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Recent Trends in Psalms Study

Psalms studies at the end of the twentieth century are very different from what they were in 1970. There has been a paradigm shift in Biblical studies, whereby texts are now read *as texts*, i.e., as literary entities and canonical wholes. This is manifested in Psalms studies in several ways, the most important of which is the attention to the Psalter as a *book*, as a coherent whole. It is also manifested in many literary and structural approaches. What might be termed a paradigm shift has also taken place in studies of Hebrew poetry, where linguistic analysis, most especially based on syntax, now occupies an important—if not dominant—position.

As its title suggests, this essay surveys the *trends* in Psalms studies since 1970, but more particularly in the last 10–15 years. Constraints of space do not allow for adequate discussion of the hundreds of books and thousands of articles produced in this period. Unfortunately, neither can we deal with the many works on the popular level, many of which are first-rate works produced by scholars, and which are important in their own right to the life of the Church and the synagogue. However, what is highlighted are the prevailing trends in the scholarly discussion of the Psalms.

The essay begins by reviewing past overviews of Psalms studies, in order to establish a context for our period since 1970, and then considers developments in five categories: (1) The Composition and Message of the Psalter, (2) Hebrew Poetry, (3) Hermeneutics, (4) Form Criticism, and (5) The Psalms in the Context of the Ancient Near East. It is in these five areas that we find the most activity and change in Psalms studies today.

PAST OVERVIEWS

For many years, the Book of Psalms occupied a marginal place in Biblical studies. The major emphases in the 19th and early 20th centuries were on historical-critical approaches (dominated by the search for hypothetical sources behind—and radical reconstructions of—the text), and on reconstructions of Israel's history and the history of its religion. In the first two volumes on the state of Old Testament scholarship commissioned by the Society for Old Testament Study (SOTS), there were no essays on any canonical corpus (e.g., Pentateuch, prophets, Psalms), but rather articles on Hebrew religion, history, and psychology (*The People and the Book* [1925]),[1] or on the literature, history, religion, theology, and archaeology of Israel (*Record and Revelation* [1938]).[2]

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[1] Arthur S. Peake, ed., *The People and the Book* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925).
[2] H. Wheeler Robinson, ed., *Record and Revelation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938).

However, the Psalms played almost no part in any of the essays in any case. Two other surveys that neglect the Psalms for the most part are *The Old Testament in Modern Research* (1954, 1966) and *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (1965).[3] Commentaries on the Psalms in this period reflected the concerns mentioned here.[4]

Beginning in the 1920's, however, with the work of Hermann Gunkel and that of his student, Sigmund Mowinckel, the focus in Psalms studies shifted dramatically, and the discipline gained influence in the larger field of Biblical studies. Gunkel was a towering figure in Old Testament studies (not just the Psalms) who cast his shadow on the entire century. As the father of Old Testament form criticism, it was he who gave us the categories of psalms with which we are now so familiar, such as individual laments, communal praises (hymns), royal and wisdom psalms, and the like. His focus was on the literary forms (i.e., genres) of individual psalms, and he paid attention to the life situations (*Sitze im Leben*) that supposedly gave rise to each form.[5]

Mowinckel's work followed Gunkel in classifications, but cleared its own way in emphasizing especially the cultic background to almost all the psalms.[6] In his view, the major festival in Israel was the fall harvest and new-year festival (Tabernacles), the centerpiece of which was the so-called "Enthronement of Yahweh" festival, one that he reconstructed from clues that he saw in the Psalms.[7] Scholarly interest in the history and content of Israel's religion was now indebted to Psalms studies in important ways, as it used the Psalms in its reconstructions.

Psalms scholarship has been shaped by the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel ever since. The essays by A. R. Johnson and J. H. Eaton in the next two SOTS volumes (*The Old Testament and Modern Study* [1951] and *Tradition and Interpretation* [1979]) are almost entirely devoted to studying the forms and the cultic place and significance of the Psalms,[8] as are overviews by Ronald E. Clements, John H. Hayes, and Erhard S.

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[3] J. Philip Hyatt, ed., *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965); Herbert F. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research* (2nd ed., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966). The original essay by Hahn dates to 1954; the 1966 reprint adds "A Survey of Recent Literature" by Horace D. Hummel; both deal only minimally with Psalms under other categories (e.g., "form criticism"). In the Hyatt volume, A. S. Kapelrud's "The Role of the Cult in Old Israel" (pp. 44–56) deals only briefly with the so-called "enthronement of Yahweh" psalms (pp. 52–53).

[4] See the works of Ewald (1880); Perowne (1890); Cheyne (1891; 1904); Wellhausen (1898); and Briggs (1906).

[5] Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 4th ed. (Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1926); Hermann Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. J. D. Nogalski (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998 [German original: 1933]).

[6] Sigmund O. P. Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien*, 6 vols. (Kristiana [Oslo]: Jacob Dybwad, 1921–24); *idem*, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962; reprinted with a foreword by R. K. Gnuse and D. A. Knight: Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

[7] See *Psalmenstudien II: Das Thronbesteigungfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie* (1922); *The Psalms in Israel's Worship, II*, pp. 106–92.

[8] A. R. Johnson, "The Psalms," in H. H. Rowley, ed., *The Old Testament and Modern Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951): 162–209; J. H. Eaton, "The Psalms in Israelite Worship," in G. W. Anderson, ed., *Tradition and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979): 238–73.

Gerstenberger, all from the first half of the period covered by this essay.[9] Commentaries until very recently have reflected the same concerns to one degree or another, as well.[10]

Recently, Psalms studies have focused much more on holistic analyses of the entire Psalter, the most important driving force having been Gerald Wilson's work (see below). The interest in the composition and message of the Psalter as a whole, or of portions therein, has a substantial pedigree going back into the 19th century and beyond, but Wilson's work brought it to the forefront of Psalms studies, where it remains today. Recent surveys of work in the Psalms by J. Kenneth Kuntz, Erich Zenger, James L. Mays, David C. Mitchell, and the writer all reflect this new interest,[11] and recent commentaries on Psalms by Marvin E. Tate, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, James L. Mays, J. Clinton McCann, Jr., and Klaus Seybold do so, as well.[12]

THE COMPOSITION AND MESSAGE OF THE PSALTER

The most important change in Psalms studies since 1970 has been a shift in its dominant paradigm and a refocusing of its attention. Until very recently, the Psalter was treated almost universally as a disjointed assortment of diverse compositions that happened to be collected loosely together into what eventually became a canonical "book." The primary connections among the psalms were judged to have been liturgical, not literary or canonical. The original life setting (*Sitz im Leben*) of most psalms was judged to have been the rituals of worship and sacrifice at the Temple. The psalms came together in a haphazard way, and the setting of each psalm in the Book of Psalms (*"Sitz im Text"*) was not considered. The Psalter was understood to have been the hymnbook of Second-Temple Judaism, and it was not read in the same way in which most other canonical books were read, i.e., with a coherent structure and message.

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[9] Ronald E. Clements, "Interpreting the Psalms," in his *One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976): 76–98; John H. Hayes, "The Psalms," in his *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979): 285–317; and Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "The Lyrical Literature," in D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker, eds., *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* (Philadelphia/Chico: Fortress/Scholars Press, 1985): 409–44.

[10] Schmidt (1934); Calès (1936); Oesterley (1937; 1939); Buttenwieser (1938); Leslie (1949); Kissane (1954); McCullough and Taylor (1955); Nötscher (1954); Drijvers (1964); Weiser (1962); Anderson 1972; Kidner 1973, 1975; Craigie 1983; Helmer Ringgren, *Psaltaren 1–41*. Kommentar till Gamla Testamentet. (Uppsala: EFS-förlaget, 1987); Kraus 1988–89; Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in F. E. Gaebelein, ed., *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990): 1–880.

[11] Erich Zenger, "New Approaches to the Study of the Psalter," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 17 (1994): 37–54; J. Kenneth Kuntz, "Engaging the Psalms," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 2 (1994): 77–106; James Luther Mays, "Past, Present, and Prospect in Psalm Study," in J. L. Mays, D. L. Petersen, and K. H. Richards, eds., *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995): 147–56; David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997): 15–65; David M. Howard, Jr., "Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the-Field Survey," *Word and World* 9 (1989): 274–85; *idem*, "Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the-Field Survey," in J. C. McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993): 52–70; *idem*, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100* (Biblical and Judaic Studies from The University of California , San Diego 5; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997): 1–19.

[12] Tate (1990), Hossfeld and Zenger (1993), Mays (1994), McCann 1996, and Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (Handbuch zum Alten Testament 1/15; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1996).

However, today, the prevailing interest in Psalms studies has to do with questions about the composition, editorial unity, and overall message of the Psalter as a *book*, i.e., as a literary and canonical entity that coheres with respect to structure and message, and with how individual psalms and collections fit together. Regardless of the authorship and provenience of individual psalms, or the prehistory of various collections within the Psalter, these were eventually grouped into a canonical book in the post-exilic period. Studies now abound that consider the overall structure of the book, the contours of the book's disparate parts and how they fit together, or the "story line" that runs from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150. These studies diverge widely among themselves, but they can generally be categorized in two major groups: (1) those dealing with the macrostructure of the Psalter, i.e., overarching patterns and themes, and (2) those dealing with its microstructure, i.e., connections among smaller groupings of psalms, especially adjacent psalms. Most studies have operated on one level or the other, but, in the end, they are inseparable from each other. That is, what is asserted on the higher level of broad, overarching patterns and themes should be capable of verification on the lower level of specific word, thematic, and/or structural and genre links between and among individual psalms. The latter provide the building blocks for the former.

The publication of Gerald H. Wilson's 1981 Yale dissertation, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985), provided the framework in which such work could unfold in a systematic fashion.[13] It was a landmark essay, a significant factor in the recent explosion of interest in the Psalter's final form. It did not appear in a vacuum, however. Wilson was a student of Brevard Childs, whose *An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979) has helped to define the scholarly landscape since it appeared. In his treatment of the Psalms, Childs argued for understanding the book more holistically,[14] as had other scholars.[15] In addition, Biblical studies in general were turning toward holistic readings of individual texts and larger collections in the Bible (under the rubrics of "rhetorical criticism," "literary analysis," "structural analysis," "narrative criticism," and the like). Nevertheless, Wilson provided a programmatic treatment that has defined the discussion ever since.

In his work, Wilson lays a careful methodological foundation for examining a collection of psalms as a "book," in that he traces other examples of hymnic collections from the ancient Near East: the Sumerian Temple Hymn Collection and Catalogues of Hymnic Incipits and the Qumran Psalms manuscripts. Each of these exhibits clearly identifiable editorial techniques in the outline of its final form, and thus provides helpful methodological controls for approaching the Psalter. In some of the criticisms of Wilson's or others' work, the charge has been leveled that the Psalter's editorial coherence is merely in the eye of the beholder, with few or no controls, but these criticisms ignore the methodological framework that Wilson lays. Unfortunately, this aspect of Wilson's work has not received the attention it deserves.

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[13] Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985).

[14] Brevard S. Childs, *An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979): 504–25. See also his "Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms," in F. M. Cross, W. E. Lemke, and P. D. Miller, eds., *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974): 377–88.

[15] For reviews of previous scholarship in this area, see Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 2–9; Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 15–61.

Wilson then turns to the canonical Hebrew Psalter and looks for evidence of the editorial techniques he identified in the extra-Biblical collections, along with others. He finds two types of evidence: explicit and tacit (non-explicit). For Wilson, "explicit" indicators are found in the psalm superscriptions or in the postscript to Books I–II at Ps. 72:20, while "tacit" indicators are found in editorial arrangements, such as the grouping of psalms with doxologies at the ends of Books I–IV, or the grouping of the *halleluyah* psalms (104–106, 111–117, 135, 146–150) at the ends of certain Psalter segments.[16]

The Psalter opens with an introductory Torah psalm (Psalm 1), and it comes to a close with a group of *halleluyah* psalms (Psalms 146–150). The opening psalm instructs the reader of the book to meditate upon Torah, and its placement suggests that the Psalter itself is now to be regarded as Torah, as something to be studied and meditated upon (just as the Torah is), and not just performed and used in cultic contexts. The concluding crescendo of praise instructs the reader that this is how life is to be lived: in praise of Yahweh.[17]

Each of the five "books" within the Psalter is concluded by a psalm ending with a short doxology (Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106, 145). An important indicator not only of the Psalter's structure but also of one of its themes is the occurrence of royal psalms at significant junctures (Psalms 2, 72, 89), a point noted already by Claus Westermann and Brevard Childs.[18] For Wilson, the fact that these psalms occur early in the Psalter, in Books I–III, whereas after this, the focus is on psalms of Yahweh's kingship (Psalms 93–99, 145), is significant. He sees in Psalm 89 signs that the Davidic monarchy has "failed" and therefore, in Books IV–V, royal psalms are deemphasized and Yahweh's kingship hailed (especially in Psalms 93–99), as the Psalter proclaims Yahweh's kingship above all else.

