

The Importance of Hebrew for Biblical Spirituality

by

Seamus David Ben-Moshe Spira

submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

Master of Theology

in the subject

Christian Spirituality

at the

University of South Africa

Supervisor: Professor CJS Lombaard

June 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Title and key terms	Page 5
II. Summary	Page 6
III. Acknowledgements	Page 7
IV. Financial assistance	Page 8
V. Declaration of academic integrity	Page 9
VI. List of frequently used abbreviations and quotations	Page 10
1. The importance of Biblical Spirituality	Page 11
1.1. Research, aim and demarcation	
a. The research question (motivation for study)	
b. The aim of the dissertation	Page 14
c. Scope or demarcation of the dissertation	Page 15
1.2. Thesis	Page 18
2. What is spirituality?	Page 20
2.1. What is Biblical Spirituality?	
2.2. Towards a general understanding or definition of the term spirituality	
2.3. Towards a working definition of spirituality	Page 22
2.4. Christian Spirituality	
2.5. Spirituality as an academic discipline	Page 25
2.6. Biblical Spirituality	Page 26
2.7. Transformation: the true / ultimate goal of Christian Biblical Spirituality	Page 27
2.8. The state of the discipline of Biblical Spirituality (with its dual focus on spirituality in the ancient text and on how modern spiritualities draw on the Bible)	Page 28
3. JH Eaton as an example of this model of Biblical Spirituality	Page 30
3.1. Language	Page 31
3.2. Exegesis	Page 33
3.3. Continued meaning	Page 37
3.4. Eaton and Biblical Spirituality	Page 41

4. Spirituality and the Psalms: an overview of recent publications on spirituality and the Psalms	Page 42
4.1. Vos	Page 43
4.2. Wallace	Page 44
4.3. Grogan	Page 45
4.4. Van Harn and Strawn	
4.5. Patterson	Page 46
4.6. Witvliet	
4.7. Mays	Page 47
5. The importance of the study of biblical languages for valid theological work	Page 48
5.1. The importance of biblical languages from within the reformed tradition	
5.2. The importance of biblical languages for Bible translators	Page 49
5.3. John Piper as proponent of the importance of biblical languages in the reformed tradition	
5.4. Eugene Nida and Ernst Wendland as proponents of the importance of biblical languages for Bible translation	Page 52
6. Introducing the Psalms as illustration of the importance of Hebrew for valid theological work	Page 56
6.1. The importance of Psalm study for Biblical Spirituality	
6.2. The interpretive history of Psalm study	
6.3. The shape of the Psalter	Page 57
6.4. Toward a theology of the Psalter as a whole	
6.5. Current trends in Psalm research	Page 61
6.6. Major themes of the Psalter in its final editorial and collected form	
6.7. Test cases for the study of the spirituality of the Psalms	Page 62
6.7.1. Choice of Psalms	
6.7.2. Analytical method	
6.7.3. Who is Ernst Wendland?	
6.7.4. The LiFE Bible translation method	
6.7.5. Wendland's ten step method for analyzing the Psalms explained	

7. Test case one: Psalm 1	Page 70
7.1. Introduction to Book I of the Psalter	
7.2. Overall communicative purpose	Page 71
7.2.1. Major themes / words	
7.2.1.1. Torah	
7.2.1.2. Ashreh	
7.2.1.3. Meditate	
7.2.1.4. Wise person / fool	
7.3. Compositional structure	Page 76
7.4. Thematic outline	Page 77
7.5. Verse-by-verse meaning	Page 79
7.6. Passage comparison	Page 93
8. Test case two: Psalm 8	Page 95
8.1. Overall communicative purpose	
8.2. Compositional structure	Page 97
8.3. Thematic outline	Page 98
8.4. Verse-by-verse meaning	Page 100
8.5. Passage comparison	Page 105
9. Test case three: Psalm 41	Page 108
9.1. Overall communicative purpose	Page 109
9.2. Compositional structure	Page 111
9.3. Thematic outline	
9.4. Verse-by-verse meaning	Page 114
9.5. Passage comparison	Page 120
10. Implications of findings from the three test Psalms on the issues / themes of faith in these Psalms	Page 122
10.1. Introduction	
10.2. Psalm 1	
10.2.1. Language	
10.2.2. Exegesis	

10.3. Psalm 8	Page 128
10.3.1. Language	
10.3.2. Exegesis	
10.4. Psalm 41	Page 130
10.4.1. Language	
10.4.2. Exegesis	
10.5. Summary	Page 131
11. Implications of the results from Chapter ten that may be drawn for the faith / spirituality of modern people (i.e. "Continued Meaning")	Page 133
11.1. Psalm 1	
11.2. Psalm 8	Page 137
11.3. Psalm 41	Page 138
12. The importance of a knowledge of Hebrew for the insights concluded on in Chapters Ten and Eleven	Page 140
13. Further recommendations	Page 142
14. Conclusion	Page 146
Bibliography	Page 152

Title of thesis:

The Importance of Hebrew for Biblical Spirituality

Key Terms:

Spirituality; Hebrew; Biblical Studies; Exegesis; Christianity; Old Testament; Psalms; Literary Criticism; Ancient Near East; Bible Translation.

SUMMARY:

The thesis of this dissertation is to explore the importance of Hebrew as contained in the Old Testament or Hebrew Canon, for a grasp of the spirituality or spiritualities of the people we encounter in these texts. Furthermore, to gauge the continued and extended importance of this language knowledge as it pertains to contemporary spirituality or spiritualities based upon these scriptures. This will be done with the laity and academia in mind and hence we will study these spiritualities as they pertain both to experience and academic enquiry. We will also explore the possible personal and societal transformation, which could result from such an investigation. In view of this, we will limit our scope to three test psalms all from Book I of the Psalter; and our assessment of the importance of Hebrew for Biblical Spirituality will be based on only three key areas, namely language, exegesis and continued meaning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anyone who endeavours to complete post-graduate studies knows that this is no individual effort. There are many factors that can derail one's research at any point in time. One of the most important factors I believe is the choice or assigning of one's supervisor of studies.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor of studies, Professor Christo Lombaard of the Department of Missiology and Christian Spirituality at the University of South Africa. Without his insight, understanding, perseverance and academic savvy, this dissertation would never have started or have been completed.

Friends and family have helped me immensely in this journey and their contribution has been invaluable in my personal spiritual journey. Among the many I am indebted to, I wish to mention the following people especially: my mother (Edna Cronje); my in-laws (the Reverend Chris and Minalee Botha) and in particular my wife (Melissa Spira) for her constant encouragement and support in my academic pursuits. All who have gone before me on this road know the true value of such a life partnership.

Thank you to you all!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:

I hereby wish to express my gratitude to the University of South Africa for awarding me a bursary from their post-graduate fund, without which I would not have been able to complete this dissertation.

I also received funding from the David Bosch Theological Bursary Fund, which assisted with my studies.

Again, I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my parents and in-laws who covered a great deal of my personal expenses whilst studying and without whom I would not be where I am today.

Also to Doctor Patrick and Mrs Val Bartlett who provided me with accommodation whilst doing research at the UNISA library in Pretoria.

Without these generous contributions and many others I would not have been able to complete this degree.

I am grateful and indebted to you all.

Thank you!

DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I declare that “The Importance of Hebrew for Biblical Spirituality” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

LIST OF FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLICAL REFERENCES

All biblical quotations and references, unless otherwise stated, have been taken from:

The Lexham English Bible, Fourth Edition
Copyright 2010, 2012 Logos Bible Software
Logos Bible Software, 1313 Commercial St., Bellingham, WA 98225
<http://www.logos.com>¹

¹ *The Lexham English Bible*. 2012 (W. H. Harris, III, E. Ritzema, R. Brannan, D. Mangum, J. Dunham, J. A. Reimer & M. Wierenga, Ed.). Logos Bible Software: Bellingham, WA

CHAPTER 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF HEBREW FOR BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY

RESEARCH, AIM AND DEMARCATION

a) The research question (motivation for study)

The academic study of Spirituality is unique in its focus on the experience of those who would call themselves 'spiritual'. I would therefore like to begin this document with a short background of my own spiritual journey which has ultimately brought me to undertake the present study.

From a very early age I have had an awareness of the 'spiritual', that *something other* than what I could come to terms with, using my five senses. This *other worldly*, which at first I experienced in nature was something I perceived as larger than this life. Its presence at first frightened me, because of what I experienced as the magnitude of its power, but I was simultaneously intrigued by and drawn to it. During my early school years I had a keen interest in academic study and the pursuit of knowledge. However, it wasn't until high school that I became frustrated with the 'box' in which this knowledge was packaged. This led me to pursue what I saw as the opposite of conventional knowledge, a search for meaning and understanding in the area of the *supernatural*.

During this quest, towards the end of my school career, I was introduced to Christianity. The passing of my father opened the way for my mother to practise her Christian faith again (this was not possible previously as he had converted to Judaism many years before). I started attending church with her on a regular basis, at first only from a sense of duty. I was however intrigued by an atmosphere of the supernatural in this 'Pentecostal' church and the regular use of glossolalia. It was in this environment that I first accepted the Christian faith. However, I did not entirely distance myself from other forms of spiritual practices, in an attempt to escape traditional society. This was done by means of membership in the so-called Gothic sub-culture of the 1980s (a spiritual quest identified by an openness to the spiritual realm; exemplified by the use of anti-societal dress; the taking of psychedelic drugs; and being deeply immersed in depressive 'alternative' music). It was in both these places that I found a sense of belonging, but I could never marry the two.

It wasn't until a friend had a revelation of Jesus during an ecstatic drug experience that things started to change. He became a Christian shortly thereafter and was very keen to share his newfound faith with our entire friendship circle. To my surprise, most of them decided to adopt the Christian faith, but continued with the counter-cultural dress, etc. During this time I started attending a new church along with my friends, which decreased the distance between my private and public spiritual life.

During this period of time, I developed (through an evangelism meeting, the reading of Paul's many missionary journeys and going on a short-term outreach) a keen interest in becoming a missionary to distant lands. I started sharing my faith experience with any and every person I came into contact with and am sure I was a naïve annoyance to many. These experiences ultimately led me to attend a Bible college focused on Christian missions, where I studied for three years. As part of the programme I also became more involved in practical Christian service.

At the Bible College I threw myself into academic study and did every single course I possibly could. As a major in my first and second year, I did a course named 'French for Ministry', which was supposed to be the major in my final year as well. However, at the end of my second year of study I decided to change courses and major in 'Bible Translation' instead. The course was designed and led by Dr Véroni Kruger, an expert in Classical Greek. As a practical component we translated children's Bible stories into SiSwati using 'mother tongue' speakers in the adjacent township. We also tested these stories in Swaziland.

At the end of the three years I decided to join the 'Word for the World' Bible Translators where I completed an extra year of part-time studies while working for them. This involved administrative duties, lecturing a basic course in cultural anthropology, and studying Hebrew. During my training as a Bible translator, I started doing research into languages in French-speaking African countries that did not yet have a translation of the Scriptures. I came upon a language in the 'Ethnologue' (2009) called Taabwa, spoken by approximately 250 000 people residing in Eastern DRC and decided it would be worth pursuing further.

It was at this time that I was introduced to a lady who was also looking at translating the Bible and was interested in joining me in this project. We planned a preliminary trip to Kinshasa in December 2004, where we met with the Bible Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then Zaire). We needed their approval and support for this project, both of which they were happy to give. The next six months comprised research and fund-raising, before we undertook another trip to Lake Tanganyika, where the Taabwa people were said to reside. We drove from Pretoria to Mpulungu and met there with a Catholic priest in the nearby town of Mbala. He helped much with practical aspects of life in Northern Zambia, as well as giving us some insight into whether or not a translation project into the Taabwa language was a viable venture. He was of the opinion that it would not be worth our while as most mother-tongue speakers were fluent in the local trade language.

It was at this point that my life took a drastic turn. I decided not to pursue this project any further and decided to return to secular life. At first I pursued my interest in computer studies, but did not complete the course due to a lack of funds and equipment. I also took two trips to Namibia where I first visited and later worked for several months in the retail sector. However, I had to leave the country as I could not obtain a work permit and returned to South Africa where I continued in this line of employment and once again became involved in the local church; this time in the small town of Port Alfred.

There, I was active in youth ministry in the local Methodist church, where I met my wife and later became youth pastor. My wife and I also ran a place of safety for children for a couple of months which closed down shortly afterwards as a result of restrictive government policy. However, it was as a direct result of this experience that we relocated to Port Elizabeth, where she could pursue further studies in education and where we now also reside and I was employed as student pastor.

