a general sense of thanksgiving for all the times that David was delivered from enemies. This may be seen as key to understanding the Davidic headings as they here move from *specific* incidents to a *general* sense of thanksgiving that allows for a similar "transfer" to the pray-er who will use these psalms in different contexts and situations.

Also, according to Mays, while David is described in relatively few of the psalms, the image is that of the chosen one of God, who has been anointed, with whom the Lord has made a covenant and to whom he has promised an eternal

[82] Mays makes an interesting point of the fact that this establishes a Davidic view of the psalms. He remarks on how the final editor must have known of the Davidic setting for this psalm and it may have belonged to a Jerusalem collection of Davidic psalms. The facility of putting a Davidic life setting on this psalm may have been the inspiration for putting similar Davidic life settings on other psalms.

kingdom and dynasty.[83] This "David", then, is the "putative subject of the psalms". This allows for a "type"— the reader of the psalms is set in a messianic backdrop that subconsciously reminds the reader that these are the prayers of the chosen.

Allen: The Davidic putative reader

Leslie C. Allen develops this idea.[84] Basing himself on the two premises of Wilson's supposition that Book I is oriented towards a celebration of the benefits of a Davidic era and also Childs' theory of the hermeneutical import of the Davidic references, Allen asks two simple questions:

- "Do the Psalms too bear witness to a hermeneutical process which saw paradigmatic value in the sacred beginnings of Davidic kingship?"[85]
- "Was Ps 19 intentionally inserted into the group by way of hermeneutical comment?"[86]

Allen's first question is situated in reference to the Davidic representation found in Mays' theology of the Chronicler (see above). The Chronicler presents David as a figure who initiates a new era for Israel, particularly with his generosity in the construction of the Temple. In this respect, all future kings and all individuals will be judged in relation to this "type". This may have been developed in the psalter on a spiritual level. By associating David to the prayers of one who encounters both the joys and pains of life but who remains faithful to the Lord and to his Law, a "type" is again offered. Where the Chronicler will use David as a model for generosity and rectitude in relation to subsequent kings and individuals, the Psalter uses him as a model for the spiritual journey towards Wisdom, guided by the Law, and he becomes a model for individual piety. This expands Childs' theory as, in this model, every reference to David in the titles (and not simply those that offer a life setting) implies a reference to this "type" and spiritual role model. This also complements Mays' idea of the "Davidic putative subject", who will read these psalms always with an undercurrent of messianic hope, as the prayers of one anointed and chosen, confident that the Lord will be faithful to his covenant promise and show his servant the pathway to Wisdom.

---

[83] Mays refers to Psalms 18:50; 78:70; 89:3, 20, 35, 49; 132:1,10-11f.,17; 144:10.
[84] Leslie C. Allen, "David as an Exemplar of Spirituality: The Redactional Function of Psalm 19," *Biblica* 67 (1986): 544-6.
[85] Allen, "David as Exemplar," 545.
[86] Allen, "David as Exemplar," 546.

In response to Allen's second question, we return to the importance of the juxtaposition of Psalms 18 and 19 and the lexical bonds between them. As we will discuss below, Ps 19 might be seen as an "interruption," as it seems to be inserted awkwardly into a run of royal psalms. Yet, at the same time there are lexical and thematic links between Psalms 18 and 19 that cannot be over-looked—the recurrence of the address צוּרִי "my rock" (Ps 18:3, 47 ET 18:2, 46; Ps 19:15 ET 19:14), terms such as "ordinances", "blamelessness", "pure, true and righteous", and the description of the pray-er as the "servant" of the Lord (עַבְדֶּךָ). The experiences of David in Ps 18 are clearly paralleled and juxtaposed with the pray-er who, after an initial exhilaration in the beauty of Creation, seeks guidelines for living. As Allen says:

> Ps 19 seems to have been placed beside Ps 18 in order that its second half might serve to develop those hints of David as a role model which were already evident in the royal psalm. From a redactional perspective David as the servant of YHWH no longer has a special role as partner in a royal covenant. The term does not elevate him above Israel, but brings him down to the level of the individual believer committed to serving the same God…. Overall, the redactional message proclaimed by the juxtaposition is that for the devout student of Torah the psalms of David open up vistas of personal applicability.[87]

II: 2 A second discrete approach: Ps 19 in the context of Psalms 15-24.

Another aspect of this psalm that we might consider is its place in Book One and its place in the substructure of Psalms 15-24. In doing so, the framework of research on this psalm is broadened to the "horizon" of the literary context of the psalter.[88] The framework and underlying principles proposed here will be based on the studies of de Vesco, deClaissé-Walford and Sumpter.

Initially, it will be good to remember the proposal of Wilson that the First Book of the Psalter is a Davidic Collection, framed with two initial Psalms that offer a preface to the Psalter as a whole but also to the reflections of this book on what might be the preoccupations of a Davidic ideal. This aspect will be developed later but in this section we want to examine what might be the role of this psalm in the structure of that book.

---

[87] Allen, "David as Exemplar," 546.

[88] Horizon here is used in terms of its definition as a "complex plurality." Alonso-Schökel describes the process of understanding the message in the context of this complex plurality thus:

> In communication, the individual message springs from a plurality and is based on multiple links with it, explicit or not. We understand the message by accepting it in a plurality, discovering and creating links. We call this complex reality 'horizon.'
> (Luis Alonso-Schökel: *A Manual of Hermeneutics.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998. 78)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Pss 1-2 act as a preface to the book.[89] Immediately follows the first Davidic collection, dominated by the lament as a form. Ps 41 closes the book with a final psalm where David sings of his assurance of the Lord's protection and security in the face of malicious enemies. Psalms 15-24 break this mold (even though lament is present in the sub-structure (Ps 22), it has a different focus) and eventually Ps 41 frames the book with another genre of psalm, the individual thanksgiving.

The theme of this book might well be the sense of how the individual, particularly represented in the Davidic type, needs to present needs and dilemmas before the Lord in the form of the psalmic lament.[90] Yet that will not be enough. Within the collection, other forms are also present which shed a different light on this initial meditation of what the Davidic type needs to be established (particularly Ps 8 with its broader meditation on what the human is in the midst of the grandeur of Creation). However, the most important structured interruption is this sub-section of Pss 15-24.

The discussion of the "Davidic type" and the importance of the Creation theme will be elaborated later. The focus for this discrete reading will be the place of the psalm in the substructure 15-24 and how that can affect the reading of the psalm.

Jean-Luc Vesco: Who can dwell on the holy mountain?

One model for the particular substructure, to which this psalm belongs, is outlined succinctly by Vesco.[91] He suggests that the psalm is the centrepiece of a series of psalms (15-24). It follows another series (3-14), which showed how Israel, epitomized by David, called to the Lord who is just in the situation of conflict with enemies; the centrepiece of that series being Psalm 8. In essence, according to Vesco, that first series of psalms sought an answer to where and how God might come to the aid of his people, ending on a note of hope of a change in fate (in Ps 14), which the Lord will give to his people from Sion. The answer

---

[89] Gerald H. Wilson. *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 209.

[90] Wilson summarizes the thrust of this tendency in the first book:

> If Book One is viewed as an independent unit bounded by Pss 2 and 41, the resulting effect is a very Davidic group of pss in which the proclamation of YHWH's special covenant with his king in Ps 2 is matched by David's assurance of God's continued preservation in the presence of YHWH. (Wilson, *The Editing,* 210).

[91] Vesco, *Le Psautier, I,* 175.

begins to be expanded in Psalm 15 with its image of the mountain where God dwells but with the question, which this section will seek to answer, of who can dwell there. The psalms in this structure will seek to answer that question posed in Ps 15:1, at the beginning, and Ps 24:3, at the end, of who can dwell on the holy mountain in the security of God's presence. Vesco outlines a chiastic structure, with Ps 19 at the centre of a series of psalms which are, in turn, meditations on those who dwell in the security of the divine presence (Ps 15 and Ps 24), descriptions of the joy of the just man who is God's guest (Ps 16 and Ps 23), supplications of the Just man who finds his help in the Lord as he faces tormentors (Ps 17 and Ps 22) and thanksgiving for the safety given by the Lord to the King (Ps 18 and Pss 20-21). At the core, then, is this psalm, which offers a meditation, in flamboyant terms, on the importance of the Torah for the true sense of life and living. Law (Ps 19), Kingdom (Pss 18; 20-21) and Temple (Pss 15; 24) are placed here strategically in the context of a hope for Israel, epitomized by David.

De Claissé-Walford: "an extended interruption"

Nancy de Claissé-Walford has described the series of psalms from Ps 18 to Ps 24 (her choice of sub-structure is slightly different and has a different focus to that of Vesco and Sumpter) as "an extended interruption of the characteristic lamenting of Book One of the Psalter."[92] While lament is not the exclusive form of psalm to be found in this collection (we have already mentioned that Ps 8 is a Creation Psalm, while there is also the presence of hymns (29, 30, 33, 34) and Wisdom Psalms (32, 37) and a final individual hymn of thanksgiving (41)), it is the dominant genre and it seems to set a tone for the collection. However, the structure of this "extended interruption" is worthy of closer examination as the "Davidic type" is developed.

De Claissé-Walford initially indicates some semantic links between these psalms. The terms she highlights are ישע (with the sense of "saving") and the terms נצל (with the sense of "delivering"). She notes that Pss 18, 20, 21 and 22 are appeals for safety-deliverance, but this safety seems to be realized in Pss 23 and 24. She then links this series of psalms to a story from the midrash where

[92] N. de Claissé-Walford, *Introduction to the Psalms. A Song from Ancient Israel.* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 71.

David is said to have prayed in the words of Ps 22: 21 when his life was in danger from the attack of a wild ox, and he was saved initially by a lion and then by a gazelle. Her suggestion is that this group of psalms seeks to highlight that verse from Ps 22, which has been elaborated into a personal lament, the final expression of praise being extended to Ps 23, where the psalmist, while surrounded by dangers is conscious and sure of the saving presence of the Lord. This is further complemented by Ps 24, which is a Temple-entry hymn that celebrates the entry of pilgrims to the Temple, the summit of that saving deliverance of the Lord. Rather weakly, and without much elaboration, she links Ps 19 with Ps 24 by means of the idea that Creation and *torah* also are means of celebrating the saving deliverance of the Lord.

While the sequence of the structure is only cursively outlined, the real value of this work is the idea that this sequence of psalms is linked around the theme of the saving-deliverance of the Lord. She does not really develop the importance of Ps 19, which is *per se* an interruption in the sequence of these psalms.

Sumpter: "Psalms of theological orientation"

The most recent addition to these studies on the coherence of the structure of Psalms 15-24 is the work of Philip Sumpter.[93] Sumpter not only proposes his own reading of the structure but he also provides us with a valuable summary of the trends in viewing the structure of Pss 15-24.

Auffret[94]

He acknowledges the work of Auffret, who first outlined this structure (and upon whose work the structure of Vesco seems to be built). He suggests that the psalm is the centrepiece of a series of psalms (15-24). It follows another series (3-14), which showed how Israel, epitomized by David, called to the Lord who is just in the situation of conflict with enemies; the centrepiece of that series being Psalm 8. In essence, according to Auffret, that first series of psalms seeks an answer as to where and how God might come to the aid of his people. The answer begins in

[93] Philip Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalms 15-24," *Bib* 94 (2013): 186-209.
[94] P. Auffret, "Les Psaumes 15 à 24 comme ensemble structuré," in *La sagesse a bâti sa maison. Études de structures littéraires dans l'Ancien Tes-tament et spécialement dans les psaumes.* (Orbis Bilicus et Orientalis 49;Fribourg–Göttingen:Éditions Universitaires, 1982). 93-140.

Psalm 15 with its image of the mountain where God dwells but, enigmatically, with another question, which this section will seek to answer, of who can dwell there. That question posed in Ps 15: 1, at the beginning, is repeated in Ps 24:3, at the end, of who can dwell on the holy mountain in the security of God's presence. Auffret outlines a chiastic structure, with Ps 19 at the centre of a series of psalms which are in turn meditations on those who dwell in the security of the divine presence (Ps 15 and Ps 24), descriptions of the joy of the just man who is God's guest (Ps 16 and Ps 23), supplications of the just man who finds his help in the Lord as he faces tormentors (Ps 17 and Ps 22) and thanksgiving for the safety given by the Lord to the King (Ps 18 and Pss 20-21). At the core, then, is this psalm, which offers a meditation, in flamboyant terms, on the importance of the *torah* as the pathway towards life.

Hossfeld and Zenger[95]

Sumpter goes on to acknowledge the contributions of Hossfeld and Zenger who see here an attempt at a reconstruction of communal identity at the hands of a post-exilic group ("the poor"—*die Armen)* who take a series of psalms, place them together in such a way as they can be "davidized" by the use of the two royal psalms and then, in a step further, "democratized" by the use of Ps 19 (so that David now becomes the type of a true Israelite as this allows anyone to fulfill a royal/messianic function by following the law). The next step is the application to themselves as they become the עֶבֶד יְהוָה (18:1; 19:13), the righteous servant of the Lord who will experience the salvation promised to David.

Miller and Brown

Sumpter also acknowledges the contribution of Miller and Brown. He assesses their contributions thus:

- Miller suggests an entirely synchronic reading of the unit, wherein the idealization and democratization of the Davidic motif is key.[96] The unit

[95] F.-L. Hossfeld– E. Zenger "'Wer darf hinaufziehen zum Berg YHWH's?' Zur Redaktionsgeschichte und Theologie der Psalmengruppe 15-24," in *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel. Festschrift für Nor-bert Lohfink* (eds. G. Braulik–W. Gross– S. McEvenue) (Freiburg am B. ; Herder, 1993) 166-182.

[96] P. Miller, "Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15-24," in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung. Festschrift für Walter Beyerlin* (eds. K. Seybold– E. Zenger; Freiburg im Br. 1994) 127-142

reflects presentation of David as a type, wherein the three "theoretical" psalms that frame the collection (15; 19; 24) present a trajectory of the means to become the perfect Israelite (for which David is the model) that is, in turn, realized in the "existential" psalms that intervene. In essence the theory of Pss 15, 19 and 24 is put into action in the existential settings of the other psalms.

- Brown's theory is based around two essential elements.[97] Firstly, the two psalms that frame the unit are Temple Entrance psalms, but these function on the level of metaphor, as the real entrance to the Temple is revealed in Ps 19 as the Law (Sumpter notes a disagreement with Brown on this point). In turn, this psalm influences the reading of the other psalms as it effects a "centrifugal" reading, i.e. the situations and prayers of the other psalms on both sides of Psalm 19 depend upon a reading of that Psalm to elucidate them in terms of the metaphor of the needs to enter the "Temple" of the Law. Brown also notes a "linear" development in the series of psalms, from the initial appeal for entry to the holy mountain (Ps 15) to the eventual entry of the Lord himself onto that holy hill.

Sumpter's Synthesis

Sumpter takes issue with each of these proposals while acknowledging that his work will build upon them. With reference to Auffret, he remarks that the patterns seem to be tendentious and are not always well-founded. He sounds a word of caution about the theory of Hossfeld and Zenger as he sees them as too constrained by the theory of identity of the group responsible for these psalms.[98] Similarly with Miller, he suggests that over-democratization results in insufficient attention to the themes of Creation and Law. Brown, he feels, ascribes too much attention to the centre of the chiasm as a redactional principle and that

[97] W. Brown, "'Here Comes the Sun!' The Metaphorical Theology of Psalms 15–24," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (ed. E. Zenger ; BETL 238; Leuven; Peeters, 2010) 259-277

[98] While acknowledging that a theory of the community that originally appropriated and arranged these psalms might be a constraint in the interpretation of the series, it is difficult to justify Sumpter's comment that Ps.15: 1 and Ps.24: 3 are theocentric (190). These lines clearly *are* anthropocentric and seem to have as a thrust what group might enter into the presence of God, rather than being concerned with "the shape of God's will and ways".

his interpretation suffers from a lack of acknowledgement of the "plain sense meaning."[99]

His work seeks to complement these "deficiencies" as he seeks to outline the function of the structure, to re-examine the role and interpretative importance of the framing psalms (15, 19, 24), and to focus on the themes of Creation and Zion as well as those of kingship (with its extended sense of Davidic democratization) and *torah*.

Methodology of "Aspective"

Sumpter defines his methodology. He suggests that the parataxis be viewed in a manner that is based on "aspective" (which is a noun, coined from the German) rather than perspective, which means a view of a single phenomenon from multiple perspectives, which allows for a "gradual comprehension" based on a series of perceptions rather than an over-all view (basing his standpoint on the theory of Brunner-Traut). In relation to the psalms, this has implications for a reading of parallelism, which he sees as a process of focusing, heightening, concretization and development of meaning of a common referent.

In applying this to the series of Pss 15-24, the common referent is *the struggle of faith within the context of the divine economy.* The series of psalms develops this by means of parallelism in both a linear and concentric manner. Hence, in these psalms, the common referent is developed by means of the "parallelismus psalmorum" from the initial question of who can enter into the presence of the Lord and the initial answer in terms of *torah* piety by two means:

- a concentric development where the common referent is developed and intensified from one psalm to its parallel psalm, i.e. Ps 15 is developed and expanded in Ps 24, and likewise with Ps 16/Ps 23, Ps 17/Ps 22, and Ps 18/20-1.

[99] This criticism of Brown may be unfounded. Brown outlines his methodology from the beginning of his presentation as a reading of the series from the perspective of metaphor as a means of stimulating theological imagination. He states clearly that this is a transfer into the sphere of a new perception, not necessarily the "plain sense meaning". Brown's work will be discussed below. While Sumpter may have a valid criticism of a possibly excessive use of the imagination on the part of Brown, there is still a coherence in the series of metaphors he has traced. The metaphors of mountain, warrior, "lifting up," pathway, and dawn are present in a developed network and a redactional principle is necessary. (W.P. Brown, 'Here Comes the Sun!' The Metaphorical Theology of Psalms 15-24," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (ed. E. Zenger: BETL CCXXXVIII; Leuven, 2010)).

- A linear development, as the quest for entry onto the holy hill (Ps 15) is developed to the Lord's own entry onto the hill in Ps 24. This has particular resonance for a possible post-exilic setting for the editing of this series of psalms, as this desire to enter the Temple, the place of fulfillment and life, is also the ultimate aim of returning exiles after their time of purification (as portrayed in the series of psalms). This allows for an eschatological narrative.

Two theological principles are emphasized by means of this aspective reading of the series.

Firstly, the idea of righteousness and *torah* piety becomes more than simply a means of access to the place of life and blessing but rather an essential element in the realization of God's economy of salvation.

Secondly, there is a very strong development of the answer to the initial question of who may ascend the holy hill. From an incipient idea of David as the "type" who can enter because of his devotion to *torah* piety (described in the singular), an explicit reference to a *group* who will enter is made in Ps 24:6, where the term דּוֹר is a collective noun (meaning either generation or circle) and the qualifying nouns are plural. This is bolstered by similar linear developments in Pss 20-21 where plural verbs are also used and by the imagery of "guidance and provision"—which might be interpreted as guidance for an exilic community towards the Lord's own house, and provision "in the sight of foes" for an anointed community.

Pivotal Role of Ps 19

The pivotal role of Ps 19, connected with Pss 15 and 24, stresses along with them that *torah* piety is the means of accessing life. Yet interestingly, here is no mention of the Temple but rather a description of the glory of the Lord in Creation. Ps 24, in turn, contains references to *torah*, temple and creation. Sumpter's particular reading of this is two-fold. Firstly, the juxtaposition of creation and *torah* in Ps 19 serves to demonstrate a "step" from the question of Ps 15 as to who can dwell on the holy mountain and the initial reply in terms of *torah* piety, to an implication that Torah is also the means of finding one's place in the order of Creation. That "order of Creation," with the regular sequence of night and day and the orbit of the sun, is interpreted for humanity in the *torah*. The next "step" in this sequence

is in Ps 24, where the confluence of Creation imagery, *torah* piety and the liturgy of divine entry is the climax, according to Sumpter. In this divine entry, not only does *torah* piety find its fulfillment but so too does Creation. Sumpter thus describes the creational blessing of Ps 19 as a "proleptic foretaste" of the greater reality described in Ps 24, where the divine warrior ("King of glory") brings his people through the tribulations, as described in Ps 23:4 ("valley of darkness"), to the fullness of life.

Moments of Theological Orientation: Pss 15; 19; 24

Pss 15, 19 and 24 are described by Sumpter as "moments of theological orientation." The arrangement of this series of psalms and the existential realities they represent is coloured and structured by these three pillars to show how *torah* obedience will bring one to the fullness of life and to the consummation of Creation. Sumpter suggests a most elaborate and intricate reading of the unit. He suggests that Ps 19 should be read as a "stepping-stone" in the context of the larger and more dramatic act of moving from the existential to the heart of worship and the fullness of Creation, being in the presence of the Lord on Zion. He suggests that the "existential" psalms refer to common experience and lived realities. The process in action in this series is the tracing of a pathway from these "existential" realities to the pilgrimage reality of "life on the holy mountain," which is achieved by worship and prayer rather than by (necessarily) physically moving. On this "holy mountain", the pilgrim comes to understand the essence and fullness of life and of creation.

Comment and Development on Sumpter's Insight

In essence, there is a parallel intensification within the psalm. It begins with the voice and words (if unspoken, still evident) of the cosmos that seeks to proclaim the glory of the Lord, which is concentrated into the application of the Law in human life, which has the same effect on the individual as the sun has on the cosmos (i.e. it "revives", just as "day gives onto day"; it "makes wise", just as the silent word is heard, it is "right" and "rejoices the heart", just as the tent is "set" and the bridegroom emerges from his canopy and the strong man runs with joy; it is "pure" and "endures forever", just as the circuit of the sun is from one end to another and is set; it is to be desired like gold or honey, just as the sun's heat is

all pervasive). While the parallels are not exact, the same theory of "aspective" allows for a reading of this psalm in the same sense of a line of development. The final and most dramatic step, however, is the movement from the cosmic "telling", through the existential "telling", to the "telling" (meditation) of the heart, which can be acceptable to the Lord, who is rock and redeemer (with echoes here again of Temple entry?).

These proposals for a structure are engaging and enlightening. Another important element is that it seems to build upon the initial series (3-14) with its appeal to the justice of God for Israel, epitomized in David, as the עֶבֶד יְהוָֹה who calls upon the Lord for help, but also seeks the wisdom of understanding what it is to be human in the midst of God's vast Creation (Ps 8). These elements of seeking to understand humanity's place in the midst of the vastness of Creation and seeking the help of the Lord so as to fulfill its mission are developed in this series of psalms, where those motifs of the wonder and vastness of Creation and the plights of humanity that needs the reassurance of the Lord's presence are to be found. If the two framing questions are to be reading guides, answers should be found in this series of Psalms. Who sojourns in the Lord's tent and dwells on his mountain (cf. Ps 15:1)? Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord and stand in his holy place (cf. Ps 24:3)?

The answer is עבד יהוה. Yet the series of psalms invites reflection on this. This reflection might best be pursued on three levels.

- The use of the term "עבד יהוה" with its Davidic associations offers an initial hermeneutic for the reading of the psalm. Placed on the lips of "David," who is described as the servant of the Lord, this psalm offers an important reflection on the spiritual journey that each individual has to make in the (real or metaphorical) journey to the Temple, where the order of Creation can be realized. Yet a guide for that journey into real Wisdom is necessary. That guide and companion in the journey into Wisdom is *torah*. The Davidic ascription and personalization functions to offer a democatrization of the psalm, as this becomes everyone's journey, and to offer a sense that this journey is a journey towards the fulfillment of the covenant patrimony of Israel.
- On a second level, this could be seen, as noted above, as a parallel of a Temple liturgy. At the summit of the liturgy, the one who comes forth from

the tent of the Lord is the Sun (Ps 19:5b), from whose heat and influence nothing is hidden. It is possible that these two Temple liturgy psalms (15 and 24) have been dramatically cast to show how, for those who jouney to a physical Temple or for those who seek a spiritual, existential or cosmic Temple, entry into the presence of the Lord is possible but also connected to a journey in life towards Wisdom, guided by *torah*. This entry into the presence of the Lord can happen where the glory of the Lord is present, where the work of his hands has created a sanctuary and where he has set a tent (Ps 19: 2-7). Framed within psalms of Temple entry, this series might represent a "new liturgy" of Temple entry, which is existential and based on *torah* piety.

Torah and Temple Entry.

The Psalm can be read from the point of view of "Temple-entry" due to the elements of cultic language within the Psalm (particularly in the final petition) but also due to the place it has in this sequence of psalms 15-24, as outlined above. Rediscovering this prayer aspect of the psalm and how it can be read as an act of sacrifice and an entry into the "Temple of Words" (cf. Brown) yields a particular perspective on the theology of the psalm.

Our methodology here presumes an understanding of the power of metaphor. While the Temple is not specifically mentioned, there is a strong sense that behind some of the imagery lies the shadow of the Jerusalem Temple and its significance for Israel. This lack of specific reference in the text does not belie the possibility of a Temple reading. Rather, the use of metaphor is meant to be teasing and imaginative, as Brown has noted:

> The metaphor's capacity to generate chains of associations not normally found in other words lies in its "iconic" quality and, more significantly, in its power to bring together various levels of signification. The metaphor is the hinge between multiple lines of associations and manifold worlds of meaning. It is the metaphor's nature to arrest the hearer and to generate enough lexical ambiguity to provoke the reader's imagination into making associations beneath and beyond its semantic surface.[100]

[100] William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 8. Brown presupposes the criticism that James Barr's *Semantics of Biblical Language* might make of his proposal. He retorts immediately that Barr does not discuss the value of metaphor but rather disparages any attempt at a universal significance of certain terms in their absolute usage. He elaborates this in n. 69, p. 221.

Three different perspectives and methods will demonstrate how a Temple-metaphor reading of the psalm enriches the imagination beyond the obvious semantic values. Brown offers a reading wherein the structure of Psalms 15-24 are read with a perspective of the ascent of the Holy Mountain. Wagner examines the prayer terminology to offer a reading that re-examines the sense of prayer and sacrifice in the Psalm.

Brown: "the Temple of Words."

Philip Sumpter made reference to Brown's development of this in his article, which was discussed above. It may be useful to develop this reading of the structure and the role of Ps 19. Brown clarifies that his approach is based on a study of how metaphor (which he compares to parallelism in Hebrew poetry) can stimulate the theological imagination and offer a "surplus of semantic connections". The base metaphor here is the mountain, mentioned in Pss 15 and 24. Ascending this mountain to the pinnacle is compared to the pilgrimage to the Temple. The structure is governed by Ps 19, where it reaches its midpoint, in that the semantic connections that have been developed metaphorically up to that are given their final semantic value here, but the "ascent of meanings" (i.e. the presentation of different images that has led up to Ps 19) in itself teaches something about that psalm and how it could be interpreted within this cultic metaphor.

The metaphor begins with Ps 15 and its parallel in the chiasm, Ps 24. Both are Temple-entry psalms. Here, the psalmist is at the foothills of this mountain. The question is who can dwell on this holy mountain. The answer comes in a series of attributes that define the one who walks with integrity. Thus, the one who "ascends" this mountain is the one walking with integrity and *torah* piety. Already here, one verb seems to be suggestive. The verb נָשָׂא is used in v. 3 (Ps 15) and then repeated in Ps 24, first with reference to the ascender (v. 5) and then with reference to the gates (vv. 7; 9). Brown proposes that this language of "lifting up" and ascending is an important metaphor. The one who "lifts up" the entrance gates is this one who acts with integrity and *torah* piety. There is a development in Ps 24, however, as noted above, where the definition goes from individual to collective. This may suggest that those who are called to "lift up the gates," those invited into this sanctuary are the community who keep the *torah*. The metaphor

of "ascending" the holy mountain begins the pilgrimage. Yet their ascent is not yet complete.

Pss 16 and 23 are the next layer in the chiasm. They both celebrate trust in the Lord and an assuredness of the provision that comes from him. Ps 16 rejoices particularly in the share and inheritance (נחלה) that has been given to the psalmist, while Ps 23 rejoices in being the sheep or the guest of the Lord. Each is a celebration of trust: one in a stable and fixed situation, the other in a transitory milieu. The metaphors are those of fixed and movable property. In Ps 19:10, there is a parallel in the stability of *torah* (עוֹמֶדֶת לָעַד) and yet it is compared to the movement of the sun in the same line (טְהוֹרָה which is an implicit reference to the sun in v.6 which is running its course). Hence, in both situations of stability and movement, trust is prescriptive for *torah* piety, as displayed in these metaphors of movement and stability.

Pss 17 and 22 represent the next movement. The metaphors contained in these psalms are rich. The psalmist is oppressed by enemies who are in turn described as "lions" (17:12), "bulls" (22: 13), "dogs" (22: 17), "wild oxen" (22: 22). The trust that was summoned in the last psalm is here tested. The source of these enemies may also "internal" to the speaker, as well as external, as we read in the petition at the end of Ps 19 where נִסְתָּרוֹת could be the enemies within and hidden evil tendencies. From where should help come? Help comes with imagery of dawn in both cases, in 17:15 and implicitly in the title of Ps 22 (עַל־אַיֶּלֶת הַשַּׁחַר). This corresponds with the image of the sun in Ps 19 and even develops that image. Help comes with the dawn, that is with the arrival of the sun. This, in itself, is a metaphor for the continuing presence of the Lord in the *torah*. The metaphor brings the psalmist to a realization that the help that comes with the morning, when the psalmist sees the face of the Lord and his help comes from "the doe of the dawn," is in the regular recitation of the *torah*.

Pss 18 and 20-21 (considered as one unit) celebrate the king's ascent to victory. It may be suggested, from a redactional perspective, that they may have originally been a unit that has been deliberately interrupted and interpreted by Ps 19. Images of victory, joy and light pervade these psalms. In turn, these images are interpreted by Ps 19. The "joyful warrior" imagery applied to the sun, and then by extension to the *torah*, helps to interpret the victorious warrior imagery of these psalms. Light and gold form together another motif across these psalms,

from the light of the lamp in 18:29, to the "crown of fine gold" in 21:4, which are in turn interpreted by the sun, gold and honey imagery in Ps 19. Brown describes Ps 19 as a "corrective and complement to the royal desire for power." The victory imagery, with its notes of light and joy, is re-interpreted by Ps 19 in terms of the unsurpassed value of the study of the *torah.*

In essence, the psalmist began his pilgrimage at the gates of the foothills of the holy mountain. He walks a pilgrim path that brings him from integrity to trust to test to victory and finally, not to Zion as might be expected but to the heavens that proclaim the glory of the Lord and to the *torah*, which will be his gateway to this divine life. Ps 19 takes up the themes of each of the parallel psalms in the series and transforms them in the light of the *Torah* to give them a new significance. The Temple is, therefore, relativized, as the true portal to the Divine is the *torah*. The Lord is Creator and the Heavens proclaim his glory but the means of participating in this is not so much through military prowess or battlefield glory but through the meditation of the *torah*. The real battle against the hidden enemies takes place in the human heart, where Torah is internalized so that the one who seeks entry to the divine presence might find it, not in the Temple but in the meditations of his heart.

Brown's reading of the series of psalms is, as he claims, an "act of theological imagination." His study of the motifs that pervade this series of psalms and his interpretation of their semantic value in the light of Ps 19 allows for a reading of this sequence which harnesses the poetic imagination and which demonstrates the subtlety of the imagery that contributes to the imagination in this series. If this set of psalms is truly to be read as a series (and the evidence as quoted would seem to demonstrate that this is so), then Brown's article is at least a beginning in understanding the way this series of psalms seeks to harness the imagination. Entry into the Temple on sacred pilgrimage was one of the great means of focusing the imagination on the presence of the Lord among his people. This metaphorical pilgrimage into the sanctuary will do the same thing for those who read the poem in a situation where the physical pilgrimage may not be possible, or indeed as a companion to the physical pilgrimage.

Brown's thesis was criticized by Sumpter, as noted above. The real value of this work is to apply the theological imagination to the canonical text and to explore the text as is. While some of Brown's observances do stretch the bounds

of what Sumpter calls the plain sense meaning, the big achievement is a reading of these psalms from the perspective of metaphor. Brown does seem to have occasionally asked certain common terms and themes be read *highly* imaginatively, but the value of his work is the recognition that these metaphorical constructs exist, even if they may not have the particular parallelism that Brown suggests for them.

Synthesis and Comment

This reading of the psalm is built on the proposal that the base metaphor upon which it is built is that of the Temple. The cultic language and the eventual confluence of the ideas into prayer (cf. Wagner), as well as the structure of the series of the psalms of which this psalm is the centerpiece (cf. Sumpter and Brown), allow a suggestion that this may be read as an entry into an existential or spiritual Temple, of which the Zion Temple is a symbol. The essential elements of the Temple (the presence of the glory of the Lord, the brilliance of its ornamentation and decoration --particularly using the imagery of light and the sense of a vision of the Lord, and the idea of sacrifice and offering in the form of word and prayer) all contribute to an "act of theological imagination" that suggests the psalmist wishes to conjure an image of the Temple.

Various possibilities of an historical setting for this could be proposed, the most likely being that of the Exile, but essentially this can be of service to any sincere and devout person who wishes to perform his duties to the worship of the Lord. Hence, the psalmist proposes that one "enters" the Temple by means of the *torah*, which in turn allows him to perceive the glory of God in the wonder of Creation and to offer as sacrifice a prayerful consciousness of the importance of *torah* as a guide for his actions and thoughts.

This aspect of the entry might best be understood if compared to the text of the consecration of the Temple in I Kings 8. The Temple is consecrated in four ways—by the entry of the Ark of the Covenant (which is the stone tablets inscribed with the *Torah*), by the cloud that demonstrates the glory of the Lord, by the sacrifices and by the prayer of the king. All these elements are here present. Whatever the historical circumstances, the theology here is reminiscent of the theology of the Temple, the place of sacrifice, prayer and cleansing of offences. A constituent element of the impact of this psalm is to subtly present a

sense that the "Temple of words" and the "Temple of existence guided by *torah* piety" is duly a place where the Lord can be present to the People.

An interesting parallel to this will be seen in the Qumran ordering of the Psalms of Ascent, which are arranged to highlight Ps 119 in a similar way.[101]

In conclusion, we quote Gillingham whose study of the Zion Tradition in the Psalter demonstrates the importance of this theme. She frankly acknowledges the presence of the key themes of *torah* and King in this collection, but suggests that the Zion Tradition here should not be underestimated, as "it suggests that the royal tradition and the Torah traditions find their true locus in worship at the Temple."[102]

II: 3 Wisdom-Creation Reading of Ps 19: Ps 104 and Genesis 1-2.

Another dimension of this poem, which merits a discrete reading, is the possible Wisdom influence. From Creation imagery to elements of style and vocabulary, the Wisdom influence on this psalm allows for a more contemplative reading of the psalm. The psalm will be examined for a Wisdom influence by demonstrating how some of the language, theology and imagery of this psalm has parallels in Wisdom and Creation texts. The effect of this influence will be assessed to demonstrate what it contributes to the reading of the psalm.

Cooper: Why does the Bible begin with the Creation of the world?

Alan Cooper, in his article on aspects of Jewish interpretation of Ps 19, begins with simple but profound question: "Why does the Bible begin with the Creation of the world?"[103] As the Bible is not presented as a universal history, nor is its concern to elucidate how the world was created, Cooper concludes that the answer is not on the surface level but "on meanings and values that are encoded and implicit within it, and on its intertextual relatedness to other accounts of and allusions to creation that pervade biblical literature, especially its poetic

[101] Susan Gillingham, "The Zion Tradition and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (ed. John Day; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 321.
[102] Gillingham, "The Zion Tradition," 330. Gillingham suggests that this is not a spiritualized Temple but proposes a pilgrimage to the Temple where the Torah is taught and to which God will return.
[103] Alan Cooper, "Creation, Philosophy and Spirituality: Aspects of Jewish Interpretation of Psalm 19," in *Pursuing the Text: Studies in honour of Ben Zion Wacholder* (ed. John C. Reeves and John Kampen; The Library of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2009) 15-33.

portions." [104] He goes on to survey a series of Jewish commentators who demonstrate how this image of the initial action of God in Creation is a necessary prologue to history but more importantly to *torah*. Once a person has grasped that initial idea of God's mighty deed in Creation, that person begins to understand the action of God in disposing his creation, particularly in the gift of the Torah. As Cooper puts it: "The Torah makes perceptible that which Creation never ceases to proclaim, yet is unable to communicate."[105] The Creation motif helps to bring Israel back to this fundamental reality that all is of the Lord's ordering and forming. The recurrence of this motif refocuses Israel's sense of how it must "read" or "hear" Creation. By delving deep into the Wisdom inherent in Creation, apparent in its order and in its continuity, Israel can discover anew the blueprint of Creation, which is *torah* (cf. Prov. 8:22; Sirach 1:26: 24:23).