Wilson speaks in a more recent essay of a "Royal Covenantal Frame" to the Psalter, consisting of the royal Psalms 2, 72, 89, and 144, and a "Final Wisdom Frame," consisting of Psalms 1, 73, 90, 107, and 145 (the first psalms of Books I, III, IV, and V, along with the final psalm of Book V proper).[19] The wisdom frame takes precedence over the royal covenantal frame, and thus "trust in the power of human kings and kingship is ultimately given up, and hopes rest on Yhwh, who rules forever, and who

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[16] Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 9–10, 182–97.

[17] In his essay focusing on the boundaries and "movement" of the Psalter—"Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon," *JSOT* 50 (1991): 63–92—Walter Brueggemann argues that Psalms 1 and 150 open and close the Psalter by emphasizing simple obedience and praise, respectively. In between, however, the very real struggles of life are indicated by the laments and even the hymns (typified by Psalms 25 and 103, respectively). He argues that a critical turning-point in the Psalter is found at Psalm 73, which encompasses both suffering and hope. Thus, the pure, unmitigated praise that is urged at the end of the Psalter (Psalm 150) is now informed by individuals' and communities' struggles and experiences of God's *ḥesed*.

[18] Claus Westermann, "The Formation of the Psalter," in his *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. K. R. Crim and R. N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981): 250–58; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 515–17; Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 207–14; *idem*, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT* 35 (1986): 85–94.

[19] Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," in J. C. McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: JSOT Press): 72–82, especially pp. 80–81.

alone is able to save."[20] The Psalter, then, is ultimately a book of wisdom, containing Yahweh's instruction for the faithful and emphasizing his kingship.[21] In this scheme, Book IV (Psalms 90–106) stands at the editorial "center" of the Psalter, with its focus on Yahweh alone as king. Wilson notes,

> As such this grouping stands as the "answer" to the problem posed in Psalm 89 as to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books One–Three are primarily concerned. Briefly summarized, the answer given is: (1) YHWH is king; (2) He has been our "refuge"in the past, long before the monarchy existed (i.e., in the Mosaic period); (3) He will continue to be our refuge now that the monarchy is gone; (4) Blessed are they that trust in him![22]

Book V, diverse in subject matter, nevertheless sounds notes of praise of Yahweh, climaxing with an affirmation of Yahweh's kingship in Psalm 145 and a concluding crescendo of praise in Psalms 146–150.

That a major break in the Psalter is to be found after Book III is accepted by most scholars today, and it is confirmed by the evidence from Qumran, where the manuscripts containing psalms from Books I–III are predominantly in agreement with the Masoretic text's order and arrangement, whereas in Books IV–V, there are significant variations. Since these variations are most pronounced in the earliest manuscripts, this would seem to point to a stabilization of the text of Books I–III before that of the latter books.[23] The break after Psalm 89 is also confirmed by evidence from the psalm superscriptions. In Books I–III, psalms are grouped primarily using author and genre designations in the superscriptions, whereas in Books IV–V, the primary grouping techniques revolve around the use of superscriptions with $h\ \delta$ and *halleluyah*.[24]

Wilson's sketches of the Psalter's contours are persuasive in the main, and they have shaped the scholarly discussion of the Psalter's composition. Almost all scholars accept his argument that Book V ends at Psalm 145 and that 146–150 comprise a

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[20] Wilson, "The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11Qps[a]) and the Canonical Psalter: Comparison of Editorial Shaping," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 464.

[21] Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 137–38. Others who make the same point include Gerald T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament* (BZAW 151; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980): 136–44; J. P. Brennan, "Psalms 1–8: Some Hidden Harmonies," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 10 (1980): 25–29; J. Reindl, "Weisheitliche Bearbeitung von Psalmen: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der Sammlung des Psalters," *VTSup* 32 (1981): 333–56; J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "The Psalms as Instruction," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 117–28; *idem*, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

[22] Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215.

[23] Wilson, "Qumran Psalms Manuscripts and the Consecutive Arrangement of Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 377–88; *idem*, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 93–121; *idem*, "The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11Qps[a]) and the Canonical Psalter: Comparison of Editorial Shaping," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 448–64; Peter W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (STDJ 17; Leiden: Brill, 1997). The nature of the Qumran Psalms Scroll as a variant copy of Scripture or as a liturgical collection is still debated. Flint's is a major and important work supporting Sanders' and Wilson's view that it was the former, but others (including the writer) hold that it was more probably the latter (see *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 26–27 and references, to which add the comments of Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 21–26).

[24] Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 155–90.

concluding doxology of praise (as opposed to only Psalm 150 by itself). The same is true with his attention to the royal psalms at significant junctures, his assertion that a significant break is found after Psalm 89, his analysis of Book IV as "Mosaic" book, harking back to exodus and wilderness themes, and more.

The writer has registered an objection to Wilson's and others' assertions about the almost total subordination of the royal, Davidic theme to that of Yahweh's kingship. Contrary to his analysis that Psalm 2 begins Book I proper (Psalm 1 serving as the single introduction to the Psalter), a better case can be made that Psalms 1 and 2 together constitute the Psalter's introduction and that Psalm 3 actually is the beginning of Book I.[25] In this way, the themes of Yahweh's and his anointed king's sovereignty that are proclaimed in Psalm 2 also function as keynotes for the entire Psalter. The fact that Psalm 144 is a royal, Davidic psalm, immediately alongside Psalm 145, a Kingship of Yahweh psalm, signals that, at the end of the Psalter as at the beginning, the earthly and the heavenly expressions of Yahweh's kingdom stand together as messages of hope for the Psalter's readers.[26]

A recent and impressive full-length treatment is David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter* (1997).[27] After a thorough review of Psalms studies interpreting the Psalter as a coherent collection (pp. 15–65), he proposes his own interpretation: that the Psalter is to be interpreted eschatologically and that the Davidic kingship, far from being downplayed and viewed as "failed" in the Psalter, forms the basis for the eschatological hope in a messianic figure that is found throughout the collection. He states that "the messianic theme is central to the purpose of the collection" (p. 87), and that the Psalter

> "was designed by its redactors as a purposefully ordered arrangement of lyrics with an eschatological message. This message … consists of a predicted sequence of eschatological events. These include Israel in exile, the appearing of a messianic superhero, the ingathering of Israel, the attack of the nations, the hero's suffering, the scattering of Israel in the wilderness, their ingathering and further imperilment, the appearance of a superhero from the heavens to rescue them, the establishment of his *malkut* [kingship] from Zion, the prosperity of Israel and the homage of the nations" (p. 15).

Mitchell faults Wilson and others for reading the Psalter "historically" (i.e., tying it in specifically with Israel's pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic situations) rather than eschatologically, whereby the vision looks far beyond these historical periods. He combines a close reading of individual psalms, section by section through the Psalter, with plausible links of these to the development of Israel's eschatological program (especially Psalms 2, 45, 69, 72, 82, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 95, 109, 110, the Hallel, and the Songs of Ascents, including Psalm 132) in ways already suggested by "the ancient commentators' referring to them in connection with the same or similar

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[25] For particulars, see Appendix 4 ("Wisdom and Royalist/Zion Traditions in the Psalter") in *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 200–7. See also Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 73–74.

[26] A further critique of Wilson's position here is Mitchell's, *The Message of the Psalter*, which argues in extensive detail that the Psalter's message is eschatological, with the Davidic king still an integral part of the message, projected into the eschatological future; for specific comments about Wilson's view, see especially pp. 78–82.

[27] Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter* (see n. 11).

events" (p. 299). Much of Mitchell's support for his thesis rests on hypothetical connections with certain events—and with the eschatological program of Zechariah 9–14—that can be debated. However, the overall force and logic of his argument is impressive, and his work will surely occupy a pivotal position in future discussions of the Psalter's composition and message.

Another important work is Mattias Millard's *Die Komposition des Psalters* (1994).[28] He devotes far more attention than do Wilson or Mitchell to diachronic concerns (as is the case with several other German scholars, e.g., Reindl, Seybold, Hossfeld, Zenger), although his methodology follows that of Wilson in giving attention to genres, themes, and superscriptions. Concerning the overall outlook of the Psalter, Millard concludes that the major theme in the Psalter is Torah, with Yahweh's kingship as a central motif. In the end, David is an integrating figure as "author" of much of the book, but even more importantly in his role of one afflicted: if Israel's greatest king was so afflicted, then Yahweh's kingship is highlighted all the more. The Psalter in its final form was a post-exilic collection of prayers that originated in private (family) prayer, as a prayerbook. Its purpose was to help individuals in trouble be able to address God and, ultimately, to lead them to communal praise of God. Millard's sensitivity to the king's afflictions is commendable, but he does not deal adequately with David as a triumphant and eschatological figure.

A final book-length treatment of the contours of the entire Psalter is Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford's *Reading from the Beginning* (1997).[29] She is concerned with the canonical *function* of the Psalter's final shape, following the lead of James Sanders' canonical criticism. She argues that the Psalter was "adaptable for life," serving a dual purpose for the post-exilic community: (1) as a source book for use at ceremonies and festivals and (2) as a repository of Israel's "story" (see Sanders) that, read publicly,[30] would function to constitute Israel as a nation, enabling it to survive with Yahweh as its king. Her work has many valuable suggestions about the Psalter's shape and function; however, it is a relatively brief work, and, as such, it is more impressionistic and subjective than any of the three mentioned above, and its argument suffers because of it.

All four works above deal with the Psalter's structure on a "macrostructural" level, i.e., paying attention to the large contours and overall theme(s) of the book. At the other end of the methodological spectrum is David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100* (1997), which is an exhaustive study at the "microstructural" level.[31] It accepts the driving idea behind the works above, namely, that the Psalter should be read as a book with an internal coherence, but it tests that hypothesis on the lowest level, by subjecting Psalms 93–100 to an exhaustive analysis of every lexeme in every possible relation with every other one. The advantage of this method is that every relation among these psalms should thereby be uncovered, but an obvious danger is that too much will be made of

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[28] Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters. Ein formgeschichtlicher Ansatz* (Forschungen Alten Testament 9; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994).

[29] Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University, 1997).

[30] Here she parts company with Wilson, Millard, and others, who see the Psalter as a collection to be used primarily for private study.

[31] Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100* (see n. 11).

relations that are merely coincidental.[32] A clear development of thought, building by stages in praise of Yahweh's kingship, is visible throughout these eight psalms. A weakness in this particular work is the limited choice of psalms, in the middle of Book IV, which itself seems to be constructed in three sections—Psalms 90–94, 95–100, 101–106—that are not congruent with the section covered in this work; thus, the obvious and necessary next step is to consider Book IV in its entirety. Nevertheless, the method forms a necessary counterpart to the macrostructural works, whereby the latter's conclusions can be tested and confirmed.[33]

Another study including the same corpus in its purview is Klaus Koenen, *Jahwe wird kommen, zu herrschen über die Erde* (1995).[34] Koenen sees Psalms 90–110 as a unit, consisting of two sections—Psalms 90–101 and 102–110—each one paralleling the other (see the convenient layout on p. 113). Each section shows a movement from lament to announcement of future salvation (in line with the overall movement in the Psalter from lament to praise). He sees Psalms 90–110 as a "*composition*," which he defines as a grouping of psalms in which there is an intentional ordering and a running theme, which corresponds to the structure of a lament. Koenen detects this theme by employing the key-word (or "catch-word") method: overall, the collection offers good news to those suffering, and the work affirms that Yahweh will come and establish his rule (thus Koenen's title: "Yahweh will come to reign over the earth"). Koenen's is a careful work that is somewhat akin methodologically to this writer's. However, one problem with his work is that cuts it across the universally accepted boundary between Books IV and V (between Psalms 106 and 107). Another is that his model of the lament is not followed exactly by the structure of his corpus; for example, whereas in the first section (Psalms 90–101) Psalm 94 corresponds to the "lament" proper and Psalms 99–100 to the "expression of trust," in the second section (Psalms 102–106) neither of these components is found at all.