Concurrently with all these events I resumed my academic studies. At first I enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree with Greek, Hebrew and Linguistics as majors. I completed approximately twelve credits and then decided to switch to a B.Th. Honours degree as I was considering ordination in the Methodist church. I completed a comprehensive Honours degree in Theology with modules in Old

Testament, New Testament, Missiology, Religious Education and Christian Spirituality, which I passed with distinction. This led me to enroll for a research Master's Degree in Christian Spirituality and the Bible with the aim of pursuing a career as a lecturer. This is the pinnacle of my lifelong pursuit of combining the spiritual and the academic. What follows is an attempt to do this under the heading 'Christian Spirituality and the Bible' with specific reference to the Psalms.

This dissertation will argue that a Christian Spirituality based upon the Bible as containing a message about God, when viewed from the perspective that it is a work of human hands, the composition and interpretation of which not only took place but should still take place in response to real human needs and questions, in specific sociological, cultural and historical settings is not only possible, but will enrich the reading and study thereof and is in fact essential to the hermeneutical (interpretive) process. Furthermore, the importance of one of the languages in which its formation took place, namely Hebrew, will be put forward as essential in this quest for understanding its meaning, with specific reference to the Psalms.

b) The aim of the dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the link between Christian Spirituality and the Bible. There are many forms of spirituality and some might even refer to multiple spiritualities. Even those who identify themselves as Christians differ in their understanding of what it means to be spiritual and yet most of these people base their perspectives on the same Bible. It would therefore be safe to say that if there are multiple Christian spiritualities, all presumably based upon the Bible, then there must be equally as many differences in the way Christians approach, read, interpret and apply their specific hermeneutic.

So the question arises: where do these differences come from and what are they based upon? Since our understanding of anything is never neutral; context is all important. Our personal context as well as the context(s) of centuries of Christians who have interpreted the text of the Bible in their varied personal and historical settings, not to mention the context in which the authors of the various books of the Bible received, interpreted, contextualized, edited and transmitted the various texts that make up the canon as we have it today, lead us to the proposition

that it would therefore be more correct to speak of canons in the plural or even messages from God.

Thus what we have here are multi-faceted texts that span centuries of oral transmission, orthography, scribal transmission, editing, reconstruction, interpretation and history (both sacred and secular) and finally compilation to arrive at the Bible as we have it today. It therefore seems only fitting that a healthy understanding of the text requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted hermeneutic. Inherent in the various interpretive theories developed over the centuries (social, cultural, text-critical, redactional, etc.), what seems to have developed is the tendency to opt for one of two major approaches to understanding the message of the biblical text.

The one (synchrony)² focuses on the text in its present form and attempts to derive meaning through the use of various textual and literary devices at the exegete's disposal. The other (diachrony) looks at and takes seriously the history of the text, both in its cultural milieu and its composition and transmission. For many years it seemed necessary to choose between these options and scholars felt the need to defend their own point of view, while at the same time pointing out the futility of the other perspective.

It was not until recently that this approach has started to take a turn towards a more comprehensive and integrative method of exegesis³, which takes seriously both the synchronic and the diachronic approach to the text.

c) Scope or demarcation of the dissertation

The scope of the current dissertation is to focus on the academic discipline of Biblical Spirituality and the effect that a methodology thereof can have on Scriptural understanding and how this relates to personal and societal transformation (the goal of Biblical Spirituality). For a long time the academic study of the biblical text has

² See, *South African Perspectives on the Pentateuch: Between Synchrony and Diachrony* (Le Roux, Jurie Hendrik and Otto, Eckart, eds.(2007))

³ This approach (as reflected by the articles in the book above) refers to a multidimensional reading that includes intertextuality; viewing the text purely from a literary perspective; studying the text within various cultural and social groupings, for example an African or feminist reading; etc.

been the purview of theologians who focused on the meaning or message, in isolation of its effect on the people who assimilated (though perhaps simplistically) this message into their daily lives. A separation of experience and knowledge impoverishes the reader from a richer application of the biblical narrative to their personal spirituality. A methodology of Biblical Spirituality would initiate an integration of theory and praxis and act as a model which could be used to confront virtually any biblical text.

Presently such a methodology will be applied using the Psalter as an example of how the text as a whole was purposefully arranged and edited, therefore serving both as a key to its understanding and an example of contextual reinterpretation (in response to the crisis of the exile). This model will then be put forward as a possible way of reinterpreting the biblical text in response to present-day realities, in a way that will work towards limiting the shock reaction that the church seems to have when confronted with academic writing. I will then look at the way forward for cooperation between Academia and Ecclesia, as well to propose a programme that can make biblical studies both accessible and useable to the church as a whole.

Summary

The methodology proposed above is one which takes seriously both the historical context and present application of the text. This dissertation is an attempt to understand the history, form and significance of the Old Testament (specifically the Psalms) in a way that will contribute to a truly 'Biblical' spirituality, past and present. The Psalms provide us with a glimpse into the spirituality of the Israelites before, during and after the exile. They are filled with raw emotion in response to the sometimes harsh realities of life. As such they contain a variety and at times even opposing views about life and God. We would do well to learn from them both individually and as an integrated whole in order to assist our present-day understanding of the "message(s)" of the text, as well as the application of such knowledge in preserving and evolving our faith in the twenty-first century; a world full of fresh challenges that require creative interventions to eternal questions, such as meaning and significance in a world struggling to come to terms with its God.

THESIS

The thesis of my dissertation as stated above is to explore the importance of the Hebrew source language of the Old Testament and Hebrew Canon for a grasp of the spirituality/ies of the people we encounter in these narratives, as well as to gauge the extended importance of this language knowledge as it pertains to contemporary spirituality/ies based upon these same Scriptures, both for the laity and for academia.

I will structure this study in the following way:

In Chapter Two, I will seek to define spirituality in general and then to narrow down the scope of this definition by looking at Christian Spirituality specifically and the role of the Biblical text in this definition. I will then narrow the scope even further by proposing constitutive elements of any Biblical Spirituality, presenting the goal of a Christian Biblical Spirituality as transformation and then viewing the state of the academic discipline of Biblical Spirituality with its dual focus on spiritualities, ancient and modern.

In Chapter Three, I will use the example of a single scholar whose work embodies the characteristic dual focus presented above; an emphasis on both ancient text and modern application, with the hope that certain elements may emerge that will form the basis of a methodology for further application of such Biblical Spirituality to other authors and texts.

In Chapter Four, I will survey a number of modern publications dealing with Spirituality and the Psalms in particular for further evidence that the elements listed as core to Biblical Spirituality are in fact present in these works.

In Chapter Five, I will seek to find evidence of scholars who value the importance of the Biblical source languages for valid theological work. If such knowledge is not important theologically, it will most certainly not be held in high regard spiritually.

In Chapter Six, I will introduce the Psalms as test case for an illustration of the importance of Hebrew for valid theological work. This will be done using three psalms to pilot our study, using a specific method to analyse each.

In Chapters Seven to Nine, I will do an exegesis of the three chosen psalms, looking at the overall communicative purpose, compositional structure, thematic outline, verse-by-verse meaning and an intertextual passage comparison for each of these.

In Chapter 10, I will explore the implications of my findings from the three psalms on the spirituality found therein. This will be done separately for each of these under the headings, language and exegesis.

In Chapter 11, I will move on from the spirituality within the ancient text and focus on how the spiritualities contained in these psalms can impact on the spirituality of contemporary readers. This will be done under the heading, continued meaning.

In Chapter 12, I will return to the first part of my thesis and direct my attention to those aspects of my Hebrew knowledge that allowed for the conclusions I arrived at in Chapters 10 and 11.

In Chapter 13, I will make some further recommendations as to the direction the discipline of Biblical Spirituality might take in the future in order to bear fruit in academia as well as the ecclesia.

In Chapter 14, I will finalise my dissertation by concluding if and how proficiency in Hebrew is really important for Biblical Spirituality, as well as by suggesting further avenues of research connected to this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

In this chapter I will explore the term spirituality as part of the thesis of the dissertation, namely the importance of Hebrew for Biblical Spirituality. In subsequent chapters I will take a closer look at the role of Hebrew and the nature of the Bible. However, before we can look at the role of Biblical Spirituality, we need to define spirituality in general, and then narrow it down to that spirituality or those spiritualities linked or derived specifically from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures (more loosely termed the Bible in the Christian and the Tanakh in the Jewish tradition). We will also briefly explore the academic discipline of Christian Spirituality as a fledgling discipline apart from Theology, though inextricably linked to it. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for this dissertation, the goal and state of Biblical Spirituality as a discipline needs attention.

2.1. What is a Biblical Spirituality?

Before we continue any further, we need to discuss three aspects of spirituality embodied and intertwined in the question above. Firstly, we have to define in broad terms what spirituality is and the way it has developed over the centuries; secondly, we have to look specifically at a spirituality or spiritualities that are considered Christian; thirdly we need to study the nature of the Bible (as we are speaking here of not just any spirituality, but specifically a spirituality that relates to the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures); and finally, as a further step, we have to explore how these three phenomena interrelate and inform one another to transform the believer into “the image and likeness of God” (what I believe the true goal of Christian Spirituality to be).

2.2. Towards a general understanding or definition of the term *spirituality*:

In the preface to volume one of Christian Spirituality, Ewert Cousins (in McGinn, Meyendorf and Leclercq 1987:xii-xiii) states that:

In the planning of the project, no attempt was made to arrive at a common definition of spirituality that would be accepted by all in precisely the same way. The term “spirituality,” or an equivalent, is not found in a number of the traditions. Yet from the outset, there was a consensus among the editors

about what was in general intended by the term... As a working hypothesis, the following description was used to launch the project:

The series focuses on that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions “the spirit.” This spiritual core is the deepest centre of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality. The series explores the discovery of this core, the dynamics of its development, and its journey to the ultimate goal. It deals with prayer, spiritual direction, the various maps of the spiritual journey, and the methods of advancement in the spiritual ascent.

It is clear, therefore, that even in scholarly publications of the highest standards, full consensual clarity of understanding on what spirituality entails has not been possible. It is not unexpected, then, that in single-authored publications such openness should be found too:

Waaïjman (Waaïjman, 2002:1), perhaps the most influential modern writer on spirituality, refers for example to spirituality as “that which touches the core of human existence, namely ‘our relation to the Absolute,’ however the latter may be defined.”

Kourie (in De Villiers, Kourie and Lombaard, 2006:22), on the other hand, states that spirituality “refers to the ‘ultimate values’ that give meaning to our lives, whether or not they are religious or non-religious.” In the same article she quotes Kappen (:23) as saying that spirituality refers to:

...the manner in which humans transcend themselves and reach out to the ultimate possibilities of their existence. As such spirituality entails both an understanding of the deepest meaning of human existence and a commitment to realising the same.

Following on from this, Schneiders is quoted as stating that spirituality “is the capacity of persons to transcend themselves through knowledge and love” (in De Villiers et al 2006:23).⁴

⁴ See also, Speck (2004:3-4), Willard (1995:16) and Crago (2003:iii)

As is clear from the above attempts to arrive at a singular or unifying definition of spirituality, it would seem more plausible to look at a *working* definition (open to editing) of spirituality that would be suitable for the present study.

2.3. Towards a working definition of spirituality:

Following on from the above definitions and for the purpose of this dissertation, I would therefore like to attempt a working definition of the meaning of spirituality:

I believe spirituality to be the command centre of life; whereby the supernatural, transcendent and yet personal being (God) chooses to connect and dialogue with the human person, in such a way so as to affect all our faculties so profoundly, that it inevitably effects change in the direction of the greater good of all humanity, as one aligns oneself to the plans and purposes of this divine entity (I know as God), starting with a profound transformation of the emotions, will and intellect, so as to drive this intention into action, and thereby resulting in the mystery of existence finding its meaning and ultimate fulfilment in a personal relationship with the creator and sustainer of all that is.

To summarise this rather lengthy definition into something more manageable, I would define spirituality as “a meeting with the divine that results in a transformation into the image of God and an alignment with God’s purpose”.

2.4. Christian Spirituality

In order further to delineate the definition of spirituality into the domain of those characteristics peculiar to Christianity, let us once again engage with the experts in the field.

In his article entitled “What is Spirituality?” Waaijman (2006:1-15), referring specifically to Christian Spirituality, provides us with a historical perspective on the nature of spirituality by investigating its early forms, followed by a discussion of two approaches in the last century, and finally he investigates three basic forms of spirituality, concluding with an overview of the elements of [Christian] spirituality. He concludes by referring to a gradual, relational process, between God and person, resulting in transformation (Waaijman 2006:13-15).⁵

⁵ For a comprehensive study in this regard, see Waaijman (2002).