The presentation of Creation in literature is, therefore, a constant and necessary re-focusing on the fundamental and elemental aspect of the project of the Scriptures. In re-introducing the theme of Creation, as the authors do, there is a sense of calling the readers' mind back to the most fundamental concept: that the God who created the world did not leave it in chaos but set within it an order and a form. Discovering that, through these pages and through the reflection that they incite, is the key to Wisdom and the path to life in its fullness.

Psalm 19 and Genesis

In reference to Ps 8 (above), the importance of Genesis echoes in the contemplation of Creation in the psalms was highlighted. Yet again, in the structure and the language used to describe the Law from vv. 8-11, there is a clue of how Creation and the Law are connected. D.J.A. Clines, in his article "The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh," suggests that each of the synonyms for the Law is predicated with a phrase that is inspired by the attributes of the Tree of Knowledge in Genesis 2-3.[106] His suggestion is that the entire psalm can be read in parallel with the Creation accounts, the first part being in parallel with Genesis 1 (the noise of Creation being in tandem with primordial chaos, the

[104] Cooper, "Creation," 15.
[105] Cooper, "Creation," 23.
[106] Clines, D.J.A., "The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of YAHWEH (Psalm XIX)," *VT* XXIV (1974): 8-14.

Creation of day and night, the sun set in the Heavens, the unheard voice that generates all), while the second takes inspiration from Genesis 2-3.

An implicit comparison between the Law and the Tree of Knowledge shows the Law to be superior, as it succeeds in offering Wisdom to humanity while the fruit of the Tree did not. Where the Law "revives life" (מְשִׁיבַת נָפֶשׁ v.8, ET v.7) and nourishes the soul, the Tree that offered the fruit of Knowledge did not offer the satisfaction anticipated. The Law is also said to have the attribute of מַחְכִּימַת פֶּתִי ("making wise the simple" v.8, ET v.7). Adam and Eve could fall into the category of "simple/ פֶּתִי " (which is not pejorative here), who sought Wisdom by tasting the fruit but who were disappointed. The Law is credited with success where the Tree failed. While the attribute of " מְשַׂמְּחֵי־לֵב (rejoicing the heart, v.9, ET v 8) " seems not to find a direct correspondence, there may be an assumed correspondence in the view that the Tree of Life was a vine, and the Wisdom of its fruit gladdened the heart. Much clearer is the attribute of "מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם (enlightening the eyes v.9, ET v.8)." Adam and Eve had their eyes opened after they had eaten of the fruit (Genesis 3). This may refer to a realization of something or a reawakening from sleep—it offers a new shine (twinkle) to the eyes that was not there previously. The Law offers that same sense of awareness that came through the fruit of the Tree of Life. The final attribute forms a contrast rather than a comparison—whereas the Law endures forever, the fruit of the Tree brought perishability and finitude.

Clines concludes his observations by suggesting that the Creation account in Genesis 1 is the inspiration for the first part of the psalm, while Genesis 2-3 and the comparison and contrast between the Tree of Life and the *torah* form the imagery for the second part of the psalm.

Clines continues his study into the parallels by examining the final petition (vv.12-14, ET vv. 11-13). The terminology of asking to be acquitted from hidden faults, to be protected from being overcome and the language of great sin may have resonances of Genesis 2ff. He suggests that 'the great transgression' is provided with a concrete reference if the psalmist is thinking of Gen. iii."[107] Similarly, the story of Cain may be the background to the prayer in v. 14a (אַל־ יִמְשְׁלוּ־בִי "let them not reign over me"), with a subtle echo of Genesis 4: 7, where

[107] Clines, "The Tree of Knowledge," 13.

sin is compared to an animal lurking for its prey. Likewise, he suggests that the background of "זדים" (v.14, ET v.13) is the image of the snake in Genesis 3, as it was guilty of the presumptuousness of questioning God's commandments and of implying God might be envious.

In summary of Clines argument, he states:

> Ps. xix 8-10a may thus be seen as a meditation upon the law of Yahweh as the source of Wisdom, in the light of the Gen. iii narrative concerning the tree of knowledge. If so, a point of contact between the two halves of the psalm…. becomes apparent: the background of Ps. xixA is the creation narrative of Gen. I, that of xixB the fall narrative of Gen. ii-iii.[108]

The Creation motif and the correspondences with Genesis offer an important perspective to the interpretation of this psalm. The Law is presented as being in cohesion with Creation and not extrinsic to it. The early chapters of Genesis, and the Creation accounts particularly, offer an image of the world as a "delight in tension", where there is beauty and which is found to be good, with a life-sustaining order, but which is also marked by human tendency to err and to be distracted. Rediscovering the life-sustaining order will be humanity's pathway to Wisdom and to the balance that is offered by the Lord and Creator. This psalm explicates that theology once again in another context: that fundamental beauty cries out, that drama of Creation is played out in front of humanity, and the way to Wisdom and to the divine rock and redeemer is through the Law.

Ashburn: Genesis 1 and 2: Stability and change in chiasm

Clines's comments are dominantly focused mainly on the second part of the psalm and the intricate links between the language and the ideas that are found in common with Genesis.

Daniel G Ashburn makes some interesting parallels between the first part of the psalm and the thematics of Genesis. In essence, he suggests that this psalm is a commentary on different aspects of the Genesis accounts of Creation, based around the paradox of the stability of Creation as God has established it and then the "flux" of nature as Creation constantly refocuses itself.[109] In this light, he remarks how the "Heavens" can display the constancy and fixedness of the glory of God, while the "sky" will show his hands at work in the ongoing act that is Creation. As Ashburn comments:

---

[108] Clines, "The Tree of Knowledge," 12-13.
[109] Daniel G. Ashburn, "Creation and the Torah in Psalm 19," *JBQ* 22 (1994), 241-248.

> The Hebrew chiasm compares the message of the heavens with that of the sky. The action of the heavens, מספרים, should rather be translated as "*recounting* the glory of God," because the verb usually indicates a recounting of an event that has already taken place. In contrast, the action of the sky,מגיד , has a more immediate connotation, even ongoing, and thus a more appropriate rendering may be that the sky "*is telling"* the work of God's hands. This linguistic distinction is also borne out conceptually, as indeed the heavens appear quite fixed and stable, while in the sky we see constant change in daylight, in seasons and in the weather. Thus the heavens recount the glory of God in God's giving existence to everything in the six days of Creation. But the sky tells of the work of God's hands in God's ongoing act of Creation which sustains all that exists.[110]

In a similar manner he draws on the Genesis account of creation for his understanding of verse 3, which he suggests is to be read with the previous verse in a "conceptual chiasm". Here he sees that the action of the day (יביע אמר) suggests the "ongoing process of God's creative sustenance," as the work of humanity and the word in action form a continuation of the initial word of God that created. However, the nighttime sky draws back the veil and the "fixedness" of Creation is once again revealed, as night is said to יחוה דעת "declare knowledge". Here he suggests that the verb has a connotation with "to bring to life" and is semantically connected to the first woman, חוה, in a direct reference to Genesis. Thus the daytime is the time for the continual maintenance of Creation, the ongoing efficacy of the word spoken so that creation might be, but night allows for a recreation of that moment when all was called into Creation from initial silence.

Ashburn's perspective of the balance in the early part of the poem between the sense of an ongoing act of creation that is continually being sustained and renewed and a silent freshness of the initial moment of being called into being is an interesting reading of the first part of this poem. It duly allows for an interesting Wisdom feature of balance, while it is also rooted, both semantically and thematically, in the Genesis 1-2 accounts of the calling into being of all creation.[111]

Comparison with Ps 104: Adele Berlin and Patrick Miller.

Another model for exploring the relationship between Wisdom and Creation in this Psalm is by means of a comparison with Ps 104, which is an elaborate poetic

[110] Ashburn, "Creation," 242.

[111] This duality of stability and the existence is also noted by Balentine, who notes, In short, the emphasis in Genesis 1 is on God and the cosmos, in Genesis 2 on human existence in God's world.
Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship. (*Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis, Fortress, 1999), 82.

meditation on "Creation in Wisdom". While the theme of the psalm seems to stay within the realm of Creation and shares the theme and style of Ps 19A, there are some resonances of how life can reflect the order and Wisdom of Creation (e.g. Ps 104:24, where it is acknowledged that God makes all "in Wisdom") which offer a suitable correspondence with Ps 19 B.

Adele Berlin offers some interesting insights into that relationship between Wisdom and Creation in her discussion of this Psalm.[112] Berlin begins with the assertion that while Ps 104 is not normally classified as a Wisdom Psalm, it has certain Wisdom affinities, particularly in its contemplation of the cosmos and the place of humans therein, with the affirmation, as already noted, that God made all "in Wisdom" (בְּחָכְמָה (Ps 104:24)) and with the final reflection on the fate of the evil. According to Berlin, while these affinities do not cast the Psalm into the category of Wisdom psalm, they do bring up some important questions about the use of Wisdom thought and motifs in the Psalms and the relationship of wisdom to *torah*.

In contrast with Weeks (see above),[113] Berlin begins by stating that Wisdom in the Psalms is ***not*** "the pragmatic, universalistic, 'non-sectarian' ancient Near Eastern wisdom that scholars commonly associate with biblical wisdom literature."[114] Loyalty to God and trust in him, particularly in the study and the knowledge of his commandments, is the root of psalmic wisdom, in

---

[112] Adele Berlin. "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104" in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays offered to honor Michael V. Fox on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday* (ed. Ronald L. Troxel, Kevin G. Friebel and Dennis R. Magary; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 71-83.

[113] Interestingly, Weeks's position on this seems to change in later studies, particularly in his *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature* (T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies; London: Continuum, 2010). While his discussion of Wisdom thought in the *Introduction* (page 6) suggests God's relationship with the world is key and *not* "notions of covenant, election or law," yet when he discusses the matter further he acknowledges a link between Wisdom and Law, as one reads in his discussion of Wisdom Psalms (Pages 88-9):

> One significant point that does arise, however, is the link between wisdom, personal piety and law. The Psalter begins with a contrast between the fates that will befall different types of individual, and this is strongly reminiscent of the contrasts drawn between the righteous and wicked in much wisdom literature. The antithesis of wickedness in Psalm 1, however, is not righteousness or innocence in some general sense, but more specifically adherence to the Torah, in which the man who is blessed finds a source of delight and meditation. Psalm 19b is similarly devoted to praise of the Torah, which will make the uneducated wise, and which offers the prospect of reward….Many psalms are concerned with personal piety, and these embody a certain type or aspect of such piety, but they also state or imply an association between wisdom and the Jewish law, such as we suspected might underpin Proverbs 1-9. If advice literature had come more generally to be understood in such terms, then the dissemination of its motifs and conventions becomes understandable as a reflection of the increasing focus upon individual piety linked to study of the Torah in post-exilic Judaism: they are markers not merely of a type of literature, but of a conceptual framework in which proper behaviour and piety can be achieved through internalization of the divine instruction. (Pages 88-9).

[114] Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation," 72.

Berlin's estimation. Knowledge of the commands will be the pathway to Wisdom and that knowledge is gained through a study of God's words. This creates an intrinsic link between Wisdom and *torah*, as the means of discovering Wisdom for many will be through *torah*. As Berlin notes:

> That is, in the view of many psalms, the form in which wisdom is accessible to Israel is through the Torah, the textual record of God's words. The Torah makes the simple wise (Ps 19:8). In this sense, there is little difference between "wisdom psalms" and "Torah psalms" (Psalms 1, 19, 119) except that the term Torah appears in the second group.[115]

Berlin suggests, in line with Weinfeld and Geller, that this is a "Deuteronomic" view of Wisdom. In essence this means that under Deuteronomic influences, wisdom became less "secular" and more associated with the revealed word of God and with its implications for the conduct of life. In this, she bases her study on the work of Weinfeld, who states:

> Until the seventh century Law and Wisdom existed as two separate and autonomous disciplines. Law belonged to the sacral sphere, whereas Wisdom dealt with the secular and the mundane. These two disciplines were amalgamated in the Book of Deuteronomy, and the laws of the Torah were now identified with wisdom: '… for this is your wisdom and your understanding' (Deut. 4:6). This identification of Torah with Wisdom is indeed somewhat paradoxical, for laws and statutes which were given by God are here regarded as being indicative of the wisdom and understanding of Israel. The verse undoubtedly reflects the difficulties which resulted from the sapiential desire to identify Torah with wisdom. The inherent contradiction was ultimately resolved only by identifying wisdom with Torah, as a result of which both were conceived together as a heavenly element which descended from heaven to take up its abode among the children of Israel (Ben-Sira 24). [116]

Berlin also refers to the examination of Wisdom by Stephen A. Geller in his essay "The Religion of the Bible."[117] Geller surveys the development of wisdom from traditional wisdom as an intellectual and educational current found in scribal schools and in family and community contexts. This had an international aspect as many themes were held in common with Egyptian and Mesopotamian counterparts. It trained the young in "practical wisdom" which was needed for a healthy and fulfilling life but had also an interest in "speculative wisdom" and the larger philosophical questions (particularly around suffering) that might be posed. Creation was important to this current on two levels. Firstly, much of the language and imagery of Creation could be used to demonstrate and communicate Wisdom ideas. Also, the world was created in wisdom and the

---

[115] Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation," 72.
[116] Moshe Weinfeld. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 255-6.
[117] Stephen A. Geller, "The Religion of the Bible" in *The Jewish Study Bible* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). 2021-2040.

natural order and unity that is reflected in nature was the fundamental principle behind wisdom thought.

Geller notes the turning point in wisdom that happens in the 7th century, as wisdom becomes more closely associated with religious ideals and concepts, particularly under the influence of the Deuteronomic School. As biblical religion developed, under the Deuteronomic-Covenantal model, a crisis is provoked in the wisdom schools. He suggests that some refused to accommodate their views with this new religious framework, citing Ecclesiastes as an example. Others sought a merger with the covenantal framework and developed a doctrine of reward and retribution, which he describes as "a hybrid wisdom-covenantal faith, though it avoids explicitly mention of covenant and presents itself as a form of natural law" (2039). The focus on nature diminishes in this new scheme until it eventually gives way entirely to a focus on covenant, to be seen particularly, according to Geller, in the "*Torah* psalms".

This is particularly reflected in Ps 19, where that natural revelation is pitched alongside the *torah* revelation, allowing a marriage between this sense of truth and order that was the object of early wisdom speculation with the sense of wisdom in the *torah* of the later school.

Yet the old emphasis on the order of creation is not blotted out by this new sense of Wisdom to be found in the *torah*. Rather, it is given a new significance as nature demonstrates the obvious, immediate and undeniable presence of the God who has created it. As such, contemplation of nature and creation leads naturally into praise, yet not "praise for its own sake" but one that highlights some aspect of the presence of the hand of the Creator in nature. In Ps 19, this becomes a marriage between the God who reveals himself in nature and then also in the *torah*. As Berlin says;

> Creation is part of what God revealed of himself to humans, a revelation that is impossible not to see. The natural world is, as it were, an ongoing visual revelation, just as the Torah is an ongoing textual (or aural) revelation. That is the sense of Ps 19, which draws a parallel between the cosmos and the Torah, mapping one onto the other. In this way is the cosmos drawn into the orbit of covenantal thought. God is revealed to Israel both through creation and through Torah.[118]

Berlin continues her study of Ps 104 with an examination of how this psalm functions as an "innerbiblical interpretation" of Genesis 1. In effect, she suggests that the psalmist has taken the Genesis blueprint and adapted it. It is

[118] Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation," 74.

"dischronologized" as it does not follow the exact pattern of the seven days of Creation (although she mentions innovative readings which try to make strict parallels). This reading of the text from Genesis 1 is an important link with *torah*, which, while not mentioned, is very present in the psalm. She suggests that it is important to remember that this is not just another reprise of the oft-used motif of creation but rather a definite engagement with the story of creation as it is recounted at the beginning of the *torah*.

However, there are other influences at play also. Job 38-41 seems to have exercised an influence on this innerbiblical interpretation, as well as Ps 19. The perspective is also different, as in Genesis 1 we have a God's-eye view but here we have a human view of the creation in real time. The format can be summarized thus;[119]

- **Domain of the Sky: God as presider: vv.1-4.**
  The image of God as presider, riding on the clouds and surrounded by his servants, including light wind and water. Earth is not yet created.
- **Creation of the World: vv.5-9.**
  Mythological elements of the cosmic battle are here represented, yet the first and foundational element of separation of waters and land is the primary motif.
- **Domain of the land: vv.10-18.**
  In turn, the creation of earth and sea (water and mountains) is a link back to the previous section. This is followed by the creation of vegetation (grass and trees specifically, as in Genesis), domestic and wild animals.
- **Natural and man-made: vv.19-23.**
  An important aspect of this creation setting is that the continued creation through human development and also animal activity are constituent parts.
  "Sun and moon" correspond with the domain of human work (daytime) and animal hunting (nighttime). Agricultural products (wine, oil and bread) and ships are mentioned in this "real-time" vision of creation.

[119] Berlin's text uses English translation versification numbers.

- **Domain of the sea: vv.24-26.**

  This is a second illustration of the manifold works. Leviathan is mentioned, possibly as a suggestion of the vastness of the sea and a reminder of the potential for life there also. The reference to the creation "in wisdom" is key to the psalm. Wisdom is that inherent order of creation
- **Ending of the Psalm: vv. 27-31.**

  The final prayer is crucial. It has a link with the Genesis sense of God finding that the creation was good, but here there is also the prayer that God will continue to vivify and sustain creation. This is particularly poignant in the prayer (v.31) that the "glory" of the Lord will continue. This is the glory that is the "manifestation of divine presence that fills the world." Sinners will disappear, as they are not part of this glory but, by his prayer, the psalmist calls on God to continue to be present in the creation that depends on him.

Parallels with Ps 19 are striking. While the description of nature is more elaborate here, and specific mention of *torah* is absent, the final prayer draws a distinct parallel with Ps 19. The psalmist, through his "prayer, song and meditation", calls on the Lord to be present in his creation and continue to sustain it. Yet "sinners will disappear"—there is a strong *torah*-Wisdom overtone to this final prayer. Another aspect is the involvement of humans in the ongoing act of creation and sustaining creation, by their work under the sun and by their creation of different elements (wine and oil) from the raw material of creation, thus making human action a co-operation of this sense of the glory of God that is contained in creation, which the wisdom of the *torah* seeks to direct. Here the psalmist's promise of prayer and praise so that order and life within creation can be sustained seems to be *torah*-inspired. The object is the same as the final prayer of Ps 19, but on a grander, even global scale. Whereas in Ps 19 the focus is on the confluence of one's own life with *torah*, here the prayer is for the totality of creation to continue to enjoy the signs of divine presence, the glory of God.

Patrick Miller also writes of the Creation motif in this psalm that "*poetry is the proper language of Creation."*[120] Miller develops and complements some of Berlin's analysis of the psalm but in different directions. This psalm, according to Miller, conveys, perhaps more than any other formula, the "centrality of order and purpose in the creation".[121] There is a purposefulness in all the God does, as all is done "in Wisdom." As he says, "there is a sensibility to the creation, an intelligibility that can only come from divine wisdom."[122] Added to this is a sense of beauty and joy, as well as the promise of a providential care (interestingly, in terms of this shelter and care, Miller states that "the earth…., like the doer of *torâ,* is not shaken").[123] Yet the most import theological point that Miller makes is in comparison to the two Genesis accounts of Creation. In the Genesis accounts, according to Miller, we have a description of the creation yet here we have something more, we can discover something of the character of God in this poem, according to Miller. As he says;

> One continues to see in all of this something of the character of God, and not only God's creative and sustaining activity. For the psalmist, creation is particularly a testimony to the wisdom of God. That wisdom is often associated theologically with creation is not surprising. Ps 104 offers grounds for this view. The whole creation is a testimony to the wisdom of God, to the sensibility and order, to the skill and intelligence and practicality of the Lord.[124]

This is an enlightening observance on the essential difference of this creation poetry. It complements the sense of the unspoken communication of nature in Ps 19. Essentially, the order and sensibility of creation, the wisdom in which creation happens is not just an activity but, as Miller notes, "something of the character of God". This poetry of life, in the thoughts and on the lips and then in action and in conduct, which is *torah*, becomes the offering that will find acceptance and sustain creation but will also lead the pray-er to find self-understanding and knowledge, even ultimately to an understanding of the very character of the Lord and Creator.

---

[120] Patrick D. Miller, "The Poetry of Creation (Psalm 104)" in *The Way of the Lord—Essays in Old Testament Theology* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), 185.
[121] Miller, "The Poetry of Creation," 186.
[122] Miller, "The Poetry of Creation," 187.
[123] Miller, "The Poetry of Creation," 185.
[124] Patrick D. Miller, "The Psalter as a Book of Theology," in *The Way of the Lord—Essays in Old Testament Theology* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), 224.

From these readings of Ps 104, we can gain a stronger sense of the wisdom context of Ps 19. In common, they have the description of nature as creation being constantly actualized and re-presented. Ps 104, while not mentioning the *torah*, touches and rereads the very fundamental principle of the *torah*, that God creates all in an order which shows us something of himself. *Torah* is the teaching that allows humanity, in action and in prayer, to learn that wisdom. Ps 19 more explicitly invites the reader to the wonder of the *torah* that enlightens, instructs and gladdens.

Synthesis and Comment

Roland Murphy begins his article, "Wisdom and Creation," with the question of how biblical data on creation has been integrated into OT theology.[125] He suggests that creation and wisdom are "mirror images," both marginal and "tacked on" to the "real" faith of Yahwism, in the opinion of many. Murphy goes on to argue for a greater appreciation of this partnership, as an essential element of the faith of Israel as they encountered God in the created world. Creation, he argues, has a double function, as it gives an account of the beginnings but also is the sphere of the lived experience of Israel. The dialogue with that lived experience is Wisdom, according to Murphy.

This offers a framework for Ps 19 and its particular presentation of the association of Nature, Creation and *torah* in this psalm. While Law might be the "real faith element" of this threesome, the undeniable and intrinsic link between the three is apparent. The God who dialogues with Israel (and, by extension, humanity in general) does so through the lived experience of Creation, which, as noted above, remains a stable and fixed monument of origins but which is also the sphere of the constantly changing, perpetually racing (to refer to the sun-warrior imagery) lived experience. This dialogue between Creation and Israel is Wisdom. Yet the dialogue is in a tongue that is not heard and needs to be interpreted. The interpreter is *torah*, which, as we noted, belongs to the "real faith" theology of Israel. Yet this psalm challenges any sense of the Wisdom-Creation pairing as a "tack-on" to real faith. Rather, the Wisdom-Creation dialogue is intrinsically related to *torah*, as Murphy comments:

[125] Roland E. Murphy, "Wisdom and Creation," *JBL* 104(1985): 3-11.

> Creation speaks but its language is peculiar (Psalm 19). It is not verbal, but it is steady, and it is *heard* (Psalm 19:2). It is parallel to the Torah, which "gives Wisdom to the simple" (Psalm 19:8).[126]

This psalm functions to offer this refocus, in the imaginative sphere, on the essential relationship between creation, Wisdom and *torah*. Ultimately, this will function on many levels, challenging any reduction of *torah* to legalism or any diminishment of the importance of Wisdom. Yet its primary attribute is its ability to craft the three ideas together seamlessly and intricately, in a challenge to the imagination, which seeks to bring the reader back, through prayer, liturgy and worship, to what Balentine calls the *torah*'s vision for worship:

> The Torah's vision begins with a picture of God, the world, and humankind that derives from a time before there was an Adam and Eve or an Israel, before there were earthly kingdoms ruled by Canaanites, Babylonians or Persians. It is a vision of a world in which every object and every person exists in happy accord with God's grand creational design. When the exigencies of history and the frailties of human nature distort this design and threaten to nullify its importance, the Torah's vision will continue to beckon towards possibilities that transcend those limitations and failures. Whether at Sinai or in the plains of Moab, in Jerusalem or in Jehud, the people defined by this vision are to know that the world God created remains possible and attainable.[127]

II: 4: The Journey along the Path so far: Ps 1-Ps 8-Ps 19 and the Wisdom motif

Parallel with Ps 8

Psalms 8 and 19 are parallel in terms of the structure of the book (c.f. above where we discussed the parallel as outlined by Vesco) but also as the starting point in each is a hymn of praise of the wonder of Creation as the handiwork of the Lord and echoes of this Creation motif will resound in both poems. On another level, the two psalms are linked theologically. The question posed in Psalm 8, "What is man?", becomes the focus of the teaching in Psalms 15-24 as they struggle with the question of what can lead a human to perfection-- to live in God's tent (15 and 24), to recognize God as the only good (16 and 23), to behold God's face in righteousness, having come through adversity (17 and 22), to call upon God and be saved (18 and 20-21). The ultimate answer, the highpoint of this moment of reflection and teaching comes in Psalm 19. Just as the Heavens, God's handiwork, show that they follow an order and a scheme, so has God given a

[126] Murphy, "Creation," 6.
[127] Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship* (Overtures in Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 81.

means, an order and a scheme, even a *torah* (law/teaching) to humanity so as to participate fully in this work of Creation.

The parallel positioning of these two psalms, both of which begin with the grandeur of Creation, suggests a firm Wisdom-theological development. The great Wisdom question posed in Ps 8 has to do with what humanity is. Already in this psalm, there are hints of an answer. In the first two images, the majesty of the Lord's name and his splendour that is seen throughout the heavens (v.2, ET v.1) is juxtaposed with the crying of babes and infants (v.3, ET v.2). With an implicit reference to Genesis 1:26, humanity is described as being made less than the gods/angels/powers only by a small bit, and with a right and duty of governance over them and has been set over "מַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ (v.7, ET v.6)." Alonso Schökel sees an importance in this implicit comparison between the man that has been placed as little less than gods/angels and the infants from whose mouths the Lord can be praised, in the context of an appreciation of the majesty and glory of nature. The recovery of that infantile (rather than puerile—Alonso-Schökel's terms) disposition of wonder is a key element of the Wisdom journey of these psalms[128]. The answer to the question of what man is lies partly in that rediscovery of the wonder of nature and in an education in how to recover that sense of humanity that can appreciate Creation, born of the child-like sense of acceptance of the world and one's place therein that allows for spontaneity and surprise. This may be a key to the didactic purpose of Torah, as described in Ps 19: 8-11 (ET 19:7-10), as *torah* can refresh the soul, make wise the innocent, rejoice the heart and light up the eyes.

Ps 8 presents an initial reflection on an issue that will need elaboration: the dilemma of a humanity that knows it has been created in the image of God and given a particular place in the world, yet that senses, in sight of the majesty and wonder of Creation, its own smallness and its vulnerability. This provides a rationale for the laments and the praises of the psalms—praise from the human that begins to comprehend that sense of wonder at its own being and calling, yet lament at the sense of its inadequacies and its powerlessness before mysteries that seem beyond it. Ps 8 presents this quandary in a framework of praise, but even this praise is formed of a question, in vv. 2 and 10 (ET vv. 1 and 9):

יְהוָה אֲדֹנֵינוּ מָה־אַדִּיר שִׁמְךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ

[128] Alonso-Schökel: *I Salmi, I*, 247-8.

Here, even in these apparent words of praise, there is the hint of the underlying need for reflection. The term מָה will return in v. 5 (ET v. 4), at the midpoint of this psalm, to ask the question of what man is. The reflection is posed in a context of praise of the Lord's name, yet this honest and intriguing Wisdom-reflection is necessary to give a rationale to the praises and the laments contained herein. The paradox of a humanity set over the Lord's handiwork yet that finds itself in wonder and amazement at its vastness and majesty is more than a rationale for the Psalter but rather, as Childs remarks, a basis for the canonical understanding of the Old Testament:

> How does the Old Testament as a whole see the problem between man as a creation of God and man living life as it actually is? What is the relationship between man as the lord of creation and man as a human being, limited in time and space, formed in communities, striving to maintain his life? The Old Testament is filled with reflections on this problem. The issue is not so much that man is constantly seeking to wrench himself free from God and to become divine himself, but rather that Hebrew man finds himself so overwhelmed by the powers of the world as to threaten any sense of his special role in God's creation. The psalms are filled with human struggle to maintain a life of faith among the dangers of everyday existence.[129]

This, then, is the Wisdom prelude to Psalm 19. The contemplation of Creation leads humanity to see, at once, the exalted position it holds and the limits to which it is subject. What is this great majesty? What then is man? The juxtaposition of these statements proposes a third: How can man live with integrity in the sight of the majesty of Creation? This may be key to an understanding of Ps 19.

The Creation that inspires this reflection in Ps 8 begins to "speak" in Ps 19.[130] This metaphor of speech is an important theme within the psalm, as we have noted, where it forms the key motif for unity in the first part of the psalm and language of speech applied to Creation suggests the teasing, riddling, provoking question: What is it that Creation proclaims, in that voice that cannot be heard?

---

[129] Brevard S. Childs: "Psalm 8 in the context of the Christian Canon," *Int* 23 (1969): 28-9. Childs makes this comment in the context of his reflection on how the question of the psalm can be resumed and developed in the New Testament *reprises* of the Psalm.

[130] A number of commentators refer to the importance of the speech motif in Ps 19, which unifies the psalm, from the unheard voice of Creation, to the words of Torah to the final prayer that these words be accepted. Cf. M. Fishbane, "Psalm 19. Creation, Torah and Hope," in *Text and Texture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979) 84-90 (particularly 86).

Conclusion

The discrete readings that comprise the study of this psalm represent some of the key issues of discovering how the *torah* hermeneutic might function within the totality of the Psalter. The underlying issue here is unity—unity in the form of the psalm, unity between the themes that are to be found within the psalm (including Creation, Wisdom , David, Temple), unity within the collection that forms the subsection of which this psalm is a constituent and unity within the greater context of the Psalter.

The examination of the psalm in the different "laboratories" shows this theme of unity within the "complex and differentiated activity" of this psalm. While this psalm may not have the formal structure of acrostic with repetition of the synonyms of Ps 119, nor the brusque and clear directiveness of Ps 1, within the development of the *torah* hermeneutic for the Psalter, the "systematic way of proceeding to comprehension" that we discover here is that holding together, in a delicate unity, of so many different aspects and elements of that hermeneutical construct. It is almost as if the author of the psalm is deliberately trying to defy those who might deny the possibility of holding the Psalter in a delicate unity that is structured towards teaching and directing by creating a psalm that, in itself, holds so many elements of that construct in a "delight in tension."

The reproductive aspect of this psalm allows for a restating of many of the elements of the *torah* hermeneutical construct in a delightful lyric format. The explicative lies in the "teasing" by means of the correlation of the different parts, from the majestic Creation and sun imagery to the structured and didactic explanation of the different aspects of *torah,* to the final prayer of trust. All elements will be essential to a *torah* hermeneutical construct for the Psalter. On a normative level, this psalm pushes the reader to an uneasiness and a certain challenge. These words are teasing, stretching the imagination of the reader to discover that there is more to this than the immediate and the apparent. This is part of its normative value. Discovering the key to this psalm may well be discovering the key to the Psalter as it is read with a *torah* hermeneutical construct. In this psalm, we are teased and riddled into seeing that *torah* goes further into the mystery of Creation and humanity than might have been expected.

CHAPTER IV: PSALM 119

Translation and Critica Textus

Stanza I: א

אַשְׁרֵי תְמִימֵי־דָרֶךְ הַהֹלְכִים בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה׃
[2] אַשְׁרֵי נֹצְרֵי עֵדֹתָיו בְּכָל־לֵב יִדְרְשׁוּהוּ׃
[3] אַף לֹא־פָעֲלוּ עַוְלָה בִּדְרָכָיו הָלָכוּ׃
[4] אַתָּה צִוִּיתָה פִקֻּדֶיךָ לִשְׁמֹר מְאֹד׃
[5] אַחֲלַי יִכֹּנוּ דְרָכַי לִשְׁמֹר חֻקֶּיךָ׃
[6] אָז לֹא־אֵבוֹשׁ בְּהַבִּיטִי אֶל־כָּל־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ׃
[7] אוֹדְךָ בְיֹשֶׁר לֵבָב בְּלָמְדִי מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ׃
[8] אֶת־חֻקֶּיךָ אֶשְׁמֹר אַל־תַּעַזְבֵנִי עַד־מְאֹד׃

(Ps 119:1-8)

1. Blessed and blameless in the way are those walking in the Law of the Lord!
2. Blessed and observant of his stipulations are those who with full heart seek him!
3. Moreover, they practice no wickedness, as they walk in his ways.
4. You have set up your orders to be kept precisely.
5. Would that my ways be firmly established so as to keep your statutes!
6. Then shall I not be shamed as I have my regard firmly fixed on all your commandments.
7. I will thank you with uprightness of soul as I am learning your righteous judgments.
8. I shall keep your statutes: please do not forsake me entirely!

Critica Textus

v. 1 Contains an interesting triple copulative, where תְמִימֵי־דָרֶךְ and אַשְׁרֵי are to be read with הַהֹלְכִים, which carries the article. Hence I propose the reading *Blessed and blameless in the way* (an interesting epexegetical genitive) rather than the more common *Blessed are the blameless in the way.*

The term "ashrē" has a dynamic connotation, as distinct from the more liturgical "barūk." This is language indicative of a wisdom background.

v. 2 presents a similar problem but I suggest that the adjective and the participle are in apposition to the presumed subject of the verb. I choose to use the English idiom "with full heart".

v. 3 would present a similar construction, if read according to the LXX which here has a participle (ἐργαζόμενοι). However, I choose to translate according to the MT.

v. 3 presents one of the verses which does not contain a synonym. However, the term דֶּרֶךְ is present, which, as will be noted below, is a term associated with the series of synonyms. See full discussion with reference to v.37.

v. 5 presents an interesting parallel to v.9, which will be discussed *in situ.*

Stanza II: ב

9 בַּמֶּה יְזַכֶּה־נַּעַר אֶת־אָרְחֹו לִשְׁמֹר כִּדְבָרֶךָ׃
10 בְּכָל־לִבִּי דְרַשְׁתִּיךָ אַל־תַּשְׁגֵּנִי מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ׃
11 בְּלִבִּי צָפַנְתִּי אִמְרָתֶךָ לְמַעַן לֹא אֶחֱטָא־לָךְ׃
12 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה לַמְּדֵנִי חֻקֶּיךָ׃
13 בִּשְׂפָתַי סִפַּרְתִּי כֹּל מִשְׁפְּטֵי־פִיךָ׃
14 בְּדֶרֶךְ עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ שַׂשְׂתִּי כְעַל כָּל־הֹון׃
15 בְּפִקֻּדֶיךָ אָשִׂיחָה וְאַבִּיטָה אֹרְחֹתֶיךָ׃
16 בְּחֻקֹּתֶיךָ אֶשְׁתַּעֲשָׁע לֹא אֶשְׁכַּח דְּבָרֶךָ׃

(Ps 119:9-16)

9. In what can a young man make clean his manner so as to keep to your words?
10. With all my heart I have sought you out, do not lead me away from your commandments!
11. In my heart I have treasured your utterances so that I should not sin against you.
12. Blessed are you, O LORD! Teach me your statutes!
13. With my lips I have told all the judgments of your mouth,
14. In the way of your stipulations I have rejoiced as much as in all wealth.
15. For your orders let me be concerned and let me be observant of your ways!
16. In your statutes will I feel delight, I shall not forget your words.

Critica Textus

v. 9. In agreement with Soll[1], I choose to translate this verse as a purpose clause instead of a gerund. It may be in parallel with v.5 and it also allows for the Wisdom technique of beginning a torah reflection with a question to begin a series of answers.

vv. 10-11. Again, I choose the more idiomatic English phrases of "with all my heart" and "in my heart."

v. 13. Anderson notes that some Greek and Hebrew mss. Read '....of your righteousness' (*ṣidkeka* for MT *pîka*), in parallel to v.7.[2]

v. 14 seems to have presented a problem even for ancient witnesses, particularly the Syriac. However, Barthélemy suggests that there is no proof that there is a Vorlage to the Syriac and that the nuance here is "as much as" (in agreement with *Jerusalem Bible*, the *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible,* and the *NRSV).*[3]

v. 16 is one of those occasions where two synonyms are present.

[1] William M. Soll, "The Question of Psalm 119:9," *JBL* 106 (1987), pages 687-688.

[2] A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (Vol. 2 (Psalms 73-150); New Century Bible. London: Oliphants, 1972). 813.

[3] Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle: Tome 4: Psaumes,* 778-9.