Gunild Brunert's *Psalm 102 im Kontext des Vierten Psalmenbuches* (1996) treats the history, structure, and interpretation of this psalm in its first two sections, but in her third section, she devotes extended attention to its place in Book IV.[35] She advances the provocative thesis that, in the final form of the Psalter, Psalms 90–100 are the words of

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[32] I have attempted to avoid this pitfall by distinguishing among "key-word links" (which are the most significant), "thematic word links" (which show only general connections), and "incidental repetitions" (which are not significant at all) (see pp. 98–102). For two positive assessments of this method, see Gerald H. Wilson, "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise," in McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 49–50; Leslie C. Allen, [Review of *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*], *JBL* (1998): 725–26. This method needs to be refined as the units under consideration grow larger. The strongest links between psalms are usually of concatenation, i.e., links between adjacent psalms, but sometimes very significant relations exist between psalms somewhat removed from each other (e.g., Psalms 95 and 100). The method does systematically take into account every lexical, thematic, and structural link among psalms.

[33] See further David M. Howard, Jr., "Psalm 94 Among the Kingship of YHWH Psalms," *CBQ* (forthcoming), which shows how a psalm of a very different nature fits in with the Kingship of Yahweh psalms around it, and further explains and illustrates the method.

[34] Klaus Koenen, *Jahwe wird kommen, zu herrschen über die Erde: Ps 90–110 als Komposition* (Bonner Biblische Beiträge 101; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995).

[35] Gunild Brunert, *Psalm 102 im Kontext des Vierten Psalmenbuches* (Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge 30; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 1996).

Moses (see the title of Psalm 90), and Psalms 101–6 those of David (see the title of Psalm 101), but of the "new David," i.e., the coming king of salvation. Her work thus complements Mitchell's in instructive ways. "David's" words in Psalms 101–4 are intended to answer the questions raised about the Davidic kingship in Psalm 89. She supports her thesis by attention to verbal and thematic links between the psalms, but many are merely impressionistic, and need confirmation in a more exhaustive treatment of every lexeme.

Jerome F. Creach's *The Choice of Yahweh as Refuge in the Editing of the Psalter* (1996) forges a third way between works focusing on macrostructures, such as Wilson's, Mitchell's, or Millard's, and those focusing on microstructures, such as Howard's, Koenen's, and Brunert's.[36] He takes a semantic-field (or thematic) approach, studying the associated field of one specific lexeme (in this case, $\int \sigma$ "to take refuge"). The concept of Yahweh as "refuge," which is found first in the programmatic Psalm 2 (v. 12), is found in a majority of psalms and it is concentrated in significant sections. Creach then uses his findings to comment on the organization of the entire work. This should be a productive third avenue for the study of the Psalter's composition and message, as other potential key words that might have been instrumental in shaping its structure are studied.

The eight works above are the major book-length treatments of the questions about the Psalter's composition and message by individual authors since 1970, a small number for almost three decades of research. However, tellingly, seven of the eight have publication dates of 1994 or later, indicating the rapidly expanding interest in this area of study. In addition, three recent collections of essays should be highlighted: *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*, and *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum*.[37] The first focuses entirely on the issue of the Psalter's composition and message, while the latter two do so in large part. Of the many important scholars who have not produced book-length treatments of the issues here, but who nonetheless are contributing significantly to the discussion—and in many cases helping to define it—pride of place must go to Erich Zenger, whose prolific contributions range far and wide throughout the Psalter. A recent essay presents his comprehensive view of the book, which he sees as a well-ordered and well-planned collection in its final form. It did not have a liturgical or cultic *Sitz im Leben* originally, but it was intended to function as a "literary sanctuary" of sorts (*Heiligtum*), where the one praying enters into Israel's liturgy by means of his prayer for the deliverance of Israel and the world, and Yahweh's kingship over both of these is exalted.[38]

The net result of this recent interest in the Book of Psalms is to bring it into the same arena in which most Biblical books have found themselves throughout the history of

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[36] Jerome F. Creach, *The Choice of Yahweh as Refuge in the Editing of the Psalter* (JSOTSup 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

[37] J. C. McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: JSOT Press); K. Seybold and E. Zenger, eds., *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung: Für Walter Beyerlin*, Herders Biblische Studien 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994, 1995); E. Zenger, ed., *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum*, Herders Biblische Studien 18 (Freiburg: Herder, 1998).

[38] E. Zenger, "Der Psalter als Buch: Beobachtungen zu seiner Enstehung, Komposition und Funktion," in Zenger, ed., *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum*, 1–57. Entrée into Zenger's previous work may be had via this essay.

their study: one where they are treated as unified compositions and are mined for the treasures to be found in their overall message, as well as in their component parts. This new development—a rediscovery of an earlier interest among rabbinic and Christian interpreters—can only be a salutary one.

To be sure, a few skeptical voices have been raised, who argue that too much is claimed for the Psalter in reading it as a book. One objection raised is that the proposals made for the composition and message of the Psalter disagree too much among themselves for any of them to have validity. However, this is an unfair charge to level against the pursuit of a complex subject that is scarcely more than a decade old. Much work remains to be done, and, we should note that there is indeed significant agreement among many of the major proposals, some of which we have already highlighted.

One critic, Erhard S. Gerstenberger, argues that the Psalter is *not* a book in our modern sense, but that it nevertheless is an extraordinarily rich collection that addresses the human condition in profound ways.[39] He attributes its present shape not to literary considerations, but to the liturgical needs of the synagogue (as versus the Second Temple). In *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, Whybray engages in a vigorous and sustained critique of efforts to read the Psalter holistically.[40] He sets out to test possible perspectives from which the Psalter might have been edited in the post-exilic period and finds all of them wanting. However, this work has several problems of its own that undermine the argument.[41]

We must mention the work of one more scholar who studies the Psalms' order and arrangement, but who does so from a very different perspective from those mentioned above. Michael D. Goulder has produced a series of major studies of collections within the Psalter, beginning with Book IV (Psalms 90–106), and including the Korah psalms (42–49, 84–85, 87–88), the "prayers of David" (Psalms 51–72), the Asaph psalms (50, 73–83), and Book V (Psalms 107–150), such that to date he has studied every psalm from Psalm 42 to Psalm 150.[42] The common thread among all of these is that Goulder takes seriously the order and arrangement of these collections, as well as the headings of the psalms. Thus, to take the example of his second book, *The Prayers of David (Psalms 51–72)*, he sees the Davidic psalms as truly Davidic, not *written* by him, but composed by a court poet, probably one of David's sons, during David's lifetime. The order of Psalms 51–72 is the order in which they were written, intended to reflect specific events in David's life as they happened. Goulder does not accept the *actual* historicity of most of

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[39] Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Der Psalter als Buch und als Sammlung," in K. Seybold and E. Zenger, eds., *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung: Für Walter Beyerlin* (Herders Biblische Studien 1; Freiburg: Herder, 1994): 3–13, especially pp. 9, 12.

[40] Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book* (JSOTSup 222; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

[41] See Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 22, n. 31, and my review of this work in *Review of Biblical Literature* (1998) [http://www.sbl-site.org/SBL/Reviews/8jun27.html].

[42] Michael D. Goulder, "The Fourth Book of the Psalter," *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (1975): 269–89; *idem*, *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah* (JSOTSup 20; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983); *idem*, *The Prayers of David (Psalm 51–72): Studies in the Psalter, II* (JSOTSup 102; Sheffield: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); *idem*, *The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch: Studies in the Psalter, III* (JSOTSup 233; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); *idem*, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107–150): Studies in the Psalter, IV* (JSOTSup 258; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

the historical superscriptions, but he does accept the *idea* behind them, namely, that "a psalm can be understood only in the light of the circumstances for which it was composed."[43] In this respect, he differs radically from much of Psalms scholarship, which sees the psalms as generalizing and universalizing compositions, applicable to many times and situations.[44]

Thus, in his treatments, Goulder historicizes the psalms in ways reminiscent of traditional Psalms scholars like Franz Delitzsch and Alexander Kirkpatrick, whose influence he acknowledges.[45] However, he is squarely in the cultic and ritual camp of Mowinckel, Johnson, Engnell, and Eaton, in accepting the Festival of Tabernacles as the central festival of the Israelite religious calendar, and he has attempted to locate the various collections within that and other festivals as the actual liturgies followed during those festivals. Thus, in most groupings of psalms (e.g., 1–8, 42–49, 90–106, 107–118, 120–134, 135–150), he sees an alternation between odd- and even-numbered psalms that he attributes to their being morning and evening psalms used in a festival, and he claims to find clues to this in the wording of the psalms themselves.[46] In this, he differs from Mowinckel and the others, who attempted to reconstruct the liturgies supposedly used in the festivals from clues throughout the Psalter and elsewhere, whereas Goulder sees the texts of these liturgies lying in full view before us, preserved intact[47] in the collections of the Psalter.

Goulder's scholarship is extremely broad and well-informed, and his exegesis of the texts is careful and impressive. He also advances a number of provocative hypotheses about the provenience of various collections that cannot detain us here. However, his work differs radically from most others who pay serious attention to the order and arrangement of the Psalter in that he sees a liturgical, not a literary, rationale for this ordering. In trying to locate the specific geographical places and historical events behind verse after verse in these collections, and in attempting to correlate them with larger collections within the Pentateuch or the post-exilic literature, he often is forced to make connections that very weak, if not non-existent.[48]

HEBREW POETRY

A second area in which there have been far-reaching changes since 1970 is in studies of Hebrew poetry. These studies range beyond the Book of Psalms, of course, but the Psalms are the largest extant corpus of Hebrew poetry. Several major monographs on poetry were produced in the short space of a few years, effecting changes in poetic studies

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[43] Goulder, *The Prayers of David*, 25.

[44] See, e.g., Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Trouble and Woe: Interpreting Biblical Laments," *Interpretation* 37 (1983): 32–45.

[45] Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107–150)*, 8.

[46] See, e.g., his treatment of Psalms 135, 139, 141, 143, and 145—all supposedly evening psalms— in *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107–150)*, 302–3, or of Psalms 90–106 in "The Fourth Book of the Psalter."

[47] He judges the Masoretic Text to be the most faithful textual witness and he rigorously prefers the MT to all others in almost every instance.

[48] See, e.g., the critique by Michael L. Barré in *JBL* 111 (1992): 527–28 [Review of *The Prayers of David*], or my comments in *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 12–14 [critique of "The Fourth Book of the Psalter"].

on a par with that produced by Wilson's work discussed above. These works were aligned along two major trajectories: analyses indebted to (1) general linguistics and (2) literary studies.[49] In the discussion below, we analyze these two trajectories, along with studies of the structural relations of poetry.

Linguistic Approaches

A remarkable phenomenon developed in the late 1970's and early 1980's, with the appearance of several works that attempted to explain the workings of Hebrew poetry using linguistic methods, particularly in terms of syntax. This had not been done previously in Biblical studies, so the confluence of these studies was noteworthy. These include Terence Collins' *Line Forms in Hebrew Poetry* (1978), Stephen A. Geller's *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (1979), M. O'Connor's *Hebrew Verse Structure* (1980), Adele Berlin's *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (1985), and Dennis Pardee's *Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetic Parallelism* (1988).[50] For the most part, these works are theoretical, concerned to account for the driving mechanisms of Hebrew poetry and downplaying or ignoring any literary or stylistic dimensions to poetry (Berlin's is somewhat of an exception).[51] Their great advantage is that they reveal things about the workings of Hebrew poetry never before seen with such clarity, and they are rooted in the nature of language itself.