Schneiders (in Donahue, 2006:75), “in attempting a phenomenology of the contemporary definition of Christian Spirituality,” speaks about the fact that it is no longer “an exclusively Roman Catholic phenomenon”, although this is a little narrow in scope to start with, as she makes no mention of Pentecostal, Charismatic or for that matter of Anglican or Methodist spirituality (the latter two having a long history of academic reflection on the matter). She is also of the opinion that Christian Spirituality is not constitutive of doctrinal rules to be adhered to which originate from theology (by which she seems to be referring to the study of theology, not an individual’s personal belief system). She does however make a statement that can be applied across the board, that Christian Spirituality is not centred on an attempt to be perfect by a select group of dedicated individuals, but is open to all and to the whole of life.

She goes on to give a definition of what she means by Christian Spirituality as “the lived experience of the Christian faith”, which when compared with her understanding of spirituality in general (see Kourie 2006:23), would then constitute the notion that Christian Spirituality refers to the ability of a person to integrate life and faith in such a way as to transcend oneself through a knowledge and love of God, self and others. This is expounded in the following exposition (Schneiders 2002:134):

Christian Spirituality casts the process and project of life-integration in terms of the ultimate horizon and basic coordinates of Christian faith. The ultimate horizon of faith is the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ into whose divine life we are incorporated by the gift (grace) of the Spirit. The basic coordinates of the life of faith are the believing community (i.e., the church) in which we live that faith; word and sacrament, which nourish faith; and mission-based ministry, by which we express and share our faith. Thus, Christian Spirituality is a self-transcending faith in which union with God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit expresses itself in service of the neighbour and participation in the realization of the reign of God in this world. Christian Spirituality, thus understood, is necessarily biblical and it is adequate only to the degree that it is rooted in and informed by the Word of God.

This seems to be a very personal view of Schneiders’ understanding of Christian Spirituality. There is much history, theology and doctrine inherent in such a definition and one can even sense hints of the various creeds lurking in the background. However, the present author does not think that in a post-modern world

one can just take conventional theological views as set in concrete. Old ideas need to be reconsidered, in spite of their centuries of tradition, perhaps even because of it. I, for one, cannot in good conscience recite the apostle's creed as though its very lines are composed of pure unadulterated truth. The present author especially takes exception to the term, 'Word of God', which denies the personal and historical situation within which each of the biblical narratives was lived and later recorded.

Following on from the above discussion on the definition, nature and elements of spirituality, it would seem only logical to include here Principe (in Donahue, 2006:75), who sets the agenda for future discussion by suggesting three levels of the term spirituality: *lived experience, teachings, and the academic study of experience or teaching.*

King (1992:4) in discussing spirituality, society and culture expounds on this in the following way:

We can therefore distinguish three distinct, though interdependent, levels in the understanding of spirituality: first, spirituality as lived experience or praxis; second, spirituality as a teaching that grows out of this praxis and guides it in turn (i.e. the spiritual disciplines and guidelines to holiness and perfection found in different religions); third, the systematic, comparative and critical study of spiritual experiences and teachings which has developed recently in a new way. All three levels, in their occurrence and expression, are closely intertwined with other sociocultural factors which shape the practice and understanding of spirituality during particular historical periods, in different religions, and in different places where the same faith is practised.

In this first section we have explored what spirituality is; we have sought to define it, surveyed its scope somewhat, tried to get to a working definition of it and had a look at what Christian Spirituality is specifically.

Firstly, we deduced that there is no singular or universal definition of the term spirituality and because of its diverse meaning and interdisciplinarity; it does not easily lend itself to such a definition. There are however key aspects that seem to be included in most definitions, namely that of a centre, core or inner dimension, as it relates to that which is beyond, transcendent or universal, and which gives meaning to our lives and in turn leads to transcendence or transformation.

We also discussed Christian Spirituality as being the spirituality of the Christian faith as lived out and experienced by Christians, for the most part based upon or at the very least linked to the Bible. However, not all Christians share the same spirituality and it would therefore seem prudent rather to speak of multiple Christian spiritualities.

Finally, we looked at three levels of the term spirituality, namely lived experience, teachings and academic study. We have looked at the first of these in some detail above and we will now move on to the other two: teachings and the academic study of such experience or teaching.

2.5. Spirituality as an academic discipline

Schneiders (quoted in Donahue 2006:75) maintains that “*spirituality as an academic discipline*” is “independent from but related to other branches of theology”.

The academic discipline of spirituality is thus “the field of study which attempts to investigate in an interdisciplinary way spiritual experience as such” (Schneiders 1989:692).

She advocates a three-dimensional approach to the academic study of spirituality, as follows (1989:695):

The first phase is essentially descriptive ... historical, textual and comparative studies are of primary importance. The second phase is essentially analytical and critical, leading to an explanation and evaluation of the subject. Here the theological, human and social sciences are of particular importance. The third phase is synthetic and / or constructive, and leads to appropriation. Hermeneutical theory governs this final phase.

Kourie (2009:158-166) discusses various methods postulated by Schneiders and Waaijman with regard to the academic study of spirituality. The first of these, the “anthropological method”, looks at the spirituality of the person being studied from the vantage point that the person is first and foremost human, before our particular faith or religion comes into play. Secondly, the “theological method” focuses on the central tenets of a particular faith as comparative criteria for

evaluating the validity of a particular spiritual experience. Thirdly, the “historical method” looks at the origin(s) of a particular faith expression and its growth and development over time. Fourthly, the “hermeneutical method” is described as an analytical procedure whereby the object of study (a particular spiritual experience) is delineated, tagged and evaluated with the aim of being integrated into the life of the person experiencing it and being somehow transformed as a result. Finally, the “phenomenological method” is an approach that focuses on the actual event and also the specific way we think about that event. Humans have an innate capacity for self-evaluation which also gives us the unique capacity for transformation.

2.6. Biblical Spirituality

In the introduction to volume one of Christian Spirituality in the series “World Spirituality: An Encyclopaedic History of the Religious Quest”, Bernard McGinn (1987:xviii) states succinctly that “The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments form the basis for all Christian Spirituality. No aspect of the life of the Christian religion can be understood apart from them”. This accords well with the views expressed by Schneiders below.

Schneiders propounds three meanings of Biblical Spirituality as follows (Schneiders 2002):

1. First, and most fundamentally, Biblical Spirituality refers to the spiritualities that come to expression in the Bible and witness to patterns of relationship with God that instruct and encourage our own religious experience (Schneiders 2002:134).
2. Secondly, Biblical Spirituality designates a pattern of Christian life deeply imbued with the spirituality (spiritualities) of the Bible. In other words, the term can refer to an integrated contemporary spirituality that is markedly biblical in character (Schneiders 2002:135).
3. Thirdly, she designates Biblical Spirituality as a transformative process of personal and communal engagement with the biblical text, approaching the

text not merely as an historical record or even as a literary mediation of religious meaning, but as the Word of God (a problematic and complex statement that requires further explanation) (Schneiders 2002:136).⁶

However, Donahue, in his concluding remarks in the article “The Quest for Biblical Spirituality”, notes that Schneiders has “centred her work on the New Testament”. Furthermore he states that (Donahue 2006:87-88):

An adequate Biblical Spirituality must be open to the whole Bible and especially to the Old Testament and to those texts there that might at first seem least suited...In dealing with material from the Old Testament, Christian scholars also must respect the autonomy and fruitfulness of Jewish readings of their scriptures and become familiar with trends in Jewish interpretation, however daunting the task.

2.7. Transformation: the true / ultimate goal of Christian Biblical Spirituality

There are many ways that a person can be transformed by a Christian Spirituality that is based on the Bible. One of these ways is a “transformative reading of scripture,” a practical outworking of the third meaning of biblical criticism mentioned above and dealt with by Schneiders (2002) as follows:

She discusses five ways of engaging in a transformative reading of scripture, namely: preaching of the Word; liturgy; faith sharing in small groups; transformative action in the world; and lectio divina (Schneiders 2002:137-140).

It is logical to assume that a person can be changed by someone interpreting and applying the Scriptures to life through the act of preaching. However, what is often overlooked is the change that takes place within the preacher him or herself. This change takes place as a result of the preparation of the sermon, through reading, prayer, contemplation, etc. Added to this, is the change that takes place in the very act of delivery, whereby the preacher is open to the inner voice and the guidance of the Spirit. Furthermore, the very position of authority given to the preacher calls for integrity, defined as wholeness, integration and non-duplicity.

⁶ See Schneiders (1999:27-63).

Following on from this, Schneiders (2002:133) states the following: “Biblical Spirituality must strike a delicate balance between historical-critical engagement with scripture and opening oneself to the Word’s life-transforming potential”.

Also, De Villiers (quoted in Kourie 2009:167) states that “More than mere critical, rational thinking is needed to live meaningfully”. Anyone involved in the study of spirituality, because of the very nature of the object under observation, is not involved in a solely intellectual exercise, but will also be transformed in some way. Just as the experience of the spiritual steers and orients our lives, so also the reflective study of that same experience has the potential to change and transform us. The very act of teaching or studying or reading and writing can be seen as a spiritual discipline, which brings us into a place where we can meet with the transcendent wholly other (God).⁷ As such, personal transformation, once effected, will lead to societal transformation, not only collectively or numerically, but through deliberate involvement resulting from a transformed heart and mind.

2.8. The state of the discipline of Biblical Spirituality (with its dual focus on spirituality in the ancient text and on how modern spiritualities draw on the Bible)

Spirituality as an academic discipline is still finding its place as separate from Theology, Biblical Studies and Religion. However, there has been a cementing of what Biblical Spirituality should at least include; if this has not been comprehensive, then, at least, it has been constitutive. There is, as stated above, a focus on the spiritualities evident from and found in the ancient text(s), as well as a parallel modern application of faith to life. Biblical Spirituality does not try and mimic, but rather interacts and debates with the stories depicted in the Scriptures, stories of those who have sought to live their lives in obedience to and in relationship with the God of both the Old and New Testaments.

Keeping these two key aspects in mind, Lombaard (2011:3) proposes the following approach or methodology (this will be explored in more detail in the next chapter):

⁷ In this regard, see also Foster (1978) and Willard (1988).

These two *foci* – ancient and modern – having been identified and reflected upon, the validity of such an approach or, perhaps even, model, ought now in various ways to be tested. One way of doing so, is to seek examples of scholars who seem to have pursued such a dual focus in their writings. By understanding what has been done, more clarity may be gained on what ought to be done.

Summary

In this chapter we centred our attention on spirituality and sought to define it as that which lets a person meet and interact with the transcendent dimension of life, the realm beyond that which we can explore with our five senses. Given the very experiential nature of spirituality, we tried to orient our personal experience with the spiritual experience of the people we read about in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures that make up the canon of the Christian Bible (although in part shared with the Jewish people and faith). Finally, every endeavour has an ultimate goal and it was proposed that the goal of a Christian Biblical Spirituality is to transform the person for the greater good of society in accordance with the purposes and plans of the God of these very Scriptures (however that may be derived and applied). It is thus proposed that the academic discipline of Biblical Spirituality needs a dual focus: the spiritualities found in the ancient text, as well as modern spiritualities that draw on these.

CHAPTER 3: JH EATON AS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS MODEL OF BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY

In the previous chapter, we looked at Biblical Spirituality in terms of its definition(s), scope and sphere of meaning. Presently we will investigate a particular Hebrew scholar's work as it relates to Biblical Spirituality as encompassing both ancient and modern expressions thereof. Lombaard, in his article "Biblical Spirituality, and JH Eaton" (2011:1) looks at the academic discipline of Biblical Spirituality from a "methodological perspective". The two tenets of his view on the subject (i.e. "the importance of ancient expressions of faith (spiritualities) in the Bible, and the importance of modern expressions of faith (spiritualities) as they draw on the Bible" (2011:1)) are then applied to Old Testament scholar JH Eaton. Eaton's works are then evaluated, with the aim of proposing a model of Biblical Spirituality that could have a much wider application (e.g. applied to the Old Testament as a whole and not just to specific books, and evaluating such application from a variety of scholars in order to gain a more comprehensive and cohesive framework or methodology of and for the academic study of Biblical Spirituality).

What should / could a discipline of Biblical Spirituality involve? One way of testing the validity of the above approach or model would be to seek examples of scholars who seem to have pursued such a dual focus in their writings. For the purpose of this study, the writings of JH Eaton as proposed by Lombaard (2011:3) will be discussed in order to gain an understanding of "what has been done", and perhaps of "what ought to be done".