Stanza III- ג

17 גְּמֹל עַל־עַבְדְּךָ אֶחְיֶה וְאֶשְׁמְרָה דְבָרֶךָ׃
18 גַּל־עֵינַי וְאַבִּיטָה נִפְלָאוֹת מִתּוֹרָתֶךָ׃
19 גֵּר אָנֹכִי בָאָרֶץ אַל־תַּסְתֵּר מִמֶּנִּי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ׃
20 גָּרְסָה נַפְשִׁי לְתַאֲבָה אֶל־מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ בְכָל־עֵת׃
21 גָּעַרְתָּ זֵדִים אֲרוּרִים הַשֹּׁגִים מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ׃
22 גַּל מֵעָלַי חֶרְפָּה וָבוּז כִּי עֵדֹתֶיךָ נָצָרְתִּי׃
23 גַּם יָשְׁבוּ שָׂרִים בִּי נִדְבָּרוּ עַבְדְּךָ יָשִׂיחַ בְּחֻקֶּיךָ׃
24 גַּם־עֵדֹתֶיךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי אַנְשֵׁי עֲצָתִי׃

(Ps 119:17-24)

17. Do good to your servant, let me live! And then, I shall keep your words.
18. Open my eyes and I will take heed of the wonders of your laws.
19. I am a sojourner on the earth—do not hide your commandments from me.
20. My soul is crushed with longing for your judgments at all times
21. You rebuke the insolent, cursed are they who go astray from your commandments!
22. Take away from me disgrace and rebuke for your stipulations have I faithfully observed.
23. Even when leaders sit and talk together about me, your servant is concerned with your statutes!
24. Indeed, your stipulations are my delight and the ones who give me counsel.

Critica Textus

v. 17. There is a possible purpose clause here as some mss contain a ו before אֶחְיֶה.
v. 23. There may be nuances, in echo of Ps 1, of "plotting against me" as well as "talk about me."
v. 24. The reading is awkward, as the parallel does not seem to be respected. The LXX includes the expression τὰ δικαιώματά σου which would offer greater balance. The Jerusalem Bible reflects the LXX text.

Stanza IV—ד

25 דָּבְקָה לֶעָפָר נַפְשִׁי חַיֵּנִי כִּדְבָרֶךָ׃
26 דְּרָכַי סִפַּרְתִּי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי לַמְּדֵנִי חֻקֶּיךָ׃
27 דֶּרֶךְ־פִּקּוּדֶיךָ הֲבִינֵנִי וְאָשִׂיחָה בְּנִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ׃
28 דָּלְפָה נַפְשִׁי מִתּוּגָה קַיְּמֵנִי כִּדְבָרֶךָ׃
29 דֶּרֶךְ־שֶׁקֶר הָסֵר מִמֶּנִּי וְתוֹרָתְךָ חָנֵּנִי׃
30 דֶּרֶךְ־אֱמוּנָה בָּחָרְתִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ שִׁוִּיתִי׃
31 דָּבַקְתִּי בְעֵדְוֹתֶיךָ יְהוָה אַל־תְּבִישֵׁנִי׃
32 דֶּרֶךְ־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אָרוּץ כִּי תַרְחִיב לִבִּי׃

(Ps 119: 25-32)

25. My spirit clings to the dust, make me live according to your word!

26. I have recounted my ways and you have answered me; teach me your statutes.
27. Give me to understand the way of your orders so that I might meditate upon your marvellous works.
28. My soul is weary with grief, raise me up by means of your word.
29. Remove from me the way of falsehood and grace me by means of your law.
30. The way of faithfulness have I chosen; your judgements have I set out before me.
31. I cleave to your stipulations, LORD, do not put me to shame!
32. I run the way of your commandments for you give me greatness of heart.

Critica Textus

v. 25. Reynolds introduces an important issue of translation here in the difficulties of translating the verb חיה . He suggests a usage of the old term in English "to quicken" but for reasons of syntax returns to the translation of to be or to live. He quotes Lofhink in suggesting that the Piel form should have a nuance of "to maintain."[4]

v. 28. Rogers makes an interesting remark on v.28 about a cognate Arabic term that is used of the curvature of the spine in old age or with the burden of depression (with Davidic overtones), which might allow for a translation of "I am stooped down from weariness", and how the verb קַיְּמֵנִי offers a sense of being emboldened and encouraged.[5]

v. 30 Terrien notes that the Syr. Reads "I desire" instead of "I have assimilated" (his translation of שִׁוִּיתִי).[6]

Stanza V—ה

33 הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ חֻקֶּיךָ וְאֶצְּרֶנָּה עֵקֶב׃
34 הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֶצְּרָה תוֹרָתֶךָ וְאֶשְׁמְרֶנָּה בְכָל־לֵב׃
35 הַדְרִיכֵנִי בִּנְתִיב מִצְוֹתֶיךָ כִּי־בוֹ חָפָצְתִּי׃
36 הַט־לִבִּי אֶל־עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ וְאַל אֶל־בָּצַע׃
37 הַעֲבֵר עֵינַי מֵרְאוֹת שָׁוְא בִּדְרָכֶךָ חַיֵּנִי׃
38 הָקֵם לְעַבְדְּךָ אִמְרָתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר לְיִרְאָתֶךָ׃
39 הַעֲבֵר חֶרְפָּתִי אֲשֶׁר יָגֹרְתִּי כִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ טוֹבִים׃
40 הִנֵּה תָּאַבְתִּי לְפִקֻּדֶיךָ בְּצִדְקָתְךָ חַיֵּנִי׃

(Ps 119:33-40)

33. Teach me, LORD, the way of your statutes, and I will observe them to the end.
34. Make me understand, so that I may observe your Law; yes, I shall keep it with all my heart.
35. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for therein I find my delight.
36. Incline my mind to your stipulations and not to gain.
37. Avert my eyes from looking upon emptiness, but give me life in your ways.

[4] Kent Aaron Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher. The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 119* (VTSup 137. Boston: Brill, 2010), 194-5.
[5] J. Rogers, *The Book of Psalms in Hebrew, metrically arranged with selections from the various readings of Kennicott and de Rossi, and from the Ancient Versions* (Oxford: Parker, 1848), 240.
[6] Terrien, *The Psalms,* 800.

38. Keep your promise to your servant, that it might be a cause to revere you.
39. Avert the disgrace that I fear, for your judgments are good.
40. Behold, I have longed for your orders: make me live in righteousness.

Critica Textus

v. 33. Here I have chosen to translate עֵקֶב idiomatically: "to the end." However, there is the possibility of a literal translation also: "as a reward." Van Gemeren discusses both possibilities and concludes that the literal translation has become more preferred in recent years. He refers to v.112 (see below) and also to 19:11.[7] I prefer the idiomatic usage, however, here as it seems more in keeping with the flow of the poem.

v. 37. Barthélemy enters into a long discussion on the possibility that בְּדַרְכֶּךָ (which seems to be the base both here and for the Septuagint translation) should be replaced by כדברכה, as attested by 11QPs[a].[8] This would solve the problem of a missing synonym in this verse (a problem also encountered in vv 3; 90; 122, and, in each case, similar textual emendations are possible). This would also have the advantage of making the eight synonyms present in this stanza. Different translations have opted for the different possibilities of "words" or "ways": Barthelemy eventually suggests that where the MT and the LXX attest to the same reading but where this is challenged by 11Qa, that it is best to regard 11Qa as a different recension, and that the tradition of MT-LXX should be respected. Hence, he suggests the TOB translation ("dans tes chemins") as being justified. This would also support the translation of v.3, where the synonym is absent and where this term is present (although some sought to emend this text also). Kraus disagrees with this position and duly amends the text, drawing parallels with vv. 25; 41; 107.[9]

v. 38. Here I choose to translate אמרה as "promise", as befits the situation. The normal translation, as outlined below, will be "utterance".

Stanza VI—ו

41 וְיָבֹאֻנִי חֲסָדֶךָ יְהוָה תְּשׁוּעָתְךָ כְּאִמְרָתֶךָ׃
42 וְאֶעֱנֶה חֹרְפִי דָבָר כִּי־בָטַחְתִּי בִּדְבָרֶךָ׃
43 וְאַל־תַּצֵּל מִפִּי דְבַר־אֱמֶת עַד־מְאֹד כִּי לְמִשְׁפָּטְךָ יִחָלְתִּי׃
44 וְאֶשְׁמְרָה תוֹרָתְךָ תָמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד׃
45 וְאֶתְהַלְכָה בָרְחָבָה כִּי פִקֻּדֶיךָ דָרָשְׁתִּי׃
46 וַאֲדַבְּרָה בְעֵדֹתֶיךָ נֶגֶד מְלָכִים וְלֹא אֵבוֹשׁ׃
47 וְאֶשְׁתַּעֲשַׁע בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהָבְתִּי׃
48 וְאֶשָּׂא־כַפַּי אֶל־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהָבְתִּי וְאָשִׂיחָה בְחֻקֶּיךָ׃

(Ps 119:41- 48)

[7] VanGemeren, *Psalms,* 744.
[8] Barthelemy, *Critique Textuelle 4,* 780-8.
[9] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 410.

41. Let your loving kindnesses and your deliverance come to me, O LORD, as accords with your utterances.
42. I will give a word in answer to the one who torments me, for I trust in your word.
43. Do not take away from my mouth the word of truth—far be it from us!—for I have hope in your judgments.
44. I will hold fast to your Law continually, forever and all time.
45. Then shall I go about in the wide open, as I have sought out your orders.
46. Then shall I speak of your stipulations before kings, and I shall not be abashed.
47. I shall delight in your commandments, with which I have fallen in love!
48. Then shall I raise my hands to your commandments, which I love, and I shall ponder on your statutes.

Critica Textus

v. 41. The plural form (חַסְדֶּךָ) seems initially to be awkward: Reference might be made to a similar occurrence of the plural form in Ps 89:2. TOB remarks that the plural form might best be understood as "l'ensemble des marques de sa fidelité." Again, here I choose to translate אמרה as "promise", as befits the situation.

v. 43: Some of the ancient witnesses omit עַד־מְאֹד. Barthélemy suggests a "light" translation ("N'arrache pas de ma bouche toute parole de verité").[10] It may simply be a later scribal interjection, which is how I have tried to translate it. Kraus agrees and suggests that this "overloads the verse and does not really fit into the context."[11]

Dahood suggests here a disjunctive waw and a translation of "So do not remove."[12] van Gemeren concurs with Dahood.[13] Apart from the initial verse of the stanza, this is the only case where the initial waw is not fllowed by a first person singular verb, which may give some credence to their suggestion.

v. 47: LXX adds σφόδρα. No Hebrew witness exists to this. It is not significant and it may be a scribal technique to artificially elongate a short verse.

v. 48: There is no ancient witness that supports the omission of אֲשֶׁר אָהָבְתִּי. Kraus suggests it may be a duplication of 47b.[14] Interestingly, this is one of the verses where two of the synonyms occur.

Stanza VII- ז

49 זְכֹר־דָּבָר לְעַבְדֶּךָ עַל אֲשֶׁר יִחַלְתָּנִי׃
50 זֹאת נֶחָמָתִי בְעָנְיִי כִּי אִמְרָתְךָ חִיָּתְנִי׃
51 זֵדִים הֱלִיצֻנִי עַד־מְאֹד מִתּוֹרָתְךָ לֹא נָטִיתִי׃
52 זָכַרְתִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ מֵעוֹלָם יְהוָה וָאֶתְנָחָם׃
53 זַלְעָפָה אֲחָזַתְנִי מֵרְשָׁעִים עֹזְבֵי תּוֹרָתֶךָ׃
54 זְמִרוֹת הָיוּ־לִי חֻקֶּיךָ בְּבֵית מְגוּרָי׃
55 זָכַרְתִּי בַלַּיְלָה שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה וָאֶשְׁמְרָה תּוֹרָתֶךָ׃

[10] Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle,* 789-90.
[11] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150,* 410.
[12] Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III, 101-150* (AB. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 163.
[13] Van Gemeren, *Psalms,* 745.
[14] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150,* 410.

56 זֹאת הָיְתָה־לִּי כִּי פִקֻּדֶיךָ נָצָרְתִּי׃

(Ps 119:49-56)

49. Remember your word to your servant, on account of which you had patience with me.
50. This is my comfort in my affliction for your utterance has quickened me.
51. The insolent deride me greatly but from your law I have not turned away.
52. I remember your judgments from of old, and I am comforted, O LORD!
53. Rage has seized me because of the impious, those who are abandoning your Law.
54. Your statutes were as melodies to me in the place of my dwelling.
55. I remember your name by night, O LORD, and I keep your law.
56. This has all happened to me for I have kept with fidelity your orders.

Stanza VIII---ח

57 חֶלְקִי יְהוָה אָמַרְתִּי לִשְׁמֹר דְּבָרֶיךָ׃
58 חִלִּיתִי פָנֶיךָ בְכָל־לֵב חָנֵּנִי כְּאִמְרָתֶךָ׃
59 חִשַּׁבְתִּי דְרָכָי וָאָשִׁיבָה רַגְלַי אֶל־עֵדֹתֶיךָ׃
60 חַשְׁתִּי וְלֹא הִתְמַהְמָהְתִּי לִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתֶיךָ׃
61 חֶבְלֵי רְשָׁעִים עִוְּדָנִי תּוֹרָתְךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃
62 חֲצוֹת־לַיְלָה אָקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ עַל מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ׃
63 חָבֵר אָנִי לְכָל־אֲשֶׁר יְרֵאוּךָ וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי פִקּוּדֶיךָ׃
64 חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חֻקֶּיךָ לַמְּדֵנִי׃

(Ps 119:57-64)

57. The Lord is my portion: I have promised to keep your words.
58. I have appealed before you with all my heart, be gracious to me according to your promise.
59. I have taken stock of my ways and I have set my steps to turn in accord with your stipulations.
60. I have made haste and I have not delayed to fulfill your commandments.
61. The ropes of the impious were all around me but I did not forget your law.
62. At midnight shall I rise to give you thanks because of your just judgments.
63. I am a companion of all those who fear you and of those who keep your orders.
64. Your loving kindness, O LORD, has filled the earth; teach me your statutes.

Critica Textus

v. 57. Van Gemeren notes the significance of חֶלְקִי, which has been variously translated as "The Lord is my portion" (as here) or "You are my portion, O Lord" (NIV). He refers to 73:26 and 142: 5 (However, this may be a misprint: I believe the text in MT is 142:6). He suggests that this may be an indication that the author is a priest or a Levite (cf. Num. 18:20).[15]

[15] Van Gemeren, *Psalms*, 748.

Dahood suggest that the plural form (דְּבָרֶיךָ) here and in v.139 may be a reference to the Decalogue ("Ten Commandments") and suggests a translation of "your commandments".[16]

v. 58: Again, here I choose to translate אמרה as "promise", as befits the situation.

v. 59: LXX has "thy ways" (τὰς ὁδούς σου).[17]

v. 57/64: Gerstenberger notes the "careful structuring" of the first and last line in this strophe. He notes that 57a ("My share is Yahweh"-his translation) seems to be echoed by "your solidarity"--again his translation—in 64a, leading him to conclude that there may have been an "overarching linkage": "My share, Yahweh, is your solidarity, Yahweh."[18]

Stanza IX—ט

65 טוֹב עָשִׂיתָ עִם־עַבְדְּךָ יְהוָה כִּדְבָרֶךָ׃
66 טוּב טַעַם וָדַעַת לַמְּדֵנִי כִּי בְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ הֶאֱמָנְתִּי׃
67 טֶרֶם אֶעֱנֶה אֲנִי שֹׁגֵג וְעַתָּה אִמְרָתְךָ שָׁמָרְתִּי׃
68 טוֹב־אַתָּה וּמֵטִיב לַמְּדֵנִי חֻקֶּיךָ׃
69 טָפְלוּ עָלַי שֶׁקֶר זֵדִים אֲנִי בְּכָל־לֵבָב אֶצֹּר פִּקּוּדֶיךָ׃
70 טָפַשׁ כַּחֵלֶב לִבָּם אֲנִי תּוֹרָתְךָ שִׁעֲשָׁעְתִּי׃
71 טוֹב־לִי כִּי־עֻנֵּיתִי לְמַעַן אֶלְמַד חֻקֶּיךָ׃
72 טוֹב־לִי תוֹרַת־פִּיךָ מֵאַלְפֵי זָהָב וָכָסֶף׃

(Ps 119:64-72)

65. Goodness have you wrought unto your servant, O LORD, in accord with your word.
66. Teach me the benefits of discernment and understanding, for in your commandments have I believed.
67. Before I came to give account of myself, yes, I was in error, but now your utterance do I keep.
68. You are good and you do good, teach me your statutes.
69. The proud have covered me over by means of deceit, but I, with all my heart, I keep mindful of your orders.
70. Insipid as fat are their hearts, but I find delight in your law.
71. It was good for me that I was brought to task so that I might learn your statutes.
72. Better for me is the law of your mouth than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

Critica Textus

v. 66. The apparatus of the BHS suggests that טוב should be deleted, probably as a dittography from v. 65. The TOB suggests that this should be read as a construct form, with the sense of "the benefits of discernment and understanding" or even "what is good in discernment and understanding". The Greek and Syriac versions

[16] Dahood, *Psalms 3,* 181.
[17] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, Vol 2, 825.
[18] Erhard S. Gerstenberger *Psalms (part 2) and Lamentations* (FOTL XV. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 315.

would suggest a conjunction of three "goodness and discernment and understanding". I have opted for a translation close to that of TOB: in the absence of a conjunction (ו), I believe the construct to be the best option, even though there is a certain awkwardness as these are not a natural pair.
Van Gemeren remarks that "good" is a covenantal term. He remarks that good judgment "is requisite for godly living in an evil world."[19] In turn, he suggest that "knowledge (*da'at*) primarily denotes the knowledge of God in one's communion with him and secondarily the 'response' to the life of fellowship with the Lord."[20] v.67 and v.71 ענה can have multiple meanings, including "to give answer", "to be humiliated" and "to be afflicted". Various translators and commentators have opted for each of these. My translation is aimed at giving a sense of each, i.e. that the process of being brought to task of coming to give an account of oneself can include a sense of humiliation and even affliction. Zenger comments that in Ps 119 this verb has that double meaning of violent oppression *and* humility ("piety of the poor"). [21] Interestingly, Zorell suggests that this term is not used consistently in this psalm, but can alternatively mean to respond to another (v.47), to be impoverished (miser *fuit),* which is the meaning he suggests here, to sing in chorus (v.172).[22]

Stanza X—י

73 יָדֶיךָ עָשׂוּנִי וַיְכוֹנְנוּנִי הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֶלְמְדָה מִצְוֹתֶיךָ׃
74 יְרֵאֶיךָ יִרְאוּנִי וְיִשְׂמָחוּ כִּי לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי׃
75 יָדַעְתִּי יְהוָה כִּי־צֶדֶק מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ וֶאֱמוּנָה עִנִּיתָנִי׃
76 יְהִי־נָא חַסְדְּךָ לְנַחֲמֵנִי כְּאִמְרָתְךָ לְעַבְדֶּךָ׃
77 יְבֹאוּנִי רַחֲמֶיךָ וְאֶחְיֶה כִּי־תוֹרָתְךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי׃
78 יֵבֹשׁוּ זֵדִים כִּי־שֶׁקֶר עִוְּתוּנִי אֲנִי אָשִׂיחַ בְּפִקּוּדֶיךָ׃
79 יָשׁוּבוּ לִי יְרֵאֶיךָ (וְיָדְעוּ) [וְיֹדְעֵי] עֵדֹתֶיךָ׃
80 יְהִי־לִבִּי תָמִים בְּחֻקֶּיךָ לְמַעַן לֹא אֵבוֹשׁ׃

(Ps 119:73-80)

73. Your hands have made me and have given me form: make me understand now and I will learn your commandments.
74. Those who are in awe of you shall see you and they shall be glad, for I have hoped in your word.
75. I know, O LORD, that your judgments are righteous and that it was faithfully that you humbled me.
76. Please then, O LORD, let your faithful love be for my consoling, in accord with your promise to your servant.
77. Let your tender mercies come to me, so that I might live, for your law is my delight.
78. The godless will be shamed, for they have misled me deceitfully. For my part, I consider your orders.

[19] Van Gemeren, *Psalms,* 749.
[20] Ibid, 749.
[21] Franz-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger. *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150.* (trans. Linda M. Maloney. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 255, note s.
[22] Zorrell, 612-3.

79. Let those in awe of you turn to me so that they might know your stipulations.
80. Let my heart be perfect in terms of your statutes so that I will not be put to shame.

Critica Textus

v. 76: Again, here I choose to translate אמרה as "promise", as befits the situation.
v. 79: There exists a qere which has the witness of some mss, the LXX and the Syriac. Translated according to this, it would be: "Let those in awe of you and those who know your decrees turn to me."

Stanza XI--כ

81 כָּלְתָה לִתְשׁוּעָתְךָ נַפְשִׁי לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי׃
82 כָּלוּ עֵינַי לְאִמְרָתֶךָ לֵאמֹר מָתַי תְּנַחֲמֵנִי׃
83 כִּי־הָיִיתִי כְּנֹאד בְּקִיטוֹר חֻקֶּיךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃
84 כַּמָּה יְמֵי־עַבְדֶּךָ מָתַי תַּעֲשֶׂה בְרֹדְפַי מִשְׁפָּט׃
85 כָּרוּ־לִי זֵדִים שִׂיחוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא כְתוֹרָתֶךָ׃
86 כָּל־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֱמוּנָה שֶׁקֶר רְדָפוּנִי עָזְרֵנִי׃
87 כִּמְעַט כִּלּוּנִי בָאָרֶץ וַאֲנִי לֹא־עָזַבְתִּי פִקֻּדֶיךָ׃
88 כְּחַסְדְּךָ חַיֵּנִי וְאֶשְׁמְרָה עֵדוּת פִּיךָ׃

(Ps 119:81-88)

81. My soul is longing for your salvation; I wait for your word!
82. My eyes long for your promise: "When will you show me compassion?"
83. Even when I was like a wine-skin in the smoke, I did not forget your statutes.
84. So what of the days of your servant? When will you bear judgment on those who pursue me?
85. The arrogant have dug pits for me, which is not in accord with your Law!
86. Your commandments are truth, yet wrongly do they pursue me, help me!
87. But for a straw had they me finished off in the land, yet still I have not forsaken your orders!
88. According to your loving kindness, let me live, so that I might preserve the stipulations of your mouth.

Critica Textus

v. 82. The apparatus of BHS suggests the deletion of לֵאמֹר. However, as this is often merely an indicator of direct speech, I believe the colon here is sufficient translation. Again, here I choose to translate אמרה as "promise", as befits the situation.
v. 85. The term שִׂיחוֹת seems to be translated into the LXX differently (ἀδολεσχίας), translated as "prating", which may be based on a misreading of the pointing (שִׂיחָה cf. v.99). However, the context seems to support the term as it stands.

Stanza XII — ל

89 לְעוֹלָם יְהוָה דְּבָרְךָ נִצָּב בַּשָּׁמָיִם׃
90 לְדֹר וָדֹר אֱמוּנָתֶךָ כּוֹנַנְתָּ אֶרֶץ וַתַּעֲמֹד׃
91 לְמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ עָמְדוּ הַיּוֹם כִּי הַכֹּל עֲבָדֶיךָ׃
92 לוּלֵי תוֹרָתְךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי אָז אָבַדְתִּי בְעָנְיִי׃
93 לְעוֹלָם לֹא־אֶשְׁכַּח פִּקּוּדֶיךָ כִּי בָם חִיִּיתָנִי׃
94 לְךָ־אֲנִי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי כִּי פִקּוּדֶיךָ דָרָשְׁתִּי׃
95 לִי קִוּוּ רְשָׁעִים לְאַבְּדֵנִי עֵדֹתֶיךָ אֶתְבּוֹנָן׃
96 לְכָל תִּכְלָה רָאִיתִי קֵץ רְחָבָה מִצְוָתְךָ מְאֹד׃

(Ps 119:89-96)

89. Forever, O LORD, does your word take its post in the heavens!
90. From generation to generation, your truth will last; you have set the earth in place and she holds!
91. By your judgments, they endure to this day, for all is your servant.
92. Were your law not to be my delight, then would I perish in my afflicted state.
93. Never will I forget your orders, for by them you have made me to be!
94. I am yours, save me! For I have sought your orders.
95. The evil lie in wait for me, to bring me to my end, but I turn my heed to your stipulations.
96. For all that is perfect, I have seen an ending, but wide indeed is your commandment!

Critica Textus

v. 90 is one of the verses which does not contain any of the synonyms (cf. v.37). Possibly אֱמוּנָתֶךָ could be understood as an additional synonym.

v. 93 presents some textual difficulties and the meaning from the text as it stands is awkward. The LXX adds a nominative addressing the Lord. Scribal error may account for additions of some lameds. However, the translation is cumbersome.

Stanza XIII ---מ

97 מָה־אָהַבְתִּי תוֹרָתֶךָ כָּל־הַיּוֹם הִיא שִׂיחָתִי׃
98 מֵאֹיְבַי תְּחַכְּמֵנִי מִצְוֹתֶךָ כִּי לְעוֹלָם הִיא־לִי׃
99 מִכָּל־מְלַמְּדַי הִשְׂכַּלְתִּי כִּי עֵדוֹתֶיךָ שִׂיחָה לִי׃
100 מִזְּקֵנִים אֶתְבּוֹנָן כִּי פִקּוּדֶיךָ נָצָרְתִּי׃
101 מִכָּל־אֹרַח רָע כָּלִאתִי רַגְלַי לְמַעַן אֶשְׁמֹר דְּבָרֶךָ׃
102 מִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לֹא־סָרְתִּי כִּי־אַתָּה הוֹרֵתָנִי׃
103 מַה־נִּמְלְצוּ לְחִכִּי אִמְרָתֶךָ מִדְּבַשׁ לְפִי׃
104 מִפִּקּוּדֶיךָ אֶתְבּוֹנָן עַל־כֵּן שָׂנֵאתִי כָּל־אֹרַח שָׁקֶר׃

(Ps 119:97-104)

97. How I love your law! It itself is my concern all the day long.
98. Your commandments will make me wiser than my foes, for it is with me always.

99. I have greater insight than all my teachers, for your stipulations are my concern.
100. I have more understanding than the greybeards, for I observe your orders.
101. From every ill path have I kept back my feet, so that I might keep your word.
102. From your judgments I have not strayed, for it was you yourself who taught me.
103. How sweet is your utterance to my palate, more so than honey is to my mouth!
104. Thanks to your orders I have gained understanding, therefore I hate every way of falsehood.

Critica Textus

v. 98: There seems to be a difficulty as the subject is plural but the verb and the appositive phrase are both singular.

v.103: This verse bears a resemblance to Ps 19: 11. The LXX translation even makes an addition (καὶ κηρίον), which makes the link stronger to that verse. Some mss as well as the LXX and Targum have a plural for אִמְרָתֶךָ. [23]

Stanza XIV---נ

105 נֵר־לְרַגְלִי דְבָרֶךָ וְאוֹר לִנְתִיבָתִי׃
106 נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי וָאֲקַיֵּמָה לִשְׁמֹר מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ׃
107 נַעֲנֵיתִי עַד־מְאֹד יְהוָה חַיֵּנִי כִדְבָרֶךָ׃
108 נִדְבוֹת פִּי רְצֵה־נָא יְהוָה וּמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לַמְּדֵנִי׃
109 נַפְשִׁי בְכַפִּי תָמִיד וְתוֹרָתְךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃
110 נָתְנוּ רְשָׁעִים פַּח לִי וּמִפִּקּוּדֶיךָ לֹא תָעִיתִי׃
111 נָחַלְתִּי עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם כִּי־שְׂשׂוֹן לִבִּי הֵמָּה׃
112 נָטִיתִי לִבִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת חֻקֶּיךָ לְעוֹלָם עֵקֶב׃

(Ps 119:105-112)

105. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
106. I have sworn and I have imposed upon myself to keep your righteous judgments.
107. I have humbled myself greatly, O Lord, make me to live by your word.
108. Be pleased, O Lord, with the offerings of my mouth and teach me your judgments.
109. My life is in my hand continually, but I have not forgotten your law.
110. The evil ones have set a trap for me, but I do not wander from your orders.
111. Your stipulations are my inheritance forever, as these are the joy of my heart.
112. I incline my heart to perform your statutes, forever, yes to the end!

[23] Cf. Van Gemeren, *Psalms,* 754. Also Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* Vol.2, 834.

v. 112. See note on v.33. The difficulty with repetition might be overcome with a translation of as "as a reward." This is also a possibility for v.33. However, repetition in poetry is normal and I believe the sense of the double affirmation is preferable to the literal translation. I suggest the idiomatic rather than the literal translation here as above.

Stanza XV---ס

113 סְעֲפִים שָׂנֵאתִי וְתוֹרָתְךָ אָהֵבְתִּי׃
114 סִתְרִי וּמָגִנִּי אָתָּה לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי׃
115 סוּרוּ־מִמֶּנִּי מְרֵעִים וְאֶצְּרָה מִצְוֹת אֱלֹהָי׃
116 סָמְכֵנִי כְאִמְרָתְךָ וְאֶחְיֶה וְאַל־תְּבִישֵׁנִי מִשִּׂבְרִי׃
117 סְעָדֵנִי וְאִוָּשֵׁעָה וְאֶשְׁעָה בְחֻקֶּיךָ תָמִיד׃
118 סָלִיתָ כָּל־שׁוֹגִים מֵחֻקֶּיךָ כִּי־שֶׁקֶר תַּרְמִיתָם׃
119 סִגִּים הִשְׁבַּתָּ כָל־רִשְׁעֵי־אֶרֶץ לָכֵן אָהַבְתִּי עֵדֹתֶיךָ׃
120 סָמַר מִפַּחְדְּךָ בְשָׂרִי וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יָרֵאתִי׃

(Ps 119:113-120)

113. I hate the vulgar but your law do I love!
114. My shelter and my shield are you; I will hope in your word!
115. Turn aside from me, you who do evil, so that I may keep the commandments of my God.
116. Sustain me according to your promise, that I may have life, and do not see me shamed from my hope!
117. Uphold me that I might be saved and that I might look upon your statutes continually.
118. You toss aside all who stray from your statutes, for their deceitfulness is in vain.
119. You lay low, even into the dross, all those evil of the earth, for which reason I have come to love your stipulations.
120. My flesh bristles from dread of you—and I do fear your judgments.

Critica Textus

v. 116: Again, here I choose to translate אמרה as "promise", as befits the situation.
v. 117: Ancient commentators and many textual critics have tried to amend this term וְאֶשְׁעָה (qal imperfect of שׁעה) to read a hitpalpel of שְׁעַע. Interestingly, KB lists the term under both lexemes as a possible reading of either. The result would be a sense of "taking delight" rather than simply of "observing". This has had repercussions also for the exegesis of the psalm as can be seen in medieval Jewish exegesis of the psalm. The LXX reading (μελετήσω) would support either reading and evidence is given for occasions where this term has been used to translate both.[24] Barthélemy concludes by suggesting that some ancient commentators simply confused the terms because of their similarity and that the text need not be amended.
v. 119: There seems to be an issue around the term הִשְׁבַּתָּ in this verse. The LXX of ἐλογισάμην, possibly supported by 11Qa (where the letter is difficult to read), would seem to suggest a reading of חשׁבת, which would give a translation of "you

[24] Barthelemy, *Critique Textuelle 4,* 797-9.

count as dross all the evil of the earth" instead of "you lay low". Interestingly, KB lists the possibility under both entries. Barthélemy suggests the alternative to be the better reading. For the sake of consistency, I choose to translate the MT but the alternative would offer a less cumbersome reading. Van Gemeren suggests there is no reason to reject the MT.[25]

Stanza XVI---ע

121 עָשִׂיתִי מִשְׁפָּט וָצֶדֶק בַּל־תַּנִּיחֵנִי לְעֹשְׁקָי׃
122 עֲרֹב עַבְדְּךָ לְטוֹב אַל־יַעַשְׁקֻנִי זֵדִים׃
123 עֵינַי כָּלוּ לִישׁוּעָתֶךָ וּלְאִמְרַת צִדְקֶךָ׃
124 עֲשֵׂה עִם־עַבְדְּךָ כְחַסְדֶּךָ וְחֻקֶּיךָ לַמְּדֵנִי׃
125 עַבְדְּךָ־אָנִי הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֵדְעָה עֵדֹתֶיךָ׃
126 עֵת לַעֲשׂוֹת לַיהוָה הֵפֵרוּ תוֹרָתֶךָ׃
127 עַל־כֵּן אָהַבְתִּי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּז׃
128 עַל־כֵּן כָּל־פִּקּוּדֵי כֹל יִשָּׁרְתִּי כָּל־אֹרַח שֶׁקֶר שָׂנֵאתִי׃

(Ps 119:121-129)

121. I have done justice and right: do not leave me to those who oppress me!
122. Make a pledge to your servant for his good, do not let the evil oppress me! (No synonym)
123. My eyes come to their end with (the sight of) your salvation, and with the utterance of your righteousness.
124. Do unto your servant as befits your loving kindness, and teach me your statutes.
125. I am your servant: let me have understanding so that I may know your stipulations.
126. It is time for the Lord to act: your laws have been smashed!
127. On account of this, I have loved your commandments more than gold, more even than pure gold.
128. Therefore, I set all things straight in every way by all your orders, but I avoid every false path.

Critica Textus

v. 121: In this case, I translate מִשְׁפָּט as "justice" rather than "judgment". Anderson notes that six mss. read "you have done," but there are witnesses also to the MT and it presents no contextual difficulty.[26]

v. 122 represents one of the verses which does not include a synonym. The critical apparatus of BHS seeks to amend עַבְדְּךָ but no textual witnesses are provided. Goldingay includes a note indicating a literal translation of "pledge your servant for good" but offers the more syntactical translation of "Pledge good things to your servant."[27]

[25] Van Gemeren, *Psalms,* 756.

[26] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* Vol. 2, 838.

[27] John Goldingay, *Psalms,* (Vol 3: Psalms 90-150. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 374.

v. 123: Again, this is almost certainly idiomatic. The English translation does not have a similar idiom but this would be similar perhaps to "I am at my wits' end".
v. 126: An equally valid translation here would be: "It is time to act for the Lord". This is not a textual difficulty, simply a double-entendre in the idiom, which might be deliberate.
v. 128 seems awkward with the repetitioof כל but this may be stylistic. Barthelemy refers to Radaq who draws a comparison with a similar text (Ez. 44:30). I have chosen to take his suggestion and to translate "concernant toute chose" (his proposal) as "in every way". [28]
Of particular note in this stanza is the deliberate use of words that sound alike (e.g.וְאֵדְעָה עֵדֹתֶיךָ in v. 125). This represents another layer of mastery and poetic technique.

Stanza XVII---פ

129 פְּלָאוֹת עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ עַל־כֵּן נְצָרָתַם נַפְשִׁי׃
130 פֵּתַח דְּבָרֶיךָ יָאִיר מֵבִין פְּתָיִים׃
131 פִּי־פָעַרְתִּי וָאֶשְׁאָפָה כִּי לְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ יָאָבְתִּי׃
132 פְּנֵה־אֵלַי וְחָנֵּנִי כְּמִשְׁפָּט לְאֹהֲבֵי שְׁמֶךָ׃
133 פְּעָמַי הָכֵן בְּאִמְרָתֶךָ וְאַל־תַּשְׁלֶט־בִּי כָל־אָוֶן׃
134 פְּדֵנִי מֵעֹשֶׁק אָדָם וְאֶשְׁמְרָה פִקּוּדֶיךָ׃
135 פָּנֶיךָ הָאֵר בְּעַבְדֶּךָ וְלַמְּדֵנִי אֶת־חֻקֶּיךָ׃
136 פַּלְגֵי־מַיִם יָרְדוּ עֵינָי עַל לֹא־שָׁמְרוּ תוֹרָתֶךָ׃

(Ps 119:129-136)

129. Your stipulations are wonders, therefore I have observed them.
130. The disclosure of your words gives light, making the simple to understand.
131. I open my mouth wide and I start to pant because I long for your commandments!
132. Turn towards me and be gracious to me, according to your judgment for those who love your name.
133. Make my steps firm by your utterance and do not allow any iniquity hold sway over me!
134. Redeem me from the oppression of humans so that I might keep your orders.
135. Make your face shine on your servant and teach me your statutes.
136. Streams of water have flown from my eyes, as they do not keep your law.

v. 130: Anderson notes, in accord with BHS, that Sym and Jerome suggest "gate" as an alternative reading to "unfolding".[29]

[28] Barthelémy, *Critique Textuelle 4,* 802-3.
[29] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* Vol. 2, 839.