The most ambitious of these works is M. O'Connor's *Hebrew Verse Structure* (1980). After an extended critique of what he calls the "Standard Description" of Hebrew poetry, he proposes to describe Hebrew poetry strictly in terms of syntactical patterns, and he argues that syntactical "constriction"—not meter, rhythm, or even parallelism—is the fundamental feature of Hebrew poetry. He states that "just as most poetic systems are

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[49] Recent overviews of studies of Hebrew poetry include: Ziony Zevit, "Psalms at the Poetic Precipice," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986): 351–66; W. G. E. Watson, "Problems and solutions in Hebrew verse: a survey of recent work," *VT* 43 (1993): 372–84; J. Kenneth Kuntz, "Recent Perspectives on Biblical Poetry," *Religious Studies Review* 19 (1993): 321–27; *idem*, "Biblical Hebrew Poetry in Recent Research, Part I," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 6 (1998): 31–64; *idem*, "Biblical Hebrew Poetry in Recent Research, Part II," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 7 (1999); Lawrence Boadt, "Reflections on the Study of Hebrew Poetry Today," *Concordia Journal* 24 (1998): 156–63.

[50] Terence Collins, *Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry* (Studia Pohl: Series Maior 7; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978); Stephen A. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (HSM 20; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979); M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980, 1997); Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Dennis Pardee *Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetic Parallelism: A Trial Cut (>nt I and Proverbs 2)* (SVT 39; Leiden: Brill, 1988 [Pardee's work was completed by 1985]).

[51] Another work focusing on syntax from the same time is Alan M. Cooper, "Biblical Poetics: A Linguistic Approach" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1976), but this was never published. See the brief summary and critique in O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 48–49, 52–53. Cooper has since abandoned his belief that a strictly linguistic (syntactical) approach is the "key" to Hebrew poetry. His "Two Recent Works on the Structure of Biblical Hebrew Poetry," *JAOS* 110 (1990): 687–90 includes critiques of studies by Pardee (see n. 50) and van der Meer and de Moor (see n. 80), two works grouped under the rubric of "structural poetics." In this essay, he calls for a poetics that takes into account more than "scientific" syntactical or structural patterns, one that "concerns itself not with everything that *can* be said about a text, but with what is *worth* saying; it seeks to communicate meaning and value, not just 'facts'" (p. 690; emphasis Cooper).

shaped in part by a series of phonological requirements, i.e., by a series of *metrical* constraints, so there are poetic systems shaped in part by a series of *syntactical* requirements, i.e., by a system of syntactic constraints. Among them is Canaanite [i.e., Hebrew and Ugaritic] verse" (p. 65).

O'Connor states that the poetic line[52] is limited in length by syntactical constraints, and he speaks of three grammatical levels (pp. 68, 86–87): the *unit* (i.e., individual words and particles dependent on them), the *constituent* (i.e., a verb or a nominal phrase, whether adjectival or construct), and the *clause predicator* (i.e., a verbal or verbless clause). There are six constraints that form the structures within which poetic lines operate, of which we may note the following: Every poetic line contains (1) no fewer than two nor more than five units, (2) no fewer than one nor more than four constituents, and (3) no more than three clause predicators. (4) Every constituent may contain no more than four units. While the possibilities for different line forms are manifold, in practice, the dominant form in Hebrew poetry (close to 80%) is fairly simple: the poetic line contains one clause and either two or three constituents (phrases) of two or three units. Knowledge of the syntactical constraints in Hebrew poetry has a practical dimension: we can more easily know how to divide up the layout of poetic texts into their true poetic lines, and thus approach a truer understanding of the mechanisms at work.

O'Connor also identifies six "tropes," i.e., "a group of phenomena which occur regularly and serve as part of the verse structure" (pp. 87–88). These are very common and thus definitional of poetry. The six tropes are (1) repetition, (2) constituent gappings (i.e., ellipsis of words), (3) syntactical dependency, (4) coloration (i.e., the breakup of stereotyped phrases), (5) matching (i.e., what most would identify with parallelism: the coordinating of lines with identical syntactical structures),[53] and (6) mixing (i.e., two dependent and two independent lines occurring in sequence, in which the former depend on the latter). The first and fourth tropes operate on the word level, the second and fifth on the line level, and the third and sixth above the line level (pp. 132–34).

O'Connor makes two major contributions to poetic studies of a general sort: (1) attention to the syntactical patterns underlying Hebrew poetry, and (2) recognition that poetic lines operate under certain constraints. Beyond these, one of his most important specific contributions is his recognition that gapping (i.e., ellipsis) is a major feature of Hebrew poetry and does not occur in prose (with only a few, grammatically insignificant exceptions). One of the major problems with O'Connor's work is its dense and highly technical jargon, and this undoubtedly has inhibited its wider consideration in Biblical studies. Yet, his system "works"—at least two major works have adopted its methodology[54]—and it deserves wider exposure. The re-issue of the work with an

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[52] O'Connor uses "line" to refer to what many other scholars refer to as "colon." There is still no generally accepted definition of a line (colon) among scholars.

[53] See also his treatment of "Parallelism," in A. Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 877–79.

[54] Walter T. W. Cloete, *Versification and Syntax in Jeremiah 2–25: Syntactical Constraints in Hebrew Colometry* (SBLDS 117; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1 and 2* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986, 1989). Cf. further the works cited in O'Connor, "The Contours of Biblical Hebrew Verse: An Afterword to Hebrew Verse Structure" (in the 1997 re-issue of his book), pp. 641–42 (the essay is found on pp. 631–61).

"Afterword" by O'Connor, as well as two articles by Holladay summarizing and applying the system, should help to remedy this situation.[55]   Since it operates strictly on the syntactical level, O'Connor's system does not exhaust the *meaning* of a poem, and it does not deal with the artistry of poetry,[56] but it has opened new doors with its attention to the syntactical fundamentals of language.

Prior to O'Connor, Terence Collins had likewise studied Hebrew poetry syntactically in his *Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry* (1978).[57] Collins used the insights of Generative Grammar developed by Noam Chomsky in proposing a system of "Basic Sentences" and "Line-Types" that operate on the level of deep structures, and of "Line-Forms,"[58] which operate on the level of surface structures. Basic Sentences are composed of at least two of the following constituents: subject, object, verb, and modifier of the verb. General Line-Types consist of one or two Basic Sentences, in the same or different orders, while Specific Line-Types are generated when the different types of Basic Sentences are specified. The different combinations yield 40 different Specific Line-Types, which can be further subdivided according to various criteria.

As we have just noted, the first three categories operate on the level of deep structures of language, and they are theoretical constructs that may or may not find expression in the surface structures of language (i.e., in actual sentences and lines), whereas the Line-Forms are constituted from the Specific Line-Types, depending on the ordering of constituents in each one, and operate on the level of surface structures. Thus, "the Specific Line-Type tells us what *kind* of constituents are involved in the line, whereas the Line-Form tells us *in what order* these constituents are arranged."[59]

Like O'Connor's, Collins' work is very helpful in elucidating the syntactical dimension of Hebrew poetry. He speaks more often and more self-consciously than O'Connor about different levels on which poetry operates (e.g., phonological, syntactical, semantic), and admits that his work is limited to the syntactical. In this, he does not claim that his system is the key to unlocking every aspect of a poem. Nevertheless, he rightly shows that one cannot fully or adequately analyze a poem without a knowledge of the syntactical patterns inherent in the deep structures and expressed in the surface structures of a poem.

In *Parallelism in Early Hebrew Poetry* (1979), Stephen A. Geller presents a comprehensive system of linguistic analysis that is more inclusive than O'Connor's or Collins', in that it includes not only syntax but also semantics (i.e., meaning of words) and meter in its task. He concentrates his efforts on the couplet (composed of two lines) and the levels below this. Like Collins, he deals with the deep structures of poetry; thus,

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[55] O'Connor, "The Contours of Biblical Hebrew Verse: An Afterword to Hebrew Verse Structure." See also William L Holladay, "*Hebrew Verse Structure* Revisited (I): Which Words 'Count'?" *JBL* 118 (1999): 19–32; *idem*, "*Hebrew Verse Structure* Revisited (II): Conjoint Cola, and Further Suggestions," *JBL* 118 (1999).

[56] These are points on which it has been criticized (see Kuntz, "Biblical Hebrew Poetry in Recent Research, Part I," 44). See also the comments below, on Collins, Berlin, and literary approaches to poetry, on the value of studying poetry on different levels and as art.

[57] See his convenient summary of his work in "Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 23 (1978): 228–44.

[58] Collins uses the term "line" to refer to the bicolon, which O'Connor calls the "paired line."

[59] Collins, "Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry," 235.

his emphasis on the "Reconstructed Sentence" allows him to show deep-structural similarities between two sentences that differ radically in their syntactical surface structures. He shows how this works with an example from 2 Sam. 22:14: "YHWH thundered from heaven; // Elyon sent forth his voice." The verbs are very different—not only in meaning, but, more importantly, in syntactical form—and yet, both occupy the same syntactical "slot" and thus both are surface-level manifestations of an underlying deep structure that we can represent as follows: "{YHWH/Elyon} from-heaven {thundered/sent-forth his-voice}."[60] His attention to meter, however, is not especially helpful, in that the phenomenon is for the most part today judged not to be present in Hebrew poetry, and his focus only on the couplet and lower levels is inadequate. Nevertheless, his linking of semantics with syntax is surely an advance over earlier studies that studied meter and semantics almost exclusively, and his conviction that semantics cannot be left out of the process of interpretation is well taken.

Dennis Pardee's *Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetic Parallelism* (1988) is a sustained analysis of two texts, one from the Ugaritic corpus and one from the Bible, using a comprehensive method of analysis that includes some 16 different steps. These include analysis of repetitive parallelism (where lexemes are repeated in parallel lines), semantic parallelism, grammatical parallelism (where he analyzes and uses the systems of Collins, O'Connor, and Geller), and phonetic parallelism. For our purposes here, the great strengths of Pardee's work include his extensive and sympathetic "field-testing" of these three systems—he finds useful elements in all three—and in his two essays included as appendixes (given as papers in 1981 and 1982), in which he discusses types of parallelism and further evaluates the works in question. His is not a ground-breaking theoretical work—he repeatedly asserts his status as a non-linguist—but it is eminently valuable for what it does do, which it does very well.

For this writer, Adele Berlin's *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (1985) is the most satisfying of the present group. She too asserts that parallelism is a linguistic phenomenon, and she states that parallelism and "terseness" are the two markers of poetic texts, when these are found to predominate in a text (p. 5).[61] Indeed, she identifies most closely—although not entirely—with O'Connor's approach to parallelism (p. 26). She argues persuasively that parallelism has many different aspects and operates on many different levels. It "may involve semantics, grammar, and/or other linguistic features, and it may occur on the level of the word, line, couplet, or over a greater textual span" (p. 25). She deals in successive chapters with grammatical (i.e., morphological and syntactical), lexical and semantic, and phonological parallelism. A great strength of her work is its clear and engaging literary style, and its copious examples illustrating her points. Her observations that (1) parallelism may operate on one level (e.g., phonological) while it does not on another (i.e., lexical or syntactical), and that (2) parallelism on one level raises expectations on another, even when it is not formally present, are especially helpful.

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[60] Geller, *Parallelism in Early Hebrew Poetry*, 17.
[61] Here she is responding to Kugel's assertions that we cannot distinguish at all between poetry and prose (see below).

Berlin thus goes beyond most of the works above by insisting that we must devote attention to both syntax and semantics (as well as to other levels). Referring to Edward Greenstein's argument that grammatical (i.e., syntactical) parallelism should define *all* parallelism, she states, "I cannot agree … that syntactic repetition lies at the base of parallelism and that semantic parallelism is a result of this repetition. In many cases, it may be the other way around.... There is no reason to give syntax priority over semantics (or vice versa); both are important aspects of parallelism" (p. 23).[62] Berlin's work, with its interest in *parallelism* specifically, and not *poetry* more generally, does not consider in any detail poetic levels above the paired line (couplet), certainly not poems in their entirety; as such, it is an incomplete study of poetry, but it treats parallelism in a thorough and instructive way.