Following Lombaard (2011:3), Eaton's scholarly work seems to have the following three emphases: language⁸, exegesis⁹ and the continued meaning¹⁰ of (especially) the Psalms (although he also did work on the Prophets). These will be interacted with below under the same headings.

⁸ Language: see Eaton: 1967:24, 1979:1 and 1981:106.

⁹ Exegesis: see Eaton: 1967:13-26, 1979:1 and 1986:1

¹⁰ Continued meaning: see Eaton: 1967:28 and 1979:123.

3.1. Language

Eaton's knowledge of Hebrew and other Semitic languages formed the basis for his understanding and interpretation of the biblical text from a variety of sources as also compared and paralleled with similar texts from in and around the Middle East at a similar time in history. Lombaard (2011:5) has the following to say in this regard:

The importance of a strong grounding in the biblical languages cannot be overestimated when it comes to understanding the Bible texts in their contexts, so as with greater validity to seek continued meaning from these texts for later times (an important aspect for the discipline of Biblical Spirituality, as indicated above).

Eaton's love for literature or literary art is evident from his writings (1985:ix). With reference to the book of Job, he states the following, "There is general agreement that his [the author of Job] work stands at the summit of Hebrew literature and among the world's great masterpieces." However, Eaton's great love for literary art could hold a potential weakness for the method of Biblical Spirituality (as proposed above), for meaning must take precedence over form, although never severed from it. As it is a method that we are after here, we cannot simply overlook the fact that Eaton had a thorough background in Hebrew, as well as in Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies. To illustrate, Eaton (1985:ix) states,

To the student it [Job] offers also much challenge. The course of the drama takes surprising turns, and at times we wonder whether the paradoxes are the intention of the author or the products of the book's later history. To turn straight to the scholarly debate on these questions is to court mental indigestion, so many are the permutations that have been suggested. The sound course, therefore, is to read the Book of Job itself, with all attention and sympathy, and with only a restrained guide at one's elbow to help through difficult turn points and share first reactions. When one has thus gained direct knowledge of the material, one can enter into the discussion of critical questions with profit and enjoyment.

It is at precisely this point that the present author wishes to differ. The present author believes that a primary reading of the text without the necessary background can lead not only to a misunderstanding or a lesser understanding of the text, but also to an uninformed lasting 'first' impression. These tainted glasses through which the text will be read and evaluated in future readings or study would be difficult to

dispose of. The present author is not proposing that we go back to a point in history when the church was the custodian of knowledge and felt the need to mediate between text and laity. However, the present author is suggesting that the background (historical, geographical, cultural and textual) as well as the history and reasons for the transmission and continued interpretation of the text throughout the centuries, be either a pre-requisite to reading the text, or that it be included either in the margins or parallel to the text to inform one's reading thereof (*especially* if such were one's first introduction to the book). Taken from an English literature perspective, this would be the same as reading Shakespeare, Chaucer or other classical texts, without any knowledge of their place in space and time. Or if one were to consider a work of art, the appreciation of its beauty could never be compared with the richness gained by knowing the artist's cultural and historical background, as well as the occasion for which it was made.

The above might not seem so evident from the example of Job or even some of the Psalms. However, more obvious examples would be the distance between present context and some other rather "strange" biblical texts, e.g. Elisha's cursing of the children in 2 Kings 2:23-24, or the trees having a meeting in the book of Judges 9:8-15. It is then that the parity becomes evident.

Although the researcher might disagree with Eaton about the order in which the interpretation of a text should take place (whether firstly from an appreciation of a text as it stands in its present context; or, with a prerequisite understanding of its *Sitz im Leben*), does not negate the fact that proficiency in language (both ancient and modern) has a crucial role to play in the interpretation of the biblical text.

Language and culture are inseparable entities, as is all too evident from the impact of colonialism, the apartheid struggle, as well as the Islamic tradition of using Arabic as an integral part of religious life and faith transmission. Everything in society is either affected or put into effect by it, from politics to art and everything in between. An example of this is seen in Eaton's analysis of the Prophets, which we will look at more closely under the heading *Continued Meaning*.

3.2. Exegesis

Moving from Eaton's emphasis on language in his works, we now move to his exegesis of the various books or texts he examined. Here Eaton once again shows his mastery of the material in question and his ability to use parallel ancient Near Eastern sources to make several unique contributions to the field of Psalm study specifically.

As an example of this, his intrigue with the annual enthronement festivals of the nations surrounding (and therefore having a definite influence on) Israel comes to the fore. This view was first put forward by Mowinckel in his *Psalmenstudien*, 6 vol. (1921–24; "Studies in the Psalms," later popularised as *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1962:106).

The idea that Israel also celebrated such a yearly event comparable with the *Akitu* Babylonian New Year's festival and that many of the Psalms find their place and meaning in this very context remains a very controversial theory¹¹.

...the festival included a ritual re-enactment of Yahweh's accession to the throne symbolised by a procession of the ark into the sanctuary, and the placing of the ark under Yahweh's cherub throne in the inner sanctum of the temple. (FLINT, Peter W and Miller, Patrick D, 2005:114)

Eaton was not afraid to travel into uncharted territory in this regard. Having said this though, one finds it puzzling that he would then be hesitant to come to terms with the idea that the "Davidic empire was a literary construction from Josianic or even post-exilic times, which based itself on memories of a small tribal leadership, or on no extant history at all, to imagine a grand Israelite-Judean kingdom in earlier times." (Lombaard, 2011:6)¹²

Though, given his fascination with King David and his alleged link to the so-called "royal Psalms", it would not seem too farfetched to imagine that perhaps

¹¹ See, Wilks (2003).

¹² See in this regard, Finkelstein (2001 and 2006).

Eaton was reading into the text or even overlooking considerable 'glaring' research findings (see Wilks below) that went in the face of his understanding and personal fascination with the festivals and drama of other cultures surrounding the inauguration of a new king and attributing the same practices directly to Israel.

Scholars seem prone to seeing patterns, parallels and links between ideas; this is part of the investigative and discovery process. However, these relationships still need to be tested and proven, backed up by sufficient evidence to give weight to each argument. Perhaps here Eaton is guilty of attempting to make connections between cultural ideas which, although similar, cannot be equated and lack sufficient proof. See Wilks (2003:534) below in this regard:

In summary, the idea of a cultic drama as the basis for the structure of Deutero-Isaiah fails to convince. In addition to the many issues and problems concerning the validity of the Enthronement Festival reconstruction that Eaton envisages, his presentation itself relates only to the inspiration that might lie behind the text, not to its ordering, rhetorical development or structure.

In his defence, Eaton does give the time and effort to address both areas¹³ of the discipline of Biblical Spirituality mentioned earlier, in order to bring the modern reader into a better understanding and application of the text. Only then can the true goal of Biblical Spirituality (as the present author sees it) be realised, namely the transformation of the person.¹⁴ Eaton is not always consistent in his application and although he was well versed in and often referred to parallels to the biblical text from surrounding languages and cultures, one fails to see a description of how Job for example has been interpreted through the ages outside of Christianity and Judaism (in the Qur'an for example).¹⁵ An exception to this is Eaton's study of Old Testament Wisdom as paralleled with wisdom literature from other world religions, the idea being to place the Hebrew wisdom tradition on a par with and therefore equally valid and useful for study amongst those with an ecumenical spirit, who are looking for divine order in a world of chaos.

¹³ Both the language and culture of the ancient context, and an exegetical understanding based on the resultant text.

¹⁴ See Waaijman in De Villiers, P et al. (2006:41-51) and Brueggemann (2002).

¹⁵ See Khoury, J N (2007:167-195); SHAH, Sayed Sikander, (1996); and JOHNS, A H, (2001).

The richness of hermeneutical inquiry which includes such a parallel reading in various traditions and religions is however stunted in various ways and by a variety of people who stand opposed to this open interpretive approach.

Firstly, large sections of the church, more so the Protestant than the Catholic tradition and specifically the so-called evangelical church would frown upon such a comparative interpretive framework and probably dismiss it out of hand.

Secondly, academic knowledge is often treated with suspicion and seen as unnecessary in the life of the church. If this is the suspicion with which academics are viewed, one can see how this prejudice would be intensified when looking at the understanding of other religions (which are often seen as the enemy of the Gospel) with regard to a shared text.

With regard to the problem of academic knowledge and the laity, Swanepoel (1994:223-236) has some valid and helpful remarks to make about this often very tense relationship. For Swanepoel (1994:223), the relevance of theology for the future lay in the *popularising* thereof. By this he means not the idea of *popular religion* (more or less equated with folk religion) “*which refers to the way in which people experience their religion, mostly in an intuitive and sometimes an emotional way*”, but rather theology “*based on sound theological research [that] has as its goal to make these research results accessible to people without formal theological training*”.

With regard to what he calls the distrust if not hostility between the church and academia, Swanepoel (1994:224) refers to Thielicke (1965:36) when he has the following to say about the increasing distance between theologians and ministers:

The ministers are ignoring the theologians and there is distrust towards the theologians, while theologians refer to ministers as *terribles simplificateurs*. This leads, according to Thielicke, to a sterile situation where both are standing next to one another, not learning from one another, and which leads to another form of tearing the body of Christ apart.

When this happens, the logical end is a complete separation of church and university, with each party continuing on an isolated path; the one increasingly

specialised and complex and the other in danger of practising an unchallenged theology based progressively more on emotion and experience.

Swanepoel therefore insists that in order for theology as a discipline to remain relevant, *“it must be accompanied by a link to the practice of it”*; and dare one add that in order for church ministry to remain relevant it needs to be informed by the advances made in theological research.

An example of this duality can be seen in the intensely personal and highly problematic concepts linked with the phrases ‘Word of God’, ‘inspired’, ‘inerrant’, etc. popular in church use when referring to the Bible. These ideas lend impetus to the understanding of the place and value of the Bible as not to be interpreted as such, but rather incorporated (i.e. the Bible has a single message and has to be taken at face value and simply obeyed). An up to date example of such simplistic thinking is the furore amongst the Southern Baptist Convention with regard to the new more gender friendly NIV Bible.¹⁶

There exists in the modern church the subtle practice of dissociation and relational excommunication when one dares to disagree or challenge the status quo. We attach labels to the “others” (for example, *fundamentalist* or *liberal*), which then affords one the excuse not to enter into debate with such a person or group. This process is often seen by ministers as their pastoral responsibility, whereby they can protect the so-called *flock*.¹⁷

Taking the above into account; for exegesis to be both relevant and comprehensive, our interpretations of the text need to be both academic and practical. We must involve both the academia and the laity. Ministers need to be more open to new ideas and mediate change, rather than stand in its way and academics need to be more involved in the popularising of theology so as to make modern research accessible to the person in the street.

¹⁶ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/august/genderdebate.html>

¹⁷ See the following as an example of the popular views on a pastor’s gifts and responsibilities:
<http://www.ministrymaker.com/pastor-or-preacher/>;
http://www.biblebc.com/studies/spiritual_gifts/Pastors.htm; <http://worldviewchurch.org/worldview-challenge/281-guardians-of-the-flock> and <http://brevia.com/Spiritual/Shepherd.htm>.

3.3. Continued Meaning

Having already discussed Eaton's focus on the areas of language and exegesis as applied to the Psalms and his other works, we will now investigate his third focus, that of continued meaning. This area involves the application of the understanding gained in the above sections to present-day life.

“When he analyses the prophets, the political setting is of the utmost importance, but then not without an accompanying interest in the theology of these prophets in their situations” (Lombaard, 2011:6). This is one avenue where an understanding of the text in its historical situation could be of great benefit to Biblical Spirituality. Knowing, for example, how Elijah involved himself in the political situation of his time and spoke prophetically into the corruption of the monarchy could help us to do the same with regard to government policies for our time.¹⁸

This does not imply that we need to emulate Elijah's act of praying for drought then rain, or that we challenge the political advisors of government to a sacrifice “duel” (although the slaughtering of animals to honour ancestors is not foreign to the public ceremonies in South Africa)¹⁹. However, I am suggesting, for example, a public debate on matters of social concern and the public exposure of governmental corruption in the media (television, print, and electronic). Although slightly different from Elijah's methods, the outcome of such action could be the same, for example bringing about justice for the poor, the exploited and the oppressed. Another example of the application of this principle (as an example of continued meaning) in the news recently was the use of social networking media to bring about the start of regime change in Egypt and other North African and Arab countries²⁰.

¹⁸ See Brueggemann (2000:229-230) in this regard.