Stanza XVIII---צ

137 צַדִּיק אַתָּה יְהוָה וְיָשָׁר מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ׃
138 צִוִּיתָ צֶדֶק עֵדֹתֶיךָ וֶאֱמוּנָה מְאֹד׃
139 צִמְּתַתְנִי קִנְאָתִי כִּי־שָׁכְחוּ דְבָרֶיךָ צָרָי׃
140 צְרוּפָה אִמְרָתְךָ מְאֹד וְעַבְדְּךָ אֲהֵבָהּ׃
141 צָעִיר אָנֹכִי וְנִבְזֶה פִּקֻּדֶיךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃
142 צִדְקָתְךָ צֶדֶק לְעוֹלָם וְתוֹרָתְךָ אֱמֶת׃
143 צַר־וּמָצוֹק מְצָאוּנִי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי׃
144 צֶדֶק עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֶחְיֶה׃

(Ps 119:137-144)

137. You are righteous, o Lord, and your judgments are fair.
138. You have made your stipulations in righteousness and in great firmness.
139. My zeal is killing me as my foes have forgotten your words.
140. Your utterance is greatly refined and your servant loves it.
141. Insignificant am I, and to be despised: yet, I have not forgotten your orders!
142. Your righteousness is right for all time, while your Law is Truth.
143. Distress and anguish find me out, but your commandments are my delight.
144. Righteous are your stipulations forever: make me to understand, so that I may truly live!

Critica Textus

v. 137: Dahood notes the difficulty in the disagreement of number in וְיָשָׁר מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ. He suggests that both adjectives might be attributed to יְהוָה and then מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ could be read as "an accusative of specification", with a resultant translation of "You are righteous , O Lord, and fair in regard to your judgements."[30] The translation, however, seems too cumbersome and the sense is equally conveyed by the more idiomatic translation above. Anderson notes that Jerome and LXX have the singular.[31]

Stanza XIX--ק

145 קָרָאתִי בְכָל־לֵב עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה חֻקֶּיךָ אֶצֹּרָה׃
146 קְרָאתִיךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וְאֶשְׁמְרָה עֵדֹתֶיךָ׃
147 קִדַּמְתִּי בַנֶּשֶׁף וָאֲשַׁוֵּעָה (לִדְבָרְךָ) [לִדְבָרְךָ] יִחָלְתִּי׃
148 קִדְּמוּ עֵינַי אַשְׁמֻרוֹת לָשִׂיחַ בְּאִמְרָתֶךָ׃
149 קוֹלִי שִׁמְעָה כְחַסְדֶּךָ יְהוָה כְּמִשְׁפָּטֶךָ חַיֵּנִי׃
150 קָרְבוּ רֹדְפֵי זִמָּה מִתּוֹרָתְךָ רָחָקוּ׃
151 קָרוֹב אַתָּה יְהוָה וְכָל־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֱמֶת׃
152 קֶדֶם יָדַעְתִּי מֵעֵדֹתֶיךָ כִּי לְעוֹלָם יְסַדְתָּם׃

(Ps 119:145-152)

30 Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150,* 188-9.
31 Ibid., 841.

145. I have called with full heart: “Answer me, O LORD! I shall keep your statutes!”
146. I called to you: “Save me, so that I might observe your stipulations!”
147. I go to meet the last dark of the night and I cry for help—yet in your word have I hope!
148. My eyes go to meet the watches of the night to meditate on your utterance.
149. Hear my voice, as befits your loving kindness, O LORD, and give me life by means of your judgment.
150. They draw near, those chasers of impurity, as they distance themselves from your law.
151. Yet you are drawing close, O LORD, and all your commandments are truth!
152. From bygone days I have learned from your stipulations that you have established them forever.

Critica Textus

v. 147: An impressive array of witnesses suggest this should be plural “in your words”.

v. 150: If we read the BHS amendment (רֹדְפַי instead of רֹדְפֵי) it would add a note of the reader being chased rather than simply the notion of a general chasing after licentiousness. The translation would then be “Those who chase after me with evil intent draw near…”. This may be preferable and has the witness of some ancient sources. However, I have chosen to translate as it stands in the MT.

Barthélemy suggests that Is. 51:1 (רֹדְפֵי צֶדֶק) offers an interesting parallel to the text which would seem to offer a parallel to the text as it stands in the MT but this is the only occurrence of this particular vocalization in the Psalter. The appended pronoun occurs six times (but this does not necessarily mean that it is preferable).[32]

The real interest in the line is the balance in the verbs: while the pursuers of wrong may draw near, they are still moving further away from the Law, which Dahood calls “an effective employment of chiasmus.”[33]

Stanza XX---ר

153 רְאֵה־עָנְיִי וְחַלְּצֵנִי כִּי־תוֹרָתְךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃
154 רִיבָה רִיבִי וּגְאָלֵנִי לְאִמְרָתְךָ חַיֵּנִי׃
155 רָחוֹק מֵרְשָׁעִים יְשׁוּעָה כִּי־חֻקֶּיךָ לֹא דָרָשׁוּ׃
156 רַחֲמֶיךָ רַבִּים יְהוָה כְּמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ חַיֵּנִי׃
157 רַבִּים רֹדְפַי וְצָרָי מֵעֵדְוֹתֶיךָ לֹא נָטִיתִי׃
158 רָאֵיתִי בֹגְדִים וָאֶתְקוֹטָטָה אֲשֶׁר אִמְרָתְךָ לֹא שָׁמָרוּ׃
159 רְאֵה כִּי־פִקּוּדֶיךָ אָהָבְתִּי יְהוָה כְּחַסְדְּךָ חַיֵּנִי׃
160 רֹאשׁ־דְּבָרְךָ אֱמֶת וּלְעוֹלָם כָּל־מִשְׁפַּט צִדְקֶךָ׃

(Ps 119:153-160)

[32] Barthelémy, *Critique Textuelle 4,* 803-5.
[33] Dahood, *Psalms III,* 191.

153. See my affliction and deliver me, for I have not disregarded your laws.
154. Plead my case and then redeem me, by your utterance make me live!
155. Salvation is far removed from the bold as they do not seek your statutes.
156. Your mercies are many, O LORD, so according to your judgments give me life.
157. Many are those who chase after me, many are my foes, yet from your stipulations I have not turned aside.
158. I have seen those who deal treachery and have felt loathing, as they have not kept your utterance.
159. See how I have loved your orders, O LORD, and according to your loving kindness, give me life!
160. The cream of your word is truth, while each judgment of your righteousness is forever!

Critica Textus

v. 160 again contains two of the synonyms.

Stanza XXI---ש

161 שָׂרִים רְדָפוּנִי חִנָּם (וּמִדְּבָרֶיךָ) [וּמִדְּבָרְךָ] פָּחַד לִבִּי׃
162 שָׂשׂ אָנֹכִי עַל־אִמְרָתֶךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שָׁלָל רָב׃
163 שֶׁקֶר שָׂנֵאתִי וַאֲתַעֵבָה תּוֹרָתְךָ אָהָבְתִּי׃
164 שֶׁבַע בַּיּוֹם הִלַּלְתִּיךָ עַל מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ׃
165 שָׁלוֹם רָב לְאֹהֲבֵי תוֹרָתֶךָ וְאֵין־לָמוֹ מִכְשׁוֹל׃
166 שִׂבַּרְתִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ יְהוָה וּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ עָשִׂיתִי׃
167 שָׁמְרָה נַפְשִׁי עֵדֹתֶיךָ וָאֹהֲבֵם מְאֹד׃
168 שָׁמַרְתִּי פִקּוּדֶיךָ וְעֵדֹתֶיךָ כִּי כָל־דְּרָכַי נֶגְדֶּךָ׃

(Ps 119:161-168)

161. Princes chase me vainly, but my heart trembles because of your word.
162. As for me, I am rejoicing over your utterances like the one who has found a mighty spoil!
163. I hate and I abhor deception: your law I do love!
164. Seven times by day I praise you because of your righteous judgments.
165. Great peace is there for the lovers of your law, for them there is no scandal!
166. I await your salvation, O LORD, and fulfil your commandments.
167. I keep your stipulations and I love them greatly.
168. I keep your orders and your stipulations, for all my ways are before you!

Critica Textus

v. 161: There is a difficulty around וּמִדְּבָרֶיךָ . The difficulty is that the form, as it stands, need some form of amendment. Ancient sources amended it to וּמִדְּבָרְךָ

(Psa 119:161 WTT). However, there may be a dittography from v.160, where interesting the sources are also at variance. Deletion of the yod and return to a singular may be preferable.
v. 168 contains two synonyms.

Stanza XXII---ת

169 תִּקְרַב רִנָּתִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה כִּדְבָרְךָ הֲבִינֵנִי׃
170 תָּבוֹא תְחִנָּתִי לְפָנֶיךָ כְּאִמְרָתְךָ הַצִּילֵנִי׃
171 תַּבַּעְנָה שְׂפָתַי תְּהִלָּה כִּי תְלַמְּדֵנִי חֻקֶּיךָ׃
172 תַּעַן לְשׁוֹנִי אִמְרָתֶךָ כִּי כָל־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ צֶדֶק׃
173 תְּהִי־יָדְךָ לְעָזְרֵנִי כִּי פִקּוּדֶיךָ בָחָרְתִּי׃
174 תָּאַבְתִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ יְהוָה וְתוֹרָתְךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי׃
175 תְּחִי־נַפְשִׁי וּתְהַלְלֶךָּ וּמִשְׁפָּטְךָ יַעְזְרֵנִי׃
176 תָּעִיתִי כְּשֶׂה אֹבֵד בַּקֵּשׁ עַבְדֶּךָ כִּי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃

(Ps 119:169-176)

169. My cry will come near to you: "O LORD, according to your word, give me understanding".
170. My supplication will come before your face: "By your utterance, save me!"
171. My lips will pour out praise because you have taught me your statutes.
172. My tongue will sing your utterance, for each judgment of yours is just.
173. May your hand be there to support me, for I have chosen your orders.
174. I have longed for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight.
175. Let me live, so that I may praise you and by your judgment help me!
176. I lost my way like a frightened sheep, seek out your servant for I have not forgotten your commandments.

Critica Textus
v. 172 also contains two synonyms.
v. 176: Anderson notes that Duhm and Gunkel sought to delete the phrase "like a frightened sheep" (כְּשֶׂה אֹבֵד) as a gloss which overloads the meter, but MT has the support of ancient witnesses and Qumran texts.[34]

Discrete Reading 1:
The Genre and Purpose of Psalm 119

While Ps 119 is a technical masterpiece, there is a difficulty in fitting it into any particular genre. Many of the characteristics that would identify it immediately as belonging to one category or another are simply absent. It simply does not "fall seamlessly" (to use Gunkel's own terminology for the identification of genres)

[34] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* Vol 2, 847.

into any of the general and noted categories.[35] The narrative of the poem, from which we would normally derive its genre, is secondary to its structure and to its language. In the Psalter, this is quite unique. Yet, to suggest that there is no narrative would also be a mistake. While there might not be the specific human drama of falling into a pit or climbing a mountain, this psalm does associate itself with the experiences of joy and pleasure, challenge and trial, but from a starting position of faithfulness to *torah* rather than from the experience itself. The classical narrative situations that might beget a lament or a thanksgiving, even elements of the kingly role and the cultic might be present, but the approach is inverted: whereas these other genres have as their starting point a human event or circumstance that gives birth to a prayerful reflection that might seek resolution or simply celebrate and give thanks for prosperous and successful outcomes, here the starting point is the gift of the *torah* and how it consoles, guides and instructs the individual in all of these circumstances.[36]

However, the technique of classifying the psalm into a genre, despite its limits, is helpful as a model to understand some of its literary aspects and how it demonstrates traits that are held in common with other psalms. In discussing the various models of classifying this psalm, there may be fresh understandings of its "kinship" to other forms.

Gunkel: from genre to formlessness

Gunkel's reflections on genre studies represent the classic early formulation of this form of studies and their impact on Psalms studies. As noted already, his proposal is that the researcher needs to begin with the study of the "character of the material itself", which leads to "a basic observation of the original essence of this poetry" that allows it to "fall seamlessly into various genres".[37] In delineating the genres, he sets three important criteria:

---

[35] Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction,* 7.

[36] An analogy might help to clarify this. Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot* belongs to the Theatre of the Absurd. This particular form of theatre, of which this play is a showpiece, seeks to examine, almost forensically but still with a real literary beauty, the various possibilities for finding meaning and sense to life, in the "existential laboratory" of the play. As such the various experiences of the two protagonists are less a dramatic narrative than they are a demonstration of the absurdity of their human condition. In a similar way, this psalm starts from a specific sense of the blessedness and wholeness of the way of those who seek to live by *torah*: the human experiences of joy, challenge, salvation and distress serve more to illustrate the point of the all-encompassing importance of *torah* in the "existential laboratory" of the psalm than to be the starting point for a reflection in themselves.

[37] Hermann Gunkel; *Psalms,* 7.

- That poems can only be assembled together that belong to, or at least derive from, "a specific occasion in the worship service". [38]
- That they must naturally indicate "a common treasury of thoughts and moods".[39]
- That they display a "language related to the form".[40]

Thus far, Gunkel's system of classification seems clear and practicable. However, this psalm does not seem to belong to, or derive from, any particular worship setting that can be ascertained. While it certainly has a common treasury of thoughts and moods with Pss 1 and 19 and the language globally could be described as Wisdom language, this is not a sufficient level of similarity to conclude that these form a genre in the classic Gunkelian sense. The "language related to form" criterion is the most difficult to identify, as Gunkel recognizes and deserves a developed comment.

Alonso-Schökel: three levels of language and their relationship to form

Luis Alonso Schökel develops this relationship between language[41] and form in his work *La Parola Ispirata.*[42] One comment he makes displays the importance of the language-form relationship. He remarks that it is often assumed that two volumes are needed to contain a language (lingua): a dictionary (for its vocabulary) and a grammar (for its technical structures). Yet another is also necessary, according to Schökel: a formulary. A sense of the forms that may be present and how language adapts to form will be a constitutive element of any language (lingua).

According to Schökel, three levels of language exist: common language, technical language and literary language.

Common language is the humus for both others, but its own sense is in the immediate and the familiar. This language is the language of spontaneous and

[38] Gunkel, *Psalms*, 16.
[39] Ibid.
[40] ibid.
[41] It may be necessary to make a distinction here as two terms are used in Italian: *linguaggio* and *lingua.* Both terms would be translated as "language" in English, but the former has a nuance of language as "wordcraft" or language specific to a situation (e.g. legal language) while the latter refers to "tongue" (e.g. French, Italian, Hebrew, Greek). In general here, "language" will refer to the former unless specifically stated otherwise by including (lingua) after the word language.
[42] L.A. Schökel: *La Parola Ispirata: La Bibbia alla luce della scienza del linguaggio.* (Brescia: Paideia, 1987), 152-157.

familiar communication (which is its form), which, according to Schökel "dissolves into clarity". Despite the oft-familiar settings and tones of this and many psalms, this level of language (in its attendant form) does not exist here. Rather, it may have had an influence on some of the more spontaneously inspired phrases but it does not seem to be present of itself.

The next level of language is **"technical language"**. This language has its origins in the humus of common language but it moves from the immediacy and spontaneity of expression, by means of separation and distancing itself, to the concepts that underpin these expressions and to technical terms for these. Therefore, this language might be described as being terminology that has a "fixedness" of meaning from recurrence in a particular context with a particular function. The example that Schökel uses is that of a mother who brings a child to a doctor. In the immediate context, she describes the experiences and conditions of the child, probably with great emotion. The step that the doctor must make is to separate from the stream of communication what might be the symptoms and to offer a diagnosis. This is the process behind technical language: it offers terms for the concepts that might be communicated initially in common language.

Whether this language occurs in Psalm 119 is an intriguing question. In common with Deuteronomy, it offers many different terms (seven in Deuteronomy; an eighth -or even up to ten-exist here) for the concept of law. As Schökel notes, with reference to Deuteronomy, the author mixes and substitutes these terms, "seeking a sense of fullness, of understanding".[43] Schökel suggests that in Deuteronomy, this prescinds technical differentiation and the intention of the author is that sense of globality. A similar sense of globality of expression seems to be present here and, as such, allows this psalm to be associated with Ps 19 and to Ps 1, where the same sense of using language in the search for a sense of the fullness and understanding of the Law, i.e. the same *form,* exists. This language is related to the form of the psalm, which seeks to give a fullness of expression to the idea of Torah and, as such, sets this psalm in relationship with the other two *in form.*[44] These three psalms are not technical instructions on the

[43]L. Alonso-Schökel, *La Parola Ispirata,* 158. The original Italian reads "l'autore coscientemente mescola e sostituisce i nomi cercando piuttosto il senso della piennezza, dell'interpretatazione".
[44] Schökel offers an interesting parallel to this in his discussion of the "spiritualization" of certain terms. He remarks that the LXX translation of *torah* as *nomos* demonstrates how the meaning of the term became more restricted and limited, a process which has had an impact on the

application of different aspects of law, even though the terms for these aspects of law are present. The *form* is important for our interpretation of these terms: technicalization of the terms would rob the reader of that sense of globality.

In summary, one needs to recognize that terms, which develop a technical meaning in other contexts with a fixedness of expression, do not have that technical meaning here but are used to create a poetic *globality of expression*. This leads us to examine the third level of language: literary language.

Literary language, according to Schökel, does not follow the process of separation and distillation that allows technical language to offer a precision in language and form, but rather it is language that has become "quintessence" (to use Schökel's own phrase), in that it has become the objectivization (or, better, the "incarnation") of the richness of interior life which humanity wishes to share but which it finds difficult to do. He comments how discourse often sells short the depth of the message that one might wish to communicate. Therefore, literary language offers a possibility of plundering all the resources of language, engaging all its functions and using its potential to the full. While this is difficult, the very difficulty can be a source of inspiration, as the sculptor can be inspired by the resilience of the marble which he has to whittle away so as to reveal the figure he alone can see within.

Of this "raid on the inarticulate", Schökel makes a number of observations. Firstly, he suggests that literary language evolves from the humus of common language by a process of "*potenziamento",* literally a process of empowering, of vesting language with a capacity to communicate something more than the immediate and the imminent. This will necessarily mean stretching language, sometimes even engaging uses of language that have heretofore not been activated. In that context, literary language loves a density of expression and a concentration of ideas, so that more can be expressed in succinct and pithy ways. Yet this does not mean that this is merely "a way of saying" but rather all the aspects of language—style, sound, connotations and even semi-conscious resonances—are important.

Secondly, the means and the material of expression are **"words"**. Words are not simply lexemes with precise significations but are again vested with

interpretation of the term ever since, despite the attempts in many dictionaries to offer explanations of the broader Hebrew background and understanding.

resonance and connotation, with conscious and semi-conscious references that communicate often much more than the imminent.[45] Theologically, Schökel comments on how the incarnation of our thoughts will always be the word made flesh.

Thirdly, the essence of literary language is its love of "multiplicity". This is not to suggest that it simply means whatever the reader wants it to hear but rather it recognizes the capacity of literary language to melt the objective and the subjective together, so as to cast a spell on the reader and to produce an "almost magical presence". This is the most intriguing and the boldest aspect of the form of literary language. It is not imprisoned to the precision and the fixedness of technical language but it has a freedom to communicate more than the imminent and the technical. Schökel in this regard quotes Clement of Alexandria who says of the Scriptures that they "bring truth to light but remain virginal as they continue to hide the mysteries of truth".

When applied to Psalm 119, this reflection on language and form offers a different perspective to that proposed by Gunkel. While Gunkel sees in this psalm a breakdown of the traditional technical genres with their specific purposes and techniques into "formlessness", Schökel's rationale takes up that same formlessness and demonstrates how this demonstrates a development into literary language. While this psalm may not comply with the literary genres of Gunkel, which in essence reflect something closer to technical language with its sense of disciplined and refined segregation of terms which will indicate a form that is identifiable and distinct, Schökel offers a model of form wherein the strict and beautiful structure (even simply to the untrained eye), the clever use of repetition of terms, the use of metaphor and the resonances and the associations of some terms together form that attempt to raid the inarticulate and to express the quintessence that is the purpose of literary language. While Gunkel may be correct technically to suggest that this psalm is a turn "towards formlessness" in terms of his (technical) categories, it is a prime example of the "incarnation of the

[45] An example might clarify this. In Yeats's poem *The Lake Isle of Inisfree,* the term "Inisfree" is, technically, the transliteration of a Gaelic place-name, *inis fraoch,* which would best be translated as *island of the bilberries.* Yet for anyone who reads that poem, the significance of the term is much larger. There is the obvious juxtaposition of two languages—whereby one might understand this as the "island of the free". There is the element of sound, whereby the colloquiality of "Inisfree" contrasts with flow of standard English. This is one example of where the semantic value of the lexeme is surpassed and expanded dramatically beyond the technical lexical value.

richness of interior life" which is the goal of literary language and its forms. Gunkel's technical genres and their limits serve a purpose and this can be very interesting and informative for the reading of the psalms and the sense of the importance of their form, but the "formlessness" of this psalm (to allude to Gunkel's own expression) allows a freedom to express in literary language what the shackles of Gunkelian genre might have inhibited. Gunkel indeed will describe this as being a "mosaic of the smallest genre components".[46] Yet the mosaic is often infinitely more effective than the sum of individual units which form it.

***Marc Girard: drama of liberation*[47]**

Marc Girard offers a different insight into the genre of the psalms. He begins with a note of distrust about the usefulness of the traditional categorization of fourteen genres. He finds that such strict categories eventually are shown to be difficult to apply to some psalms where the literary unity is not in doubt but where the Gunkelian "seamlessness" seems not to apply. Girard declares his preference for a category of "families" of psalms—psalms of liberation, of instruction, of praise and of celebration of "life" (special social events).[48]

Within these categories, he holds that psalms of Wisdom (=instruction), take the form of a master's address to a disciple, or a prophet's admonishment of a community. He cites Ps 1 as a perfect example. However, this psalm (119) does not have this form, as it is mainly a prayer, addressed to the Lord, with only four purely didactic verses (vv.1-3 (macarism) and v. 115 (prophetic admonition, which has the only imperative not addressed to God). While *torah* is the dominant theme, the apparently didactic statements about *torah* are couched always in a framework of prayer, asking God to allow the psalmist to "live" the *torah*. Girard states:

> But from the beginning to the end, a real existential drama of salvation underlies the long poem. In my book *The Psalms Mirror of the Poor,* in describing the typology of the

[46] Gunkel, 307.

[47] This section is based on Girard's presentation to the Continuing Seminar "Psalm 119: Poetry, Structure and Theology" at the Seventy-second International Meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of America (1-4 August 2009, Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska). Girard's contribution was entitled "Psalm 119: Stylistic Structures and Literary Genre".

[48] Girard explains this theory in more depth in the article "The Psalter" in the *The Bible and its traditions* (https://bibletraditions.org/vd/en/ø1.Ps1.en.pdf). Girard says:

> In short, without neglecting the valuable information gained from the form-critical approach, it would seem preferable to opt for a simpler presentation of the categories of psalms, relying more on the psychological moods expressed and on the way the believing persons and communities might use them, including of course, the people of Israel. Thus we shall distinguish between the psalms of praise, the dramas of liberation, the teaching poems, and the festive songs for special occasions. (page 50).

> liberation dramas, I came to the conclusion that eight steps have to be distinguished: lamentation, supplication, hope to be eventually delivered, divine intervention (either theophany or oracle of salvation), effective liberation, thanksgiving, stable confidence for the future public communication. In Psalm 119, the first three steps are found: lament (8% of the text), call for salvation (10%), confidence (2%). Even the didactic and moral elements do not hide the existential drama of the psalmist: he is a "resident alien" (v.19), "despised" (vv. 39,141), betrayed (v.158). Of course, in his explicit calls for life and salvation he describes his own situation in more precise terms: he faces "deceitfulness" and "lie" (vv. 67-70, 118), hostility and persecution (v.157), death (vv. 61, 84-85, 87, 95, 110); his throat "clings to the dust" (v.25); he weeps (v.28)…
>
> What is to be concluded? In spite of the arithmetic proportions, to understand the original meaning of the psalm, to me, the priority has to be given to the dramatics of salvation. The message could be the following: even when one faces the worst existential problems, the Word of God is the "way" *par excellence* to get rid of them. In fact the Word of God not only enlightens the "path" of human behaviour (from a moral standpoint), but it has the power to open the roads of human existence that have been blocked by all kinds of oppressors.[49]

Girard's thesis is attractive, in that he exchanges the classic criteria of Gunkelian discernment of genre for a more literary-sensitive categorization of the psalm. Girard describes the drama of salvation family thus:

> *The dramas of liberation* are rooted in situations of political, social, moral, physical, psychological or simply existential destitution experienced either by an individual or a collectivity or even by a king in solidarity with his people (Ps 3-7; 9-14; 16-18; 20-23; 25-28; 30-32; 34-36; 38-44; 51; 53-64; 66; 68-71; 73-74; 76-77; 79-80; 83; 85-86; 88-90; 94; 102; 106-109; 115-116; 118-120; 123-126; 129-131; 137-144). Theoretically, the drama type consists of eight stages: lamentation, supplication, trust in salvation, announcement of divine intervention, testifying to liberation, thanksgiving, unshakeable trust if the problems should ever recur, and testimony given in public. Certain poems are limited to one stage; others consist of several of them; two psalms even include up to seven (Ps 31 and 40). [50]

A possible parallel is the drama of the Book of Job, where the hero is pitched against both natural and physical trials and also against the voices of false Wisdom (his wife, his three friends, the youthful Elihu). The Job drama undergoes the same stages. The drama of Job is the coming to the realization of 42:1-6, where he understands that he does not understand but still he "sees", even from the "dust and ashes". In Ps 119 there may be the hints of a Psalmic Job, with the sense of drama and the test of Torah that matches Job's test of Wisdom. Just as the premise of Job's innocence (firmly established in Job 1-2) is the preface to the "I-Thou" drama and dialogue in the Book of Job, so here the premise is contained in the macarism of vv.1-3, where the blessedness and blamelessness of those who walk in the *torah* of the Lord, keep his decrees and seek him with full heart. The praying subject subsequently explores the truth of this premise in the existential laboratory (or, perhaps better, on the stage of this psalm) where he

[49] Marc Girard, "Psalm 119: Stylistic Structures and Literary Genre", (no pagination).
[50] Marc Girard, "The Psalter" in *The Bible and its traditions.* ,50.

undergoes many experiences that will test and prove this premise to be true. Whereas Job pushes the drama into the ultimate climax of his summoning God to account for himself, Ps 119 pitches the drama in a more general and sedate manner, but one whereby here also the conclusion is that one can stray like a sheep but the beacon that enlightens the way for the Shepherd (with echoes of Psalm 23) to seek this stray is the very fact that he has kept the commands (v.176, the final verse). Just as Job was a movement from pristine external compliance to Wisdom to an "inner seeing" (Job 42:6), so here the Psalms brings one to the point whereby the *torah* is no longer an external observance but an inner compass that gives direction and solution to the vicissitudes of life but also ultimately allows God to recognise where his faithful and blameless one is when "disorientated" (even blamelessly) in the way.[51]

This is then what Girard means by "salvation": that the reader of the psalm might begin to appreciate, through the sheer monotony and fastidiousness of this psalm that the one hope for a light for the path or a mark that will allow the Shepherd to find the disoriented stray is the *torah*. Girard says:

> Une saine notion et une sainte théologie de la Loi ne peuvent être inculquées de nos jours qu'au prix d'une insistance continue et presque fastidieuse. De cela, le Ps 119 reste le signe et l'aide-mémoire! Avant de « faire », il faut « connaître »; pour « connaître », il faut « apprendre » (*lmd* au qal) ; et pour « apprendre », il faut se mettre a l'école d'un Autre (*lmd* au piel). Le terme de tout cet effort se **résume en un seul terme: « vie »,** c'est-à-dire « salut ».[52]

Will Soll: Psalm 119 as a lament

Another theory on the genre of Ps 119 is to be found in the work of Will Soll.[53] Soll suggests that Ps 119 should be read as a lament. In one sense, Soll seeks to return to the classical sense of genre of the Gunkelian School. However, while he situates himself within that tradition, he distances himself from the definition of Psalm 119 as a *Mischgattung.* Soll's primary focus, as we will see, is *to return to the sense of Ps 119 as prayer.* Situating the psalm as lament achieves this purpose and there is some merit in his proposal, as we will examine.

Soll begins the presentation of his theory negatively, in distancing himself from the categorization of the psalm as Mischgattung by Gunkel and those who strictly follow him. In this he suggests that the categorization indicates the

---

[51] The term "disorientated" is a direct reference to Brueggemann's functionality theory of the stages of "orientation", "disorientation" and "reorientation" which will be discussed presently.
[52] Marc Girard, *Les Psaumes Redécouverts—de la structure au sens*. (Vol. III. Montréal: Éditions Bellarmin, 1994). 140.
[53] Will Soll, *Psalm 119: Matrix Form and Setting* (CBQMS 23; Washington: CBA, 1991).

existence of a problem without offering a solution.[54] Soll also distances himself from those who immediately inherit the Gunkel tradition, particularly Weiser and Kraus.[55]

Neither is Soll enamoured of the position taken by Deißler. Deißler effectively takes the idea of the *Mischgattung* somewhat further by suggesting that this psalm is actually an anthology. Soll is happy to accept that there is a "strong and creative relation to the preceding biblical text", but he disagrees with the term "anthology" and Deißler's (somewhat forced) reading of the verses as dependent on other biblical text. This, as Soll observes, would serve merely to atomize the psalm even further and would not contribute to an over-arching vision of the unity of the psalm.[56] While there are strong allusions to other biblical texts, this need not suggest that this is solely an anthology. The psalmist draws from the same well as the other biblical writers, even if he is not drawing from them directly. The use of allusions, echoes and common vocabulary with other biblical texts suggests a strong biblical culture as the background of the psalm.

Soll's own scholarly inheritance comes in the form of the work of Claus Westermann and his criterion for the categorization of the psalm as lament comes from Westermann's theories on the nature of praise and lament. Essentially, Westermann revisits Gunkel's delineations but from the particular standpoint of how these fit within the matrix of worship. Refocusing the vision on worship allows Westermann to review the boundaries of the genres (which he describes as being "fluid") into the two related currents of "praise" and "lament". These are, in turn, twin realities, as "praise", epitomized in the hymn, is the thankful and grateful reaction of the people to the gift of the Lord's intervention on their behalf in history. Lament, in turn, becomes their prayerful

---

[54] Ibid, 62. Soll credits this expression to R. Gordis, but in another context, as he indicates in footnote 10.

[55] Weiser's categorization of the psalm exemplifies the assertions of this school:

> The psalm is a many-coloured mosaic of thoughts which are often repeated in a wearisome fashion;.....The types of poetry, too, change without any recognizable order and reinforce the impression of restlessness produced by the whole psalm....; the psalm is a purely literary product.

Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* OTL; London, SCM Press, 1962. 739-40.

[56] Deißler in turn has his heirs who perpetuate his understanding of the psalm. John Day is to be counted among these and he describes Ps 119 thus:

> Psalm 119 has rightly been described as anthological. It shows dependence on a number of other Old Testament books, including Deuteronomy, Proverbs and Jeremiah. It clear reflects post –exilic legal piety, and its combination of legal piety and wisdom has something in common with the Book of Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira) in the Apocrypha. The psalm is *sui generis*--- it is centred on the Torah, but it has Wisdom traits, as well as some features of the individual lament and occasionally of the hymn of praise.

(J. Day: *Psalms* (Old Testament Guides. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 57.

presentation of circumstances that need his intervention. It is this vision of lament that Soll applies to Psalm 119: a prayerful but structured presentation of the situations that need the intervention of the Lord in the life of the individual (as here) or in the historical circumstances of the people.[57]

In applying the form of lament to this psalm, Soll initially has recourse to the observation of Von Rad that the elements of a declaration of faithfulness to *torah* and then a protestation of the psalmist's innocence are both present. However, to further his case he applies the outline of the lament that has been recognized by Westermann, consisting of address, lament, confession of trust, petition, vow of praise. Two further observations on this outline are made, one being that they do not depend on a specific worship setting and that they are not stereotyped. Both will be important, as Soll is clear on the fact that he does not want to discuss the aspect of setting and its import on genre; neither does he want to stereotype lament, as the order of the elements will not be respected in this psalm. Finally, he stresses that, as we stated above, lament, in Westermann's theory, cannot be separated from petition, but rather they will often be joined as the lament will be an exposition of what the psalmist wants to be restored so that praise might again be the norm. Both are present in this psalm—some sixty verses being petitionary and some thirty-eight verses of lament around the action of foes or some personal difficulty (but none, interestingly, directly because of the Lord's absence).

Soll goes on to "fit", almost gymnastically, the different features of the lament into the psalm. That he can do so is of little surprise in a psalm of this length with so many aspects. Ultimately, the scope of any lament is petition and discovery of new hope from God's promise. This is true of this psalm also as the psalmist discovers his hope of God's promise (which can be used to translate one of the synonyms) in the *torah*.

That the constituent elements of lament are present does not recast this psalm as lament. Certainly it plunders the lament tradition and the aspects of petition and presentation of adverse circumstances (complaint) are present. Yet this might not be regarded as exceptional. Many traditions have adapted the elements of lament in a similar manner and re-used them, without sounding the

[57] Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms.* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 15-35.

melody of lament directly. Eighteenth century Irish and Scottish poetry used elements of the genre of lament in poetry for the Stuart kings, where the real focus is political and cultural rather than lament, but the form is adapted because of it poignancy and emotional capacities.[58] Something similar happens here, as Soll has realized, where the elements of lament are present and lend something of that poignancy and emotion to the poem but the real focus of the poem is not so much in the call for assistance as in the affirmation of assistance that comes from the *torah*.

The real benefit of Soll's endeavour is to re-focus the psalm as prayer, in that strange amalgam of praise and lament as outlined by Westermann. This he does successfully but his rather forced setting of lament is less convincing. Rather, as suggested above, the genre of lament is plundered for its elements and the poignancy of "honest prayer" as the poet creates a sense of the urgency and emotion of his quest. Something of the poignancy of lament might be seen particularly if we compare the imagery or language to be found in the psalm with various allusions in other parts of the Old Testament, thus in vv. 23 (with echoes of Ps 2); 25 (almost Joban in its imagery); vv. 51, 69,78, 86-87, 95, 141 (which might find parallels in Jeremiah 18:19ff or Isaiah 52:13-53:12); v.125 (cf. Isaiah 42:1); v.136 (with a possible allusion to Jer. 9:1-2); v.161 (cf. I Sam 26:18ff.); v. 176 (with a possible allusion to Ez. 34:6ff.).

This is "honest prayer", as described by Walter Brueggemann in his discussion of the psalms of lament/complaint/protest:

> Honest prayer expresses the basest reality of our lives…. But when life is not well and we are pushed to extremes, the lament psalms offer a model of engagement in full candor with the God of transformative possibility.[59]

Psalm 119: Patchwork or Portrait?

Some commentators have dismissed the rhetoric and narrative of the poem as non-existent, victim to the rigours of the acrostic form. Alonso-Schœkel most pungently dismisses the poetic narrative of the psalm by saying that there is nothing of the poetic herein but it is rather a "materially successful exercise."[60]

---

[58] One example, common to both traditions is the haunting piece, *Sé mo laoch,* which has had a surprising revival in modern music and has come to be used again at funerals, resetting it in it supposed original *Sitz im Leben!*

[59] W. Brueggemann: *From Whom No Secrets are Hid—Introducing the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 91.

[60] Alonso-Schœkel, *Salmi,* 600.

Others follow suit with similar dismissals of a poetic narrative to the psalm, smothered by the acrostic form. Some offer a different model, other than the literary, for its rhetoric, such as Deissler with the suggestion that it might be an anthology used in post-exilic Wisdom Schools and based, loosely, on the teachings of the Prophets and Deuteronomy, or Bergler with the notion that it is a formal liturgy, based around each of the synonyms and used in the context of the Feast of *Sukkot* (cf. Nehemiah 8:15).[61]

John Eaton provides us with an interesting and informative survey of different scholarly evaluations of the rhetoric of Ps 119 in his *Conference with the Commentators.*[62] As a means of understanding how this sense of the rhetoric of the Psalm has evolved, and even how a sense of its importance is emerging, a summary of his findings may be helpful.

With reference to Franz Delitzsch, [63] Eaton notes that he finds a "thoughtful artistry in the composition." [64] Delitzsch proposes that the background to the composition is that of a time of apostasy or persecution.[65] He continues to suggest the time of Ezra or the Hellenistic persecutions as a likely time of composition.