The foregoing survey demonstrates, then, that study of parallelism in Hebrew poetry must be rooted in syntax, for this lies at the foundation of language and how texts (including poetic texts) communicate. In the theory of signs argued by Charles W. Morris, *syntactics* is the foundation upon which other relations build; it deals with the syntactical relations of signs to one another.[63] *Semantics* presupposes syntactics, dealing with the relations of signs to the objects they denote. *Pragmatics* deals with the relation of signs to their interpreters, that is, "all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs."[64] Syntactics is the most abstract, but it has the greatest explanatory power, i.e., it can explain the *workings* or the *mechanisms* of Hebrew poetry in ways that no other approaches can.

Having said this, poetic analysis—which presumably is a tool in the search for *meaning*, in the end—cannot find its abode solely in syntactics; it must also consider the levels of semantics, phonology, and morphology. And, as the literary studies below show, there is also an "art" to understanding poetry that is not to be found solely among the classifications and explanations of the mechanisms of Hebrew poetry. This art moves far beyond syntactics. Therefore, in the search for the *meaning* of a poem, syntax must be foundational, but it is not adequate by itself to elucidate meaning completely.

Literary Approaches

Consonant with the trends in the larger world of Biblical studies, many works on Hebrew poetry have appeared since 1980 emphasizing literary approaches, whereby individual psalms are treated as coherent wholes and the artistic dimensions of poetry are very much the focus. Books of this type include James Kugel's *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (1981), Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (1985), Harold Fisch's *Poetry*

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[62] Greenstein represents one pole in studies of parallelism, in that he argues that parallelism is *solely* a function of grammar (i.e., syntax). See Edward Greenstein, "How Does Parallelism Mean?" in S. A. Geller, ed., *A Sense of Text: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature* (JQR Supplement; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982): 41–70. While he admits of semantic parallelism, he does not concede that it can operate when syntactical parallelism is absent or in very different syntactical structures. See the further comments of Berlin, *Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 21–25.

[63] Charles W. Morris, "Foundations of the Theory of Signs," in O. Neurath, R. Carnap, and C. Morris, eds., *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1938): 77–137. I thank Philip C. Schmitz for calling this work to my attention.

[64] Morris, "Foundations of the Theory of Signs," 108.

With a Purpose (1988), and Luis Alonso Schökel's *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (1988).[65] The great advantage of these works is their literary sensitivity, in explicating the art of poetry, and not just its mechanics. We also discuss in this section other works dealing with the poetic devices of Hebrew poetry.

James Kugel's *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (1981) addresses the nature of parallelism.[66] His fundamental poetic unit is the paired line, or couplet, and he expresses the relationship between the two as "A is so, and what's more, B." That is, the second line of the pair will advance the thought of the first line in a "seconding" manner of some sort. As such, he overturns the popular view of parallel lines as "synonymous."

He also argues that the distinction between prose and poetry is overdrawn. In many cases in Psalms, for example, the parallelistic connections between lines A and B are almost non-existent, such as in "Blessed is the Lord // for he did not make us fall prey to their teeth" (Ps. 124:6); such a sequence is essentially indistinguishable from a prose sentence. On the other hand, we find many examples in prose texts of what we would identify as parallelism if they occurred in the Psalms, as in "God made me the cause of laughter // all who hear will laugh at me" (Gen 21:6) or "I will surely bless you // and surely multiply your seed" (Gen. 22:17). Kugel argues that, since Hebrew has no word for "poetry," there is no such thing. However, surely there are differences that can be distinguished. For example, Hebrew has no word for "prose," either, but this does not disprove its existence. Also, in the Psalms, there are many Hebrew words for poetic compositions, such as *mizm⌐ρ, μα°κ≈λ*, or *ℑιγγ ψ ν*. Nevertheless, Kugel has succeeded in reminding scholars that much poetry is "prose-like" and vice versa, and that they should think in terms of a continuum between the poles of prose and poetry, and not hermetically sealed categories.

In contrast to the works above, Kugel resists any "system" for reading poetry: "there is no such thing as an 'objective' approach to biblical texts, no neutral set of literary tools that will take apart any book or passage and tell us what makes it work" (p. 302). Kugel's great strength is his explication of the "seconding" relationship between lines A and B, demolishing the simplistic view that equates lines A and B as "synonymous."[67] However, his disdain for any foundation in a system or theory of language leaves his approach open to potentially endless subjectivity.

This blurring of the lines between poetry and prose finds an echo in the work of J. C. de Moor on the Book of Ruth[68] and William T. Koopmans on Joshua 23 and 24,[69] who

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[65] James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic, 1985); Harold Fisch, *Poetry With a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Luis Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Biblical Poetics* (Subsidia Biblica 11; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988).

[66] In addition to his 1981 book, see also Kugel's remarks in "Some Thoughts on Future Research into Biblical Style: Addenda to *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*," *JSOT* 28 (1984): 107–17.

[67] Another strength of Kugel's work is his extensive and authoritative tracing of the history of the study of Hebrew poetry from the earliest rabbinic treatments to the present day, including his dealing with the rabbinic and early Christian "forgetting" and obscuring of parallelism.

[68] J. C. de Moor, "The Poetry of the Book of Ruth," *Orientalia* 53 (1984): 262–83; 55 (1986): 16–46.

[69] William T. Koopmans, "The Poetic Prose of Joshua 23," in van der Meer and de Moor, eds., *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry*, 83–118 (see n. 80); *idem, Joshua 24 as Poetic Narrative* (JSOTSup 93; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), especially pp. 165–76.

speak variously of "narrative poetry," "poetic narrative," "poetic prose," or "prosaic poetry."[70] They locate the texts in an "intermediate range"[71] between the poles of poetry and prose. Along with Kugel, these scholars remind us that the classical categories of poetry have many loose ends. However, it is not clear how, in their scheme, one would be constrained from reclassifying *any* text usually judged to be prose as "poetic prose"; their work comes close to rendering any distinctions between prose and poetry meaningless.

While Kugel's work may not be "literary" in the pure sense, three works that can be unquestionably be grouped together as truly literary studies are those of Alter, Alonso Schökel, and Fisch. None of these authors attempts a theoretical explanation for Hebrew poetry, but all display masterful eyes to the details and nuances of poetry as literature, as works of art. In *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (1985), Robert Alter begins with a discussion of "The Dynamics of Parallelism" that echoes Kugel's, in that he sees the second "verset" of a couplet going beyond the first in any of a number of ways, only one of which might be synonymity (and that only very rarely). Others include complementarity, focusing, heightening, intensification, specification, consequentiality, contrast, or disjunction. Along with Kugel's observations, this work effectively demolishes the idea of complete synonymity between lines.[72] Alter's treatments of larger units ("From Line to Story") and other forms (e.g., "The Garden of Metaphor") are instructive in the appreciation of the art of poetry, and they are delights to read.

Luis Alonso Schökel's *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (1988) is similar, in that it approaches Hebrew poetry as an art form, and it is a masterpiece of sensitivity to the text and its subtleties. Alonso Schökel read the Bible as literature long before this approach came into fashion in the 1980s; indeed, his work helped to usher in the approach. His discussions include parallelism, sounds and rhythms, synonymy, repetition, merismus, antithesis, polarized expression, images, and figures of speech, all discussed in concrete and readable ways that demonstrate the value of close literary reading of poetic texts.

Harold Fisch's *Poetry With a Purpose* (1988) reads the Bible's poetry and other literature[73] with a literary eye, uncovering the rich tapestries of its art. The Bible is at one and the same time *esthetic literature*, capable of being appreciated on a literary level, and also *religious literature*, which, with the claims to exclusivity contained within it, is like no other. The irony of much Biblical literature is that both of these aspects of its literature are true (i.e., it is esthetic and it is religious) and that often the Bible's poems "gain their power from the devices they renounce."[74] The Bible's authors, through their use of the literary arts, urge their readers to read the Bible in ways that are *not* literary, but

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[70] J. C. L. Gibson's use of the term "narrative poetry" differs from de Moor's and Koopmans'. He refers to poetic compositions embedded in narrative texts, such as Exodus 15 and Judges 5, and he calls for a grammar of "narrative poetry" to be written. See J. C. L. Gibson, "The Anatomy of Hebrew narrative Poetry," in A. G. Auld, ed., *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson* (JSOTSup 152; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993): 141–48.

[71] Koopmans, "Joshua 23," 88.

[72] Essentially the same point is made by O'Connor and Berlin, from a linguistic perspective. See O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 50–52; Berlin, *Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 14–15, 64–65.

[73] His work is not limited to poetry, despite his title.

[74] Fisch, *Poetry With a Purpose*, 4 (this passage concerns two poems by George Herbert, but Fisch goes on to describe similar tensions in the Bible).

theological. Fisch argues that the Bible's texts regularly subvert themselves (or, perhaps we might say that they subvert the reader's normal understanding of things), in embracing and yet rejecting literary and poetic forms. Thus, to take but one example, Isaiah's treatment of beauty in 52:7 ("How beautiful are the feet…") shows that beauty is not at all contemplated in the usual categories of physical beauty, but rather in terms of moving feet and in the fulfillment of their mission; indeed, the beautiful feet bring a message of salvation, that the Lord reigns, a truth that leaves "beauty" far behind. Thus, the reader, who begins by thinking of "beauty" in its usual sense, is left with a very different conception of it.

Wilfred G. E. Watson's *Classical Hebrew Poetry* (1986) and *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (1994)[75] are "literary" studies in the sense that they catalogue in great detail numerous literary-poetic techniques in Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Akkadian, such as use of different types of parallelism (e.g., gender-matched, number, stairstep), stanzas and strophes, chiasms, sounds (assonance, alliteration, rhyme, onomatopoeia, wordplay), repetition, word pairs, ellipsis, etc. However, they are essentially catalogues to be referred to than treatments outlining any particular way of reading poetry. Watson does not propound any general theory of poetry, "largely because scholars themselves have not yet formulated such a theory."[76]

Structural Approaches

Closely bound up with the turn to literary studies of poetry are a myriad of structural studies. Typically, these deal synchronically with the surface structure of the Masoretic Text, and they study entire psalms as coherent wholes—a salutary development. They differ somewhat from the literary studies mentioned above in that the latter truly read the psalms as works of art, whereas many of these structural studies end up as catalogues of large-scale literary devices, of chiasms, inclusions, and the like, often spanning many verses. The structures of psalms are laid bare (although often no unanimity on a given psalm's structure is reached), with very elaborate diagrams, but too often little is said of a psalm's art or its meaning. Such an approach is often called *analyse structurelle*, which studies surface structures, as opposed to *analyse structurale*, which is the deep-structural analysis of French Structuralism or semiotics.

Two leading practitioners of this type of analysis are Marc Girard and Pierre Auffret, who both have produced a great number of structural studies. In their work, they exhaustively treat repeated patterns within individual psalms, and consider the lowest levels of the word up to the highest levels of the poem. In addition, Auffret also is very attentive to such patterns between psalms and psalm groupings. In *Les psaumes redécouverts*, Girard studies the psalms on three levels: syntagmatic (the most basic relationships, e.g., hendiadys), syntactic (e.g., parallelism), and the structural unity. He rightly insists that meaning is tied to structure, paying attention to both, but also

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[75] W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (2nd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986); *idem*, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (JSOTSup 170; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

[76] W. G. E. Watson, "Problems and solutions in Hebrew verse: a survey of recent work," *VT* 43 (1993): 374.

distinguishing between them.[77] Auffret has written structural analyses on almost every psalm, which are collected in a series of books.[78] While there are differences between the two,[79] overall, their approach is very similar.