¹⁹ <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/animal-group-concerned-by-2010-slaughter-plan-1.466293>

²⁰ E.g. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/02/22/egypt-social-media-in-the-middle-east-as-a-tool-for-incremental-change/> and <http://www.7summitsagency.com/social-media/why-social-media-can-influence-social-change/>.

Moving back to Eaton, in the final section of Eaton's book (*The Contemplative Face of Old Testament Wisdom*, 1989), we find a landmark application providing a bridge between ancient texts and their continued meaning for our time. Here, the themes of wisdom and contemplation, as studied in the various world religions and traditions throughout the ages, are brought to bear on the needs of the modern reader. Eaton (1989:128) describes this as follows:

In this our final chapter we shall reconsider the themes and meanings we have found in the sages and contemplatives and relate them to the needs of our time. We must not cast off care for the ancient meaning in its own context, but in taking the meaning up to test it against modern experience, we may hope to enter into it more deeply, as well as to derive benefit for modern living.

He does this by applying the wisdom gained from contemplation in the various traditions to topics relevant to the needs of the world today. This is done under the headings *the offer of life, cosmic consciousness, the ecumenical spirit, the mad scramble, the questioning of religious authority, wisdom and the modern goddesses (i.e. science and technology), etc.*

In doing so, Eaton shows a rare talent in bringing the impact of the message across the timeline to today, without losing one ounce of its prophetic impact, hence challenging not only the individual but also society (as constitutive of collective individuals), to transform. If our hearts are stirred and our minds renewed, the world can yet be reborn to fulfil its original purpose; as stated in Chapter Two "a meeting with the divine that results in transformation into the image of God and alignment with God's purpose". Herein lays again the goal of Biblical Spirituality, exemplified by a true scholar. The church would do well to learn from such as these.

Of course, not all of Eaton's works follow this format and therefore they are not as directly or obviously useful in making the meaning of the ancient text in its context relevant for our times. For example, in his work relating to prophecy and liturgy in the Old Testament (1981), there is a definite application for the modern church, which Eaton does not exploit to its full potential.

An example of the tenuous relationship between prophecy and liturgy is evident in the modern church where much is made of worship (i.e. music and song)

to provide the audience an avenue into ecstasy or rapture, where the so-called glory of God is all pervasive.²¹ However, very little change as a result thereof seems to take place in the lives of the individuals caught up in the emotion of such moments. This is not a denial of the fact that emotions often provide the catalyst for the first steps necessary in the journey towards change. However, in such services, restrictions are often placed on those calling for a change of heart and actions in addressing the injustices of the society in which we live (the essence of prophecy).

Having said all this, though, it would be unfair to expect Eaton to provide a commentary for every book in the Bible. It would not be practical for a single individual to write a complete series of reference works that would explore not only the message of the spiritualities of those books and characters, but also how this message was applied over time, in various faith traditions, and also make it relevant for today. This is beyond the scope of one person and negates the richness present when texts are studied by a variety of commentators.

Eaton was first and foremost a Hebrew scholar and student of Old Testament, not of Biblical Spirituality. Hence, we need intermediaries today with a broad understanding of ancient culture, exegesis, and spirituality who can write with the church and laity in mind, so as to illuminate their Bible reading and make the pathway to transformation more clear to follow. Swanepoel (1994:234) suggests that these intermediaries should be the *popularisers* of theology (as discussed earlier) and suggests the following skills needed by these promoters of *popularised theology*:

The populariser must not only have a thorough knowledge of theology, but also good communication skills and knowledge of social sciences and popular culture. Stress should be placed on recruiting popularisers, preferably recent graduates.

The populariser is however only a part of the process and Swanepoel goes into great detail to describe what such a process could and should include and even provides a table (:235) to outline this. He concludes with the following statement:

...it is important that popularising theology must be tackled as a well-coordinated project. This is not the task of one man, not a task that just

²¹ See Jourdain (1997:327-328).

anyone can do or that a group of enthusiasts can attempt. We have an enormous challenge and a terrain on which relatively little research has been done. This must be tackled with great urgency...It can and must not only be a theoretical research project, but an implementing programme...Perhaps the time is now ripe to find a society for the popularising of theology and to place [it] on a firm basis.

Having explained the role and importance of popularising theology for the process of continued meaning, one needs to take cognisance of the risks associated with its acceptance and application by the church and the lay person. Swanepoel (1994:227) highlights this aspect below:

There is still, and perhaps always will be, a deep seated feeling that Christian faith must be all or nothing, that we have eternal unchangeable truths and that even the slightest deviation from the norm will open the floodgate for doubt, despair, moral collapse and anarchy.

The recent uproar over the new book by Rob Bell²² (2011), in which he tackles the concept of heaven and hell is a good illustration of the reaction by the church to this sort of deviation from traditional ideas.

There needs to be a process whereby continued meaning is sought not only for today, but also to realise that this is a continuous and circular process, whereby today's new interpretations do not become static enemies to fresh understandings to changing contexts tomorrow. There should be a sense of eternal truth on the one hand, but also openness in application to continually changing contexts.

We have many contemporary tools at our disposal to do this. For example, collaborative work on online commentaries²³ could be one such method and so could Bible software that is constantly updated from the source as authors make changes to their publications. Often more useful in making academic knowledge accessible to the person in the street, is the magazine²⁴, blog²⁵, or online journal²⁶. The danger

²² *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell and the Fate of Everyone Who Ever Lived.*

²³ <http://hypertextbible.org/>

²⁴ <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/>

²⁵ <http://gerritbrand.blogspot.com/>

²⁶ <http://www.ve.org.za/index.php/VE> and <http://ivbs.sbl-site.org/home.aspx>

of some of these avenues, however, lies in the fact that anyone can publish on the internet, so there needs to be a type of 'peer review' system similar to that used for academic journal articles²⁷. Still, the possibilities are endless.

3.4. Eaton and Biblical Spirituality (Further development and conclusion of chapter)

Following on from Lombaard's suggestions for further research in search of a 'method' of Biblical Spirituality, in the next chapter we will compare other scholars and their more recent contributions to the spirituality of the Psalms. The aim of doing so is the hope that a pattern may emerge which would in turn help to further delineate and define the future study of this new academic discipline. Of course, the study of the Psalms is only one of the avenues that can and should be pursued. There are also other candidates, namely texts that have a history of transmission, translation and interpretation from biblical times to the present; and that also have this history throughout various faith traditions (e.g. Jewish, Christian and Muslim); as well as the ones that have extant research in at least one or more of the areas looked at above (i.e. language, exegesis and continued meaning) (Gillingham).

In this chapter we surveyed the discipline of Biblical Spirituality from the perspective of an academic who embodies the characteristics we have earmarked as constitutive of such methodology. These could then be applied to other authors and scriptures, both in terms of what has been done and perhaps also what should be done. The importance of Hebrew for understanding texts within their context was highlighted as a prerequisite for seeking continued meaning in our own time. This importance was discussed under the headings language (a vessel for cultural transmission), exegesis (which to be relevant and comprehensive needs to be both academic and practical) and continued meaning (in which there should not only be a sense of eternal truth, but also an openness in application to continually changing contexts).

²⁷ In this regard see, <http://wiki.science.ru.nl/Titus-Brandsma-Instituut/spirin/SPIRIN:Encyclopedia>.

CHAPTER 4: SPIRITUALITY AND THE PSALMS – AN OVERVIEW OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Having looked in Chapter Two at a working definition for a Christian Biblical Spirituality and in Chapter Three at J H Eaton as an example of a biblical scholar who embodies two of the main characteristics inherent in such a definition, namely, expressions of faith within the Bible, as well as applications of such faith in modern times (the aim of the study of Eaton's works was to try and find a methodology for the academic study of Biblical Spirituality as a unique discipline), we will now look at more recent publications on spirituality and the Psalms by a variety of scholars who embody the characteristics mentioned above.

As a starting point we will look at Lombaard's article entitled "Four recent books on spirituality and the Psalms: some contextualising, analytical and evaluative remarks" (2006). In this article, he compares four commentaries from 2002 to 2005, written by Stuhlmueller, Brueggemann, Waaijman and Firth, that fit the profile for a methodology of Biblical Spirituality as postulated above.

Since then, there have been numerous publications on the Psalms, some of which have not yet been released at the time of writing²⁸. Not all of these publications fit into the methodology for the academic study of Biblical Spirituality as put forward above. All of them however have a valuable role to play in highlighting the spirituality within the Psalms as well as some specific application to specific areas of life and ministry. The publications evaluated are listed below.

- Vos, C J S 2005. *Theopoetry of the Psalms*. Pretoria: Protea Book House.
- Wallace, H N 2005. *Words to God, Word from God: The Psalms in the Prayer and Preaching of the Church*. Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Grogan, G W 2008. *Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Van Harn, R E & Strawn, B A 2009. *Psalms for Preaching and Worship: A Lectionary Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Patterson, B 2008. *God's Prayer Book*. Carol Stream: Tyndale.

²⁸ See Gillingham (2013).

- Witvliet, J D 2007. *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Mays, J L 2006. *Preaching and Teaching the Psalms*. Westminster: John Knox Press.
- Goldingay, J 2007. *Psalms Volumes 1, 2 & 3*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

4.1 Vos

Starting with Vos's *Theopoetry of the Psalms*, we see here again as Lombaard (2006:14) states "*that one always tends to find one's own spirituality back in Scripture, not by design, but as an inescapable matter of an individual's frame of reference, and, thus, that spirituality is always intensely personal*". For Vos, this *personal* spirituality relates to his love for poetry (he has published three volumes of his own works) and thus he also deals with the Psalms as a collection of poems, which he refers to as *theopoetry*. Vos is quick to reinforce that each Psalm needs to be looked at individually, before considering the book(s) as a collection or unit. He states this as follows (2005:11):

I did not approach the Psalms exclusively as a collection or an entity. Poems have their own existence, their own voice. The rich tone of each Psalm (poem) must be heard. We need to listen to the way each individual Psalm harmonises with the other voices in the choir.

Vos fits into our tentative framework of language, exegesis and continued meaning as the basis for a relevant Biblical Spirituality. The language aspect is evident in his understanding and application of poetic literature; the exegesis aspect is covered in the extensive research he did into the Psalms in which "careful attention was paid to the tradition and reception history of the Psalms" (2005:11). The historical setting of the text was also enriched by a study of the "surrounding countries of the Oriental world" which "revealed textual relationships, influences and dependencies, as well as the powerful impact of myth and tradition." (:11) Vos applies the Psalms for today by focusing on their usefulness for preaching and liturgy, which forms a large portion of this commentary. It is perhaps because of this practical application that he manages to marry the biblical text and the modern

reader or preacher in such a way as not to lose touch with either the historical setting or the continued meaning of the Psalms for today.

Vos is not however addressing the un-churched, which is unfortunate as indeed the Psalms are a great point of meeting between the church and lay people who are struggling with real life situations and difficult issues, such as not only described in the Psalms but also experienced today. We should not shy away from such raw spiritual experiences.

4.2. Wallace

Moving to Wallace's *Words to God, Word from God* we see a similar, but slightly different perspective on the Psalms. Wallace focuses on the Psalms as prayers rather than poems and looks at their place and use in Christian prayer, preaching and worship. He tackles the dual nature of the Psalms and explores whether or not the Psalms are to be spoken or sung as prayers to God, or if they should rather be used to teach and instruct. Wallace looks at the use of the Psalms in Israel, the New Testament, and also throughout church history. His focus is not so much on language and exegesis, but rather on themes and experiences of life expressed as prayer, both in the biblical text and for today. In this way the contemporary spirituality of both individual and congregation can be enriched in a very practical way.

Of course Wallace assumes that the Psalms are used in worship and liturgy (which is indeed the case in the more traditional denominations), but does not address the fact that many modern churches do not sing, preach or pray the Psalms at all. If these congregations are to be addressed and their spirituality enriched through the use of the Psalms, a way has to be found to make them more contemporarily relevant, e.g. arranging them to new music, encouraging individuals to be bold in expressing their emotions as prayers (using the Psalms as a guide) and preaching on modern issues highlighted in the Psalms, such as betrayal, injustice, etc.

4.3. Grogan

Grogan's *Psalms* fits into our methodology by addressing all three of the criteria already mentioned (language, exegesis and continued meaning), but does so by using a theological reading of the text of the Psalter. However, even though the focus and terminology focuses on theology, the application to Biblical Spirituality is undeniably present, as can be seen in the section entitled "*The Psalter's Relevance to Present-Day Theological and Other Issues*" (2008:359):

In every age of the church Christian writers have applied the Psalms to contemporary experience of God and to the issues of their own day, just as the NT writers did, and as the Qumran sectaries and the Jewish authors of the Midrashim did. Martin Luther, for example, loved the Psalms and often identified personally with the experiences of the Psalmists. He and Melancthon used to sing Psalm 46 together in times of adversity, and Luther saw the doctrines of the Christian gospel in the Psalter.