The next commentator proposed for study by Eaton is Friedrich Baethgen.[66] In this commentary, there is a suggestion that scribal errors may have obscured an original scheme of the eight synonyms. He suggests it may be composed as a vademecum for the young. The experiences seem closer to those of a people rather than an individual.[67] He suggests an early Hellenistic period, giving rise to a need for a poem that will vaunt the glory of the ancestral Law.[68]

Eaton's survey continues with the work of Bernhard Duhm.[69] In turn, Duhm proposes the hypothesis of a young "Elihu", lacking poetic gifts and humility, as originator of the poem.[70] He finds no redeeming features in its art, theology or piety, regarding it as the "most empty product that ever blackened

---

[61] Siegfried Bergler, "Der längste Psalm: Anthologie oder Litugie?" *VT* 29 (1979): 257-288.
[62] John Eaton, *Psalms of the Way and the Kingdom. A Conference with the Commentators* (JSOTSup 199. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).
[63] Franz Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar über die Psalmen,* (Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1867).
[64] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 17.
[65] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 18.
[66] Friedrich Baethgen, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897).
[67] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 20.
[68] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 21.
[69] Bernhard Duhm, *Die Psalmen* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1899).
[70] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 24.

paper."[71] This is indicative of a more generalized disparaging attitude (on Duhm's part) towards the Law.

Nest in the survey is the work of Charles Briggs, whose primary focus is textual criticism.[72] In this vein, he claims to have found the original order of the rotation of the terms for Law. This is seen as the prayer of the congregation, where the Law has almost a hypostatic function as representative of God. The hypothesis for the situation is that of persecution, by either Greeks of Syrians, towards the end of the Hellenistic period.

Rudolph Kittel suggests that t his is a didactic poem in the form of a confession, with a tone of lament or prayer.[73] The reverence for the Law has become almost idolatrous.[74] He envisages its origins in the reactionary reverence for the Law of the Greek period.

Hermann Gunkel's work (1929) is next examined.[75] Gunkel, whose concern is in the recognition of genres, sees this as a garish mosaic of almost all the lyrical forms—a mixed poem. The acrostic comes at the sacrifice of quality in content.[76] Gunkel posits the idea of an old man, reflecting over his lifetime, as the purported psalmist. He suggests the Persian period as a likely time of composition.

Aage Bentzen's work of 1939 sees a consistency in parts of the psalm—particularly in the first strophe.[77] He sees its purpose as being to facilitate individual meditation, even in a form of penitential chant.[78] Again there is an association with Ezra and the need to hold fast to God's Word in a situation of conflict.

Sigmund Mowinckel (1955) classifies the psalm as a lamenting prayer for help, where the statements about the Law are motives for a favourable hearing. There is a sense of identification between the cosmic Law and the Torah.[79] The composer is a leading figure in his community, perhaps aided by a levitical singer

---

[71] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 25.
[72] Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms.* (2 volumes. ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906).
[73] R. Kittel, *Die Psalmen: ubersetzt und erklärt* (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche, 1914)
[74] Eaton, Psalms of the Way, 29.
[75] Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen.* Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933.
[76] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 32.
[77] Aage Bentzen, *Fortolkning til de gammeltestamentlige Salmer* (Køb, 1939).
[78] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 35.
[79] Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 36-8.

with the purpose of expressing piety for the Law.

Hans-Joachim Kraus (1960) returns to the idea of the psalm as a kind of anthology.[80] There is the use of a number of *Gattungen* around the general theme of respect for the Law.[81] He sees the composition as post exilic. He has a particular sensitivity to the psalm's joy in the Word.

Mitchell Dahood (1966-70) is the first to apply the Qumran findings to the study of the psalm, in which he sees, through the study of syntax, "a freshness of thought and felicity of expression." [82] He sees *torah* as all forms of divine revelation and a guide of life.[83] He favours a pre-exilic dating for the psalm, perhaps in the Deuteronomic activity of the seventh century. It may have been composed for a Davidic king.

Claus Westermann (1984) believes the Psalter may have ended with this psalm at one stage, which is recognised as a means of demonstrating the opposition between the pious and the godless, based on their devotion to the Law.[84] The focus is on a book-based piety.[85]

The final work in Eaton's survey is that of Will Soll.[86] After an exhaustive examination of acrostics, he sees a unity in the acrostic form *in se* which, when matched with the eightfold repetition of the synonyms functions well for what it is meant to be, without any need for the third element of a poetic narrative. He refocuses on the prayer aspect of the psalm strongly, demonstrating how Torah is pitted against real existential situations and this is then brought into the matrix of prayer.[87]

Eaton's survey demonstrates both the disparity of opinions on the rhetoric of the psalm and also on the appreciation of the stylistic features of the poem. Eaton summarizes the findings and then he refocuses the perspective to the idea of contemplation. The very disjointedness and apparent lack of connection between the verses may well, conversely, be the key to its success as a contemplative tool, whose unity is already established by means of the acrostic

---

80 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960).
81 Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 40.
82 Mitchell Dahood, ---------. *Psalms III. 101-150.* (AB. New York: Doubleday, 1970).
83 Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 43.
84 Claus Westermann, *Ausgewählte Psalmen* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).
85 Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 44.
86 Will Soll, *Psalm 119: Matrix Form and Setting* (CBQMS 23; Washington: CBA, 1991).
87 Eaton, *Psalms of the Way,* 133.

form and the repletion of the synonyms. As Eaton says;

> The alphabetic scheme and the rotation of synonyms take on more meaning from the contemplative purpose. The aid to memory, the sense of order and completeness, the dedicated skill--- here are valid appreciations of the acrostic. But there is more. From the letters which are the primal elements of all utterance unfolds a yet richer alphabet of communion—from each letter in turn eight sayings that draw to God. It is precisely the 'disjointed' nature of the sayings that is their strength, intentionally so. Each has its own completeness as a link to God, spokes in a wheel of communion. The various names for God's healing word are told over and over again like beads on a rosary. They reveal new facets, like stones ever moved to new settings.[88]

More recently, the study of the rhetoric of the poem has returned to the scholarly forum and some more recent studies apply the techniques of rhetorical analysis to this psalm. Freedman begins his analysis by describing the psalm's literary quality as "rather pedestrian and mechanical in its content."[89] However, in turn, he discusses some of the symmetry on word patterns and the metrical counterpoint which he claims demonstrate an over arching symmetry to the plan of the psalm, leading to a different evaluation on this score at the end of his analysis:

> In sum, the poem is a mechanical and technical marvel, with an intricately worked structure, within which the poet exercised considerable freedom to express his originality and creativity, while keeping within the self-imposed boundaries of the overall construction.[90]

Meynet offers another model, based on rhetorical analysis of the psalm. His method is complicated, depending on identifying the sequence of the whole psalm based on a series of five sub-sequences.[91] Within these sequences, he analyses the word structure to determine the implicit thematics in these sub-sequences:

Subsequence 1 (vv.1-40).
The dominant motif is that of the **Way**, with overtones of the Exodus experience. The series of imperatives are indicative of the giving of the Law within that experience

Subsequence 2 (vv. 41-80).
The implicit thematic is the fruits of divine *hesed,* particularly **words** and **memories**. Words come from God to direct the individual but also this gives the individual the words to use in turn towards the enemies. Complainers misuse the

[88] Ibid., 52.
[89] David Noel Freedman, *Psalm 119: The Exaltation of Torah* (Biblical and Judaic Studies, 6. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999). 14.
[90] Ibid, 80.
[91] Meynet, *Les huit psaumes,* 141-273.

same words. Memories are also the fruits of divine kindness and the memory of Creation is a continuing word that renews and calls to life.

Subsequence 3 (vv.81-96)
In a context of conflict with enemies, he can feel abandoned but will not in turn abandon the Law. In this context, he begins to learn and to become whole, which is the implied thematic herein. This is the centrepiece of the Sequence.

Subsequence 4 (vv.97-136)
The learning motif continues as attitudes towards others, towards enemies, towards God and towards life and death are formed. These are based on the implied thematic of Justice and lies. Corporal imagery is renewed as one of the chief metaphors becomes walking with Torah.

Subsequence 5: (vv. 137-176).
The situations of danger and distress are the motif and the search to understand in the face of the ultimate danger of death is the implied thematic. The eventual movement is to a plea to give life, to praise and then to the Wisdom that all depends upon God but that humanity can find its way to God by means of the Law.

As a final remark, Meynet notes the importance of connecting the opening and closing lines. In essence the straying sheep is blessed, because he has the "way" back in that he does not forget the commandments and the Law.

Meynet's work is interesting and probably the most suggestive rhetorical analysis of this poem that one will find. One cannot but feel, however, that the rhetorical analysis and the word structure (which he does not examine in the original but in French translation) is somewhat stretched; but he has begun a conversation which will be enriching to the analysis and study of this psalm.

Final Comments

The acrostic form, with the repetition of the synonyms, forms the primary element of composition in Ps 119. As such, it has been accused of smothering the poetic narrative and forming a synthetic and tasteless artifice. On the contrary, this forms a linguistic temple, wherein the forms and shapes of Biblical prayer come together, under the banner of the *torah*, to create a symphony. The dis-jointedness, as Eaton noted, is not a flaw but rather a dynamic tension which

holds together many of the strands of the human experience and brings them into the orchestra of this psalm, where the *torah* will conduct them in their performance.

In this, this psalm holds an important place in the interpretation of the Psalter. In like manner, the Psalter gathers together the various elements of the Biblical prayer tradition in the same dynamic tension. Royal hymns, personal laments, pleas for healing, thanksgiving for the harvest all come together in the symphony of the Psalter. Ps 119 is a clear instrument to show that this coming together is not accidental and sporadic but rather that it is a formed into a structure and an order that is framed by the call to begin the Way and reaches its climax in unbridled praise. This psalm has been strategically placed (at what might have once been the end of the Psalter, before the addition of the Collection of Ascents and the Final *Hallel)* to influence the reader's understanding of the Psalter. In like manner to the Psalter, different elements come together here, but their very structured format reminds the reader that the entire Psalter has something similar---not just is there a collection of these various poems and prayers but they come together to form a linguistic temple, as do the various elements that compose this psalm. Zenger calls this ordering principle the "arc of tension" and he says that the arc of tension that exists between the opening Beatitudes, describing the blessing of life lived in concord with the gift of *torah*, and the closing verses (of strophes 21 and 22), praising the Lord for the gift of his saving *torah*. He says:

> In this arc of tension, Psalm 119 corresponds to the frame of the whole Psalter, which opens in Psalm 1 with a beatitude for the "lover of Torah" and has its solemn finale in the fivefold Hallel, Psalms 146-150. [92]

Conclusion

In our discussion of the genre and literary form of Psalm 119, it may seem that no firm conclusion is possible. Yet the study of genre in itself is a model for the understanding of psalms, not a strait-jacket into which they have to fit. Gunkel's perspective, that the psalm evolves into formlessness as it has elements of a mixture, allows the understanding of the psalm as a literary temple in which the various forms of prayer and poetry can find a home. Girard's insistence on there

[92] Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger. *Psalms* Vol. 3. (trans. Linda M. Maloney. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011). 262.

being a "drama of salvation" allows for a sense of the characterization of the *torah* student, pitched against the background of friend and foe, in search of "life". Deißler reminds us of the creative and receptive relationship between the psalm and the other books of the Old Testament. Soll's rebranding of the psalm as lament is an appeal to recognize the poignancy and the "honest prayer" that we find therein.

The essential point in the discussion of literary form is that the very text communicates something of its message. Beyond the immediacy of expression and even beyond the development of literary language, the form of text also communicates. This becomes clear with an example: If one were to open a book of poetry, even from their form, one might see the immediate difference between one of Shakespeare's sonnets, passages of Virgil's *Aeneid* and verses of *Humpty-Dumpty.* In each case, the form "meta-communicates" a message about the text. One is a piece of poetry that uses parallelism, rhyme and sonnet form to communicate a message initially; likewise the Aeneid will use metre, versification and form that will be significantly different from the sonnet and allow for a more ponderous and somber message to be communicated. The nursery rhyme uses parallelism, rhyme and structure also, and its form and message are interconnected, as it is easily seen that it is meant as a piece of fun. The form of the text communicates something beyond the linguistic immediacy and can tell us, beyond the words, something of its importance. [93]

When this is applied to Psalm 119, about which there is no unanimity on its literary form, as we have seen, the literary form seeks to present something of its uniqueness and its hermeneutical value. To have created a masterpiece of this nature, in terms of its technical structure (acrostic), its thematic repetivity (synonyms), its encompassing use of drama, Wisdom motifs, elements of lament, its "globality of expression" (in terms of its use of language and development thereof, according to Schœkel), is, of itself, a statement. With Soll, I would maintain that this remains within the matrix of prayer, but even as prayer, it

[93] C.f. FABB, NIGEL. "Linguistics and Literature." The Handbook of Linguistics. Aronoff, Mark and Janie Rees-Miller (eds). Blackwell Publishing, 2002. *Blackwell Reference Online*. Cited 24 July 2015.Onlinehttp://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9781405102520_chunk_g978140510252020
Here we read:

> It seems possible also that some kinds of literary form (e.g. certain kinds of narrative form) are best reinterpreted as meta-descriptions of the text which the text itself communicates; thus some kinds of literary form resemble literary content more than they resemble linguistic form.

seeks to make a statement about the direction of prayer in itself and the direction of prayer of the book in which it is to be found. Robert Alter appeals for this in his work, as he asks the readers to look for the "nuanced individual character" of each poem, beyond its use of genre and imagery (which might be held in common with other poems).[94] The nature of poetry, according to Alter, is that "poetry, working through a system of complex linkages of sound, image, word, rhythm, syntax, theme, idea, is an instrument for conveying densely patterned meanings, and sometime contradictory meanings, that are not readily available through other kinds of discourse."[95]

This will be the aim of our subsequent distinct readings—to outline the "densely patterned meanings'' contained in this poem about the term *torah*, about its place in relation to other acrostics and to other psalms and about the general direction it might offer to the Psalter as a whole.

Discrete Reading 2: Psalm 119 in relation to the neighbouring psalms: liturgical and pilgrim aspects to Torah

The location of Ps 119 within the Psalter is another important aspect for the understanding of the psalm and its notion of presenting *torah*. The situation of Ps 119 is obviously strategic—immediately after the first *Hallel*, and immediately before the *Psalms of Ascent.* The impact of this setting on the reading of the Psalm needs some attention. Some commentators suggest that his was initially seen as the last psalm in the collection, before the addition of the Psalms of Ascent and the final Hallel—but this is speculative and difficult to prove.[96] As we find it in our canon, this psalm stands in relation to the great thanksgiving prayer and entry liturgy of Ps 118 on one side and the collection of Psalms of Ascent on the other. We might well ask whether there is a relation to each and, if so, what is this relation.

In the case of Psalm 118, we have a psalm of thanksgiving that seems to incorporate a liturgy of entry to the Temple. The context of this thanksgiving and entry have variously been associated with the rebuilding of the Temple in Ezra 6 or the re-proclamation of the Law and the instigation of the feast of Sukkot in Neh.

[94] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry.* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 141-142.
[95] Ibid, 141.
[96] Westermann. *Praise and Lament,* 253.

8-9.[97] Either is interesting in terms of associating the Psalm with Ps 119. One might suggest that the call to open the doors into this Temple may well refer to the linguistic Temple that is Psalm 119, and that the subtle context of the re-proclamation of the Law in Neh. 8-9 is the echo that reverberates into Ps 119. The just will enter through these gates of righteousness and the way to do this is by means of the gift of the *torah*, which is celebrated in Ps 119. Three elements then might set the context of relationship between these two psalms:

- The sense of a thanksgiving and a reaffirmation of the gift of life after a time of trial, which leads to the song of victory and the affirmation of life, a life that will recount the deeds of the Lord (v.17). This might then be seen to be a life lived in the context of the *torah*, as celebrated in Ps 119.
- The entry liturgy and dialogue, where the "righteous" are invited to enter through the gates. The metaphor is implied: the gate of entry into righteousness will be the *torah*, as described in Ps 119.
- The macarism of v.26, remembering the blessing of those who enter this gate, which is not linguistically the same as Ps 119:1-2,[98] but has the same resonance of calling welcome and blessing (in the form of the *barūk)* upon those who "enter in the name of the Lord" (v.26) and the wishes of safe passage (in the form of the *ashrê*) upon the way that is blameless (119:1).[99]

Vesco sees the link between the two psalms in a series of inter-related themes and a number of successions between the two psalms:

> Au Ps 118, 18, Dieu ne donnait pas le psalmiste à la mort. Au Ps 119, 110, les impies lui donnent un piège pour s'emparer de lui. À l'ouverture des portes de justice (Ps 118, 19) succède l'ouverture des paroles divines (Ps 119, 130). À la bénédiction de la maison de Dieu (Ps 118, 3, 26) succède la psalmodie dans la maison où le psalmist séjourne en hôte de passage (Ps 119, 54). De Dieu venait la benediction (Ps 118, 26), le psalmiste la lui retourne maintenant (Ps 119, 12).
>
> Le Ps 118 se situait dans le context de la restauration des remparts de Jérusalem sous Néhémie. Le Ps 119 pourrait s'insérer dans celui de la restauration de la loi au temps

[97] Goldingay, *Psalms III,* 355.

[98] Gerstenberger notes that the beatitude is "a distinct opening formula, but it does not have, form-critically speaking, a definite end." (Gerstenberger *Psalms (part 2),* 311. This makes our point more solidly: the resonance back to the accompanying macarism of 118:26 becomes more poignant in the light of this lack of a closure to the macarism of the opening verses of Ps 119.

[99] Terrien has an interesting note on the distinction between these two macarisms. He notes that blessing (118:26) is "a ritual gesture transmitting the virtue or even the sanctity of a patriarch or priest." Happiness, on the other hand (119: 1-2) is "A dynamic exclamation, a send-off with the wish for a bon voyage. *Ashrê* is probably derived from a verb of movement, 'to step forward.'" (cf. Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms. Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2003), 799.)

> d'Esdras (Ne 8, 1-8). Il rappelle en tout cas l'importance que revêt l'observance de la Loi pour monter et pour vivre à Jérusalem. Celui qui veut entrer par les portes de justice (Ps 118, 19-20) doit la mettre en pratique. Le Ps 119 dit comment. La porte de YHWH n'est autre que l'enseignement divin.[100]

The particular resonance of this for the understanding of *torah* is to move the idea of the Law from the ethical or the spiritual to the liturgical. In a movement similar to the pilgrimage to the Holy Hill metaphor that frames Ps 19, here the worship setting of Ps 119 is brought to the fore: *Torah* obedience has a liturgical value also, which might not be as evident as the other aspects of *torah*. *Torah* obedience is a form of worship, a pilgrimage through the gates of righteousness, in thanksgiving for life restored and renewed. In Ps 119: 114, there may even be an explicit reference to this pilgrimage, where we read the term סִתְרִי, which Van Gemeren sees as a possible allusion to the "shelter" that could be found at the tabernacle.[101] Likewise, Anderson sees the reference to swearing an oath in v.106 as a reference to a cultic oath, upon entry into the Temple.[102]

In this context, we have already noted the arc of reading that connects this psalm to Pss 111-112, the two other acrostic psalms at the beginning of the Egyptian Hallel. As we noted with reference to the quotation from deClassé-Walford, these three psalms seem to frame "words of praise to God (Psalms 113-118) for deliverance and protection in the defining moment of ancient Israel's history."[103] Thus, the structure of our "liturgy" seems to look like this:[104]

Psalm 111	Acrostic: **it speaks about the Lord** and his characteristic activity towards his People.
Psalm 112	Acrostic: the **focus is on the individual** and how the fruitfulness of the Lord looks in the life of the individual.
Psalm 113	A **call to praise the Lord** but the motivation is his care for the poor and the childless rather than the great acts of Creation or National Deliverance.
Psalm 114 (In the LXX, Ps 114 and Ps 115 are treated as one psalm).	An "idiosyncratic praise psalm":[105]The psalm seems to be **a rationale for praise**, reminding Israel of the deeds of the God of the Exodus. All Creation is involved in this act of praise and marvel. The final verse may be a reference to Is. 41:18 and the Exile. The entire psalm makes

[100] Vesco, *Le Psautier II,* 1113.
[101] Van Gemeren, *Psalms,* 755.
[102] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* Vol 2, 835.
[103] deClassé-Walford, *Psalms,* 839.
[104] These classifications are based on the interpretations in Goldingay, *Psalms III,* 301-446.
[105] Goldingay, *Psalms III,* 321.

	the experience of the Exodus and the Exile to be available and the experience of liberation to be remade.
Psalm 115	This seems to be both a **praise psalm and a prayer for help**. It shows elements of a liturgical dialogue, where the congregation prays together in vv.1-8; the leader speaks in vv.9-11 and vv.14-16, with a response from the congregation in vv.12-13 and vv.17-18.
Psalm 116 (LXX and Jerome divide vv.10-19 into another psalm).	This takes the form of an **individual thanksgiving**. The first part (vv.1-9) is the call to praise the Lord for his actions and the description of the plight of the psalmist. Vv. 10-19 might have been an **accompaniment to a thank-offering** in the presence of a crowd.
Psalm 117	Shortest Psalm: This expresses **the essential nature of a praise psalm**. This praise is to extend to the nations.
Psalm 118	**Thanksgiving and Testimony Psalm**. As noted above, it may have been used in the re-dedication of the Temple or the re-proclamation of the Law and it reflects liturgical events.

The setting of these eights psalms is a sequential movement from a general thanksgiving and recalling of the actions of God, to a focus on the individual and the reaction of the individual to those actions of God on the grand scale and on the individual level. The focus moves even outside of Israel with a call to all the nations to praise but then is refocused on the individual's entry through the gates of righteousness and the need to see the light that the Lord has shone on the psalmist.

This setting might offer a perspective on *torah* in Psalm 119 that is not immediately evident in the psalm itself: the liturgical aspect of the *torah*. Beyond the spiritualized or the ethical, the *torah* will be the liturgy of life that offers praise to the Lord and allows the prayer-er constantly, in attention to *torah* living, to offer thanks and praise. This praise, in word and in *torah*-living, will ultimately lead to salvation, as Vesco notes:

> Chant d'action de grâce, le Ps 118 terminait le *Hallêl* et servait d'introduction au Ps 119. Il développait le theme de la bonté et de la puissance divines (Ps 118, 1-4, 14-16, 29). Dieu est un meilleur refuge que l'homme (vv. 8-9). Il est le salut (v. 14). Le Ps 119 célèbre la pratique de la loi qui conduit au salut. L'exil a puni Israël parce qu'il avait été infidel à la loi divine. Cette loi reste le guide unique sur le chemin de la justice et de la vie. C'est là la leçon essentielle que le Ps 119 entend donner.[106]

While the Egyptian Hallel and Ps 118 in particular set the scene for the entry to the way, the passing through the gates of righteousness, the series of

[106] Vesco, *Le Psautier II,* 1160.

psalms that follows, the Psalms of Ascent or the Gradual Psalms, also sheds a light on our reading of *torah* in Ps 119. The collection of Psalms of Ascent (Pss 120-134) has variously been credited as a collection of psalms that were used by pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem or on the steps leading up to the Temple. Goldingay remarks that the diversity in theme between these psalms would suggest that they were not composed originally as a collection but that their formation as a collection and the association with pilgrimage was early.[107] This association with pilgrimage is important: it demonstrates an early sense of how Israel might "walk humbly with God" (Mic 6: 8).

Kirsten Nielsen explores how this image of Israel's humble walking with God might have been interpreted with particular attention to the juxtaposition of Ps 119 and the collection of the Psalms of Ascent. According to Nielsen, the Psalter seeks to answer the call to "walk humbly with God" in two possibilities, emphasized by the juxtaposition of these texts. On one level, the meaning of this might be contained in the "way" to be walked of Psalm 119, the way of *torah* observance. This might well be the pathway to Jerusalem for those who do not or cannot undertake the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Otherwise, the way to walk will be that pilgrimage to the Holy City. As she says:

> The author of Ps 119 wanted to underline the Torah and by so doing stressed the role of ethics. The redactors of Pss 120-134, on the other hand wanted to stress the pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple. And if I am right in this suggestion, then I could argue that standing side by side in the Hebrew Bible Ps 119 and Pss 120-134 give two different answers to the same question. If the question is "How do we walk humbly with our God?", one answer is: We walk with God in our daily life following his Torah; and the other would be: We walk with God on our way up to the house of the Lord. And the redactors of the Psalter included both answers and placed them side by side.[108]

Nielsen's insight is enlightening, particularly when one examines the theology of the Collection of Ascents. In a similar manner to the "existential laboratory" of Ps 119, the Collection of Psalms of Ascent presents the pilgrim carrying prayers that indicate a practical search for peace, with a conscious of their own "tongue of deceit" (120:2-3), prayers for peace for Jerusalem (Ps 122), a consciousness of scorn and shame (Ps 123), the threat of "seething waters" – both physical and metaphorical (Ps 124), the prayer for restoration (Ps 126), the prayer for sons (Ps 127) and grandchildren (Ps 128).

---

[107] Goldingay, *Psalms III,* 752.

[108] Kirsten Nielsen, "Why not plough with an Ox and an Ass Together? Or: Why not read Ps 119 together with Pss 120-134?" *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament: An International Journal of Nordic Theology* 14 (2000), 57.

In essence, the "humble walk to Jerusalem with God" is always accompanied with the real prayers of God's people, be that walk the metaphorical walk of *torah* observance or the physical pilgrim path. The juxtaposition of Ps 119 and the Psalms of Ascent add to the understanding of *torah* that sense of the humble walk with God, accompanied by the real prayers for life of the pilgrim. Van Gemeren seems conscious of the implicit image of pilgrimage as he notes of v. 54 that a possible translation is "in the house of my pilgrimage," which he links thematically with v. 19 and the notion of being a stranger.[109] In contrast, Terrien sees in this line an allusion to the Temple, a context that allows a comparison between the Law's beauty and the beauty of the Temple psalmodies and songs, thus identifying the psalmist as "a sacred singer, not a professional cultist."[110] *Torah* understanding is based on that sense of discovering that pilgrim pathway, leading from the interiority of understanding, to the action based on ethics, to the freedom of one who has discovered the gift of the *torah*.

Discrete Reading 3: The Matrix of Prayer

The acrostic and the repetition of the synonyms dominate the landscape of this psalm. Studies of the psalm tend to focus the attention on these aspects. Yet Alonso-Schœkel, while stressing the force of these aspects, and stating that the psalm has "nothing of the poetic, but is a materially successful exercise,"[111] still suggests that the theological narrative of the psalm is not to be dismissed. He notes how in Ps 37 the acrostic form has often tricked some commentators into paying scant attention to other aspects of the poetry and theology of the psalm.[112]

The Psalms, as poetry, have a capacity to explore the reality of the existential tryst with the call of *torah* with a greater freedom than the stricter narrative of historical texts, nor the urgent clarity of prophetic oracles, nor the illusive wisdom of the *mašal*. Here, we turn to Alter's proposal that psalms, which are common across the ANE, are adapted by the Hebrew poets as a medium of expressing distinct understanding about key aspects of life, as Alter states:

> The psalms are of course written out of deep and often passionate faith. What I am proposing is that the poetic medium made it possible to articulate the emotional freight,

[109] Van Gemeren, *Psalms,* 747.
[110] Terrien, *The Psalms,* 800.
[111] Alonso-Schœkel, *I Salmi, II*, 600. The original Italian reads: *Poiché di poetico il salmo non ha niente: è un esercizio materialmente riuscito.*
[112] L. Alonso-Schœkel, *Manuale di poetica ebraica.* (Brescia, Edizioni Queriniana, 1989), 230-1.

> the moral consequences, the altered perception of the world that flowed from this monotheistic belief, in compact verbal structures that could in some instances seem simplicity itself. Psalms, at least in the guise of cultic hymns, were a common poetic genre throughout the ancient Near East, but as the form was adapted by Hebrew poets, it often became an instrument for expressing in a collective voice (whether first person plural or singular) a distinctive, sometimes radically new, sense of time, space, history, creation, and the character of individual destiny. In keeping with this complex expressive purpose, many psalms, on scrutiny, prove to have a finely tensile semantic weave that one would not expect from the seeming conventionality of the language. (142). [113]

This double reality of discovery of the multi-faceted truth and the distinctive sense of reality within the "finely tensile semantic weave" of Ps 119 offers another aspect on the intricacy of this poem. Beyond the recognition of the particularities of form and theme, there will be a need to re-situate this psalm in the realm of dialogue and prayer. Prayer, of its nature, needs that liberty of expression, even when external formulae and strict poetic norms are in use.[114] Psalm 119 is a prayer, as described by Lacan.[115] It makes sense in the context of dialogue, where this is a human response to the gift of the *torah*, the Word of God. The psalmist is speaking to God and dares to do so because God, through the *torah*, has spoken to him first. God has called him to this response, not simply in an interior fashion but exteriorly, in the gift of the *torah*. Thus Israel is fulfilling part of the *torah*, of the Call, in this idea of a response that is dialogue but that is also based in the experiences and dramas of living. In this context, Lacan goes on to say:

> Si le Psaume 119 est une vraie prière, faut-il la considerer comme une litanie d'oraisons jaculatoires sans unité profonde? Certains le pensent, persuadés que la loi de la composition alphabétique du psaume rend impossible un exposé coherent et suivi; on sait en effet qu'il y a autant de strophes que de lettres hébraïques, vingt-deux, et que dans chaque strophe les huit vers commencent par la même lettre.
>
> Nous croyons cependant que cette long psaume a une unité: elle lui vient du movement de la prière qui l'anime; pour saisir cette unité, l'analyse litéraire ne suffit pas, il faut entrer dans le movement du psaume, prendre part au dialogue auquel Dieu invite, avec le psalmiste, ceux qui ont comme lui une âme de <<pauvre>>, une âme humble, uniquement soucieuse d'entendre la Parole de Dieu.[116]

The way of *torah* obedience is, therefore, a life that is correctly oriented and that flows out in the stream of praise as it gathers momentum in an ever-greater sense of itself as healthily participating in an interpersonal and interactive communion, a life gratefully grasped as a gift that has come from the

---

[113] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 142.
[114] A useful analogy might be a comparison with the work of Saint John of the Cross, which is an example of classic poetry in form and yet a mystical freedom in expression.
[115] M.F. Lacan: "Le mystère de la prière dans le psaume 119," *LumVie* 23 (1955): 125-142 (677-694).
[116] Ibid, 127(679).

Lord. This has the advantage of overcoming legalism and fideism, allowing the *torah* to be pitted against existential problems, yet holding firm the conviction that *torah* has a validity and a wisdom in the sight of these issues. As Brueggemann says:

> The outcome of these observations is to see that Torah piety does not consist in the flat response of obedience to a code of commands. Rather Torah obedience is a full existence of trust in and loyalty to a covenant partner, trust and loyalty that are embodied in obedience to instruction but that bespeak an interpersonal, interactive communion and not simply compliance with a set of rules.[117]

In conclusion, we might return to an image that is closely associated with that of the Way, the image of light/sight/lamp. This psalm serves to offer a theological backbone to the idea of orientation, as we have stated. When Israel is most true to itself, it is living in communion with the God of whom it is an image and a steward and with other human beings, towards whom there is a natural and divinely commanded attraction. How can one be sure that the orientation is correct? Surprisingly, prosperity and security on the way are not safe indicators, as even when the orientation is correct, there can be difficulties and trials (vv.81-88 demonstrate that faithfulness is not assurance of "comfort"). That which allows the psalmist to see that he is on a safe path is *torah*: this is his "light" and his "lamp" (v.105); once his eyes are fixed on the *torah*, the orientation is correct and he will not be "shamed" (v. 6). Mazzinghi finds the imagery of "seeing" to be somewhat unexpected. He suggests the psalmist specifically tries to surprise us with this language of "seeing", particularly in relation to v.18, where the Psalmist asks that his eyes might be opened so that he would *see* the marvels of the *torah*. Of this Mazzinghi says:

> This is not solely a matter of hearing, but also of "seeing": the Law, indeed, is a great deal more than a collection of precepts. It is precisely the revelation of all that God has done for humanity, the synthesis of his marvels. Meditating on the Law is therefore the best means of meditating on the entire richness of the divine action. [118]

A similar usage of the language of "seeing" (although the verb is different) is to be found in Job 42: 5. The end of the drama of the divine-human *rîb* comes in this punch-line where Job describes his new experience of God, perceived as a

---

[117] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms,* 520.

[118] Luca Mazzinghi, "Salmo 119: Meditazione sulla Legge del Signore," *PdV* L,5 (2005): 42.
The translation is mine. The original Italian text reads:

> Non si tratta soltanto di ascoltare, ma anche di <<vedere>>: la legge, infatti, è ben più che un insieme di precetti; è appunto la rivelazione di tutto ciò che Dio ha fatto per l'uomo, la sintesi delle sue meraviglie. Meditare la legge è così il modo migliore per meditare l'intera richezza dell'agire divino.

moment when his eyes have seen (" רָאָתְךָ"), rather than by the "hearing of the ear". Again this language is used of prophetic oracles, where the experience of the oracle is described in terms of "seeing" (cf. Amos 1:1 " חָזָה"). The language of "seeing" has a nuance of a more encompassing and immediate experience of the ensemble of the *torah*, which has an effect upon the perceiver that is more than mere word and descriptions.

Even more evocative is the imagery of v. 105, where *torah* is described as "light" and lamp. Mazzinghi refers to the culture of this image which will reoccur in Prov. 6:23 and in Wisdom 18:4 as well as in Rabbinic writings. The image of light and lamp makes sense in the context of someone who is finding the way in the darkness and wants to be assured of the right path. *Torah* is a reassurance for those who might otherwise be lost or unsure of the way. With *torah* there is the certainty of a guide in the night. As Mazzinghi says:

> Humanity, who often finds that it must live in a dark world, can find the way towards happiness and life only of enlightened by God himself, by means of his word and with his law.[119]

Torah is therefore the guarantor of orientation, not merely a guide. Living in *torah* faithfulness is not simply ethical uprightness, nor legalistic impeccability, but a living and active sense of one's existence as being oriented towards the naturally and divinely commissioned foci of a communion with God, expressed in the reality of imaging God for the stewardship of Creation, and also communion with other human beings, thus breaking down isolation and engaging in interpersonal and interactive communion. This is the reality of *praise—torah* obedience is entry into the Temple space, with a consciousness of living in the presence of the Divine, expressed not only in words and song but by the very obedience and lived prayerfulness of this orientation. As Tom Wright has noted:

> Indeed,.., we have here a sense not only of the Torah as a new kind of 'sacred space' but of the transformative effect of obedience. Wherever you travel, all this implies, the Torah will be like a moving tabernacle, a place of refuge: 'Your statutes have been my songs', says the next stanza, 'wherever I make my home' (119:54)…..
>
> So if the Temple was a microcosm, a small version of the whole world, the same is true of the Torah – or at least, the Temple and the Torah between them point ahead to a new world, God's new 'place', the renewed creation filled with God's glory and purpose as the waters cover the sea. [120]

As such, this psalm gives a firm theology to the entire tradition and current

---

[119] Ibid, 44. The translation is mine. The original Italian text reads:
L'uomo, che spesso si trova a vivere in un mondo tenebroso, può trovare la via verso la felicità e la vita solo se illuminato da Dio, con la sua parola e con la sua legge.

[120] Tom Wright. *Finding God in the Psalms. Sing, Pray, Live.* (London: SPCK, 2014), 104.

of praise in the Psalter. Praise is more than an expression of thanks in the view of a set of circumstances that seem to be positive and favourable but rather the natural and divinely commissioned orientation and current of life, directed towards the fullness of Creation. Praise, *tehillim*, is the river that flows and brings humanity ever nearer the new place filled with God's glory.

Discrete Reading 4: The Torah

The praise of *torah* is the central theme of this psalm. Psalm 1 invites the reader to begin on the road of *torah*-guided living, with the images of life and delight that accompany it. Ps 19 urged the listener to become attentive to how the *torah* interprets the silent word of Creation. The 176 verses of Ps 119 bombard us with the praise of *torah* and how it can overcome adversity, inspire contentment and enlighten the journey of life.

This section proposes to examine what might be the notion of *torah* which is behind this praise and exaltation. Our *expositio* of this will have three elements: study of its terminology; examination of the viewpoint of the author; an examination of the theological implications of *Torah* here, with particular emphasis on the relationship with Wisdom.

Torah by any other name

Psalm 119 is a work of intricate craftsmanship which exalts the *torah* in a symphony of praise and rapture. *Torah* is the means for the Psalmist to find order and ultimately to find his delight. Its importance is paramount. *Torah* is, in turn, truth; it is eternal; it is his love and his meditation; it is a lamp and a light. He is abhorred by those who disrespect it. In it he has found the way to life.

Yet what is this Law? This term, Law, has echoes in the *sacra pagina* more than many other terms. Within the sacred page, few terms are reintroduced and re-examined with such frequency. The psalmist has plundered many different literary and theological storehouses in his attempt to describe *torah.*

Two elements of the synonymic structure are important for our purpose. Firstly, the entire structure is centred on the putting in relief of the idea (and the term) of Torah. This is programmed from the very first verse, and *torah* is the dominant term among the key words. Of this Freedman remarks:

> All of them (i.e. the key words) revolve around a center, which is summed up in a phrase found in the very first verse of the poem: *torat yhwh* 'Yahweh's instruction'. ....The centrality and pre-eminence of the word *torah* are confirmed by the fact that it occurs more frequently than any other content word in the whole poem, 25 times.[121]

Hence, we can conclude from the structure that the central theme is the exaltation of the *torah* as the "way" of perfection and happiness. Walking in this way is the key to blessedness. The *torah* is a way in which to walk.