Another approach is that of J. C. de Moor and his students at the Kampen School of Theology in the Netherlands, exemplified in *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry*.[80] This approach also includes analysis of poems at all levels, beginning with the *foot* (a word with at least one stressed syllable), and proceeding up to the *colon*, *verse*, *strophe*, *canticle*, *subcanto*, and *canto*. Usually the levels of the strophe and above are held together by external parallelism, whereas internal parallelism operates at the lower levels. One weakness of this approach is that it equates form with meaning in most instances, implying (erroneously) that, when the structure of a poem is elucidated, the task of interpretation is complete.[81] A similar approach is espoused in South Africa by Willem S. Prinsloo and his students, which he calls a "text-immanent" approach.[82]

Paul R. Raabe, in *Psalms Structures* (1990), is concerned to identify the building blocks of six psalms with refrains (42–43, 46, 49, 56, 57, 59), and he deals briefly with four more (39, 67, 80, 99). They consist of strophes, which are combined into stanzas. The refrains (verses repeated at regular intervals) link stanzas together into larger wholes called "sections."[83] Daniel Grossberg's *Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry* (1989) includes a study of the Psalms of Ascents (120–134) in which he analyzes these poems as a unified whole.[84] He sees elements that act centripetally to bind together the entire grouping into a tightly related, consolidated structure, but at the same

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[77] Marc Girard, *Les psaumes redécouverts: De la structure au sens*. 3 vols. (Quebec: Bellarmin, 1994–96).

[78] See, e.g., Pierre Auffret, *Hymnes d'Égypte et d'Israel: études de structures littéraires* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 34; Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1981); *idem*, *La sagesse a bâti sa maison: études de structures littéraires dans l'Ancient Testament et specialement dans les psaumes* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 49; Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1982); *idem*, *Voyez des vos yeux: étude structurelle de vingt psaumes dont le psaume 119* (VTSup 48; Leiden: Brill, 1993); *idem*, *Merveilles à nos yeus: étude structurelle de vingt psaumes dont celui de 1 Ch 16,8–36* (BZAW 235; Berlin, de Gruyter, 1995).

[79] See Pierre Auffret, "L'étude structurelle des psaumes: réponses et compléments I," *Science et esprit* 48 (1996): 45–60; II, *Science et esprit* 49 (1997): 39–61; III, *Science et esprit* 49 (1997): 149–74, where he responds to Girard's criticisms of his work

[80] Willem van der Meer and Johannes C. de Moor, eds., *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry* (JSOTSup 74; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988). The essentials of this system are explained in M. C. A. Korpel and J. C. de Moor, "Fundamentals of Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetry," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 18 (1986): 173–212 [reprinted in *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry*, 1–61].

[81] See the similar comments by Cooper, "Two Recent Works on the Structure of Biblical Hebrew Poetry," *JAOS* 110 (1990): 689–90. Cooper categorizes this work as a purely "linguistic" work, but, given its lack of theoretical discussion, I judge that it is a "literary" work focusing almost entirely on form and structure.

[82] This approach is a text-based and text-oriented framework for interpretation, dealing with morphological, syntactical, stylistic, and semantic components of poetry.   See, e.g., Willem S. Prinsloo, "Psalm 116: Disconnected Text or Symmetrical Whole?" *Biblica* 74 (1993): 71–82; *idem*, "Psalm 149: Praise Yahweh with Tambourine and Two-Edged Sword," *ZAW* 109 (1997): 395–407; G. T. M. Prinsloo, "Analysing Old Testament Poetry: An Experiment in Methodology with Reference to Psalm 126," *Old Testament Essays* 5 (1992): 225–51.

[83] Paul R. Raabe, *Psalms Structures: A Study of Psalms with Refrains* (JSOTSup 104; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

[84] Daniel Grossberg, *Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry* (SBLDS 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989). His study of the Psalms of Ascents is on pp. 15–54.

time he identifies other elements that act centrifugally, which work in the opposite direction.

HERMENEUTICS

Perhaps the most striking feature of Biblical studies today is its vast diversity. The Bible is studied from a seemingly endless list of perspectives, using a multiplicity of critical approaches. No longer do the historical-critical method, the history-of-religions approach, or form criticism hold hegemonic sway in any area of Biblical studies as the dominant paradigm of interpretation. For example, Haynes and McKenzie's *To Each Its Own Meaning*, a standard introduction to the scholarly disciplines, lists no less than 13 critical approaches in Biblical studies today, and entire dictionaries devoted solely to interpretation have appeared.[85] Today, Psalms studies can be found using almost every one of these methods.

Several recent works self-consciously use several different methods on one psalm. For example, in *The Psalms and their Readers* (1993), Donald K. Berry applies different critical methodologies—textual, structural (poetic), form-critical, rhetorical-critical (literary), reader-oriented—to Psalm 18, showing the value of each one. His special interest is to show how reader-oriented study can help to re-contextualize the psalm in the twentieth century.[86] William H. Bellinger, Jr. takes a similar approach in *A Hermeneutic of Curiosity and Readings of Psalm 61* (1995), using form, canonical, rhetorical, and reader-response criticisms, ending with a theological analysis.[87] His "hermeneutic of curiosity" is one in which the text invites us to ask questions and to explore, and thus we should read it using all available methods. The text becomes a window into its world of origin, its own shape and message, and its readers in relation to it, and, among them, the critical approaches must cover all three of these elements. Jutta Schröten, in *Entstehung, Komposition und Wirkungsgeschichte des 118. Psalms* (1995), reviews the range of critical approaches to Psalm 118 throughout the history of interpretation, and then offers two parallel readings, from synchronic (poetics and form criticism) and diachronic (source and redaction criticism) perspectives.[88] In *Mijn God, Mijn God, Waarom Hebt Gij Mij Verlaten?* ("My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?") (1997), scholars in separate disciplines employ nine different approaches in the study of Psalm 22: exegetical, poetic (structural), textual (LXX), psychological, pastoral, systematic

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[85] Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993). Cf. also John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (rev. ed.; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), and the following two dictionaries of interpretation: R. J. Coggins and J. L Houlden, *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990); John. H. Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999).

[86] Donald K. Berry, *The Psalms and Their Readers: Interpretive Strategies for Psalm 18* (JSOTSup 153; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

[87] William H. Bellinger, Jr., *A Hermeneutic of Curiosity and Readings of Psalm 61* (Studies in Old Testament Interpretation 1; Macon: Mercer University, 1995). See also his "Psalm xxvi: a test of method," *VT* 43 (1993): 452–61.

[88] Jutta Schröten, *Entstehung, Komposition und Wirkungsgeschichte des 118. Psalms* (Bulletin de Bibliographie Biblique 95; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995).

theology, church history, and its use in Jewish commentary (the psalm of Esther) and the New Testament (Mark 15).[89]

Herbert J. Levine's *Sing Unto God a New Song* (1995) is a more theoretical approach, not focusing on one psalm, but he too argues for using several disciplines in order to uncover their power, showing how the Psalms can be used even in the modern day, in both religious and secular cultures.[90] He uses history, anthropology, linguistic philosophy, phenomenology of religion, literary discourse, "biblical interpretation," and post-Holocaust interpretation.

Several works have focused on the history of interpretation of psalms. For example, in a fascinating study entitled *Psalms of the Way and the Kingdom* (1995), John H. Eaton engages two groups of psalms—the three "Torah" psalms (1, 19, 119) and three "Kingship of Yahweh" psalms (93, 97, 99)—using ten commentators from the 1890s through 1960s (Delitzsch, Baethgen, Duhm, Briggs, Kittel, Gunkel, Bentzen, Mowinckel, Kraus, Dahood) as his conversation partners in working his way through each psalm.[91] In addition, he enlists three more recent interpreters for each group (Westermann, Gerstenberger, and Spieckermann for the Torah psalms, and Lipinski, Gray, and Jeremias for the Kingship of Yahweh psalms). Lars Olov Eriksson's *"Come, Children, Listen to Me!"* (1991) deals with Psalm 34 and consists of two major parts: (1) the distinctives of this psalm in its OT context, and (2) its use in the NT and in the Early Greek Fathers. He also points to the need for study of rabbinical and patristic writings.[92] Uriel Simon discusses four rabbinic approaches to the Psalms in the 10th–12th centuries A.D. in *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms* (1991).[93] Saadiah Gaon treated the Book of Psalms as a second Pentateuch, revealed to David. The Karaites, Salmon be Yeru ̣am and Yefet ben >Ali, saw the psalms as perfect prophetic prayers for all ages. Moses Ibn Giqatilah disagreed, seeing the psalms as *non*-prophetic prayers and poems. Abraham Ibn Ezra emphasized the psalms' sacred character as prophetic prayers and divine songs. Adele Berlin also treats medieval Jewish exegesis in *Biblical Poetry Through Medieval Jewish Eyes*.[94]

Many modern critical approaches, common today in the academy, are also used in Psalms studies. For example, *feminist criticism* is represented by Ulrike Bail's *Gegen das Schweigen klagen* (1998).[95] She sees Psalms 6 and 55 as the laments of a woman who has been raped, and links them with the story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. Support comes

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[89] Marcel Poorthuis, ed., *Mijn God, Mijn God, Waarom Hebt Gij Mij Verlaten? Een interdisciplinaire bundel over psalm 22* (Barn: Ten Have, 1997).

[90] Herbert J. Levine, *Sing Unto God a New Song: A Contemporary Reading of the Psalms* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[91] John H. Eaton, *Psalms of the Way and the Kingdom: A Conference with the Commentators* (JSOTSup 199; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

[92] Lars Olov Eriksson, *"Come, Children, Listen to Me!" Psalm 34 in the Hebrew Bible and in Early Christian Writings* (Coniectanea Biblica 32; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1991).

[93] Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadiyah Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra*, trans. by L. J. Schramm (Albany: State University of New York, 1991).

[94] A. Berlin, *Biblical Poetry Through Medieval Jewish Eyes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

[95] Ulrike Bail, *Gegen das Schweigen klagen: Eine intertextuelle Studie zu den Klagepsalmen Ps 6 und Ps 55 und die Erzählung von der Vergewaltigung Tamars* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1998).

from the shared terms and imagery in the narrative story (and also Judges 19) and the two psalms (cf., e.g., the "feminine" imagery of the besieged city in 55:9–11 [Heb 10–12]). Marchiene Vroon Rienstra's *Swallow's Nest* (1992) is very different, as it is a devotional guide for daily reading, but it emphasizes and celebrates the "feminine" aspects of God, using feminine pronouns for God and offering suggestions as to settings each psalm might fit in a contemporary woman's life.[96]

Sociological and *liberationist* approaches are represented by several authors. In J. David Pleins' *The Psalms: Songs of Tragedy, Hope, and Justice* (1993), he speaks of "a poetry of justice."[97] He lays out the manifold form-critical genres with attention to socio-political issues of justice, mercy, and hope, provides his own fresh translations for many psalms, and consistently brings the psalms to bear on the modern situation. Stephen Breck Reid deals with similar issues of marginalization of the poor and the outsider (the "other," represented in the Psalms by the enemies) in *Listening In: A Multicultural Reading of the Psalms* (1997).[98] He employs insights from the Two-Thirds World in understanding the psalms' appeal to those outside the gate, and he too shows how the psalms speak to the contemporary world.

Walter Brueggemann's is a prominent voice employing sociological insights in Biblical studies, including attention to the poor and oppressed, and his Psalms studies are permeated with these.[99] One stimulating example is *Israel's Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology* (1988). In this book, he argues that the praise of God is fundamental to the life of faith and that praise must be rooted firmly in the here and now, in the experiences of life. Furthermore, the "world" that believers inhabit is formed or shaped, in a very real way, by the contents and attitudes of the praise they express. If this praise is shallow, empty, unthinking, then their "world" will reflect that, whereas if their praise is based on their genuine experience of God and his faithfulness in their lives, including their experiences of pain and discomfort, then this "God" they worship is indeed the true God. In *Abiding Astonishment: Psalms, Modernity, and the Making of History* (1991), Brueggemann speaks again of "world-making," dealing with several "historical psalms" (78, 105, 106, 136). He addresses the questions of (1) how these psalms that recite history with a supernatural dimension fit into the modern world of history writing (where the supernatural is excluded) and (2) how they, which are written by and for "insiders," can be used in an inclusive, rather than exclusive, manner. *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (1995) is a collection of 14 of his essays from 1974–93, including his seminal essay on "Psalms and the Life of Faith,"[100] and several from similar (sociological) perspectives.