He then tackles these modern concerns under several headings, many of which deal with a Biblical Spirituality, e.g. "Christian thinking should start with God; Christian thinking about God should be shaped by biblical revelation; God has revealed himself to be both transcendent and immanent; etc." Unfortunately, Grogan is very narrow in his understanding (interpretation) and falls prey to a closed set of beliefs not open to much dialogue. The evangelical church often seems to find comfort in providing easy answers to tough questions and formulas in place of relationship. Grogan too seems guilty of this, which will make his work limited to a specific audience who already share his views.

4.4. Van Harn and Strawn

Editors Van Harn and Strawn's lectionary commentary *Psalms for Preaching and Worship* is filled with helpful commentary and insightful application. The various contributors add to the wealth of this work and because the Psalms are dealt with in a lectionary format, much ground is covered and information is concise and impactful. Even though each of the Psalms included in this collection is expounded and applied fruitfully, one must not neglect the very well-written summary of Psalm studies in the first section, which is easy to read and aptly highlights the major trends present in Psalm research as it stands today.

The focus in the application of each specific Psalm is on preaching and worship in the congregation (as is evident from the title), but the theme or main point is applicable to all of life. This would therefore also make for a helpful devotional or personal study commentary for those who want more than simply the basics to enrich their daily spiritual experience.

4.5. Patterson

Patterson's *God's Prayer Book* is totally individual, devotional and personal in nature and as such is very useful for encouraging private prayer and worship with, in and through the Psalms. It is a useful guide for the beginner or lay person who would like to interact with the scriptures. As such the Psalms are an easy entrance to the treasures to be mined in other more complex Old Testament passages. Unfortunately, not much textual, contextual and historical information is given or referred to and, like looking at a van Gogh, the understanding and appreciation will be limited. Having said this though, all of us can benefit from a practical prayer guide, especially one with the Psalms as foundation.

4.6. Witvliet

Witvliet has written a very practical guide to "*The biblical Psalms in Christian worship*". In it he concentrates on worship in its varied forms and applies the Psalms to each aspect and situation. Written for the church, it is focused on:

"...renewed engagement with the Psalms in the context of public worship...Specifically, (to) gather up insights from and provide some orientation to four bodies of literature that are often disconnected from each other:

- Biblical scholarship on the Old Testament and Hebrew Bible;
- Writings on the history, theology, and pastoral practice of worship, liturgy, and preaching;
- Writings on the history and practice of church music; and
- Currently available liturgical and musical resources." (2007:xiv)

This commentary comfortably fits into our foundational methodology of Biblical Spirituality as it covers aspects of language, exegesis and continued meaning, while at the same time highlighting spiritualities found in the Psalms, throughout church history and those of today.

4.7. Mays

Mays' *Preaching and Teaching the Psalms* provides the reader with a guide to studying, teaching and preaching the Psalms. This is done in a very thematic or topical fashion in all three sections. Broad themes are discussed followed by an exposition of specific Psalms to cement the motif of preaching and teaching.

Mays turns to two different concerns that have been important to him, but also to the broader interpretation of the Psalms. In his essay on the question of context, he takes up one of the dominant issues in contemporary Psalm study: how do the varying contexts in which one reads a Psalm – for example the setting in life of the different genres, the context provided by the Psalter as a whole, and the context of each Psalm in the whole of Scripture – affect one's hearing, interpretation and appropriation of each Psalm? (Miller and Tucker 2006:viii)

Mays' own life context has been that of teaching and preaching and he is a renowned Hebrew and Old Testament Scholar. All of this insight is brought to bear in this easy to read manual, with both the scholar and the lay person in mind. Mays is also a prime candidate for study in terms of scholars who are able to bridge the divide between the spiritualities found in the scriptures and those of the readers.

Summary

In this chapter we surveyed recent publications on Spirituality and the Psalms by a cross-section of scholars who embody the characteristics deemed necessary for a methodology of Biblical Spirituality, namely expressions of faith within the Bible, as well as applications of such faith in modern times. Their approaches varied substantially and each had a particular focus, but all fitted in with our approach to a greater or lesser degree. It can thus be provisionally concluded that the three elements of language, exegesis and continued meaning are indeed crucial for this discipline.

CHAPTER 5 - THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF BIBLICAL LANGUAGES, MOST PARTICULARLY HEBREW, FOR VALID THEOLOGICAL WORK: AN OVERVIEW OF EXTANT LITERATURE ON THIS TOPIC

In the preceding chapters we have dealt with the second part of the thesis for this dissertation, namely Biblical Spirituality. In the present chapter we will investigate the first part of the thesis, namely the importance of Hebrew in this endeavour. We have already established a general foundation for the crucial role that language, exegesis and continued meaning play in the discipline of Biblical Spirituality. Now we will narrow our focus to a specific source language of the Biblical text, namely Hebrew. As has already been stated, language is both representative of, and a vehicle for, cultural dissemination. Meaning is therefore inherent in the text itself, as well as latent in inter-textual and extra-textual context. Because we are dealing here with a Spirituality based on the Biblical text, we need to take into account all the textual, cultural, social and political factors available to us from the same time, culture and geographic location. This would naturally include sources outside the corpus of the Biblical canon. Although this might seem fairly obvious here, commentators very seldom take these factors into account when interpreting any given text. We will presently undertake a study into the factors influencing such understanding from two groups who both claim to hold dear the importance of the source languages of the Old Testament scriptures.

5.1 The importance of biblical languages from within the Reformed tradition

Unfortunately not much has been written on this topic; at least very little modern research is available on the importance of biblical languages for valid theological work. What information is available is mostly from within the reformed tradition²⁹. The reasons for the study of Hebrew and Greek from this camp are broadly summarised from the perspective that (a) the Bible is inspired in the languages it was first received and written; (b) as ministers we are first and foremost ministers of the word and should therefore be fluent in the language of that word in order to convey the message of the word with understanding and clarity. This view is

²⁹ Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Jean Calvin and more recently John Piper and Miles van Pelt.

highlighted by the following quotation by B.B. Warfield, entitled "Our Seminary Curriculum" about the importance of biblical languages when teaching:

"No second hand knowledge of the revelation of God for the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs - to all their needs, from the moment they are called into participation in the grace of God, until the moment when they stand perfect in God's sight, built up by his Spirit into new men. For such a ministry as this the most complete knowledge of the wisdom of the world supplies no equipment; the most fervid enthusiasm of service leaves without furnishing. Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the book; to know it at first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the book should be given them in its very words (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) as it has come from God's hand and in the fullness of its meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labours of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought."

5.2. The importance of biblical languages for Bible translators

The other group of people most interested in the source languages of the Bible are of course Bible translators. Although many Bible translation agencies do not work directly from the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek scriptures, but choose to use an available modern translation as a starting point, they do employ the services of a variety of translation consultants, among them scholars and experts in these languages, to review, test and correct the various drafts of these new translations.

5.3. John Piper as proponent of the importance of biblical languages in the reformed tradition:

The views of the first group seem fairly simplistic with regard to the importance of biblical languages but the issues involved are both complex and divergent. For example, the statement that the Bible is inspired is not shared by all, and even those who agree, differ as to the meaning and extent of what is meant by inspiration. Along with this, one has to look at what language is, and if it can be inspired and if so, orally or only in written form. Also, for that matter, are present-day ministers only so-called ministers of the word, or has their function changed over time? Hidden within the statement is also the sticky issue of the priesthood of all believers. Should

only the minister be fluent in the biblical languages, or are we all ministers of the word?

John Piper, a well-known figure in the reformed tradition and proponent of the inspiration and infallibility of scripture, has the following admonition with regard to the importance of the biblical languages³⁰:

...most seminaries--evangelical as well as liberal--have communicated by their curriculum emphases that learning Greek and Hebrew well is merely optional for the pastoral ministry.

Piper here focuses primarily on the importance of Greek and Hebrew for the pastoral ministry, but makes a valid point with regard to the exclusion or optionality of the biblical languages at seminaries (mainly in North America, but a phenomenon seeming to spread to other parts of the world). He also betrays his bias against the so-called liberal institutions, which he hints at being in error further in this article.

Several things happen as the original languages fall into disuse among pastors. First, the confidence of pastors to determine the precise meaning of biblical texts diminishes. And with the confidence to interpret rigorously goes the confidence to preach powerfully.

Piper is naïve in thinking that the biblical text has or contains a precise meaning and shows his ignorance or denial of language and literary theory and what the present researcher believes to be his flawed assumption that the very text of the Bible is inerrant, inspired and infallible.

Second, the uncertainty of having to depend on differing human translations (which always involve much interpretation) will tend to discourage careful textual analysis in sermon preparation. For as soon as you start attending to crucial details (like tenses, conjunctions and vocabulary repetitions), you realise the translations are too diverse to provide a sure basis for such analysis.

This is a loaded statement, as Piper refers to English and other modern translations as products of human effort and therefore prone to 'interpretation'. Unfortunately, he seems to deny the fact that the reader of the biblical source language texts is in essence 'interpreting the text' and doing so purely individually

³⁰ See, Piper (2002:81).

and subjectively, whereas most modern translations are done by a panel of experts. The illusion of certainty seems to haunt Piper who also seems to forget that some of the source texts are already translations, e.g. the Septuagint.

Weakness in Greek and Hebrew also gives rise to exegetical imprecision and carelessness. And exegetical imprecision is the mother of liberal theology. (Piper, 2002:100)

Here as stated above, Piper is clear about his views on liberal theology as being guilty of “carelessness and imprecision”. He does well to avoid mentioning the atrocities that sometimes result from so-called fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible.

Further, when we fail to stress the use of Greek and Hebrew as crucial in the pastoral office we create an eldership of professional academicians. We surrender to the seminaries and universities essential dimensions of our responsibility as elders and overseers of the churches. (Piper, 2002:101)

Again Piper betrays his bias against academics, universities and even seminaries by claiming the position of elder and overseer of the church, hence to an extent elevating his own role and responsibility and thus denying the priesthood of all believers and the calling of those who choose to teach (a biblically defined role) outside the local church (as time, location and resources are better utilised at an academic institution).

No matter what we say about the inerrancy of the Bible, our actions reveal our true convictions about its centrality and power.

We need to recover our vision of the pastoral office which embraces, if nothing else, the passion and power to understand the original revelation of God. (Piper, 2002:102)

Piper in this article summarises much of what is believed to be ‘gospel truth’ by many evangelicals and reformed theologians with regard to the inspiration of the Bible in its ‘original’ languages.

At this point it would perhaps be useful to state the present researcher’s personal views on the matter at hand, so that the reader of this dissertation can better understand his beliefs, understanding and purpose in the present study.

The researcher does not hold to the idea that the Bible, as we have it in its multiple translations, is the inspired, inerrant and infallible word of God. He also

does not hold fast to the idea that various manuscripts that compose the Bible as we know it (even though written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) are the word(s) of God. It should be obvious from this statement that his thesis with regard to the biblical source languages does not support the views generally held by the reformed tradition and its proponents as described above. He is (amongst other things) a liberal, lover of ancient texts and literature, a follower of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and a seeker of truth wherever it may be found. I believe the Bible to be a work of human hands and therefore it should be read and studied as such. Those who wrote it, whose stories are contained therein and who found inspiration from it were all human beings who lived in a specific culture, time and place and who spoke specific languages. Without an understanding of the language(s) they spoke (language being a vehicle of and for culture), we can have only a limited understanding of their life setting. Hence, we are somewhat separated from the story by our lack of understanding of the authorial intent, as well as the intended audience response. Ultimately therefore, we will be less affected by its message and our spirituality based on the Bible will be poorer as a result.

5.4. Eugene Nida and Ernst Wendland as proponents of the importance of biblical languages for Bible translators

The views of the second group stated above are no less complicated, as can be seen by the proliferation of English translations of the Bible. Most English translations are translated directly from the source languages and yet even these can yield vastly differing results. This is not only dependent on the translation method and source texts chosen, but also on interpretive choices that have to be made when translating difficult words or phrases, as well as the purpose each translation is intended for.