Secondly, each of the seven synonyms for *torah*, which make up the key words of the structure, adds a different nuance to the idea of *torah*. Before we examine the key term, we reconsider the aspects introduced in the synonyms.

דָּבָר (word)is one of the key words used as a synonym (22 times: vv. 9; 16: 17; 25; 28; 42; 49; 57; 65; 74; 81; 89; 101; 105; 107; 114; 130; 139; 147; 160; 161; 169). It can have a legal overtone (particularly in the plural), used both as a description of the Decalogue and used in the *Shema.* However, as Soll notes, it is not a technical term to refer to commandments and it has, particularly in the singular use, an echo of "promise" or word in the sense of "word of honour". Soll notes the associations of this word with hope and promise. Vesco remarks on the concept of "prophetic word" for this term, and how, once it is applied to God, it "puts the emphasis on the authority of the prophetic or legislative word, on its efficacity, its truth and its permanence. The divine word is a source of life and of hope."[122]

אִמְרָה is also used (19 times: vv. 11; 38; 41; 50; 58; 67; 76; 82; 103; 116; 123; 133; 140; 148; 154; 158; 162; 170; 172) It has the meaning of "utterance". In this psalm, it has a semantic value of pledge or promise. It is frequently translated as "promise". It is a poetic word, associated with "covenant". Normally, this is used of the divine speech, except in Ps 17:6. It is also used of the utterances of Wisdom in Prov. 1:2. Anderson notes that this term "often means the law of God in general, or his promises in particular (v.140). The 'word of Yahweh' may also be a circumlocution for 'Yahweh.'" [123] He refers to Ps 105:19, where " אִמְרַת יְהוָה צְרָפָתְהוּ" (The Word of God tested him), implying a usage of this term as a circumlocution. Of its use in v.123, he claims it "is the dynamic word of God which accomplishes the righteous divine purpose underlying it (Isa. 55: 11)."[124]

---

[121] Freedman, *Psalm 119*, 33.
[122] Vesco, *Psaumes II,* 1140.
[123] Anderson. *The Book of Psalms,* 812.
[124] Ibid., 838.

מִשְׁפָּט is also used, usually in the plural (vv. 7; 13; 20; 30; 39; 43; 52; 62; 75; 84; 91; 102; 106; 108; 120; 121; 132; 137; 149; 156; 160; 164; 175). It comes from a root with a meaning of "to decide" or "to judge". In the plural, this normally refers to the body of laws. However, we have here four instances of a use in the singular (vv. 84; 121; 132; 160 --although some witnesses suggest this final reference is plural, it is singular in MT), often with a cry for "mišpaṭ" to be done. The sense is, therefore, closer to a philosophical idea of "fairness" or justice than to a particular law or regulation. Also, the plural use is often in a moral dimension. The mispatim are a way to God's righteousness. Even if the psalmist were to live in another regime under another ruler's regulations, these would still be his path to righteousness. They serve as a model for fairness in the conduct of humanity.[125] According to Kidner, these offer "the standard given for fair dealing between man and man."[126] Van Gemeren also notes how these "laws" can bring the psalmist into God's "favour", thus allowing him to praise God. In this context he says:

> The "laws" (*mišpāṭîm*) of God are "righteous" (*ṣedeq;* cf. vv. 62, 75, 106, 123, 144, 160, 164, 172; 19:9) in that they establish divine order in this world, granting the godly a sense of deliverance and freedom (cf. v.40: "Preserve my life in your righteousness"). Hence he praises the Lord for his "righteous laws" (cf. vv.62, 164).[127]

Anderson, however, notes that this can also be based on "ad hoc" decisions which were then accumulated as legal precedents."[128] In this sense, the reflection on precedent lends itself not just to casuistry but also to a nuance of "salvation history."[129]

חֹק is also used, always in the plural (Huqqim). It has the meaning of "statute". However, in this psalm it is often associated with the verb to teach. The psalmist wants to be **taught** the statutes. Given the semantic link between the verb to teach and the word "*torah*", this particular refrain has a special nuance. VanGemeren sees a link between the order of the created world and the order that these decrees seek to promote for human life: "The 'decrees' (*huqqîm,* vv. 5,

[125] Vesco, *Psaumes II*, 1140.
[126] Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. London: Intervasity Press, 1975), 419.
[127] VanGemeren, *Psalms,* 739.
[128] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (Vol 2), 810.
[129] Ibid, 824, note on v.52.

8) of the Lord give order to human lives, even as they uphold order in the created world."[130]

מִצְוָה is used (dominantly in the plural מִצְוֹת). Its occurrences include vv. 6; 10; 19; 21; 32; 35; 47; 48; 60; 66; 73; 86; 96; 98; 115; 127; 131; 143; 151; 166; 172; 176. It means "commandment". Vesco defines this term as "prescriptions emanating from an authority."[131] Likewise, Kidner remarks that this has more to do with the authority and right to give orders than to the power to convince or to persuade.[132]

עֵדוּת is used, translated here as "stipulations". This is another word associated with the covenant. It can variously have the meaning of testimony or of covenant stipulation, linking covenant faithfulness with this way of conduct. Van Gemeren notes that this term can also occur in idiomatic usage in the terminology of Exodus 31: 18, "the two tablets of the Testimony," with the result that this term is often synonymous with covenant and it has a particular nuance of covenant loyalty.[133]

פִּקּוּדִים is our final synonym. This is again a covenantal word. It has overtones of "trust". Although often translated as "precepts", Soll sees a better translation in the word "orders". Kidner notes that this term is "drawn from the sphere of an officer or an overseer, a man who is responsible to look closely at a situation and take action."[134] Anderson notes that it only found in the Psalter and in 103:18 it is parallel to "Covenant," while in 111:7 it goes with "the works of his hands" (i.e. his self-revelation).[135]

What is the over-all image that comes from this variety of terms? The Psalmist does not simply want to stay in a state of "not-guilty" in whatever tribunal, but rather, his vision of *torah* is an ensemble of respecting teachings and traditions in an atmosphere of trust and faithfulness. The primary meaning of *torah* remains the expression of God's will and authority. An important secondary meaning is associated with the idea of "promise" and trust, from living within the dynamics of the Covenant.

---

[130] VanGemeren, *Psalms.* 739.
[131] Ibid, 1141.
[132] Kidner, *Psalms 73-150,* 418.
[133] Van Gemeren, *Psalms,* 737-8.
[134] Ibid, 418.
[135] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (Vol. 2), 809.

This leads us to a discussion of the term *torah* itself, the lynch-pin of the synonymic collage. It is the most frequently used term of the eight, and it has also connections to the terms for "way," which also are present in the poem. The structure of the poem puts emphasis on this term, however, as the key term for this reality to be praised and honoured, expounded and extolled. תּוֹרָה appears in vv. 1; 18 29; 34; 44; 51; 53; 55; 61; 70; 72; 77; 85; 92; 97; 109; 13; 126; 136; 142; 150; 153; 163; 165; 174. Vesco defines this term as "a divine 'teaching' revealed to men through the medium of a priest (Dt. 33: 8-10), of a prophet (Is. 1:10; 8:16, 20) or of a sage (Prov. 13:14), so as to order their moral conduct according to the will of God."[136] Kirkpatrick remarks that this is "no rigid code of commands and prohibitions, but a body of teaching, the full meaning of which can only be realized gradually and by the help of Divine instruction."[137] This term, however, comes to mean a great deal more than this sense of an authoritative moral teaching. It becomes the subject matter of the *hagah* that becomes the music of the blessed way in Ps 1. It becomes the interpreter of Creation's silent voice that goes out through all the earth in Ps 19. Here it becomes even more. It is, as defined by Freedman, "much more than the laws by which Israel should live, as given in the Pentateuch; *tôrâ* has become a personal way to God."[138] In this, the motif terms for "way" דֶּרֶךְ and אֹרַח, closely associated to the seven synonyms, add a further theological nuance. This psalm offers a grammar of ascent to the blessed life of walking in the way of the Law (cf v.1). This is the song that accompanies those who walk this pilgrim way. At the same time, it introduces the pray-er into the language that is the unspoken word of Creation in Ps 19 and the sheet-music for *hagah* of Psalm 1. Rightly does Alonso-Schœkel remark that this psalm is a source book of aphorisms, dainty and pithy phrases that will stay in the memory and accompany those who take this "way."[139] Each of the synonyms,

---

[136] Vesco, *Psaumes II,* 1140. The original French reads ".. un 'enseignement' divin révélé aux homes par l'intermédiaire d' prêtre (Dt 33, 8-10), d'un prophète (Is 1, 10; 8, 16, 20) ou d'un sage (Pr 13, 14), afin de régler leur conduit morale selon la volonté de Dieu."

[137] A.F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Vol. 2: Books IV and V. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge: University Press, 1901), 700.

[138] Freedman, *Psalm 119,* 89.

[139] Alonso-Schœkel suggests at the end of his commentary, after identifying that the psalm avoids (literally exorcises) three possible risks: the 'banalization' of the Word; the 'pretence' of listening to it and the alibi of considering it to be in accessible and therefore not entering into it, of not "inhabiting it" (a term he attributes to Claudel) with simplicity (v. 18, cfr. Mt 11:25), commotion and stupor, a loving attachment (vv.32, 163). (Alonso-Schœkel, *Salmi II*, 620). In essence, he suggests that the use of this psalm as an antiphonary will best counteract these risks, as the language and the concepts adopt themselves easily to this type of "medicine" (my own term).

with the particular nuances associated, presents a slightly different but complementary aspect of the concept of *torah*, becoming, as it were, a "face" of *torah.* These different faces of *torah* help in the appreciation of how *torah* functions, not simply in this psalm but throughout the Psalter. *Torah* is more than the song that enlivens those who walk the pilgrim way—it is also the guiding presence, an eight faced angel that accompanies.

Torah and Wisdom: A Dialogue that leads to a Transformation

A. Robert, in an article on the meaning of the word "law," illustrates what each of the Old Testament traditions understands by the term, from a strict Deuteronomic sense of the the Decalogue and the Law codes, to a prophetic sense of the need for a spiritualized and interiorized law, to the Wisdom setting wherein the Law needs to govern actions with a sense of balance and suppleness. Robert belongs to a generation of pre- historical-critical Catholic scholars, whose approach was necessarily canonical and based on a vision of the text that was theological, as might best be illustrated by the Introduction, a work which he edited, where the section on the Psalms, written by Auvray, concludes with a reference to the Patristic interpretation, particularly that of Augustine who credits the Psalms as having the answer to many serious questions and "the remedy for each illness of the soul."[140] When speaking of the Chronicler, he makes much of the Chronicler's depiction of David and how David might well be seen as an heir to Moses. In summary, he sees this psalm as part of this "tradition of suppleness" and the dynamic reality that began with Moses and that is renewed in the work of the "prophets" (in a broad sense). The *torah* was a dynamic and supple reality that flourishes within a context of growth and understanding. The name *"torah*" extends to the role of those prophets (in a large sense) who constantly renew and adapt the Law given by Moses. One necessary element in this constant renewal and a necessary ingredient in the dynamic nature of *torah* is Wisdom.[141]

While Wisdom is a theme throughout the poem, its tones become more explicit in particular sections. In vv. 97-104, *torah* is the Wisdom master who has

[140] A. Robert and A, Feuillet. *Introduction à la Bible* (2nd edition, revised and corrected. Vol.1. Tournai: Desclée, 1959). 622.

[141] A. Robert, "Le Sens du mot Loi," *RB* 46 (1937), 182-206. (Of note is his conclusion, on page 206, where he states "le mot Loi signifie toute Révélation divine, conçue comme norme de vie.")

brought the pray-er to be wiser than enemies, teachers and the aged. Allen remarks on the fact that "a pronounced feature of Ps 119 is the identification of *Torah* and parallel terms with wisdom (cf. Sir 24:23), especially in vv. 72, 89, 98, as in the other *torah* psalms, and its didactic intent is clear."[142] A particular insight into this from the Jewish perspective comes from the historical rabbinic commentators. In his commentary, Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer refers to the Jewish commentators on these subjects. This uses unnuanced and direct references to some of the rabbinic texts. With reference to the enemies, he remarks how two of David's enemies, Doeg and Architopel, were masters of the *Torah*, but their knowledge remained insincere and they did not reach the Truth. In turn, he remarks how no one human master will ever teach the entirety of the Truth but the student must move from master to master, and from Scripture to Mishnah, and then to Midrash and then to Aggadah, to gain different perceptions and greater knowledge than any individual master might offer. The aged are the ones who pass on the Oral Tradition from Moses on Sinai, yet again that Tradition does not remain static but is enriched by the generations that teach and learn.[143] Here Feuer quotes Sforno who says ".. the Sages taught that a man learns much from his teachers, more from his colleagues, but most of all from his students." [144] More critically the pray-er returns to the enthusiasm of the young child, eager to learn his letters, who has discovered that this *torah*-taught Wisdom is "sweeter than honey", with a possible reference to the practice of teaching children the *torah* by placing honey on the letters and allowing them to eat the honey after the lesson. In essence, the message is clear that the greatest teacher is *torah*. *Torah* itself will be both the teacher and the subject, in the same way as Wisdom can be both the teacher and the material of learning.

In his work on the exemplary *torah* student, Reynolds describes how the *torah* student needs to undergo much of the inner transformation that would have been typical of the Wisdom student at the foot of his master. In essence, Reynolds's work seeks to suggest that this idea of transformation and interiorization of the Torah is the subject matter of this psalm. In this process, the

[142] Leslie C. Allen. *Psalms 101-150* (Revised edition. WBC 21. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 182.
[143] Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer. *Tehillim. A New Translation with a commentary from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (Art Scroll Tanach Series. Brooklyn: Messorah Publications, 1983), 1465-7.
[144] Ibid, 1467.

implicit and explicit analogies to Wisdom become important. As the student is formed by *torah*, as he interiorizes this teaching and gains this sense of direction for the way, he comes to appreciate *torah* as more than a teaching but as a teacher also, and as a good teacher always lives in the lives of his students, so *torah* lives and develops in the life of the exemplary student.[145] Normally, this type of language is more suited to the Wisdom Tradition and the model is one taken from that tradition. Reynolds's thesis goes on to see how that idea of the *torah* teacher goes on to show where *torah* leads Israel and the Biblical tradition in general.[146]

Reynolds's thesis is expressed in terms of the relationship between *torah* and Wisdom:

> One who walks in Torah, who is by the definition of Ps 119 also a student of Torah, undergoes a spiritual and intellectual transformation by means of internalizing Torah. The process is similar to the acquisition of wisdom descibed by Fox in his essay "Wisdom in the Lectures." The young man being addressed by his father in Proverbs does not possess all possible wisdom. In fact, as a youngster he may possess very little wisdom; he may have only the instruction (תורה) of his parents. Yet if he avoids present temptations by following instructions, then he will have the opportunities to gain wisdom. Similarly, the young man in Ps 119 has a place to start: "How can the young man keep his way pure? By observing your word." (v. 9). He has some knowledge of Torah, perhaps also from his parents, and if he will walk in what he knows, then God's word will light the path ahead (v. 105). The young man in Proverbs develops a character trait, which can be called wisdom: "Wisdom is a configuration of the soul: it is *moral character.*" (Fox, *Proverbs* 1-9, 348, italics original). Similarly, the student of Torah internalizes individual instructions and regulations, and this internalization develops into a character trait, specifically the fear of God.[147]

Reynolds's model is one interesting hypothesis for the relationship of Wisdom and *torah* in the psalm. It is complemented by the implicit analogy to Proverbs 31 from the common heritage of acrostic expression. The woman of Proverbs may serve as a personification of Wisdom that enriches the lives of those around her. In like manner, Master *Torah* offers his student light and hope, as well as the capacity to encounter the challenges of life.

---

[145] Kent Aaron Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher. The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 119.* (VTSup 137. Boston: Brill, 2010).

[146] Reynolds's work is masterful. He gives a deep reflection on the ideas and the concepts that make up the ensemble of this psalm and where it brings the reader and where it even brings the Biblical Tradition. However, I may be giving his thesis an articulation that is not quite as clear in the development of the text. This is particularly obvious in his treatment of the idea of Wisdom and Torah. For example, in pages 52-56, he gives an exposé of the Wisdom language that is present in the psalm, yet on page 131, he concludes that the words for wisdom are absent (even though he has already noted how wisdom language is present). While some aspects of the study are contradictory and his central thesis is not quite articulated as clearly throughout the work, the studies of the psalm are enlightening and insightful.

[147] Reynolds, *The Exemplary Torah Student,* 86.

Ravasi also follows this line in suggesting that, while praise of the Law is present, it is used to offer a reflection on the **intriguing relationship between the gift of the Law and the human acceptance of that gift and subsequent absorption of that gift into the drama of existence.**[148] Into this complex knot will come the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears of human life and these can be examined in the light of *torah*. Whereas this might more normally be the material of Wisdom, here Master *Torah*, rather than Lady Wisdom, is personified as a faithful companion on the journey of life and some of his attributes are only discovered in this matrix of personal experience. This idea of a guiding, teaching personification is of note and importance. This leads us to another surprising fact: the dominant motifs that form the colours of the textile of this weave are from the Wisdom Tradition. Here we find such themes as "way" (in various synonyms, present almost 60 times), "life" (present about 21 times), "heart"/"conscience" (20 times), the verb "to teach" (c. 20 times), "justice" (12 times), the verb "to love" with the Word of God as its object (11 times), the verb to understand (10 times), "loving faithfulness"—interesting as it is the strongest covenantal term (7 times).[149] This notion that *torah* may be personified and become a guiding, teaching presence is crucial to our understanding of this psalm and the larger framework into which it will fit.

Robert returns to this subject in another article which depicts how *torah* interacts with Wisdom in this psalm, again from a canonical and theological perspective typical of the scholarship of pre-*Dei Verbum* Catholic exegetes.[150] He identifies the depiction of *torah* in vv. 89, 91 and 96 with the personification of Wisdom in Job 9; 7, 9 and 28: 27. In common, they are seen to be firmly fixed in the heavens yet the source of teaching and guidance for humanity. Robert develops this to a second moment, where this personified *torah* is the divine master, the source of direct divine revelation. No longer can the pious expect the drama of extraordinary and supernatural prophetic revelations: their master now will be the sacred text as Robert says:

> C'est à travers le texte sacré que l'âme entre en communion des pensées et des vouloirs de Dieu, et qu'elle se prête, d'une façon constante et normale, à la divine

[148] Ravasi suggests this formulation of the theme of the psalm in his commentary, where he states:
> Il tema central del psalmo è solo apparentemente la legge jahvistica, in realtà è l'intreccio tra le due libertà, quella del dono della parola divina e quella dell'adesione vitale umana. (Gianfranco Ravasi, *Il Libro dei Salmi: Commento e Attualizzazione.* Vol III. Bologna: Dehoniane, 2008. 448.).

[149] Ibid, 449.

[150] A. Robert, "Le Psaume CXIX et le sapientiaux." *RB* 48 (1939). 5-20.

> pédagogie…. C'est par la lecture que Dieu se révèle, et non plus par l'audition, puisque l'ère prophétique est close; ou plutôt la lecture est le seul moyen par lequel on puisse désormais entrer en communication avec Moïse et les Prophètes.[151]

Torah has become the teacher in this practical and imminent manner. In reading and in meditating *(hagah*) the text, the reader has a direct divine revelation, which offers two results: a joy in the heart and a direction for the way. On a number of occasions, he declares the joy he finds in this Law but he also claims to love the Law (vv. 47-8, 87, 113). This "love" marks the interiorization of this Law. Robert describes it as a Deuteronomic word, more at home in the language of the *Shema,* but the beginnings here of an attitude of interiorization and spiritualization of the Law.[152] Fishbane continues this vein of study by tracing the process of spiritualization of *torah* from the initial priestly teachings, to the codification, to the moment when these became the object of piety and devotion:

> We should not minimize the seismic implications of the expressions found in Psalm 119. They reveal a spiritual attitude to the Torah and the commandments are the object of spiritual veneration, love and trust; this is more than a piety of study and observance, and remarkably discloses a dimension of relationship to the commandments and Torah which is pious and religious in its own right. With the transformation of Torah study and its teachings, we are close to the heartbeat of the birth of Judaism. Psalm 119 is an axial document in the history of the religion of Israel--- one which sets the course for millennia of Jewish spirituality, from late antiquity on. It is at once an ancient formation and preformation of subsequent types.[153]

Torah becomes therefore a teacher and then, in turn, a source of teaching. This psalm represents for this movement much of what Proverbs 8 was for the Wisdom movement—both are personified, both are the object of attraction and love, both become the space wherein the new directions are discovered. Whereas Wisdom gives the "taste" for this adventure, *torah*, in turn, will give him direction and the will to live as God wants him to live. As Whybray says:

> In this prayer, then, the psalmist is sure that he is in direct communication with God. This gift of illumination will, he is convinced, provide the means fully to understand the meaning of God's law and, through that, to appreciate, by meditation, the wonder of his operations. It will lead him to live as God wills him to live (vv. 34, 35) and so to abstain from base and fraudulent behavior (v. 36). The psalmist already *knows* the letter of the law, but only through divine illumination will he learn its true implications (vv 73, 125)-

[151] Ibid, 16-17.
[152] Other commentators follow this line, particularly P.J. Botha, "Interpreting 'Torah' in Psalm 1 in the light of Psalm 119," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 68(1), Art#1274, 7 pages, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1274.
[153] Michael Fishbane, 'Spiritual Transformations of Torah in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition," *JSRI* 6 (2007): 13.

--- that is, that it requires him to live an honest life. These petitions thus encapsulate the essence of true wisdom and torah piety: a moral life based on a true knowledge of God.[154]

Jon D. Levenson and the "fluidity" of Torah*[155]*

A particularly rich reading of the relationship between *torah* and Wisdom is that of Jon D. Levenson in his article "The Sources of Torah." Levenson begins with an examination of the traditional rabbinical view that the Pentateuch is coterminous with the "*Torah"*, such that all references to the Torah were to be seen in the light of Mosaic revelation, which is superiorly authoritative. Yet within the rabbinic tradition there is already the seed of recognition of a non-identification of Pentateuch and *torah* with reference to the oral *torah*, an instantiation of which is the *Book of Jubilees,* which sees the Pentateuch as "authoritative, but not definitive."[156]Therefore, even this original and classic "Mosaic domination" of the term *torah* has within its tradition elements that point to a certain fluidity. Levenson goes on to assert that no text is as preoccupied with the term *tôrâ* as Ps 119. The theology of the psalm is dominated by its form, with "discipline and formal constraints,"[157] that will characterize both theology and form. Levenson returns to the idea of an anthological element to the psalm, recognizing lexical affinities with Jeremiah but identifying the theology to be closer to Deuteronomy. Yet here, he begins to outline distinct features of the theology of this psalm. He remarks that there is no priestly theology, no explicitly covenantal terminology and no reference to Moses, which leads him to assert that there is here an "unmediated character of the revelation of commandments" which is "in pointed contradiction to the Deuteronomic tradition and to the whole exaltation of Moses' gifts upon which the doctrine of priority and preeminence of the Pentateuch is founded."[158] God is the teacher of *torah* in this psalm and the psalm as an entity is " a prayer for illumination and revelation."[159] With this in mind, Levenson notes that the *torah* here lacks a constant identity but has a "sporadic" nature, akin to prophetic *torah*. This is not, then, a prayer for guidance in exegesis but rather a

[154] R.N. Whybray, "Psalm 119. Profile of a Psalmist," in *Wisdom, You are my Sister—Studies in honour of Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday.*
(ed. by Michael L. Barré. CBQMS 29. Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1997), 36.
[155] Jon D. Levenson, "The Sources of Torah: Psalm 119 and the Modes of Revelation in Second Temple Judaism" in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 559-574.
[156] Ibid., 561.
[157] Ibid., 562.
[158] Ibid., 564.
[159] Ibid., 564.

prayer that reflects a sense of how God can "*torah"* the psalmist directly, offering direction and guidance for the journey of life. Levenson goes on to distance himself from any theory of relation to Ezra or Nehemiah, for whom "book consciousness torah" was paramount, as he sees this less in terms of book consciousness *torah* and more in terms of torah from "unmediated spiritual experience, including the charismatic gift of wisdom."[160] Levenson suggests that it belongs to a current close to the sense (if not the time) of *Jubilees,* for whom scripture is still fluid and prophecy is still live and active, producing more scripture and the spiritual experience to read it. Therein might lie the rationale of this psalm: it may have served a function of allowing the reader to enter into the spiritual state necessary to receive *torah* personally and unmediatedly. This accounts for its length and regularity—as the reader prays, with the regular, relaxing predictability, other thoughts might be banished as he comes to hear the torah, in a manner akin to *lectio divina.*

Another key question for Levenson is of what the *torah* of Ps 119 consists. He sees it as being influenced by the Deuteronomic tradition but without identification with it and having a much stronger sapiential morality aspect than a book focus. Herein, he compares it with Ben Sira who seeks to educate people in a Wisdom-critiqued percursus of the tradition, for whom the Pentateuch was the supreme exemplification, but not the sole manifestation, of the Wisdom current. Yet one of the key differences is the lack of examples from the history of Israel in the psalm, where the only example is the experience of the psalmist but sometimes veiled in language that might suggest a throwback to figures in the history of Israel. The reason for this may lie in the fact that the entire tradition of Law is telescoped into the dichotomy of keeping the Law or forsaking it. In that is everything: all the exemplifications from the history of Israel demonstrate that simple maxim. Within the Law is the understanding and the rendering of oneself according to the word of God:

> For the psalmist, everything is a consequence of the *dābār,* a term that denotes not only a commandment or a promise but also the energetic transformative "word" through which God effects his will. The *dābār* of God is "posted in the heavens" and governs the astral bodies (Ps 119: 89-91) yet it is also available to the speaker, who has striven to observe it (v.101). In other words, the commandments that the psalmist practices, even those which may be Penteuchal, constitute a kind of revealed natural law. They enable him to bring his own life into harmony with the rhythm of the cosmos and to have access to the creative and life-giving energy that drives the world.[161]

[160] Ibid., 566.
[161] Ibid., 569.

The entire endeavour is vested with a stronger and clearer rationale: the thanksgiving for the gift of *torah* and the prayer to be taught it does not simply leave the individual's mouth as a token of respectful religiosity but it is a deep and powerful prayer for existential fulfillment and earnest living.

In a final moment, Levenson returns to the notion of the book culture and the need for the psalmist to dialogue with the culture. Levenson remarks that there is not a rejection of a "booked *torah*" but rather there is here a witness to a moment of fluidity, wherein the book was not the exclusive or even the primary understanding of torah. Instead there was a fluidity, where the written text and the oral tradition were manifestations of the divine teaching, while direct and unmediated divine teaching was also envisaged. Herein lies a witness to a moment before the culture of God's word became differentiated into book, and tradition and spiritual experience but which balances the three.

Levenson offers another perspective on the use and origin of the psalm. While Ps 1 might demonstrate "didactic piety" and Ps 19 demonstrate creative interpretation, there is here witness to unmediated direct divine guidance that comes from the maelstrom of the *torah*.

Conclusion

Torah benefits from the tradition of Wisdom as in this psalm it is celebrated as a reality that is transforming itself and transforming the one it teaches. That transformation is spiritual but its effects are in the conduct and the "way" of the reader. This leads us to our next exploration of the identity of *torah—torah* as an ethical way of living.

Discrete Reading 5: Torah and the Way: Ethics and the *Torah*

The *torah* movement is not simply notional or idealistic but the very essence of the *torah* movement is that this dialogue reality with God finds practical expression in the life, actions and expressions of the people who live in relation with God. Praying this psalm will necessarily imply for the worshipping community a reflection on actions and deeds and how they express the dynamic richness of this *torah* movement.

V. 168 is notable for the fact that two of the synonyms are present in this verse, as well as the term דְּרָכַי which, as we have noted, is a strongly associated word. This draws a particular attention to this verse. This is also the last verse of the penultimate stanza, a stanza which is resumptive of many of the themes within the psalm, including the unjust persecution, the peace of the law and the commitment to praise seven times a day. Yet in the last three verses, and particularly in this last verse, a real dynamic of the *torah* is celebrated. Of this line, Goldingay writes:

> The last line in the section re-expresses the point about keeping (*šāmar*) those orders and declarations, but focuses on the action this implies rather than the inner attitude. In an ideal world, or rather if we were ideal people, the idea that God sees everything we do might be an unworthy motivation for obedience, but in the actual world seminary students need to be proctored when they are taking tests (cf Heb. 4:13).
>
> The notion that our ways are before Yhwh carries a further connotation. In 38:9[10] its implication is not that Yhwh knows what we do but that Yhwh knows what happens to us (cf. "before you" in 88: 1[2];"before me" in 89:36[37]). A similar implication makes sense here. Yet again the line links Yhwh's commands and God's promises. Our living obedient lives means that God keeps an eye on us.[162]

This is not simply a spiritual reality but one which will guide "all the ways" of this psalmist. This practicality of *torah*, the real-life application in "all the ways" of the psalmist is the end result of the spiritual formation and transformation of the *torah*. There may be a subtle resumption of vv. 1- 3, where the term "way," according to Anderson, "may express one of the central aspects of Israelite religion, as in Jer. 7:23."[163]

This 'way' is therefore a practical, real-life expression of the inner attitude of a *torah*-centred wisdom. This will guide the actions and the deeds of the psalmist as, in terms of the image of v.130, the unfolding of the *torah* gives light and gives understanding to the simple. This will result in a guided, enlightened and enriched ethic, that leads the psalmist in a way that is a constant change in existence and a life with a meaning and a design (in essence this is the opposite of the 'wandering' of v.10 (שׁגה), described by Anderson as a strong expression, understood as the leading astray of a blind man (Dt. 27:18) or the 'erring from ways' of Is.63: 17.[164]) As we read in Maillot and Lelièvre, in their discussion of the "fourth theme" of the psalm, how obedience to the Law is the source of joy:

> Cette joie n'est pas ici une joie de propriétaire-de-la-Loi, ou celle d'un homme pour qui tous les problèmes seraient résolus parce qu'il détient la Loi, et pourrait se vanter d'être un propriétaire de la vérité, mais qui, ensuite, découvre que par sa Parole, Dieu a voulu

[162] Goldingay, *Psalms III,* 440.
[163] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (Vol. 2), 809.
[164] Ibid, 812.

> jeter un pont entre le ciel et la terre, entre la sainteté de Dieu et la faiblesse humaine, que Dieu a ainsi donné à l'homme la possibilité d'avoir une signification, une destinée, en lui permettant de lui ressembler, *mutatis mutandis* certes, mais réellement…. Dans l'obéissance, aussi terrestre qu'elle peut être, l'homme découvre qu'il n'est pas seulement une brebis perdue (v.176), mais aussi une brebis retrouvée. Pas seulement une créature totalement absurde et incapable, mais déjà une créature qui a un sens (par la seule grace de Dieu).
>
> La Loi met l'homme dans une autre situation, une autre condition. Elle fait de l'homme le partenaire de Dieu. Elle ne change pas son être (les Israélites n'auraient d'ailleurs pas comprise mot "être"). Mais elle change du tout sa situation, son existence. [165]

This 'change in existence,' which is effected by the Law on all the ways of the sincere pray-er of this psalm, is the practical effect of the change that the *torah* makes in life: it is a guide for ethical living. This ethical living is not simply a legalistic compliance but an expression of the meaning (signification/destinée) that has been discovered in the gift of the *torah*. Van Gemeren also traces the stages of this process as interiorization of the Law, then an outward expression in concrete actions, which lead to a lifestyle freed from anxiety and further adversity, as he notes (of vv. 30-32):

> The psalmist's choice (cf. 25: 12) is shown in a strong determination to do what is right, beginning with his "heart."…Determination also found expression in an affirmation of love and devotion: "I hold fast" (*d-b-q.* "cling," v.31;cf. Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20).The Psalmist prays further that his life style--- in response to the revealed will of God--- will keep him free from anxiety and further adversity ("shame," v.31; cf. v.6; 25:2).[166]

Speaking the new reality into being: Wenham

Gordon Wenham has made two studies of the ethical dimension of the Psalter and the role of this psalm therein[167]. Wenham argues for the "unique persuasiveness" of the ethical outlook of the Psalms.[168] He prefaces his argument with reference to Speech-act theory and he discusses "performative words". Here he uses the example of wedding promises and he notes how the pronouncing of the words changes the situation and, to an extent, speaks into being a new reality:

> Using this categorization of speech acts, I suspect, one could say that praying the psalms involves the worshiper in many commissive speech acts: the psalms as prayers are really a series of vows. This is what sets them apart from other biblical texts with an ethical dimension.[169]

---

[165] Alphonse Maillot et André Lelièvre, *Les Psaumes. Traduction nouvelle et commentaire* (Vol. 3. Geneva: Éditions Labor et Fides, 1969), 131.
[166] Van Gemeren, *Psalms,* 743.
[167] Gordon J. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah—Reading Biblical Songs Ethically* (Studies in Theological Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).
-----, *The Psalter Reclaimed. Praying and Praising with the Psalms* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2013).
[168] Wenham, *Psalms as Torah,* 77.
[169] Wenham, *Psalms as Torah,* 67. A further exploration of Speech-Act theory and its application to the psalms is to be found in *The Psalter Reclaimed,* 23-35.

In this context, before he comes to examine Ps 119, he notes that the public prayer of these psalms had an important impact:

> To pray a psalm is to commit oneself to its values and standards in a way that is quite different from listening to a proverb, legal rule or story. To pray a psalm may well involve more than praise or petition; it may commit the worshiper to act in certain ways.[170]

Of Psalm 119 and the idea of *torah* therein, he says that here the totality of God's revelation is placed into the sphere of prayer for Israel, who is invited here to look at all that God has done, all that God has shown himself to be, all that God has revealed of himself, and then to react to this by seeking to live in harmony with it through the gift of *torah*:

> This survey of terminology (i.e. the terms used as synonyms, immediately preceding this quote) shows the breadth of Psalm 119's understanding of the law: it is not just ethical injunctions and rules, but rather the whole of God's revelation…..It covers all that helps to link God to his people, from the revelation in the created order (Ps. 19:1), to the patriarchal experience of salvation, to the laws given at Sinai, to the teaching of the sages, to the return to Zion. Contemplation on all these experiences of God's grace prompts a deep yearning for a closer walk with God.[171]

Praying Psalm 119 will then incur a commitment, even an obligation, on the pray-er to live in accord with *torah*. Wenham's insights into speech-act theory offer another perspective on this psalm: the psalmist is praying into being the reality of *torah*. In Psalm 1, this is already the *hagah* that will accompany him, day and night, and that will bring him to the state of freshness and stability of the tree by the water's edge. Likewise, the unheard voice of Psalm 19, the voice of "heavens and firmament", of "day and night", of the warrior-sun can be seen, even if not heard, in the grandeur of Creation. This raises a question: what does the world, that this psalm seeks to pray into being, resemble?

Within any form of writing, but perhaps more in Scripture than elsewhere, the power of creating an image in order to communicate a concept is critical. Isaiah is one of the masters of this with his depictions that are often so vivid and so spectacular (e.g. the images of Isaiah 11 or 55). Ezekiel also often offers a vision of the realities that he tries to speak into being (e.g. Ez. 37). Wenham rightly talks about the power of the language of prayer to influence how people act, as he retorts back to the old adage of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, reminding the reader that "it is in prayer that people give utterance to their deepest and most fundamental

[170] Wenham, *Psalms as Torah,* 77.
[171] Wenham, *Psalms as Torah,* 88.

convictions."[172] Yet it is also often in prayer that people find the image of the new reality they must create. How will this reality of *torah*, being prayed into being, look? What will this "closer walk with God" be like?