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[96] Marchiene Vroon Rienstra, *Swallow's Nest: A Feminine Reading of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

[97] J. David Pleins, *The Psalms: Songs of Tragedy, Hope, and Justice* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993).

[98] Stephen Breck Reid, *Listening In: A Multicultural Reading of the Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997).

[99] Walter Brueggemann, *Israel's Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); *idem*, *Abiding Astonishment: Psalms, Modernity, and the Making of History* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991); *idem*, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, ed. P. D. Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

[100] See below, p. **.

Many other critical approaches are represented in numerous essays, including *rhetorical criticism* (i.e., close literary and structural readings),[101] *deconstruction*,[102] *speech-act theory*,[103] *discourse analysis*,[104] *ecological* readings,[105] and what might be called "*physiological*" readings.[106]

Such is the vast new diversity in Psalms studies that even traditional, Christological approaches have received new and stimulating treatments, such as Bruce K. Waltke's "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms" (1981) and Georg Braulik's "Christologisches Verständnis der Psalmen—schon im Alten Testament?" (1995). Waltke argues for different stages of reading the Psalms, following the process of canonical formation (individual psalm, collections, Psalter, Old Testament, New Testament), and argues that in the final analysis, the entire Psalter should be read Christologically. Braulik likewise sees a messianic (re)-interpretation of individual psalms as these were incorporated into large collections.[107]

William L. Holladay's *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years* (1993) is a work that resists categorization, but is included here because of Holladay's call for a

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[101] E.g., Leslie C. Allen, "The Value of Rhetorical Criticism in Psalm 69," *JBL* 105 (1986): 577–98; J. Kenneth Kuntz, "King Triumphant: A Rhetorical Study of Psalms 20 and 21," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986): 157–76; Loren D. Crow, "The Rhetoric of Psalm 44," *ZAW* 104 (1992): 394–401. See also the discussion above of "Structural Approaches," which in many cases are similar methodologically.

[102] David Paul McCarthy, "A Not-So-Bad Derridean Approach to Psalm 23," *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Society* 8 (1988): 177–92; David Jobling, "Deconstruction and the Political Analysis of Biblical Texts: A Jamesonian Reading of Psalm 72," *Semeia* 59 (1992): 95–127; David J. A. Clines, "A World Established on Water (Psalm 24): Reader-Response, Deconstruction and Bespoke Interpretation," in J. C. Exum and D. J. A. Clines, eds., *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 143; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993): 79–90.

[103] Hubert Irsigler, "Psalm-Rede als Handlungs-, Wirk- und Aussageprozeβ: Sprechaktanalyse und Psalmeninterpretation am Beispiel von Psalm 13," in K. Seybold and E. Zenger, eds., *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung: Für Walter Beyerlin* (Freiburg: Herder, 1994): 63–104.

[104] Ernst R. Wendland, "Genre Criticism and the Psalms: What Discourse Typology Can Tell Us about the Text (with Special Reference to Psalm 31)," in R. D. Bergen, ed., *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994): 374–414.

[105] B. J. Raja, "Eco-Spirituality in the Psalms," *Vidyajyoti* 53 (1989): 637–50; Erich Zenger, "'Du kannst das Angesicht der Erde erneuern' (Ps 104,30). Das Schöpferlob des 104. Psalms als Ruf zur ökologischen Umkehr," *Bibel und Liturgie* 64 (1991): 75–86; K. V. Mathew, "Ecological Perspectives in the Book of Psalms," *Bible Bhashyam* 19 (1993): 159–68; James Limburg, "Down-to-Earth Theology: Psalm 104 and the Environment," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 21 (1994): 340–46.

[106] Gary S. and Susan L. Rendsburg, "Physiological and Philological Notes to Psalm 137," *JQR* 83 (1993): 385–99 (who argue that in vv. 5–6—which speak of the psalmist's right hand withering and his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth—the psalmist is describing a cerebro-vascular accident, or stroke, in the left side of the brain); Schnier Levin, "Let my Right Hand Wither," *Judaism* 45 (1996): 282–86 (who argues that vv. 5–6 describe cerebral palsy).

[107] Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in J. S. and P. D. Feinberg, eds., *Tradition and Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1981): 3–18; Georg Braulik, "Christologisches Verständnis der Psalmen—schon im Alten Testament?" in K. Richter and B. Kranemann, eds., *Christologie der Liturgie: Der Gottesdienst der Kirche—Christbekenntnis und Sinaibund* (Freiburg: Herder, 1995): 57—86. A full development and defense of Waltke's idea is J. E. Shepherd, "The Book of Psalms as the Book of Christ: The Application of the Christo-Canonical Method to the Book of Psalms" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1995). A thorough review of the patristic treatments (mid-2nd to mid-6th centuries A.D.) of Psalm 45 is to be found in Elisabeth Grünbeck, *Christologische Schriftargumentation und Bildersprache* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 26; Leiden: Brill, 1994).

Christological interpretation of the Psalms.[108] It traces the history of the psalms through their origin and development in the Biblical period, and then through the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation from Qumran to the modern day. His work, while very sophisticated and cognizant not only of modern critical scholarship but also sensitive to religious and non-religious traditions that would not revere the Psalms in the ways in which Christians do, nevertheless in the end calls for Christian, i.e., Christological, readings of the Psalms ("Through Jesus Christ Our Lord").

FORM CRITICISM

The middle half of the twentieth century was dominated by form-critical and cultic S*itz im Leben* studies, following the programs laid out by Gunkel and Mowinckel mentioned above. Since 1970, although the most creative energies have been devoted elsewhere and such studies are no longer dominant, they by no means have ceased.

Pride of place must be given to the recent translation of Gunkel's *Introduction to the Psalms* (1998).[109] Sixty-five years after publication in German, the results of Gunkel's form-critical analyses are now accessible to English readers; they can discover for themselves Gunkel's categories of individual and communal laments, praise hymns, thanksgiving psalms, royal psalms, and the minor categories, including his assignment of specific situations in life corresponding to these (for Gunkel, these were mostly the cult, i.e., in public ritual situations associated with the Temple). His interest in a single *Sitz im Leben* behind each psalm type is no longer sustainable today. However, his form-critical categories continue to frame the discussion to this day, even though they have been revised and augmented somewhat.

Another major work made available in English is Claus Westermann's *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (1981).[110] This includes his seminal work, *The Praise of God in the Psalms* (1965), and several other essays. Westermann's most distinctive insight is that Hebrew had no separate word for "to thank"—the word normally used in contexts where this is expected is "to bless"—and that thus the word translated "thanksgiving" ($\tau\delta$) should be understood as another word for "praise." He thus argues that the distinction between psalms of praise and psalms of thanksgiving is misguided; he calls the first type "psalms of descriptive praise," where the praises of God describe his attributes in general, universal terms, and those of the second type "psalms of narrative (or 'declarative') praise," where God's praises are recited (declared) in the form of specifics of what God has done for the nation or the individual. Westermann overstates the case somewhat, because certainly there are some meaningful distinctions between "thanksgiving" and "praise." Nevertheless, his is a most helpful distinction, by revealing that, ultimately, all of the psalms are to be considered "praises" (a point he makes with

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[108] William L. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

[109] Hermann Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. J. D. Nogalski (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998).

[110] Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. K. R. Crim and R. N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981).

reference even to the laments, which move toward praise in their concluding vows to praise).

Another work with refinements to Gunkel's is Erhard S. Gerstenberger's *Psalms, Part I* (1988).[111] Gerstenberger's is a form-critical study of the first 60 psalms.   He follows Gunkel's classifications, but his distinctive contribution is his attention to social settings of the psalms, including a focus on "in-group and out-group" dynamics. He argues that many psalms arose in the context of "the small, organic group of family, neighborhood, or community" (the "out-groups"), not in "the central temple or famous wisdom academies" (the "in-groups": p. 33). As such, the origin *and* function of many psalms was not liturgical or connected with the cult at all.

An important enterprise that can be classed as "form-critical" is Walter Brueggemann's "Psalms and the Life of Faith" (1980).[112] In this essay, Brueggemann suggests a new way of categorizing psalms by function. In his scheme (suggested by the work of Paul Ricoeur) "psalms of orientation" are those are characterized by the absence of tension, in which the world is ordered and goodness prevails, such as psalms of creation, wisdom, retribution, and blessing. The second type is "psalms of disorientation," comprised of laments. The third type is "psalms of reorientation," comprised of thanksgivings and hymns of praise. In these, Brueggemann detects a greater sense of excitement than in the "ordered" psalms of orientation, and in these there is evidence of the psalmists' having gone through disorientation and now have progressed to a new place of orientation, which is much more secure and mature than the original orientation. In this scheme, then, thanksgivings and hymns (Westermann's psalms of declarative and descriptive praise), while they differ formally from each other, are similar in function, in that they belong to the new orientation, informed by trouble and God's gracious intervention.[113] While Brueggemann's new categories do not do away with the standard form-critical ones, his model is a very useful one and has had a significant influence in Psalms studies since 1980.

As a form-critical category, the psalms of lament have attracted the most scholarly interest over the years, and form-critical investigations since 1970 continue this trend. Studies have focused on specific elements of the laments and on their overall function.

For example, William H. Bellinger, Jr., in *Psalmody and Prophecy* (1984),[114] deals with prophetic elements in psalms of lament, particularly on the "certainty of a hearing" portion of these, which he links (following Begrich) with the oracle of salvation: as the promise of deliverance is delivered to the individual praying the psalm, this individual then responds with words indicating his faith that he will be (or has been) heard. Bellinger challenges the notion of the "cultic prophet," arguing that the oracle of salvation

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[111] Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part I: With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry* (FOTL 14; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

[112] Walter Brueggemann, "Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," *JSOT* 17 (1980): 3–32 [reprinted in his *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (see n. 99)]. He has followed this up in later writings, and synthesized it for a popular audience in *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

[113] In later writings, Brueggemann places some hymns (e.g., Psalm 150) in the category of "psalms of orientation," because they are "static," with no evidence, in his view, of the life-transforming experiences found in the psalms of reorientation. See, e.g., *Israel's Praise*, 92–93.

[114] W. H. Bellinger, Jr. *Psalmody and Prophecy* (JSOTSup 27; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984).

could easily have been uttered by a priest, as well. Raymond Jacques Tournay, in *Seeing and Hearing God in the Psalms* (1991), argues, on the other hand, that authentic cultic prophets did exist; they were the post-exilic Levitical singers.[115] He focuses on theophanic evocations and cultic oracles to show that there is an important prophetic dimension to the Psalms, which the Levitical singers composed in order to bring hope to bear on the post-exilic community. He ties this prophetic hope in with the messianic hope, and argues that the Church can recover some of this hope by focusing on this prophetic dimension. His argument depends heavily on the post-exilic origin of many of the psalms, however, a point that cannot be verified in most cases.

In *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms* (1989),[116] Craig C. Broyles distinguishes between psalms of plea, in which God is praised and asked to intervene on the psalmist's behalf, and psalms of complaint, in which the psalmist challenges God, who is seen either as an aloof bystander or an active antagonist. The complaints are not complaints *per se*, but rather intend to summon God to be faithful to his promises and act on the psalmists' behalf.

Two works have studied the community laments in the context of the ancient Near East.[117] Paul W. Ferris, Jr.'s *The Genre of Community Laments in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (1992) studies 19 psalms plus the Book of Lamentations, along with the communal forms of the Mesopotamian city laments, *balag*s, and $\varepsilon\rho\Im\varepsilon\mu\mu\alpha$s. His work is "an attempt to develop a unified comparative description of the Hebrew communal lament in light of the phenomenon of public lament in neighboring cultures" (p. 13). His theory of genre is more advanced than traditional form criticism, and stresses that the constituent parts of a given genre do not need to be completely uniform, and are not necessarily dependent on only one *Sitz im Leben.* Ferris concludes there is no connection of dependency between the Israelite and Mesopotamian laments, but rather that they both go back to a common cultural inheritance. Walter C. Bouzard, Jr., on the other hand, disagrees, in *We Have Heard With Our Ears, O God* (1997). He investigates the possible Mesopotamian sources behind the community laments, and concludes that the evidence "points to the strong possibility of a specifically literary connection between the two collections" (p. 201), although he admits that the specific evidence for borrowing is only circumstantial. Bouzard questions Westermann's structural elements, the "expression of confidence" and especially the "certainty of a hearing" (pp. 109–13, 204–5), since they are not present at all in the Israelite laments he examines—Psalms 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89.