Herein lies what the author believes to be the focal point of the present study, namely, 'interpretation'. Do we simply read the Bible as some would have us believe or do we interpret the scriptures? This is important not only for translators, but also for the average Bible reader; for the very act of reading is an act of interpretation. The author sides here more with the reader-response critics³¹ than with the speech-

³¹ Protagonists of reader-response criticism most notably include Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss and Roland Barthes.

act theorists³² in that firstly the author believes we can never be truly objective when confronted with any text (no matter what the authorial intent) and secondly, although a text confronts us with new information, how we assimilate such is once again subject to our experiences and worldview as well as how we compare such information with ideas already established in our minds (occupying the same semantic domain).

It is at this point that the author will present what he believes to be the key to resolving the issue of Bible reading, interpretation and understanding with regard to the biblical languages and their importance, namely Bible translation. By following the model used by Bible translators (a group perhaps more than any other involved in the process of not only making the message of the Bible accessible to a new language or culture, but concurrently trying their utmost to maintain a fidelity with the source language texts), it is hoped to show how a thorough knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, not only aids but is crucial for the understanding of the Bible and also making it relevant and applicable to the modern reader. Bible translators are faced with difficult exegetical issues almost on a daily basis and have to make extremely difficult translational choices, but they do not shy away from the task as the necessity of their work requires that such decisions be made. As a group, they employ the services of highly qualified academics, experts in the fields of Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Linguistics, Cultural Anthropology, Old and New Testament Studies, Ancient Cultures, etc. in order to faithfully translate the message of the Scriptures.

There are however as has already been said many different translational methods and strategies, depending on the purpose for each new translation of the Bible. In English, style and target audience to a large extent dictate the type of translation, whether it should be literal or paraphrase, as well as the entire range in between. The theory and practice of Bible translation has changed much over time and especially so since the breakthrough theory of functional or dynamic equivalence postulated by Eugene Nida in 1964. Nida's work relied heavily on the discipline of semantics and specifically the area of semantic domains. This was crucial for recreating the meaning of the source text within the target language. Nida spearheaded componential analysis which separated words into components of

³² Key figures in the development of speech-act theory are John Austin and John Searle.

meaning, for example chair = furniture + seating for one person. As can be seen from this very simplistic explanation, there are various other objects of meaning within each category (or semantic domain); for example, within the category of furniture one would also find table, bookshelf, etc. These domains often overlap as is clear in that chair and couch would be in the same category called seating, whereas one wouldn't sit on a bookshelf. Once components of meaning in source texts have been analysed they can be transferred / translated into the receptor language and culture. This relates well to the idea of the reader's involvement in understanding the text, and looks not only to the reader-present, but also to the intended-reader-past. Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence³³ is basically summarised as follows (Nida and Taber 1969:1):

The older focus in translating was the form of the message, and translators took particular delight in being able to reproduce stylistic specialties, e.g., rhythms, rhymes, plays on words, chiasmus, parallelism and unusual grammatical structures. The new focus, however, has shifted from the form of the message to the response of the receptor. Therefore what one must determine is the response of the receptor to the translated message. This response must then be compared with the way in which the original receptors presumably would have reacted to the message when it was given in its original setting.

We will return to the above definition in a subsequent chapter when looking at receptor response (ancient and modern) in relation to the biblical text and how it relates to Biblical Spirituality and personal transformation.

The most recent development in Bible translation theory has come from Ernst Wendland and the Summer Institute of Linguistics and is summarised in his book *Translating the Literature of Scripture* (2004). In it, Wendland looks at what literature is, whether or not the Bible is or contains literature, and if so could or should it be translated as such, in other words, 'Translating Scripture as Literature'.

In the next chapter we will take a more in-depth look at this model and see what it has to offer in relation to the importance of biblical languages for valid theological endeavours.

³³ See, Kerr (2011).

Summary

In this chapter we focused on the importance of Hebrew for valid theological work for two divergent groups who both believe in the value of such. The first group we looked at was the reformed tradition and specifically from an Evangelical perspective. The example we used was that of John Piper, a prominent member of the so-called “Evangelical Alliance”. The second group focused on was that of Bible Translators and the examples used were those of Eugene Nida and Ernst Wendland, both hugely influential in the theory and practice of translation. What came to light from both perspectives is the tremendous importance placed on one’s view of the Bible as consisting of or containing ‘God’s Word’. The present author also briefly stated his own views in relation to these perspectives and in so doing limited the scope of this dissertation. In the next chapter we will put our theory of the importance of Hebrew for Biblical Spirituality to the test in relation to the Psalms.

CHAPTER 6: INTRODUCING THE PSALMS AS ILLUSTRATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HEBREW FOR VALID THEOLOGICAL WORK

As the heading of this chapter suggests, we will now investigate a particular application of our proposed method for Biblical Spirituality to the Psalter. We will focus on the rationale behind the choice of the Psalms for our pilot study, namely their enormous impact on the spiritual lives of countless generations who have based their faith on the Biblical text. We will look at the Psalms in terms of their interpretive history, shape, theology, current research trends and major themes. Finally, we will narrow our choice to three Psalms and the reasons for this choice will be given as well as the analytical method that will be used to study them explained.

6.1. The importance of Psalm study for Biblical Spirituality

Perhaps no other book belonging to the Jewish and Christian canon has influenced the spirituality of these respective religions more than has the Psalms. Throughout the centuries, countless souls have taken inspiration from their words in private devotion as well as in personal and corporate worship.

6.2. The interpretive history of Psalm study

It stands to reason then, that how we understand and interpret the message(s) of the Psalms is crucial for both our belief systems and faith practices. Following Smith and Domeris³⁴ (2008:118) the interpretation history of the Psalms can be roughly divided into four major periods; pre-critical, historical-critical³⁵, form-critical³⁶ and redaction critical³⁷. They have the following to say:

³⁴ This article is a well-ordered and concise summary of the history of Psalm interpretation and is beneficial for anyone wanting to come to grips with the major themes and contributors in this field of study.

³⁵ Notable figures during this era include De Wette (1811), Olshausen (1853), Ewald (1866; 1899) and Wellhausen (1899) and also the traditional approaches of Hengstenberg (1845-1848) and Delitzsch (1887).

³⁶ Prominent during this era were the renowned scholars Hermann Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel.

³⁷ Ground-breaking work was done in this era by Brevard Childs and later his student Gerald Wilson.

Pre-critical interpretation (before 1820) generally considered the shape of the Psalter significant, but made no formal attempt to identify its purpose. During the historical-critical (1820-1920) and form-critical (1920-1980) periods, scholars treated the Psalter as an ad hoc collection of lyrics for use in temple worship; the focus was on the historical Sitz im Leben of the Psalms. The modern interest into the editorial shaping of the Book of Psalms marks a renewed belief in the fact that the order of the Psalms is significant and the first serious attempt to discern the editorial purpose or message of the Psalter as a 'book'.

6.3. The shape of the Psalter

Since the late Gerald H. Wilson wrote his seminal work on the redaction of the Psalms (1984) it has been generally accepted that the Psalms are not merely a haphazard collection of hymns and songs from the history of Israel's northern and southern kingdoms, but that the collection was purposefully edited 'post-exile' to form a cohesive whole and that the entire so-called book has a unified message and purpose.

Much work has gone into trying to discern the process and purpose by and for which the Psalms were both collected and edited into the final form we have today. It is generally agreed upon nowadays that there is a fivefold division in the book of Psalms: (Book I: Psalms 1–41, Book 2: Psalms 42–72, Book 3: Psalms 73–89, Book IV: Psalms 90–106 and Book V: Psalms 107–150).

Wilson's argument was that it had been edited to show a progression of ideas. He also maintained that the redaction might have been a twofold process. First, books I, II and III were collated and later books IV and V. He concluded this through a comparative analysis of documents from Qumran and the Masoretic text, on both a textual and theological level³⁸.

6.4. Toward a theology of the Psalter as a whole

Moving on to a theology or metanarrative of the books of Psalms we will presently undertake a survey of the various approaches to an understanding of the message past and present. As said earlier, there is general consensus that the book of

³⁸ See, von Koh's, *G.H. Wilson's Theories on the Organization of the Masoretic Psalter* (2010)

Psalms is an edited collection which was only finalised in the post-exilic period. However, there is no consensus as to the purpose and thus consequently also the overall message of the Psalms. Wilson, well respected for his textual work on the editing of the Psalms is not agreed with by many when it comes to the theological arguments he makes for an overarching theme.

On a textual level Wilson's "The editing of the Hebrew Psalter" (1984) remains unparalleled. However, it is on a theological level that there is much disagreement in scholarly circles today. (Von Koh, 2010:177)

Wilson himself offered an explanation as to the purpose of the editorial arrangement of the Psalms, which we will consider amongst other modern views below. However, he warns that "Any explanation of such significance, must make reference to, and be consistent with, those indicators of shape" found within the textual evidence for its redaction.

His assumption was that the Psalter brought together previously existing collections (textual evidence) and that from this it can be deduced that the most probable marker of the editorial agenda would be found at the 'seams' between the five books of the Psalter. His conclusion was that so-called 'royal' Psalms are found at three of the four seams of the first major collection (in the twofold collection) of the Psalter (i.e. Psalms 1-89, or books I, II and III); therefore the overarching message could be that of kingship (firstly by an earthly king, David and then in book IV by YHWH as true king in post-exilic Israel).

De Claissé-Walford followed a similar avenue and also emphasised the so-called 'seam' Psalms. She concluded that both Torah and kingship were dominant themes. This can be seen in the possible introduction to the final collection of the Psalter as a whole in Psalms 1 and 2 (Psalm 1 focuses on Torah and Psalm 2 on kingship). She sees the purpose of the editorial collection as a narrative on Israel, with Davidic Psalms prominent in books I and II; laments on the demise of the kingdom in book III; book IV being a retrospective to the Mosaic era when YHWH was Israel's king; and book V a celebration of YHWH once again as king. Her conclusion of the overall message of the Psalter is thus that God and law were adequate for the people of Israel before the exile and that post-exile they remain

adequate. She states the editorial purpose of the book of Psalms as a whole, as follows (2006:457):

The story of the Psalter seems to be a summons to the people of postexilic Israel to review their history, come to see that in their postexilic life setting having an earthly king of the line of David is no longer possible, and to acknowledge God as king and sovereign over Israel as a means for survival in their present circumstances and hope for the future.

Others who followed similar lines of argument were Parrish (2003), who maintained that the metanarrative of the Psalms is about the interaction between kingship, YHWH and the law; also Walton (1991) who proposed that the entire Psalter be read as a 'cantata' about the Davidic covenant.

Not everyone followed these historical rationales however, and Brueggemann (1984 and 1991) proposed a very different framework to explain the theological shape of the Psalter. He proposed that one interpret the message of the Psalms from a wisdom writing perspective and its practical application for today. He also concluded that Psalm 1 was deliberately placed at the beginning of the Psalter as a sort of introduction and that it thus served two specific purposes, namely that it "should be read through the prism of Torah obedience" and that it also presents an idealistic frame of reference to understanding life, one in which those who are obedient to Torah prosper and those who follow sinful ways pass away.

Brueggemann also states that Psalm 150 was purposefully placed as a conclusion to the Psalter and calls the reader to unconditionally praise God. These two ends therefore taken together provide the framework for the understanding of the overall message and purpose of the Psalter, namely to carry the audience from obedience to praise as he states in his own words (1991:72) "the way from Torah obedience to self-abandoning doxology is by way of candor about suffering and gratitude about hope". The middle section of this framework is extremely important for Brueggemann as it often sounds contrary to the "bookends" of Psalm 1 and 150. It is this wrestling with the struggles of life that provides the essence of the raw faith embodied in the Psalter – that which is postulated over against that which is experienced in daily life.

Others have followed Brueggemann's views that the Psalms are to be viewed as a progression from lament to praise. Mihaila (2001:52-57), as an example, agrees with Brueggemann and sees Psalm 73 as pivotal in this movement because of its central position in the Psalter, both physically and theologically.

Alternatively, some scholars have investigated the role and position of the so-called 'wisdom Psalms' in the final redaction of the Psalter. These include Mays³⁹, Kuntz⁴⁰, McCann⁴¹ and Crenshaw⁴². Anderson⁴³ (1994) on the other hand treated books I – V in canonical order, starting in the Davidic era and ending around the time of Nehemiah.

Mitchell (1997), however, emphasised that the entire compilation of the Psalter as we have it today was intended by the editors to be read eschatologically. Few modern scholars would agree with this summation. However, many believe that (at least) some Psalms have an eschatological slant.