We might begin to answer this question in the negative. Unlike Pss 1 and 19, with their dominant images of the tree by the flowing river or the circuit of the warrior sun, there is no single dominant image here. There are many powerful images in this psalm, from the cleaving to the dust of v. 25, the wine-skin in the smoke (v.83), the lamp and light (v. 105), the hiding-place and shield (v. 114), the gold (v. 127) or the lost sheep of the final verse. Yet none of these dominates the psalm. What dominates the psalm, even on a visual level in Hebrew, is the structure and form. As we noted above, it communicates a sense of order and steadiness, which is apparent even on the visual level. Therein lies the image of what this reality is like: the ethical vision of *torah* living is best seen in the image of this psalm: within the structure and order of a life lived with *torah*, all the great existential trysts will happen, from the oppression from the wicked, to the moments of lying in the dust; from the insecurities and questions of youth, to the cleavings to the dust. All the drama and all the banality of human life can be experienced in the "laboratory" of the *torah*, where ultimately that sense of order and structure will overcome as it directs the pray-er's path on that "closer walk with God," wherein, as Terrien notes, the appropriation is so strong (cf. v. 97) that the language becomes closer to that of a lover than an ethicist.[173]

Christian Appropriations of the Ethical Value of Torah

C.S. Lewis discusses this aspect of the psalm with some refreshingly frank insights. He asks how the Law can be an object of delight. One might honestly try to keep the Law but few will find that it is a delight. He discards the idea of this delight being simply a clear conscience and he is conscious of the danger of delighting in the "subject" of the Law without this becoming dangerously self-satisfying. He comes to discuss Ps 119 with the eye and ear of a master of literature, remarking how the repetitions may have had a pleasure for the ancient ear similar to the Italian metre of *Sestina.* He describes the intricacy of the poem as being a "thing done like embroidery," and the product of "delight in leisurely,

[172] Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed,* 105.
[173] Terrien, *The Psalms,* 802.

disciplined craftsmanship."[174] This care shows something of the attitude of the psalmist to the Law, as "both involved exact and loving conformity to an intricate pattern." [175] This is not what has often become known disparagingly as "pharisaism,"[176] although that temptation may grow from an aberration of this attitude, but a delight in the sheer order of things as they comply to the Divine Law. He says:

> The Order of the Divine mind, embodied in the Divine Law, is beautiful. What should a man do but try to reproduce it, so far as possible, in his daily life? His "delight" is in those statutes (*16*); to study them is like finding treasure (*14*); they affect him like music, are his "songs" (*54*); they taste like honey (*103*); they are better than silver and gold (*72*). As one's eyes are more and more opened, one sees more and more in them, and it excites wonder (*18*). This is not priggery nor even scrupulosity; it is the language of a man ravished by moral beauty.[177]

Lewis goes on to examine how the Law is "true", how it offers directions for living, as these directions are based on the very order of things: "Their delight in the Law is a delight in having touched firmness; like the pedestrian's delight in feeling the hard road beneath his feet after a false short cut has long entangled him in muddy fields."[178] This psalm celebrates truth in the Law, a firm sense that this Law shines out because it is so resonant of the order and beauty of Creation.

This is Lewis's appraisal of the ethics of Ps 119. In essence this psalm, with its beauty and intricacy, resonates the beauty and intricacy of the Law, which interprets that unspoken word of nature (Ps 19). That is at the heart of the ethical vision of this psalm: the very beauty of order comes from the order of Creation itself and the truth is for Israel that to live in symphony with this order is the path to blessedness. One modality of expression of this truth is the Pentateuch, which seeks to codify and consolidate this guidance. Yet the *torah* is a great deal more than a written code, however well constructed that code might be. Jacob Grimm writes of the need to express law in poetry.[179] One of the important aspects of this need to express the Law through poetry is the fact that, according to Grimm, both depend upon two essential elements: "*dem Wunderbaren und dem*

---

[174] Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms,* 52.
[175] Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms,* 52.
[176] This term has become problematic more recently, but it is used here with reference to the attitude that Lewis calls the "Pharisaic conception" (*Reflections,* 53) at a time when this term was not as problematic.
[177] Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms,* 53.
[178] Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms,* 55.
[179] Jacob Grimm, "Von der Poesie im Recht," Zeitschrift für geschichteliche rechtwissenschaft," 2/1, 25-99. This is based on a conference delivered in the Faculty of Theology in the Institut Catholique de Paris, Winter 2012.

Glaubreichen"—on the marvelous and the believable. Poetry becomes a powerful vehicle to communicate this marvellous order in a manner that can be believed and perceived, which might not be as evident in codification and legislative texts. Hence the need for this as an expression of ethical living—it can offer a view of the Law that does beyond the legalist into the marvellous.

Within this venture we might also look at the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In his unfinished meditation on the psalm, he returns to that image of the "way" and its importance in the interpretation of this psalm. This meditation was a formation for the students for ministry in Bonhoeffer's care. It is an example of a Christian theological appropriation of this psalm. Within this, Bonhoeffer underscores the idea of the "way" that is open to those who read this psalm. They are guided along a way that sees God's action constantly operative in life. In order to comply with this action, the gift of this "word" or Law is given to them to be the subject of their meditation and to effect in them that unity and compliance with this action of God. Thus, ethical living for Bonhoeffer is the compliance with that way which is to be discovered in the gift of the Word or Law. Actions are to be guided by that Word, not because it is an authoritative rulebook but rather because it is the way that begins with God and ends with his searching them out again:

> Members of the community of faith have no need to exhort one another to make a new beginning; instead, they speak to each other as those to whom God's new beginning is continuously being given. They know they are together on the way, which begins with God having found his own and which can only end with God searching for them again.[180]

Bonhoeffer's reading of the psalm comes at a time when this call to authoritative ethical actions inspired by the reading and meditating on the Word would be costly and dangerous under the totalitarian regime of Fascist Germany. Within the context of his appropriation of this psalm, the clarity of vision that it offers is pivotal in forming Bonhoeffer's ethical position. Firstly, the "way" is not dependent on human response but rather on divine initiative:

> In answer to the question about the law of God we are not presented with moral teaching or an ethical norm, instead we hear about a completed action of God.[181]

[180] Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Meditating on the Word* (Edited and translated by David McI. Grazie. Plymouth: Cowley Publications, 2000), 96.
[181] Ibid, 98.

The question might be evinced as to whether Bonhoeffer's teaching becomes quietistic, but the answer is most definitely negative. Rather, Bonhoeffer insists that the way forward is always a human effort, even though, as in this psalm, it is not goal orientated but rather a continuous way, from the joy of discovering the happiness of the way to the joy of being found by God on that way:

> With God one does not arrive at a fixed position; rather one walks along a way. One moves ahead or one is not with God. God knows the whole way; we only know the next step and the final goal. There is no stopping; every day, every hour it goes farther. Whoever sets his foot on this way finds that his life has become a journey on the road. It leads through green pastures and through the dark valley, but the Lord will always lead on the right pathway (Ps. 23) and he will not let your foot be moved (Ps 121:3). [182]

Bonhoeffer sees in this psalm then a masterpiece of theological reflection on how God's way can become a human way back to God.[183] Along that way, the human being is sure of the gift of the Law as a direction and as a means to find the path. A constant meditation on that Law then becomes the necessary means to ensure that one is on that way:

> There is no standing still. Every gift we receive, every new understanding, drives us still deeper into the Word of God. We need time for God's Word. In order to understand the commandments of God correctly we must meditate at length upon his Word. Nothing could be more wrong than the activism or that feeling of contentment that denies the worth of reflection and meditation. [184]

Bonhoeffer's theological reflection on this psalm sheds an important light on the idea of *torah* as moral guide. Instead of a blind obedience, Bonhoeffer sees in the gift of *torah* as presented in this psalm, not a codex of regulations but the matrix necessary for ethical empowerment. Human actions are not governed by norms and regulations that assure order, but rather by the constant movement along the "way" which becomes this order in itself. Brock traces this back to a Lutheran principle, which understood human sanctification as "the synchronization of our lives with scripture to take place via continual exegesis of scripture."[185]

Bonhoeffer finds in the Psalter, with its framing "the concept of instruction or command with a dynamic understanding of human behaviour,"[186] a perfect

---

[182] Ibid, 104-5.
[183] C.f. Bonhoeffer, *Meditating,* 106. Here Bonhoeffer states: "The way of God is his way to the human being, and only thus the way of the human being to him."
[184] Bonhoeffer, *Meditating,* 121.
[185] Brian Brock, "Bonhoeffer and the Bible in Christian Ethics: Psalm 119, The Mandates, and Ethics as a 'Way.'" *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18 (2005): 7-29.
[186] Ibid, 11.

location to reformulate this idea of a reading and meditation of the Word as a matrix for human ethical action. As noted above, a fundamental principle is that the Law is not a set of norms but "a completed action of God" which draws people into life. The Law then becomes a creative space, where God can be active in human behaviour and in ethical praxis, as Brock notes:

> For Bonhoeffer the Law is a space created by God's judgements, which humans only truly inhabit in the acknowledgement that it is God who acts and decides in the fullest sense of the words. Creation is thus conceived as a location within the Law: God's redeeming is the context of his redeeming work.[187]

Bonhoeffer's appropriation of the metaphor of the way and the concept of the Law into a dynamic ethical framework offers a fresh insight into this psalm. The meditation on the Law does not necessarily involve a neurotic scrupulosity of observance but the opposite—an opening to the completed action of God into which human action flows like a river into the sea, only to see the whole process begin again and again.

Lewis and Bonhoeffer represent two Christian readers of the Psalm into an ethical and dynamic perception of *torah*. This has to be an element of the understanding of *torah* in this psalm and of the dynamic of the psalter: the teaching of the Lord and its reception are not to remain quietistic but guide human action in the "way."

Conclusion

An essential aspect of this psalm is the dynamic expression of *torah* that it seeks to speak into being. *Torah* is not simply to remain in the sphere of the notional or the theoretical but it needs to find expression in the "way," that is in the lived expression of obedience. It is in this light that the traditional nomenclature of "Law" finds its meaning: while *torah* never limited to a set of rules and regulations, neither does it remain in the sphere of the abstract and the ideal. *Torah* offers direction and guidance for life and the "way" of ethical living is one of the fruits of the *torah* movement.

---

[187] Ibid, 13. This is complemented in Bonhoeffer's statement:

> The creation and the law are the two great unbreakable statutes of God, which eternally belong together, because the same God has given them. (Bonhoeffer, *Meditating,* 108).

General Conclusion on Ps 119.

The very structure and the presentation of this psalm, as well as its length and its repetitive form, bear witness to its being a literary monument of significance. To have created this psalm is to have created a monument in words to the reality of *torah.* As one might create a monument to a great leader or a great event, so that whenever it is seen that person or event is called to mind, so it is with this psalm. This is key to the reproductive aspect of the psalm: the chanting or meditation on this psalm is a reminding of the essential elements of the *torah.*

Yet that is not all. Instead of simply being an item if interest that might arouse attention and curiosity so as to draw attention, this psalm is structured to reflect and resemble the reality of which it bears witness: the great and many-faced gift of *torah.* If our monumental psalm has eight faces, each demonstrating the different aspects of what *torah* living might be, then we begin to see how this psalm functions explicatively. It begins, almost, to personify *torah,* to give it a personal quality and to allow it to become a companion on the way of life (that was already started in Ps 1). Hence, here, we might say, *torah* becomes incarnate. This is to be seen in the practical and real application of *torah* in ethical living and in the transformation towards Wisdom and understanding that it seeks to engender. Yet that structured and complex creation also allows for a real engagement with the drama of human living. While it remains structured and formal it is not divorced from the cries of lament, nor the sighs of anxiety, nor even the gentle tones of hopefulness.

Each time this is read, in a context of study or prayerfulness, it moves the reader to a deeper understanding of the directiveness of life that is at the heart of the gift of *torah*. So it functions on the *reproductive* level, but with an *explicative* aspect of demonstrating how *torah* has a face that is real, practical and directional. This leads to its *normative* value as it pushes the reader to discover anew, each time that it is read, where and how the gift of *torah* is directing the existential way.

For reading the Psalter, this become the great sign-post for the *torah* hermeneutic. Here is where, once again, the decision is placed before the reader. In Psalm 1, that journey was begun with a clear instruction. In Ps 19 the way becme the great way of all Creation, the voice that cries from the heart of Creation and of which *torah* is the interpreter and the minstrel. Here we find the great

monument that opens the last stage of the way of using words to discover a path to Wisdom. The very fact that its genre is so difficult to define, and yet seems to carry something of the poignancy of the great drama of existence, the call to discover the way to transforming Wisdom and to ethical living are all aspects of what this poem seeks to add to the hermeneutical construct of the Psalter---it seeks to guide the reader, who may well have found something of his/her own journey reflected in the steps of the Psalter journey, into the last great effort of finding direction and purpose (*torah*) in these poems.

CONCLUSION

Towards a *Torah* Hermeneutic of the Psalter

In our Introduction, we set the programme of this work as an examination of the three layers of the psalms, with an examination of the "complex differentiated activity" and of the "designs and purposes, aim and means" of each psalm in turn. Continuing the analogy used by Alonso-Schœkel, as we have looked in the rooms and the floors of the building, it is now time to step outside and to see how it functions and what sort of vision it offers from outside.

Returning to the need to establish how this functions reproductively, explicatively and normatively, this next section will examine the idea of what a torah hermeneutic, based on these three psalms might offer to their reading and to the reading of the Psalter as a whole. In essence, we return to the question:

What is the vision of *torah* and how does it function?

Hermeneutically-charged Texts

Hermeneutics of factical life

The mode of reading in terms of "hermeneutics of factical life," whereby interpretation of a phenomenon is understood with what it functions "as," is described by means of an example from Heidegger by Caputo.[1] Heidegger's kitchen table was "a three dimensional extended mass occupying a point on a space-time grid."[2] Yet how this mass was interpreted adds another dimension to it far beyond its facticity—it becomes a connection with all those who had ever sat thereat; marks upon it are reminders of when it became children's desk or play-area, it was the space used by his wife to write letters to him while away. Even later, once it would be found in years after its use, it will have the import of *flooding* those who see it with memories of its world.

This is essentially how hermeneutics can broaden the interpretation from the "facticity" of an item to what import it carries and what it "means" because of that hermeneutic. The corpus of the Pentateuch comes to mean a great deal more than the facticity of its being a collection of different texts from a period of a

[1] John D. Caputo, *Hermeneutics. Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information.* (Milton Keynes: Pelican, Random House, 2018), 40-44.
[2] Caputo, *Hermeneutics,* 40.

certain number of years, collected and edited. One of the hermeneutical triggers (similar to the pen marks on the table) will be the texts that deliberately *flood* those who hear it with a sense of how it serves to direct and teach Israel.

Hermeneutically-charged texts

We move to ask, then, how a written corpus might be charged and "flooded" with identity by an interpretation beyond facticity: what is a hermeneutically charged text, and how it might influence the reading and the interpretation of any corpus? Hermeneutically- charged texts offer a reading of the corpus to which they belong that influences how the reader interprets the ensemble. An obvious example would be the *dénouement* in a detective novel, which will call the reader to revise different elements of what had been read. The final scene in Sebastian Faulks's novel *Human Traces* changes the perspective of the entire novel, interpreting the events of the novel from the perspective of the female characters, which had otherwise remained in the background.

Biblical example

Examples of how texts offer a hermeneutic to collections and books are to be found throughout the Old Testament and in the New Testament. A clear example of a hermeneutically charged text is Job 42: 1-6. The entire book, composed of the drama of Job's innocence before God's apparent casual injustice, is given a new perspective by this text, where what Job now sees (42:5) now makes for a change of perspective and a radical shift in position, often translated as a "repentance," in 42:6.

This text serves as a clear model of how hermeneutically charged texts function. The hermeneutic, which it provides, colours the reading of the entire text. One might read the text of Job as a collection of protests at the apparent lack of justice in the random manner in which ruin, bereavement and illness have been visited upon an innocent and upright protagonist. The language and the style of the corpus suggest tragedy. Yet that "tragedy reading" is subverted by this hermeneutic, whereby at a critical moment, Job acknowledges that what he has "seen" has caused him to change perspective and attitude. Reading the drama of the text from this perspective does not lessen the dramatic expression of pain, suffering and loss in the sheer torment expressed in the work, but it does offer an

interpretation and a perspective that turns it from tragedy to wisdom. Reproductive readings might well allow for an expression of similar grief, but with the overtone of a search for wisdom within that expression of grief. Explicatively, it moves the expression of grief into a necessary moment of "hearing" how God is and then discovering ("seeing") for oneself (42: 5). Normatively, it offers a paradigm for those in difficulty and pain to find an initial olive branch of hope.

Towards a torah hermeneutic for the Pentateuch

On another level, we might begin with a question: What makes the Pentateuch *torah?* In essence, this is a collection of disparate texts, from aetiological myths to patriarchal narratives, from epic stories to contractual form, from legal texts to poetry. Those who gathered these texts and proposed them to a community as normative and defining, structured them in such a manner as to give them an interpretation that allowed them to become *torah*—a defining teaching text that offers direction and purpose to Israel. This is a *torah* hermeneutic. It is so well established as to be an unquestioned fact. However, the truth is that it is a complex and structured interpretation of these readings which orients a reading of them as *torah.* This becomes apparent in some key texts: Genesis 17; Exodus 34; Deut. 4-6 (particularly 6:4-9). These are texts that demonstrate the presence of a *torah* hermeneutic functioning in the Pentateuch. They are key texts that affect an interpretation of the entire material, with the effect of bringing unity to this compendium of different texts and giving a vision of how *torah* functions, with reference to an opening statement of identity (Abrahamic covenant), a restored, renewed and enlarged sense of belonging (Sinai Covenant) and a normative and ritual restatement of the essence of this choice (Deuteronomy and the *Shema).*

This is therefore how a hermeneutically charged text works: it allows for a *reproductive* reading of the corpus that charges it with this current, alongside an *explicative* reading that explains how the entire corpus can be read in this light and finally authorizes a new *normative* function of the entire corpus, whereby the historical, poetic and mythic is adapted to function in an instructive manner.

Deut. 6:4-9 (commonly known as the *Shema*) serves as an example of how this works. Coming after the restatement of the Decalogue, and as part of a

sermon on it, this text influences the reading, not just of the Commandments, but of the entire corpus of the Pentateuch. Beginning with the command to "hear" (with its obvious echo of the Schœkelian *reproductive* aspect), already a wisdom master's technique, it gives an interpretation of how "these words" are to be kept in the heart: they are to be recited to children and along the way, upon rising and going to bed, fastened to the hands and even in the doorways. Above all, they are to be welcomed with "love" of all the heart, soul and mind. They are not to remain solely in the theoretical or historical sphere but are to be signs and motives of the defining relationship between the Lord and Israel. In this way, the contractual and covenantal language is given another interpretation— one that is almost spousal in its effects and its depth. The *reproductive* reading of the text of the Decalogue (and, by extension, of the entire Pentateuch) is imbued with this quasi-spousal character. On the *explicative level*, the "words" that are to be repeated are not just "words" but emblems, ensigns and the matter of conversation and meditation. However, it is on the *normative* level that this process seems to reach its most affective as these "words" become the directing norm, guiding the hearer in the direction of real wisdom and truth.

While the interpretation of the Pentateuch as *torah* is so well established and so unquestioned, the fundamental rationale applies: this is so because the *torah hermeneutic* functions so well. Hermeneutically charged texts are intrinsic to this, to the extent that they affect the reading of the text on a structural level that can only be appreciated with a view from the distance. The *torah* hermeneutic in the Pentateuch is built on these charged texts which have such an effect as to bring the associations to bear on the entire corpus.

Towards a framing for a torah hermeneutic

We have noted thus far how a torah hermeneutic already functions within the Pentateuch to influence the reading hermeneutically to the point that this is taken for granted and functions seamlessly in the readings of the text. Hermeneutically charged texts assist and orient our readings towards a particular aim and within a particular framework. Essentially, they take the "facticity" of the text and charge it with a particular current and perspective. These hermeneutically charged texts serve to affect and direct the reproductive, explicative and normative reading of themselves and subsequently of the corpus into which they are integrated. We

have seen how these hermeneutically charged texts work in the case of Job and in the case of the Pentateuch, where they influence the reading of a tragedy narrative and meditation to become a *mashal*, and, in the case of the Pentateuch, a collection of various narrative, poetic, reflective and legal texts, so that they are read as *torah.*

Any hermeneutic for the reading of the Psalter needs to confront the issue of the disparity of material, between praise and lament, way and kingdom, tears and victory. The test of our hermeneutic lies in its ability to function across the apparent disparity of material and to offer a perspective that seeks unity. Where the text cries and whimpers in defeat and misery finds companionship with the jubilations and praises of the moment of victory found elsewhere, if each can be seen from the perspective of *torah,* a sign-post towards the great and final destination of presence to the Lord but within a context of self-understanding as people on the way and not yet ultimately there. Both are necessary moments in the journey. Yet the advantage of my proposed *torah* hermeneutic is the refocusing on the differing voices in the Psalter in terms of their possible complementarity rather than corrosiveness. As with the apparent dichotomy of lament and praise, both teach the pray-er and wayfinder about the truth of this human journey and about the reality of finding the way in the midst of the extremes and vagaries of existence. This is how the hermeneutic must function, between praise and despair, between the need to teach the wisdom of the *torah* and to seek the vision of God.

Defining the torah hermeneutic from within

Each of Psalms 1, 19 and 119 offers a contribution to the definition of this *torah* hermeneutic. As stated already, the proposal is that the ensemble of these contributions can function to load the reader's perspective on the reading of the Psalter. In order to define the hermeneutic, it is necessary to examine what contribution each psalm offers to this ensemble and how then they blend to function as a totality.

Psalm 1, as we have noted, offers a didactic piety that opens the reading of the Psalter as a way to Wisdom and offers the perspective that the meditation of this *torah* is the companion, day and night, of the "blessed" who is not a scoffer nor evil, nor a sinner. We might begin to notice that, while the praise-lament

tension is present in the contrast between the praise of the just one and the doom and scattering promised of the wicked, also present is the tension between wisdom and eschatology, as the blessed one is he who takes this road of meditation and delight but its perspective is towards the judgment and the discovery of who will stand among the congregation of the righteous. This eschatological interpretation is noted by Cole, who remarks how Ps 1 is given an eschatological interpretation in the Qumran documents.[3] Even the image of the tree (with its apocalyptic resonances as well as Wisdom overtones) is caught in this tension: while its leaves will not wither—an interesting suggestion that this is already in the eschatological sphere where the cycles of nature are no more—yet it will only produce its fruit at the appointed time, which is not yet the case. This tension adds to the contrast of the pious and blessed and his antithesis, the scoffer and wicked, who will be blown away by winds of eschatological harvest-time. What has this to teach us of our *torah*? Both tensions need to be held together in our reading of the pages opening before us. Yes, the obvious story of the blessed and his delights in his meditation will need to answer the questions of how and why he will sometimes call out in cries of bitterness and defeat. A subtle and yet forceful undercurrent of eschatological movement helps in that moment: the way is sure but it is not yet over. The reader moves in the direction of its fulfillment and *torah* will both allow him a sure path and a sense of its direction, but the movement and the challenge remain until the end, when praise will be complete and the journey will be over. This way is most blessed when it ceases to be a way and becomes only praise but until then, the tension remains and is even necessary.

Thus we might resume with the sense that the *torah* hermeneutic here offers a piety that is both didactic and eschatological. The way is blessed and known to the Lord, yet the end of *torah* is its objective—to move to the place where the blessed will prosper and stand where the Lord knows.

By contrast, Psalm 19 offers another perspective. In lieu of the eschatological tension and push towards an end, we find there the most secure and certain of all ways, the certainty of day that follows night, the utter fixedness of the daily circuit of the sun in the apparent infinity of the heavens. There is here something of the opposite tension: instead of the push towards the finish of Psalm

[3] Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter.* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2012), 4.

1, we find here a sense that the "way" of *torah* is as certain and as fixed as the most absolute of ways, the daily solar circuit. As sure as night follows day, as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow, so sure is *torah* as a way for reviving the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart and as desirable as gold for its brightness and honey for its sweetness. The faithful follower of this way will not "go astray" (as happens to the wicked in the last verse of Ps.1 or to the sheep in the final verse of Ps 119). Instead of focusing on the tension between the way and the end, the focus here is on the sheer enjoyment and security of the gift of *torah.* Beyond where it will lead, in itself, it already offers a security and a refuge. It is redeemer and rock already. Creation, in all its beauty and security, seeks to speak to humanity and to be understood and the interpreter of its silent language is *torah.* To understand beauty and security is to listen to this. Thus *torah* as a way is here seen as secure and fixed, offering humanity an opportunity to understand beauty and joy in a path as sure as that of the warrior sun emerging from his marriage tent.

Thus we might resume here that *torah* offers humanity an interpretative key to understanding the inherent beauty and security of Creation, much to be desired and in which is "great reward" (v.11). The way that is offered in *torah* can and will be found, as surely as the sun finds its daily circuit.

Entering into the maelstrom of Ps 119 and the enormity of how it sees *torah* and what it in turn offers to the *torah* hermeneutic for the Psalter presents multiple possibilities but two seem to be worthy of particular attention.

Firstly, the very uniqueness of structure, length and composition of this psalm draw attention to it, which means that it is proposed as a milestone to be noticed and flagged particularly. Even on a simple "cosmetic" level, this psalm commands attention for its length and the craft of its composition. It is a natural marker and what it has to say will need to influence where and how the Psalter is read.

The issue to be confronted in our secondary moment is how the essential element of the *torah* hermeneutic is developed in this psalm and what this might contribute to the reading of the Psalter. Michael Kodzo Mensah suggests that there is a thematic coherence as revealed in a six-canto thematic structure.[4] He

[4] Michael Kodzo Mensah, *I turned back my feet to your decrees (Psalm 119,59). Torah in the Fifth Book of the Psalter.* (Österreichische Biblische Studien 45; New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 306.

traces this from an initial presentation of the problem of the "Two Ways" (Canto 1: vv. 1-16), to the need for a dramatic choice for *torah* as the right choice, diametrically opposed to the way of falsehood (Canto 2: vv. 17-48), to the core message of the psalm in the admission of error and the acceptance of chastisement as a pedagogical tool, against a backdrop of the Lord's revelation of his kindness and mercy (Canto 3: vv. 49-88). Canto 4 marks the complete solemn return by oath to the way of *Torah,* which becomes a form of verbal sacrifice (vv. 89-128). The fifth canto sings of the manifestation of the Lord's love and faithfulness, made known through the mediation of *torah* and made manifest in history (Canto 5: vv.129-160). Finally, the sixth canto returns to the initial theme of the choice and the need for introspection and examination, in the context of *torah* meditation, in order to ensure continuation on this firm way, despite occasional straying and the need for corrections (vv. 161-176). Mensah affords particular weight to v.59 and the call to turn one's feet to the decrees of the Lord. He concludes with a note on how the strategic positioning of this psalm parallels with the same strategic positioning of Pss. 1 and 19, which he notes as "showing a key thematic rapport at the two poles of the Psalter."[5] Mensah's final note is a suggestion that

> The meditation of YHWH's Torah is not only the point of departure in the First Book; it is arguably the thematic summit, to which the *lectio continua* returns in the Fifth Book of the Psalter.[6]

Mensah offers an interesting and theologically coherent reading of how the theme of *torah* obedience is developed from choice to pedagogy to restorative healing and to fulfillment and contentment, maintaining the sense of challenge and the need for self-discipline and self-awareness. In addition to his six-canto reading, I would like to offer a complementary aspect of how the theme of *torah* might be read. Perhaps a sensitivity to the possibilities of apocalyptic readings may be useful to another reading of the psalm. If we read with an apocalyptic sensibility, a number of elements of how *torah* is developed become more enlivened. Psalm 119, as noted already, begins with a beatitude, proclaiming those who "walk with *torah*" to be blessed. It is possibly an interesting echo of some apocalyptic and later visionary literature. A parallel might be the blessing at the beginning of the New Testament Book of Revelation, Rev. 1: 3. Later vision

[5] Mensah, *I turned,* 308.
[6] Mensah, *I turned,* 308.

literature develops along the same lines, with beatitudes opening the early medieval *Visio Tnugdali (Fís Tundail)* and hints of the beatitude at the opening of the *Paradiso* in Dante's *Divina Comedia.* Reading the psalm with this in mind opens up a new vista. If our walk through the psalm, guided by the eight-faced angel of *torah* (the eight synonyms) is to be read apocalyptically, a surprising dimension may be opened. Let us imaginatively envisage an angel agent, such as is characteristic of apocalyptic, as a guide to reading. This might well be the"eight-faced angel of *torah"* who becomes our guide in a surprising walk beyond imagination, similar to the role of Virgil and Saint Bernard in Dante or the star in *Visio Tnugdali:* it allows us to be guided to see elements of our world from a perspective that is "apocalyptic"—opening hidden meanings behind life and Creation.

Our proposal, then, is to offer an apocalyptic reading of the psalm and to examine how this adds to the notion of *torah*. When we start to read Psalm 119 from this perspective, a few possibilities are open to us. Again, let us imaginatively envisage an angel agent, such as is characteristic of apocalyptic, as a guide to reading. This might well be the eight-faced angel of *torah,* who discloses a transcendent reality as she leads the reader into a realm where eyes are opened to wonders (v.18), the soul that is in dust is revived (v.25), new understanding is given (v.26), the reader walks in new freedom (v.45), the name of the Lord is remembered in the night (v.55), the earth is seen as full of loving kindness (v. 64), understanding goes beyond that of earthly teachers and the aged (v.99-100), and the words are given a sweet taste (v.103), the unfolding of the words offer new light (v.130), and great peace is given (v.145).

This image of the "eight –faced angel of *torah"* might seem bizarre but such is the nature of apocalyptic literature and it is in keeping with some of the images to be found in Ezekiel, Daniel or the Apocalypse of Saint John. This is the transcendent reality of *torah,* a vision of a "new land" which is opened up to the psalmist through the mediation of *torah.* Here the reader is given a taste of the peace and healing, comfort and refuge that will be the eschatological reality to which the *torah* is leading. *Torah* here dons the garb of a visionary guide and leads the psalmist into a vision of what this transcendent reality is and opens up the imagination to the possibilities of how *torah*-land might be!

This is important to our *torah* hermeneutic. Once we apply this new vision to the reading of the Psalter as a whole, it acquires something of the impact of what the words of Daniel or Ezekiel may have had on the banks of the rivers of exile. *Torah* is not simply eschatological guide or redemptive refuge, but a visionary messenger that can allow the reader to overcome present difficulties and distresses and open up the vista of an eschatological reality of peace, healing and truth. Elements of the existential challenges are present in the reading of Psalm 119 but viewed from the perspective of the transcendent reality to which the angel *torah* is leading the reader. Likewise, in the narrative of history, in the screeches of lament or in the exuberance of praise throughout the Psalter, the same angel *torah* might well offer a call and a summons to look beyond the immediate and become open to this transcendent reality.

To resume, the torah hermeneutic here gains a transcendent and spiritual aspect. The reading of the Psalter from the perspective of the *torah* hermeneutic includes an openness to the transcendent reality that lies beyond the imminent. Beyond the waters of Babylon, beyond the open gates of Sion, beyond the desert and the sea, lies another reality to which *torah* is directing the reader but which is being disclosed even now by this strange angel that leads us to this vision of this land. This is part of the teaching function of the Psalter: the call to cry or sing praise, to remember and to bless, all the time also allowing the light of this new land to break through. All the more, as we noted in our first point, is this the case as the very enormity and uniqueness of the psalm calls the reader to pay heed to this guide into the transcendent possibilities as we read the Psalter.

As a synthesis, we might blend these elements together to define the *torah* hermeneutic as a key to reading the Psalter with a constant and general attentiveness to the new realities that are opened in the sphere of *tehillim,* a thrust towards the eschatological newness within a realistic sense of the existential struggle, an interpretative function that allows the security and the beauty of this creation harmony to be understood, and a push into the transcendent reality that opens up the greater reality which lies beyond the immediate.

Reading the Psalter with this hermeneutic means more than allowing the psalms to teach and to sing. In parallel to the Pentateuch, where story and song, law and myth, epic and tragedy conspire to bring the reader into the new reality

of the chosen life, so too here, the *torah* hermeneutic opens up the new realities that lie beyond the sung and spoken poems and brings the reader and pray-er into that realm. Whereas the *Shema* calls Israel to "hear" the words that will be upon the heart and before them, the Psalter (read with a *torah* hermeneutic) calls upon Israel to speak those words and allow them to bring Israel into a ever-new sense of the way it must walk.

To resume, our *torah* hermeneutic is essentially a call from these three sister psalms to the reader of their companion poems to be attentive to the nuances that they propose. As in any anthology, each unit can be read independently, and we have seen how that functions. Attention to the canonical structure and to the echoes that come from linguistic, literary and cultural themes lend to the flow of the collection. The *torah* hermeneutic opens another vista: it asks the reader to read these poems with a sense of the way on which their feet have been set. This movement will change those who read it with a sense of how this reading can inspire then *to move beyond with eschatological thrust* while still *appreciating the security and the beauty of their path,* while also asking them *to transcend these realities and begin to walk in that new place where healing, hope and light are dominant,* while the very words used become pregnant with the human memory and affectations that they have acquired from their usage.

The Effect of this hermeneutic on reading the Psalms

In applying this hermeneutic to the reading of individual psalms and collections of psalms, we find, as is proposed above, that new vistas of understanding and imaginative transformation are opened. The material of the psalms, once read in the light of this hermeneutic, can be "flooded" and charged with this three-fold imaginaire. In conclusion I offer four specific examples that give some sense of what this hermeneutic might look like.

Psalm 2

Psalm 2 has long been associated and read with Psalm 1 as a unit.[7] The intimate connection between both is acknowledged. It has often been read as an immediate exemplification of the first psalm's doctrine. However, once we read

[7] This discussion is the material of Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 37; Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2012) and Susan Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms* (Oxford: University Press, 2013).

it according to the criterion of our *torah* hermeneutic, the possible resonances are striking.

In terms of the first aspect of our hermeneutic (the move beyond with eschatological thrust), this psalm, with its semi-dramatic setting, pushes the reader to look beyond the initial stage-set of plotting princes. The plotting princes, with their short-sighted outlook, murmur and plot with little sense of the comedy that is being played about them. Once the scene changes, we see how the Lord laughs at these plotting princes in the same manner as a schoolmaster who has overheard little boys planning to play truant—he enjoys a moment of humour before donning his role as supervisor and speaks to them in his anger, reminding them that he has set authority in place and it is to be respected. The king has been set on Zion, the holy hill. In a Christian context this language resonates hermeneutically as a reference to Christ, both at the Resurrection and again at the Ascension. Ancient Jewish readers in a post-exilic context may have also heard the overtones of a restoration of the Jewish kings. Both are practical applications of a canonical hermeneutic. Yet within the Psalter itself, as we have seen, the metaphor of the journey to the holy hill and the pilgrimage to Zion are of import and note: there is a sense here that even before other theological hermeneutics are cultivated, the journey of Psalm 1 is that journey to the holy hill where the king set in place by the Lord is ruling. Once again, this leads to a double-entendre, whereby this can be read as the straightforward pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or, on another level, the journey of the people to that fulfillment of time and promise that will be the rule of the anointed messianic leader (c.f. Is. 2:1-4; Mic. 4: 1-5 for eschatological association of *torah* with Zion).

On the level of *torah* interpretation and the security of this path, we find here how the hermeneutic leads us again into the drama of the poem. In the "first act" (vv.1-3) we have those who really do not understand—the plotting princes. Their lack of understanding of their own situation leads them to the proposition of rebellion against the "bonds" of the Lord. There is a double irony here as they both misunderstand their own power and capacities and the nature of the *torah* as the natural bonds, inherent in Creation, which guide and direct human life. In the second act, there is the image of the one who laughs and then vociferously corrects. This is again an interesting double image. Images of the Lord's laughter are rare in the Old Testament, but this is one of three in the Psalter (otherwise

37:13 and 59: 9). The image of the wise woman of Proverbs is also recorded as smiling (Prov. 31:25). However the most interesting parallel might be with the Genesis incident of the conception and birth of Isaac (although the lexical term is different, but possibly related). Initially Abraham laughs at the thought of begetting a child (Gen. 17:17), then Sarah also laughs at the thought (18:12 ff.), but the last laugh is that of the Lord, acknowledged by Sarah (21:6). The effect of this comedy is even the origin of their son's name. Both laughed at the prospect of their bearing a son in accord with the Lord's plan, yet the last laugh becomes that son's name. In the same way here we see the drama replayed—the princes scoff and bluster among themselves, but the Lord laughs at their impetuosity and fool-hardiness, before asserting his own power in the prince he has established. Yet the laughter of the Lord has echoes of promises and times fulfilled, an apocalyptic tone that enhances this concerto. The third act (vv.7-9) brings in a new voice. Whose voice might it be, that promises to be the Lord's son, the heritage of the nations and the instrument of his power? While this is often proposed as a coronation oath and the words of the king, they might also be the words of our guide and friend, the angel *torah.* This verse would, thematically and lexically, slip into the lines of Ps 119. That guide is already here, subtly reminding us that *torah* can and will be present in the drama of human laughter and God's laughter. This might even carry into the final act (vv.10-11), where the security and the refuge (reminiscent of Ps 19) are evoked.