In Anneli Aejmelaeus' *The Traditional Prayer in the Psalms* (1986),[118] she proposes to call Westermann's form-critical genre of complaint psalms (Gunkel's individual laments) "prayer psalms of the individual," because of the prominent place of

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[115] Raymond Jacques Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God in the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem* (JSOTSup 118; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

[116] Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms* (JSOTSup 52; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

[117] Paul W. Ferris, Jr., *The Genre of Community Laments in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (SBLDS 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Walter C. Bouzard, Jr., *We Have Heard With Our Ears, O God: Sources of the Communal Laments in the Psalms* (SBLDS 159; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

[118] Anneli Aejmelaeus, *The Traditional Prayer in the Psalms* (BZAW 167; Berlin: deGruyter, 1986).

imperative prayer to God in these. In the tradition of classical form critics, she posits an evolutionary development of "traditional" prayers (i.e., prayers using conventional language that reach back into Israel's pre-exilic history) from simple (pre-exilic) to complex (post-exilic) forms. The main problem with her approach is this evolutionary hypothesis, which has been abandoned by most Biblical scholars; nevertheless, her treatment of the form and function of imperative prayer is useful.

Two works focus on the individual in the psalms.[119] The first, Steven J. L. Croft's *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (1987), engages the often-asked question about who the individual was; he argues that the speaker in the "I" psalms (96 psalms) is either the king, a private person, or a minister of the cult, whether a cultic prophet, wisdom teacher, or temple singer. Martin Ravndal Hauge, in *Between Sheol and Temple* (1995), does not address the question of the identity of the individual, but rather seizes upon three fundamental motifs in the psalms—"Temple," "the way," and "Sheol"—to describe the emotional and mental location of the individual's religious experience.

Mowinckel's hypothesis of an Enthronement of Yahweh Festival is kept alive in J. H. Eaton's *Kingship and the Psalms* (1986).[120] Eaton accepts Mowinckel's reconstruction of this supposed festival and its connection with the Festival of Tabernacles,[121] along with A. R. Johnson's argument that the Israelite king was closely involved in this. He thus expands the category of royal psalm to include close to half of the psalms: the individual laments are actually prayers of the king in most cases. This has been disputed by many, but the canonical form of the Psalter supports his view, in that to David the king are attributed 73 psalms.[122]

THE PSALMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

In the early part of the twentieth century, interest in ancient Near Eastern connections for the psalms focused primarily on parallels with Mesopotamian hymns, prayers, and laments. Gunkel looked to these in his identification of the basic psalm forms, as did Mowinckel in reconstructing his hypothetical Festival of the Enthronement of Yahweh. Such interest still continues in several form-critical studies (see above).

In the middle of the century, however, interest shifted to parallels with Ugaritic literature, which consisted of texts written in a West Semitic language closely related to Hebrew and included many poetic compositions among them. The zenith of Ugaritic influence on Psalms study came with Mitchell Dahood's *Psalms I–III* (1966–1970), in which he radically re-wrote the Psalms on the basis of supposed Ugaritic parallels, but his

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[119] Steven J. L. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (JSOTSup 44; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); Martin Ravndal Hauge, *Between Sheol and Temple: Motif Structure and Function in the I-Psalms* (JSOTSup 178; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

[120] J. H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 2nd ed. (The Biblical Seminar; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986).

[121] As does J. Jeremias in *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen: Israels Begegnung mit dem kanaaäischen Mythos in den Jahwe-König-Psalmen* (FRLANT 141; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), although he does not go to the lengths that Mowinckel did in reconstructing the festival.

[122] Cf. Waltke (n. 107).

influence has been negligible in the past two decades, principally because of the excesses in so many of his proposals.[123]

Today, the primary interest in Ugaritic among Psalms scholars lies in study of the poetic features common to both, paramount among which are word pairs. Often called "fixed word pairs," the term "parallel word pairs" is more appropriate, and it refers to words occurring relatively frequently in parallel lines belonging to the same grammatical class (e.g., noun, verb, participle). Obvious examples are *snow* and *rain*, *left* and *right*, *sun* and *moon*, *father* and *mother*. Many variations occur, including repetition of the same verb in a different form (masculine vs. feminine, singular vs. plural, *qatal* vs. *yiqtol*, etc.), augmentation of the same word (e.g., *desert* and *holy desert*, *wreaths* and *gold wreaths*), or the metaphorical pairing of words (e.g., *honey* and *oil*).[124] Dahood studied these extensively,[125] but the standard study today is Yitzhak Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (1984).[126] Avishur catalogues the different types of word pairs, and plots their occurrence in the Bible and extra-Biblical languages (Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Akkadian). He also corrects many of Dahood's excesses, noting, for example, that perhaps 70% of Dahood's examples cannot be considered "common word-pairs" (p. 40).

In another work, *Studies in Hebrew and Ugaritic Psalms* (1994), Avishur takes up the problem of the relationship between Ugaritic and Hebrew psalms, and he concludes that there is no strong connection between Israelite tradition and Ugaritic-Canaanite tradition, but rather that the similarities can be accounted for by common thematic, linguistic, and stylistic elements.[127] Opposed to this, Carola Kloos argues in *Yahweh's Combat with the Sea*, on the basis of Psalm 29 and the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15), that Baalism did indeed form the basis for an important strand of Old Testament religion, that Yahweh functioned as an "Israelite Baal" in his conflict with the sea (Yam).[128]

Interest in the ancient Near East has not been limited to literary or form-critical studies. A valuable study of ancient Near Eastern iconography as it relates to the Psalms is Othmar Keel's *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (1978).[129] It organizes its material around ancient Near Eastern conceptions of the cosmos, destructive forces (death, enemies), the Temple, conceptions of God (in the Temple, in creation, in history), the

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[123] Mitchell J. Dahood, *Psalms I–III*. 3 vols. (Anchor Bible 16–17A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968–1970).

[124] See the brief introductions in Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 65–72; Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 128–44.

[125] M. Dahood, "Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs," in L. Fisher and S. Rummel, eds., *Ras Shamra Parallels* (Analecta Orientalia 49–51; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1972, 1975, 1981), I: 71–382; II, 1–39; III, 1–206; Dahood listed more than 1000 parallel pairs in these articles. See also P. Yoder, "A-B Pairs and oral composition in Hebrew poetry," *VT* 21 (1971): 470–89.

[126] Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 210; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1984).

[127] Y. Avishur, *Studies in Hebrew and Ugaritic Psalms* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994).

[128] Carola Kloos, *Yahweh's Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

[129] Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Seabury, 1978). Cf. also Ringgren, *Psaltaren 1–41*, which devotes a great deal of attention to ancient Near Eastern parallels and iconography.

king, and man before God, and includes comments—and usually illustrations: there are 556 in the book—for 146 of the 150 psalms.

CONCLUSION

The most remarkable features of Psalms studies since 1970 are (1) the paradigm shift in interpreting the Psalter, which is now read more and more as a unified collection, (2) the paradigm shift in interpreting Hebrew poetry, which is now read more and more syntactically, (3) and the exponential growth in the number of different approaches to individual psalms and psalm types. Each of these has its great advantages, which have been touched upon above.

Each has potential pitfalls, as well. In the first area, the greatest dangers are those of subjectivity and over-generalization. This approach must develop proper methodological controls and also be able to articulate the results of its investigations with clarity and with sufficient specificity as to be meaningful. Research in this area must proceed along at least four fronts. (1) *Macrostructures*: Most of the research to date is devoted to this level, and it needs to continue. However, it alone cannot answer the questions definitively. (2) *Microstructures*: More attention needs to be devoted to the intricate networks of lexical and other connections between and among individual psalms and psalm groupings, including the redactional dynamics where preexisting collections begin and end. (3) *Semantic Fields*: The semantic-field approach employed by Jerome Creach promises to yield useful results and should be employed with various key lexemes. (4) *Parallels*: Further research on other Biblical collections (e.g., Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve), as well as extra-Biblical ones (e.g., Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Qumran) should offer further insights and controls.

In the area of Hebrew poetry, the attention to syntax must be wedded to semantics and poetics in the pursuit of meaning, as we have argued above. Attention to syntax, by itself, will yield an understanding of the workings of Hebrew poetry, but it cannot yield a complete picture of the *meaning* of poetic lines, let alone entire poems.

In the area of different approaches, the danger is that over-compartmentalization of the discipline of Psalms study will result in few or no checks and balances on interpretive approaches. This is true of Biblical studies at large: increasing specialization in every discipline can lead to scholars of one viewpoint talking with others who agree with them and no one else, and the salutary effects of critical review is sometimes missing. The exponential growth in approaches to the study of the psalms reflects the post-modern times in which we live at the end of the twentieth century: any and all approaches to a text—and any and all conclusions about a text—are deemed to be equally valid. However, the search for authorial meaning and intent, despite the difficulties associating with recovering these, should not be abandoned in the ever-expanding embrace of new approaches, and each should be subjected to critical review, not only in terms of conclusions reached but also in terms of the validity and usefulness of the approaches themselves.

Psalms studies are vibrant and flourishing in 1999, compared to their status in the academy a century ago. They have taken their place in the mainstream of Biblical

studies, and have grown exponentially.[130] For the most part, they have reflected the larger trends visible elsewhere in Biblical studies since 1970. And, at the turn of the millennium, when many people are looking for eschatological signs, the message of eschatological hope in the Psalter is as fresh and as relevant ever.[131]

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[130] The virtual explosion in the numbers of books and articles on Psalms, as well as approaches to them, parallels the numerical growth of the professional societies since 1970. In the Society of Biblical Literature, membership more than doubled in the period under consideration, from 2820 in 1970 to 7121 in 1998. In the Evangelical Theological Society, membership more than tripled, from 802 in 1970 to 2539 in 1998. (These figures are courtesy of Andrew D. Scrimgeour and Gregory L. Glover of the SBL and James A. Borland of the ETS.)

[131] I thank Chris Franke, Mark D. Futato, William L. Holladay, Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Michael Patrick O'Connor, Philip C. Schmitz, and Erich Zenger for offering helpful suggestions on portions of the manuscript, and William L. Holladay and J. Kenneth Kuntz for placing forthcoming manuscripts of their own at my disposal. A few portions of this essay are adapted from my review of Psalms studies in *The Structure of Psalms 93–100* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 1–19, and are used by permission.

View Psalms studies Research Papers on Academia.edu for free. Â Recent canonical approaches to reading the Psalter either take the form of a macrostructural level in which a thematic center is proposed for the entire book of the Psalms, whether it be reading the psalms from the wisdom frame, a Messianic/eschatological frame, a kingship frame, or a combination. In contrast, lower-level studies have confined their canonical proposals to one book of the Psalter, or a specific sub-grouping (â€œPsalms of Ascent,â€ â€œPsalms of Asaphâ€). At both levels, a canonical approach broadens the exegetical task from the purpose of merely explaining its genre classification to Recent trends in the United States suggest that it has experienced a break from the trajectory of continued gains in life expectancy. Â The USA may not be alone in experiencing declines in life expectancyâ€"a recent study documented an increase in the age standardized death rate in England and Wales during 2014-15.9 However, whether this decline was driven by factors similar to those in the USA and whether any other high income countries experienced similar declines is unknown. We assessed whether declines in life expectancy occurred in other high income countries during 2014-16, the main age groups and causes of death contributing to these declines, and the extent to which these declines were driven by shared or differing facto This paper will discuss recent trends in English word formation. To elaborate on the subject it starts to define what word formation is and how it fits into morphology, the part of linguistics dealing with words and their basic units. In the first part it will discuss basic terms and promote the necessary understanding of word analysis. We will discuss what productivity is and what constitutes a new word. Included is also a short introduction in the theory of the lexicon, where the so called lexemes are stored. The second part will go on with the introduction of recent neologisms that I found