Our hermeneutically charged reading of this psalm allows this text the space and the room to express the eschatological thrust towards the moment of the Lord's laughter, when his promises are fulfilled, as it allows for a moment of guiding by the transcendent voice of the angel *torah* who will be the Lord's son and instrument to break a way to tell of the Lord's decree and offer an image of what *torah*-land might be, while the security and the refuge of those who trust in the Lord is finally celebrated. The elements of our hermeneutic are present and allow for a rich reading of this psalm into the theological frame of a *torah* hermeneutic.

Pss 34 and 37

The two psalms, 34 and 37, are structurally linked (as both have an acrostic structure) and thematically related.[8] Both have interesting features when read according to our *torah* hermeneutic.

Ps 34 may well be a declamatory prayer for an individual in the midst of a community gathering. It may even have resonances of a folk hymn. A number of the allusions and references take a different light in terms of our hermeneutic. V. 6 (Note: E.T. v. 5) calls on the listener to "look to the Lord and become radiant." Alonso-Schœkel comments on the significance of the three verbs, as each has a potential echo. He links *hbyt* with the incidents from the life of Moses recorded in Ex. 3:6, Ex. 33:8 and finally Ex 34: 29-35, where Moses finally looks upon the Lord and returns with a radiant countenance. However, he identifies the two following verbs as antonyms in this context. The verb *nhr* (cf.Is. 60:5) is used of that which shines with a special light, while *hpr* refers to the eclipse or the setting of the sun. This can be read in the light of the *torah* hermeneutic with particular reference to Ps 19: the one who contemplates and looks toward the gift of *torah*, as often epitomized by Moses, actually becomes that rising sun and youthful warrior of the first part of the psalm. The security and beauty of the image of the daily solar circuit is not just notional and theoretical but it can be found in the faces of those who trust in the *torah* and seek the Lord therein as Moses did.

Vv. 9-11 of this psalm represent what Alonso-Schœkel calls the "application of the senses."[9] In this context, the language of taste, hunger and satiety are used as metaphors for the spiritual journey, where the ultimate human need and desire is the relationship with the Lord. Here, the image of a feast of plenty is used to describe those who have taken refuge in the Lord and who have their needs fulfilled. However, the image of the feast has a larger biblical carriage. It is often used in an eschatological sense. Again here, the eschatological thrust is to be detected. Those who genuinely seek the Lord and, by extension, discover the way to him by following *torah* will be the guests at this great banquet where their needs will be fulfilled.

Within the psalm, vv.12-15 form a unit that might be called the Wisdom teacher's interlude. The tone and matter change as the Wisdom teacher offers

[8] Alonso-Schœkel, *I Salmi* (Vol. 1), 593.
[9] Alonso-Schœkel, *I Salmi* (Vol. 1), 593.

guidance to those who seek life. Who is this Wisdom teacher? The tone and the material would once again fit neatly into the folds of Ps 119 and we might, here again, allocate these words to our apocalyptic guide, the angel *Torah.* This, again, might be a momentary glimpse of the land to which our guide seeks to guide those who seek life—a place where they can and will seek peace.

Turning to Ps 37, we might describe this as the vision of an old man (cf. v 25, also Joel 2:28). This old man is looking back on the journey and offering his teaching to those who follow. One key to his understanding of this journey is that it is a journey of possession of the land. The idea of stability and security in the possession of the land is closely linked with the idea of freedom. The ultimate freedom comes in following *torah,* which is in the heart of those who are just (v.31), in contrast to the evil who will never be free and never be secure. Once read within the frame of our hermeneutic, we see how these important themes of the land and freedom are linked to the gift of *torah.* The term *hgh,* important in Ps. 1, is used also here in v. 30, where the mouth of the Just is said to "mutter" (*hgh*) wisdom, in parallel with the *torah* in the heart, which gives direction to his steps. This is an indication of time fulfilled and a vision of what the truth of a *torah*-guided life will resemble. The elements of our hermeneutical frame are there. The eschatological thrust is seen rather as a fulfilled reality in the possession of the land. The security of *torah* living is clear from the freedom of the just and from the sadness of the evil. This is what *torah*-land might resemble—a place of freedom which the angel has, as it were, guided the just man to find.

In synthesis, these two psalms can find a richer and a deeper meaning when read within the frame of the *torah* hermeneutic.

Ps. 78

This is a specific and declared example of a psalm which, from its own internal structure, needs to be read with a *torah* hermeneutic and offers a vision based on that hermeneutic. The Psalm begins with a wisdom call to listen. It seeks to instruct in wisdom by means of *mašal* and *torah.* The psalm poetically looks at the history of the people of Israel, but, as highlighted already in the early verses, from the perspective of the relationship between the Lord and Israel (covenant), as comes to be expressed and guided by *torah.* Goldingay suggests this differs

strongly from most of the psalms as at no point does it address the Lord directly, and he calls it "an exhortation in poetic form," likening it to Deut. 32. He goes on to suggest that it "is designed not merely to record the past but to change people for the future."[10]

Westermann includes this psalm as a primary example of "re-presentation of history" which "as it occurs in the body of the Psalm understands itself consciously and explicitly to be primarily praise of God."[11] Westermann goes on to delineate a difference between historical psalms and other narrative forms of history. This key aspect of re-presenting history as praise serves to allow for "traditioning"—a process whereby the deeds of the past are recalled and represented to the present generation so that they might learn from them how to move into the future:

> This means nothing less than that the heart of the tradition is the praise of God, the handing down of the glorious deeds of the Lord and the wonders which God has wrought. This has to occur so that the coming generation will place its trust in God, so that its heart will be steadfast and its spirit faithful to God. What is here so precisely and clearly enunciated is that the "traditioning" of the events of past history within the contemporary scene has a meaning that is forward looking. By recounting the glorious deeds of God, the future is opened.[12]

However, there is, according to Westermann, a specificity in this psalm as "along with the praise of God's deeds in history appears the gift of the law and as a natural consequence obedience and disobedience."[13] The specific hermeneutic for the reading of history is attention to the *torah.* From the first line, the very term *torah* is introduced, as the teaching device of the Wisdom master who calls his attendants to hear, and then reintroduced as divine instruction and direction in v.5. (Interestingly, in the first five verses, already are used four of the synonyms from Ps 119.) Other terms associated with the Wisdom tradition include מָשָׁל and חִידוֹת (v. 2). This psalm then seeks to offer a representation of history, integrated into the tradition of praise and from the perspective of a hermeneutic of *torah.* The elements of ultimate goal and eschatological thrust are present, particularly in the language of the choice of Judah and the election of David (vv. 67-72); the security of *torah* obedience is expressed in the exemplification of what happens with disobedience (c.f v.35, where the Lord is again the "rock").

[10] Goldingay, *Psalms* (Vol II), 479.
[11] Westermann, *The Psalms,* 238.
[12] Westermann, *The Psalms,* 238.
[13] Westermann, *The Psalms,* 239.

Above all, the stratagem for reviewing and representing history is again the *torah.* Through the eyes of *torah* comes this representation of the story of Israel and the essential critique is that of *torah* vision. What the Fathers have taught, what the riddles of the past have sought to tease into the minds of generations, what the ponderous art of the parable has sought to cultivate is a vision of life and the story of the people based on *torah.* Westermann highlights the fact that this act of critique and evaluation of the story of Israel takes place in a context of praise. The very act of praise thus teaches and instructs Israel how it must not only acknowledge the Lord who created and saved, but how that must become a constant focus and compass for decisions and choices. The praise of *torah* comes to its fulfillment in a real lived existential act of praise based on the direction, security and vision of *torah.* The story is the basis of their pondering (as a mashal seeks to call them to do) and their teasing (as might be expected of the challenge of the riddle) so as to bring the readers or hearers to a realization that the challenges of the past and the mistakes of the forebears are also the stuff of their existential challenge and to acknowledge the need for the guidance and vision of the *torah,* that messenger or angel who can guide them. As Brueggemann and Bellinger say of this psalm, it "is more than information: it is the experience of a drama that calls for response from the congregation."[14] The real danger is in the forgetfulness of the marvels and wonders of *torah* obedience. Forgetting this leads to lostness and an absence of a sense of direction and purpose. In essence then, reading this psalm into our hermeneutic enriches the reading of the psalm but also adds to the understanding of the hermeneutic as *torah* also becomes the memory of praise. In v. 8 part of the rationale of the Psalm is that the reader "should not forget" the wonders of the Lord while in v.11 Ephraim's sons' refusal to walk the way of *torah* is a sign that they have forgotten the wonders of the Lord. This is an element of our hermeneutic: it will remind Israel, in its very act of praise, of the wonders of the Lord and of the direction that needs to be taken to stay within this tradition and this movement. Of this Bellinger and Brueggmann write:

> Psalm 78 embodies the rehearsal of the story of faith for the worshipping community. It passes on the faith tradition of the ancestors. The poem thus serves a central educational purpose for communities of faith. In this psalm, the recital of history is not so much about passing along information as it is about learning the lessons of history; that didactic purpose shapes the historical recital. Memory serves hope for the

[14] Bellinger and Brueggemann, *Psalms,* 341.

> present and future. The historical recitals in Ps 78 focus on two mistakes of past generations: (1) lack of trust in God to provide in the wilderness and (2) idolatry. Both mistakes reject the living God and the covenant relationship between God and the faith community of ancient Israel. Both have to do with the loss of memory, with forgetting the relationship that gives identity and hope. [15]

Reading Psalm 78 thus exemplifies how a *torah* hermeneutic works practically but also adds to our understanding of that hermeneutic. Representing history shows how *torah* has guided and directed the generations of the past, ushering them into a covenant relationship with the Lord where their identity was secure and where they found their homeland, both spiritually and physically. The memory of praise lies in this *torah* hermeneutic. The past needs to be read through this spectrum but the future comes to be under this guidance also.

[15] Bellinger and Brueggemann, *Psalms,* 342-3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abraham Ibn Ezra. *Commentary on the First Book of Psalms.* Translated and annotated by H. Norman Strickman. The Reference Library of Jewish Intellectual Faith. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009.

Allen, Leslie C. *Psalms 101-150, revised.* WBC 21. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002.
------. "David as Exemplar of Spirituality: The Redactional Function of Psalm 19", *Bib* 67, (1986): 544-546.

Alonso-Schökel, Luis. *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics.* Subsidia Biblica 11. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988.

---------. *Manuale di Ermeneutica Biblica.* Biblioteca Biblia (1). Brescia: Queriniana, 1989.

---------. *I Salmi.* Translated from the Spanish edition by Antonio Nepi*.* 2 vols*.* Roma: Borla, 1992.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry.* NewYork, NY: Basic Books, 2011.

-------. *The Book of Psalms—A Translation with Commentary.* New York: Norton, 2007.

Anderson, A.A. *The Book of Psalms.* Vol. 2 (Psalms 73-150). New Century Bible. London: Oliphants, 1972.

Ashburn, Daniel G. "Creation and Torah in Psalm 19," *JBQ* 22 (1994): 241-248.

Auffret, Pierre. "De l'oeuvre de ses mains au murmure de mon Coeur: Étude structurelle du Psaume 19," *ZAW* 112 (2000): 24-42.

-------- "Les Psaumes 15 à 24 comme ensemble structuré," Pages 93-140 in *La sagesse a bâti sa maison. Études de structures littéraires dans l'Ancien Tes-tament et spécialement dans les psaumes.* Orbis Bilicus et Orientalis 49; Fribourg–Göttingen:Éditions Universitaires, 1982.

Auvray, P.: « Le Psaume 1 » *RB* 53 (1946) : 365-371.

Auwers, Jean–Marie, Elena di Pede, Dany Nocquet, Jacques Vermeylen, Catherine Vialle and André Wénin. *Psaumes dans la Bible, psaumes d'aujourd'hui.* Lire la Bible. Paris: Cerf, 2011.

--------. "'Les Cieux racontent la gloire de Dieu': Sur l'unité et la théologie du Psaume 19", *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 12 (1999): 73-81.

-------. "Où va l'exégèse du Psautier? Bilan de six années d'études psalmiques (1995-2000)," *RTL* 32 (2001): 374-410.

Baethgen, Friedrich. *Die Psalmen.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897.

Ballentine, Samuel E. *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: the Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue.* Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis, Fortress, 1993.

----------. *The Torah's Vision of Worship.* Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis, Fortress, 1999.

Barthélemy, Dominique. *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament. Tome 4. Psaumes.* Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 50/4. Edited by Stephen Ryan and Adrian Schenker. Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2005.

Bellinger, William H. *Psalms. A Guide to Studying the Psalter.* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.

Bentzen, Aage. *Fortolkning til de gammeltestamentlige Salmer.* Copenhagen: Køb, 1939.

Bergler, Siegfried. "Der längste Psalm: Anthologie oder Litugie?" *VT* 29 (1979): 257-28.

Berlin, A.: *Biblical Poetry through Medieval Jewish Eyes.* Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991.

---------. "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104". Pages 71-83 in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays offered to honor Michael V. Fox on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday.* Edited by Ronald L. Troxel, Kevin G. Friebel and Dennis R. Magary. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005.

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament. The ordering of life in Israel and early Judaism.* Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Böhler, D. "'Der bestirnte Himmel über mir und das moralische Gesetz in mir'? Was betrachtet der Sänger von Ps 19?" *BZ* 53 (2009): 82-93.

Bosma, Carl J. "Discerning the Voices in the Psalms: A Discussion of Two Problems in Psalmic Interpretation," *CTJ* 43 (2008): 183-212.

Botha, P.J. "Interpreting 'Torah' in Psalm 1 in the light of Psalm 119," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 68(1), Art#1274, 7 pages, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1274.

Botterweck, G.J. and H. Ringgren *et al.* (ed.). *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* Translated by David E. Green *et al*. 12 Volumes. Grand Rapids, Mich and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1974-2003.

Boylan, Patrick. *The Psalms: A study of the Vulgate Psalter in the light of the Hebrew Text.* Dublin: Gill & Son, 1920.

Breen, Columba. "The Psalms of the Law", *The Furrow* 15 (1964): 516-525.

Brennan, Joseph P. "Some Hidden Harmonies in the Fifth Book of Psalms". Pages 126-158 in *Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan*. Edited by Robert F. McNamara. Rochester, N.Y.: St. Bernard's Seminary, 1976.

Briggs, Charles Augustus and Emilie Grace Briggs. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms.* 2 volumes. ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906.

Brock, Brian. "Bonhoeffer and the Bible in Christian Ethics: Psalm 119, The Mandates, and Ethics as a 'Way'", *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18 (2005): 7-29.

Brown, William P. *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

-------, "'Here Comes the Sun!' The Metaphorical Theology of Psalms 15–24." Pages 259-277 in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms.* Edited by E. Zenger. BETL 238; Leuven; Peeters, 2010.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.

-------, "Response to James L. Mays 'A Question of Context.'" Pages 29-41 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter.* Edited by J. Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

--------."Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function." Pages 3-32 in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith.* Edited by Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

------. "Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon." Pages 189-213 in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith.* Edited by Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

---. *The Psalms & the Life of Faith.* Edited by Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

-------. *Spirituality of the Psalms.* Facets. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.

---------. *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit.* 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007.

-------. *From Whom No Secrets are Hid—Introducing the Psalms.* Edited by Brent A. Strawn. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

--------- and William H. Bellinger. *Psalms.* NCBC. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Bullough, S. "The Question of Metre in Psalm 1," *VT* 17 (1967) 42-49.

Caputo, John D. *Hermeneutics. Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information.* Milton Keynes: Pelican, Random House, 2018.

Childs, Brevard S. “Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon”, *Int* 23 (1969): 20-31.

--------. “Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis”, *JSS* 16 (1971): 137-150.

--------. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

Clements, R.E. *God and Temple.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1965.

Clifford, R.J., *Proverbs,* OTL, Westminster John Knox, Louisville, KY, 1999.

Clines, D.J.A. “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of YAHWEH (Psalm XIX) ”, *VT* 24 (1974): 8-14.

Coetzee, Johan H.: “Listen to the Silent Voice of the Heavens and Taste the Sweetness of Torah: Reading Psalm 19 from a “Body Phenomenological” and “Embodied Understanding” Perspective,” *OTE* 22 (2009): 281-301.

Cohen, A. *The Psalms.* Soncino Books of the Bible. London: Soncino Press, 1960.

Cohen, David J. “Journey to the Center of the Heart—Psalm 19 as Transformance”. Pages 17-31 in *In Praise of Worship: An Exploration of Text and Practice.* Edited by David J. Cohen and Michael Parsons. Eugene, Oreg: Pickwick Publications, 2010.

Cole, Robert L. *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter.* Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2012.

Cooper, Alan: “Creation, Philosophy and Spirituality: Aspects of Jewish Interpretation of Psalm 19.” Pages 15-33 in *Pursuing the Text: Studies in honor of Ben Zion Wacholder on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday.* Edited by John C. Reeves and John Kampen. JSOTSup 184; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.

Cox, Dermot. *The Psalms in the Life of God’s People.* Slough: St Paul Publications, 1984.

Craigie, P.C. *Psalms* WBC 19. Waco, Texas: 1983.

Crenshaw, J.L. “Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon ‘Historical’ Literature”, *JBL* 88 (1969): 129-142.

Dahood, Mitchell. *Psalms 1-50.* AB. New York: Doubleday, 1965.

---------. *Psalms III. 101-150.* AB. New York: Doubleday, 1970.

Davidson, Robert. *The Vitality of Worship,* Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1998.

Day, John. *Psalms.* Old Testament Guides. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990.

DeClaissé-Walford, Nancy L. *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter.* Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1997.

----------. *Introduction to the Psalms: A Song from Ancient Israel.* St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004.

----------, Jacobson, Rolf A., Laneel Tanner, Beth: *The Book of Psalms.* NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.

Deissler, Alfons. "Zur Datierung und Situierung der, Kosmischen Hymnen' Pss 8, 19, 29". Pages 47-58 in *Lex Tua Veritas: Festschrift für Hubert Junker.* Edited by Hienrich Groß and Franz Mußner. Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1961.

Delitzsch, Franz. *Biblischer Commentar über die Psalmen.* Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1867.

Dempster, Stephen. "An 'Extraordinary Fact': *TORAH AND TEMPLE* and the Contours of the Hebrew Canon, Part 1", *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 23-56.

------"An 'Extraordinary Fact': *TORAH AND TEMPLE* and the Contours of the Hebrew Canon, Part 2", *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 191-218.

dePinto, Basil. "The Torah and the Psalms", *JBL* 86 (1967): 154-174.

Deurloo, K.A. "Psalm 19: Riddle and Parable". Pages 93-100 in *Goldene Apfel in silbernen Schalen: Collected Communications to the XIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Leuven, 1989.* Edited by Klaus Dietrich Schunck and Matthias Augustin. Beitrage zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums 20. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992.

Drijvers, Pius. *The Psalms: Their Structure and Meaning.* Translated from the 5th revised edition of the Dutch original. Freiburg: Herder, 1965.

Driver, S.R. *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament.* 9th edition. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913.

Duhm, Bernhard. *Die Psalmen.* Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1899.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction.* Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Eaton, J.H.: "Some Questions of Philology and Exegesis in the Psalms," *JTS* 19 (1969): 603-609.

-------. *Psalms of the Way and the Kingdom. A Conference with the Commentators.* JSOTSup 199. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Endres, John C.: "Cry out to God in our Need'-Psalms of Lament", *The Way Supplement* 87 (1996): 34-44.

Fabb, Nigel. "Linguistics and Literature." The Handbook of Linguistics. Aronoff, Mark and Janie Rees-Miller (eds). Blackwell Publishing, 2002. Blackwell Reference Online. Cited on 24 July 2015. Online : http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9781405102520_chunk_g978140510252020>

Feuer, Rabbi Avrohom Chaim. *Tehillim.* 5 volumes. Art Scroll Tanach Series. Edited by Rabbis Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz. New York: Messorah Publications, 1983.

Fishbane, Michael A. "Psalm 19: Creation, Torah and Hope." Pages 84-90 in *Text and Texture: Close readings of selected Biblical Texts.* New York: Schocken Books, 1979.

-----. 'Spiritual Transformations of Torah in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition", *JSRI* 6, 18 (2007): 6-15.

Fischer, James A. *The Psalms: I will be their God and they shall be my People.* Canfield, Ohio: Alba Books, 1974.

Freedman, David Noel: *Psalm 119: The Exaltation of Torah.* Biblical and Judaic Studies: 6. Eisenbrauns: Winona Lake, Ind. 1999.

Gélin, Albert. *The Psalms are our Prayers.* Translated by Michael J. Bell. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1964.

Geller, Stephen A. "The Religion of the Bible." Pages 2021-2040 in *The Jewish Study Bible.* Edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Gerstenberger, Erhard S.: "The Lyrical Literature". Pages 409- 444 in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters.* Edited by Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

----------: *Psalms: with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry.* 2 volumes. FOTL XIV-XV. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988, 2001.

Gillingham, Susan. *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible.* Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

----------. "Messianic Prophecy and the Psalms", *Theology* 99 (1996): 114-124.

----------. "The Zion Tradition and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter", Pages 308-341 in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel.* Edited by John Day. London: T&T Clark, 2007.

----------. *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 & 2 in Jewish & Christian Tradition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

----------, ed. *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict & Convergence.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Girard, Marc. *Les Psaumes: Analyse Structurelle et interpretation. 1-50.* Recherches Nouvelle Série-2. Montréal: Éditions Bellarmin, 1984.

--------. *Les Psaumes redécouverts: de la structure au sens.* 3 volumes. Québec: Éditions Bellarmin, 1996.

----------. "Psalm 119: Stylistic Structures and Literary Genre." Paper presented at the Continuing Seminar: *Psalm 119: Poetry, Structure and Theology.* Seventy-second International Meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of America. Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, 1-4 August, 2009.

----------. "The Psalter." No pages.. Cited 22 July 2015. Online: https://bibletraditions.org/vd/en/ø1.Ps1.en.pdf

Glass, Jonathan T. "Some Observances on Psalm 19". Pages 147-159 in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in honor of Roland E. Murphy.* Edited by Kenneth G. Hoglund, Elizabeth F. Huwiler, Jonathan T. Glass and Roger W. Lee. JSOTSup 58. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987. 147-159.

Goldingay, John. *Psalms.* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. 3 volumes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006-8.

Gosse, Bernard. "Le Livre des Proverbes, la sagesse, la loi et le psautier", *ETR* 81 (2006) 387-393.

----------. "L'Appel de la sagesse de Proverbes 1 et la constitution finale du psautier", *RB* 113 (2006): 552-569.

----------. "L'Influence de Pr 30, 1-14 et du Livre des Proverbes sur le Psautier et les textes qui en dependent", *BN NF,* 136 (2008), 73-83.

Gottwald, Norman K. *Studies in the Book of Lamentations.* Reprint of original from 1954. Studies in Biblical Theology, First Series No. 14. Eugene: WIPF & Stock, 2010.

Gounelle, Rémi. "*Il a placé sa tente dans le soleil (Ps.* 18(19), 5c(6a) chez les écrivains ecclésiastiques des cinq premiers siècles". *CBiPa* 4 (1994): 197-220.

Grogan, Geoffrey W. *Psalms.* Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Gunkel, Hermann. *Introduction to the Psalms: the Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel.* Completed by Joachim Begrich. Translated by James D. Nogalski. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998.

Harrelson, Walter. "Psalm 19: A Meditation on God's Glory in the Heavens and in God's Law." Pages 142-147 in *Worship and the Hebrew Bible: essays in honour of John T. Willis.* Edited by M. Patrick Graham, Rick R. Marrs and Steven L. McKenzie. JSOTSup 284, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Hassell Bullock, C. *Encountering the Book of Psalms.* Encountering Biblical Studies Series. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

Høgenhaven, Jesper. "The Opening of the Psalter: a Study in Jewish Theology", *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 15:2 (2001): 169-180.

Hossfeld, F.-L. and E. Zenger. "'Wer darf hinaufziehen zum Berg YHWH's?' Zur Redaktionsgeschichte und Theologie der Psalmengruppe 15-24." Pages 166-182 in *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel. Festschrift für Nor-bert Lohfink.* Edited by G. Braulik, W. Gross and S. McEvenue. Freiburg am B. ; Herder, 1993.

----------. *Die Psalmen I.* Die Neue Echter Bibel: Kommentar zum Alten Testament mit der Einsheitsübersetzung; Lfg. 29. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993.

----------. *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100.* Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

----------. *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150.* Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Hermeneia. Minneapolis, Fortress, 2011.

Howard, David, M. "Editorial Activity in the Psalter." Pages 52-70 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter.* Edited by J. Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Howell, John. "Psalm 19: Relating the natural order with the Torah's wisdom", *Theology* 112 (2009): 243-250.

Hunter, Alistair G. *An Introduction to the Psalms.* T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies. London, T&T Clark, 2008.

Johnston, Philip S. and David G. Firth, eds. *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches.* Leicester: Apollos, 2005.

Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 1-72.* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. London: Intervarsity Press, 1975.

--------. *Psalms 73-150.* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. London: Intervarsity Press, 1975.

Kirkpatrick, A.F. *The Book of Psalms*. 2 volumes. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge: University Press, 1901.

Kissane, Edward J. *The Book of Psalms.* 2 volumes. Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1953.

Kittel, Rudolph. *Die Psalmen: ubersetzt und erklärt.* Leipzig: A. Deichertsche, 1914.

Klouda, Sheri L. "The Dialectical Interplay of Seeing and Hearing in Psalm 19 and Its Connection to Wisdom", *BBR* 10 (2000): 181-195.

Kraus, Hans-Joachim *Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary.* Translated by Hilton C. Oswald. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

Kuckenbill, Daniel David: *Ancient records of Assyria and Babylonia.* 2 volumes. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1926-7.

Kugel, James L. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry.* Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1981.

----------. "Topics in the History of the Spirituality of the Psalms". Pages 113-137 in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages.* Edited by Arthur Green. World Spirituality 13. London: Routledge & Kegan, 1986.

Lacan, Marc-Francois. "Le mystère de la prière dans le psaume 119". *LumVie* 23 (1955): 125-142 (677-694).

Leclercq, Jean. *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God. A Study of Monastic Culture* Translated by Catherine Misrahi. New York: Fordham University Press, 1961.

LeFebvre, M. "Torah Meditation and the Psalms: The Invitation of Psalm 1". Pages 213-225 in *Interpreting the Psalms. Issues and Approaches.* Edited by Philip S. Johnson and David G. Firth. Leicester: Apollos, 2005.

---------, "'On His Law He Meditates': What is Psalm 1 Introducing?" *JSOT* 40 (2016): 439-450.

Levenson, Jon D. "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience". Pages 32-61 in *Jewish Spirituality: from the Bible through the Middle Ages.* Edited by Arthur Green. World Spirituality, 13; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

--------."The Sources of Torah: Psalm 119 and the Modes of Revelation in Second Temple Judaism". Pages 559-574 in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in honor of Frank Moore Cross.* Edited by Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.

Lewis, Clive S. *Reflections on the Psalms.* Glasgow: Collins Fontana, 1958.

Lönig, Karl. "The Torah as the Sun of Creation." Pages 133-143 in *To begin with, God created..: Biblical Theologies of Creation.* Edited by Karl Lönig and Erich Zenger. Translated by Omar Kaste. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2000.

Maillot, Alphonse et André Lelièvre, *Les Psaumes. Traduction nouvelle et commentaire.* 3 Volumes. Geneva: Éditions Labor et Fides, 1969.

Mays, James Luther. "The David of the Psalms", *Int* 40 (1986): 143-155.

----------. "The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter", *JBL* 106 (1987): 3-12.

----------. "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation." Pages14-20 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*. Edited by J Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

----------. *Psalms.* Interpretation—a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994.

----------. "Past, Present and Prospect in Psalm Study", Pages 147-156 in *Old Testament Interpretation, Past Present and Future: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker.* Edited by James Luther Mays, David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Mazzinghi, Luca. "Salmo 119: Meditazione sulla Legge del Signore". *PdV* L, 5 (2005): 40-47.

McCann, J. Clinton. "The Psalms as Instruction", *Int* 46 (1992): 117-128.

-----. *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms. The Psalms as Torah.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

McCann, J.C. (ed.). *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter.* JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Mensah, Michael K. *I turned back my feet to your decrees (Psalm 119,59). Torah in the Fifth Book of the Psalter.* Österreichische Biblische Studien 45. New York: Peter Lang, 2016.

Merton, Thomas. *Praying the Psalms.* Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1956.

Miller, Patrick D. *Interpreting the Psalms.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.

----------. "The Beginning of the Psalter." Pages 83-92 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter.* Edited by J. Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

----------. *The Way of the Lord: Essays in Old Testament Theology.* Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004.

----------. P. Miller, "Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15-24." Pages 127-142 in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung. Festschrift für Walter Beyerlin.* Edited by K. Seybold and E. Zenger. Freiburg im Br. : Herder, 1994.

Moberly, R.W.L. *The Theology of the Book of Genesis.* Old Testament Theology Series. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Morgenstern, Julian. "Psalms 8 and 19A", *HUCA* 19 (1945-1946): 491-523.

Mowinckel, Sigmund. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship.* Translated from the Norwegian edition by D.R. Ap-Thomas. 2 volumes in one. The Biblical Resource Series. Grand Rapids Mich/ Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004.

Murphy, Roland E. "The Classification 'Wisdom Psalms'", Pages 156-167 in *Congress Volume.* VTSup IX; Leiden: Brill, 1963.

--------. *The Gift of the Psalms.* Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000.

-------. "Reflection on Contextual Interperation of the Psalms." Pages 21-28 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter.* Edited by J. Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Nel, Philip. "Psalm 19: the unbearable Lightness of Perfection," *JNSL* 30 (2004): 103-117.

Nielsen, Kirsten. "Why not plough with an Ox and an Ass Together? Or: Why not read Ps 119 together with Pss 120-134?" *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament: An International Journal of Nordic Theology* 14 (2000): 56-66.

Oesterley, W.O.E. *The Book of Proverbs.* London: Methuen, 1929.

----------. *The Psalms.* 2 volumes. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939.

Perry, T.A. *Psalm 19. Hymn of Unification.* Peabody: Hendrickson, 2016.

Ravasi, Gianfranco. *Il Libro dei Salmi: Commento e Attualizzazione.* 3 volumes. Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1985.

Reynolds, Kent Aaron. *Torah as Teacher. The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 119.* VTSup 137. Boston: Brill, 2010.

Robert, A. "Le Sens du mot Loi", *RB* 46 (1937): 182-206.

--------, "Le Psaume CXIX et le sapientiaux." *RB,* 48 (1939). 5-20.

-------- and A. Feuillet, *Introduction à la Bible.* 2nd edition, revised and corrected. Vol.1. Tournai: Desclée, 1959.

Rofé, A. "The Piety of the Torah Disciples at the Winding-up of the Hebrew Bible: Josh. 1: 8; Ps. 1: 2; Isa 59:21", Pages 78-85 in *Bibel im jüdischer und christlicher Tradition. Festschrift für Johann Maier zum 60. Geburtstag.* Edited by Helmut Merklein *et al.* Bonner Biblische Beiträge 88. Frankfurt-am-Main: Hain, 1993.

Rogers, J. *The Book of Psalms in Hebrew, metrically arranged with selections from the various readings of Kennicott and de Rossi, and from the Ancient Versions.* Oxford: Parker, 1848.

Seitz, Christopher R. "Royal Promises in the Canonical Books of Isaiah and the Psalms", *World without end: the Old Testament as abiding Theological Witness.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. 150-167.

----------. *Figured Out. Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Seybold, Klaus. *Introducing the Psalms.* Translated by R. Graeme Dunphy. London & New York: T&T Clark, 1990.

Sheppard, G.T. "Canonization. Hearing the Voice of the Same God through Historically Dissimilar Traditions", *Interpretation,* 36 (1982): 21-33.

Soll, William M. "The Question of Psalm 119:9", *JBL* (1987): 687-688.

---------. "Babylonian and Biblical Acrostics", *Bib* 69, 3 (1988): 305-323.

----------. *Psalm 119: Matrix, Form and Setting.* CBQMS 23. Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1991.

Stuhlmueller, Carroll. *Psalms 1*. OTM 21. Winnington, Delaware, Michael Glazier, 1983.

Sumpter, Philip. "The Coherence of Psalms 15-24", *Bib* 94 (2013): 186-209.

Terrien, Samuel. "Wisdom in the Psalter". Pages 51-72 in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in memory of John G. Gammie,* edited by Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott and William Johnston Wiseman. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

----------. *The Psalms. Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Tournay, Raymond J. "Notules sur les Psaumes". Pages 271-80 in *Alttestestamentliche Studien* [Friedrich Nötscher Festschrift]. Edited by Hubert Junker and Johannes Botterweck. Bonn: Hanstein, 1950.

Trublet, Jacques. "Le Corpus Sapientiel et le Psautier". Pages 139-174 in *La Sagesse Biblique de l'Ancien au Nouveau Testament: Actes du XVe Congrès de l'ACFEB (Paris, 1993).* Edited by Jacques Trublet. Lectio Divina 160; Paris: Cerf, 1995.

VanGemeren, Willem A. *Psalms.* The Expositors Bible Commentary (Vol. 5). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.

Vesco, Jean-Luc. *Le Psautier de David, traduit et commenté.* 2 volumes. Lectio Divina. Paris: Cerf, 2006.

Wagner, J. Ross. "From the Heavens to the Heart: The Dynamics of Psalm 19 as Prayer", *CBQ* 61 (1999): 245-261.

Waltke, Bruce K. "Preface to the Psalter: Two Ways", *Crux* 43 (2007): 2-9.

Watson, Wilfred G. E., and Wilfred G E Watson. "Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques." Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1984. Cited 27 October 2017.

Online:https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=436996

Weeks, Stuart. "Wisdom Psalms", Pages 292-307 in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel.* Edited by John Day. London: T&T Clark, 2007.

---------. *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature.* T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies. London: Continuum, 2010.

Weinfeld, Moshe. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Weiser, Arthur. *The Psalms- a Commentary.* OTL. London: SCM Press, 1962.

Wellhausen, J. *The Book of Psalms.* Translated by Horace Howard Furness, John Taylor and J.A. Patterson. London: James Clark & Co, 1898.

Wenham, Gordon J. *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically.* Studies in Theological Interpretation. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012.

-----, *The Psalter Reclaimed. Praying and Praising with the Psalms.* Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2013.

Wénin, André. "Le Psaume 1 et l'encadrement du Livre des Louanges", Pages 151-175 in *Ouvrir le Écritures; Mélanges offerts à Paul Beauchamp à l'occasion de ses soixante-dix ans.* Edited by Pietro Bovati and Roland Meynet. Lectio Divina, 162. Paris: Cerf, 1995.

---------. *Le Livre des Louanges: Entrer dans les Psaumes.* 2nd edition. Collection Écritures, 6. Brussels: Éditions Lumen Vitae, 2008.

------- ."Le Psautier comme livre: Quelques signes d'unification". Pages 51-71 in *Psaumes de la Bible, psaume d'aujourd'hui.* Lire la Bible. Paris: Cerf, 2011.

Westermann, Claus. *The Psalms: Structure, Content and Message.* Translated by Ralph D. Gehrke. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1980.

---------. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms.* Translated by Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen. Atlanta, Ga: John Knox Press, 1981.

----------. *The Living Psalms.* Translated by J.R. Porter. Edinburgh: T&T Clark: 1989.

Whybray, Roger N. *Reading the Psalms as a Book.* JSOTSup, 222. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

----------. "Psalm 119. Profile of a Psalmist". Pages 31-43 in *Wisdom, You are my Sister—Studies in honour of Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday.* Edited by Michael L. Barré. CBQMS 29. Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1997.

Willis, John T. "Psalm 1—an entity", *ZAW* 91 (1979): 381-401.

Wilson, Gerald H. *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter.* SBLDS 76. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985.

---------. "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise." Pages 42-51 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter.* Edited by J. Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

---------. "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms." Pages 72-82 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter.* Edited by J. Clinton McCann. JSOTSup 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

----------. *Psalms.* Volume 1. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

----------. "The Structure of the Psalter". Pages 229-246 in *Interpreting the Psalms. Issues and Approaches*. Edited by Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth. Leicester: Apollos, 2005.

Witherington, Ben (III). *Psalms Old and New. Exegesis, Intertextuality and Hermeneutics.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2017.

Wright, Tom. *Finding God in the Psalms. Sing, Pray, Live.* London: SPCK, 2014.

Zenger, Erich. *A God of Vengeance? Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath.* Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Louisville, KY: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1996.

--------(ed.). *Einleitung in das Alte Testament.* 7th edition. Studienbücher Theologie. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008.

------- (ed.) *Introduzione all' Antico Testamento.* Translated from the 5th German edition (2004) by Enzo Gatti and Gianni Francesconi. Brescia: Queriniana, 2005.

Zimmerli, Walther. "Zwillingspalmen". Pages 105-113 in *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruche: Beitrage zu Psalmen und Propheten. Festschrift für Joseph Ziegler.* Edited by Josef Schreiner. Forschung zur Bibel 2. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1972.