To conclude this brief summary of the interpretive tradition of Psalm study, Smith and Domeris have the following to say (2008:115)

The prevailing attitude towards the Book of Psalms has come full circle. Prior to the rise of historical criticism, it was widely believed to be more than a haphazard collection of hymns and prayers, although few attempted to prove that it is purposeful arrangement or to identify the purpose of the arrangement. During the periods dominated by historical criticism (ca. 1820-1920) and form criticism (ca. 1920-1980), interest was limited to individual Psalms and their historical origin and function. Today, however, there is a renewed conviction that there are purposeful literary relationships between Psalms and that the Psalter itself is a purposefully edited collection. Unprecedented effort is being exerted to discover the editorial agenda underlying the Psalter and the literary relationships between Psalms.

³⁹ *'The Place of Torah-Psalms in the Psalter'* (1987)

⁴⁰ *'Wisdom Psalms and the Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter'* (1992 & 2000)

⁴¹ 'Psalms as Instruction' (1992) & *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (1993)

⁴² 'Wisdom Psalms?' (2000)

⁴³ 'The Division and Order of the Psalms' (1994)

6.5. Current trends in Psalm research

This however is not where the story ends. Many different avenues of Psalm study have appeared since Wilson and are currently being undertaken. These diverse approaches are not unique to biblical studies and follow along the lines of similar avenues of research in mainstream literary theory. Susan Gillingham's article entitled "Studies of the Psalms: Retrospect and Prospect" (2008) is a very insightful paper that highlights not only the 'past' of Psalm study throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but also gives a concise overview of current trends and possible future avenues for research. In it she suggests that there will most likely be a continuance of joint ventures with regard to the Qumran and the Psalms, with the probable addition of ecumenical collaboration with regard to Psalms and the Septuagint and the Targums as well. Gillingham also posits that we can expect more combined work on the 'reception history' of the psalms 'at particular points in time'. Furthermore, studying the Bible and in particular the psalms 'as literature' is still a fairly new academic pursuit and much more fruit will be born from this avenue of research. Gillingham expresses her desire to see more publications that deal with the contemporary application of human concerns found in the psalms and in particular 'rhetorical readings of individual Psalms by feminist commentators'. She makes an excellent point with regard to these academic pursuits that has direct bearing on the present study, as follows (2008:9):

Not only will these draw together the concerns of the academy and the communities of faith, and so allow for a response to Psalmody which is both intellectual and imaginative, but they will also further enhance the ecumenical and interfaith studies of Psalmody.

6.6. Major themes of the Psalter in its final editorial and collected form

From the above one can extract the following as possible major themes of the book of Psalms in its final editorial collection: Torah (obedience); Kingship (earthly and divine); Wisdom and Eschatology. Within these themes it seems the beginning, end and seam Psalms have played a significant role in the scholarly interpretation of the Psalter. Few of the interpreters and commentators have focused on the application

of these themes for today in a systematic and practical way, with perhaps Brueggemann's explanation bearing the most fruit in this regard.

6.7. Test cases for the study of the spirituality of the Psalms

In earlier chapters it was mentioned that more modern commentaries are focusing on the spirituality of the Psalms (see above) and it was also suggested by Lombaard that a working model for such study might include elements of language, exegesis and continued meaning of the biblical message for today.

Following on from this, the discussion will in the following chapters focus on three Psalms as an example of how these various elements can be utilised for a better understanding and practical Biblical Spirituality application of the Psalms for today. Much more research needs to be done on the spirituality of the Psalms and it is the aim of the present dissertation to make a contribution to this area of research.

6.7.1. Choice of Psalms

The three Psalms chosen (and the reason for such) as a result of the above arguments are as follows:

- Psalm 1
- Psalm 8
- Psalm 41

These sample Psalms have been chosen as a pilot study into the book as a whole. To have chosen Psalms from the remaining four books would have complicated the matter in terms of details and scope and lost the focus of the study, which is ultimately about the importance of Hebrew for Biblical Spirituality. It is the researcher's conviction that the principles explored here in the first book of the Psalms can readily be applied to the others.

As has already been stated, these three test Psalms all belong to Book I of the Psalter. Psalms one and forty-one introduce and conclude this book and Psalm

eight has a rich transmission history in both Jewish and Christian traditions. There are also some technical difficulties inherent in the Hebrew text of this Psalm, which well illustrate the need for a mastery of the biblical languages in order to make well-reasoned interpretational choices.

In addition, Psalm one begins the entire collection of Psalms and is therefore of prime importance in an attempt at finding an overarching theme or theology for the Psalter as a whole, if indeed such exists. As a result, more time will be spent on and more detail extracted from Psalm 1 than Psalms 8 and 41.

6.7.2. Analytical method

The discussion will follow Wendland's (2002:204-209) "ten-step method" of exegesis, which he summarises into "five primary procedures", here and also in the following two Psalms to be studied in subsequent chapters.

There are various exegetical methods to follow when undertaking a study of a biblical text. The reason that Wendland's method has been chosen is that he embodies the type of person mentioned previously, whose life work has revolved around making interpretational choices.

6.7.3. Who is Ernst Wendland?

Ernst Richard Wendland was born in Washington, USA, in 1944. He took up permanent residence in Zambia in 1962, where he currently resides and ministers. He received a Bachelor's degree in 1968, majoring in biblical languages; an MA in 1975, majoring in Linguistics; a PhD in 1979, majoring in African languages and literature; and an STM in Exegetical Theology in 1999.

Doctor Wendland is lecturer at the Lutheran Bible Institute and Seminary in Lusaka; language coordinator for publications of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa; translation consultant for the United Bible Societies, under whose supervision several Bible translation projects have been undertaken and completed; visiting professor at the University of Stellenbosch in the Department of Ancient Studies; and is also involved in the affiliated Centre for Bible Interpretation and Translation in

Africa. In addition, Dr Wendland lectures at several other institutions worldwide and is a member of and sits on numerous boards and councils.

Dr Wendland has written extensively on Hebrew poetry and authored the very influential book *“Analyzing the Psalms”* used by translators from all over the world trying to come to terms with translating this biblical book into languages as diverse as the countries and cultures to which they belong.

Apart from his academic prowess, Dr Wendland is also a missionary and involved in the theology and spirituality of the African people on a daily basis. He is therefore a prime candidate for further study in terms of the criteria mentioned in previous chapters, as one who is proficient in the biblical languages, linguistic artistry and ministerial (spiritual) formation.

6.7.4. The LiFE (Literary Functional Equivalent) Bible translation method and the interpretation of the Psalms

Ever since Nida and Taber’s ground-breaking *Theory and Practice of Translation* was published in 1969, Bible translations proliferated not only in English, but across the globe. The theory of ‘dynamic or functional equivalence’ made this possible, as it focused on transferring the meaning of a text from one language to another and not on a literal or formal correspondence of words from source to target language. Since that time many adaptations or additions to the theory of (Bible) translation have been made and modern translators can choose from a variety of methods as described below:

Among the many translation theories that have been documented and are being advocated count the literalist, functionalist, descriptive, text-linguistic, relevance, and interpretive, comparative, professional, literary-rhetorical or intercultural approaches.

A full description and comparison of all the methods mentioned above is outside the scope of this dissertation, but the present author will go into more detail on one of these methods, the ‘literary-rhetorical’ method, as a suitable candidate for translating (or interpreting) the Psalms. This method commonly known as the ‘LiFE’ (literary functional equivalence) approach combines two previously separated

emphases, that of equivalence of meaning between two languages (functional parity) as well as due regard for the artistic and literary aspects of the Bible.

In this regard it is important to realise that the Bible is not only a book conveying a neutral message. Its authors intended to convey a message (or messages) that would elicit a response from its audience(s), both in terms of its emotive force and call to action. This element has often been in the background with regard to the majority of translations in circulation and it was left to the religious practitioner to assume the role of mediator. However, the translation itself can fulfil this role to a greater or lesser degree and hence the proposition of the LiFE method as described by Wendland (2004:266-272) below:

It depicts translation as a mediated act of communication (genre, context, settings, cognitive and skopos frames) that represents in a given language the variety of expressive dynamics (great impact, appeal and beauty) of diverse texts of Scripture. Special attention is paid to the target language through a literary rhetorical analysis and application of the target language's verbal forms (constitution – collection – classification – comparison – compensation – creation – examination – and – criticism).

The LiFE approach to translation assumes the proposition that the Bible is literature and like all great works of literature needs to be approached and translated / interpreted as such. This idea in and of itself could lead to mild cardiac arrest for many readers of the Bible and even for traditional scholars who assume (as has already been stated in an earlier chapter) that the Scriptures are sacred and inspired in the languages they were originally written. This is truer in theory than it is in practice, as they readily use the King James Version as their authoritative text. However, most modern scholars would agree with the proposition that the Bible be treated as literature and the continuous stream of new translations is partial evidence for the need of such.

Viewing the Bible as literature, literary-functional equivalence underscores that a Bible translation needs to reflect literary features of the source texts and those of the target audience as well. Awareness of literary features implies among other things the effort to identify the unity and the diversity of a biblical text: the unity is revealed through literary devices of connectivity, intertextuality and archetypes, while some significant difference in literary composition might serve to indicate a distinctive section.

Analyzing and translating the Psalms requires a thorough understanding of the literary devices found in Hebrew poetry, as much of the meaning is contained in the various literary forms employed therein. As mentioned in the quotation above and as argued in this dissertation, the Psalter is a unified and edited text and needs to be approached as such. This fact will become more evident when we analyse the individual psalms in the following chapters. A detailed description of the importance and types of literary devices found in the Hebrew Scriptures is given by Wilt (2003:208-211) below:

...the structure of a text, and hence its understanding, depends on other literary devices such as genre and patterning (parallelism, chiasmus, intercalation, inclusio, contrast, comparison, causation-substantiation, climax, pivot, particularization-generalization, purpose, anticipation, retrospection, summarization, interrogation, etc.). In addition, literary elements such as foregrounding (prominence and progression), imagery (metaphor, metonymy, and euphemism), phonicity (rhythm, alliteration, onomatopoeia) and dramatics (direct speeches, dialogues) all serve a communicative function which needs to be integrally conveyed.

In light of all that has been said so far, it would seem acceptable to employ the LiFE model for our study, not only for its comprehensive exploration of source language literary devices, but also for its investigation into possible 'functional' equivalents in the target language, so that the maximum impact of the message intended for the primary audience is felt even today. This is important for our study, because we are not only looking to understand the Scriptures, but also to have our lives transformed by its message(s). This is a two-way process as our understanding of text influences or determines our interpretations and our preconceived ideas influence and determine our understanding of any given text. Our particular worldview becomes the lense through which we see all of life; as so aptly stated in the quotation below:

The Christian faith as a whole "never exists except as translated into a culture" (Bosch 2002:447; Sanneh 2004:1).

We are not blank slates and we do not come to our understanding of a given passage as if by a mere objective assimilation of its message. The communication process, whether oral or textual, involves a sender (who encodes an idea into signs and symbols) who then transfers this encoded message to a receiver (who decodes

these symbols and signs into a corresponding idea that resembles the one in the sender's mind). It is important to note that the received idea never mirrors the original one exactly. This is as a result of the fact that no two persons are exactly the same. To complicate this process even further, in the transfer stage of the communication process, the message is affected by 'noise' (environmental, social, cultural, linguistic, etc.). Now when it comes to understanding a message in the Bible, this process is made tremendously complex, as we are further separated from the process in that neither original sender nor receiver is alive any longer nor do we in certain instances have access to the identity of either. Wilt (2003:39) describes this process as follows:

A person never sends a meaning, let alone the meaning, to another person; rather she sends an arrangement of signs that she intends to be understood in certain ways. Meaning depends on the hearer's interpretations as well as the speaker's intentions, and the hearer's interpretations are shaped by others' interpretations.

It therefore would seem only logical that to speak of the Bible as being the 'word of God' is a denial of the complexity involved in human communication. It also diminishes the responsibility and 'hermeneutical competency' required of every interpreter or translator and the necessity to commit all resources to the task of making difficult exegetical choices. This is so because, as Wilt puts it:

Any translation process includes a lesser or greater degree of deletion, distortion, generalization, specification, or equivalence between the source text and the target text.

In light of this reality, the researcher believes the best method for the translation and interpretation of the Psalms, is that of the LiFE approach in that it also mirrors our underlying threefold approach to Biblical Spirituality (language, exegesis and continued meaning).

6.7.5. Wendland's ten step method for analysing the Psalms explained

In his own words, the goal of Wendland's ten step method (2002:204) for analysing a Psalm is to...

“...thoroughly and systematically analyze a given Psalm in preparation to translate it in an appropriate and acceptable manner—one that best fits the biblical text, its intended use in the target language, the primary audience concerned, and the abilities of the translators themselves.”

These ten steps (204-208) are listed as follows: (1) Study the context; (2) read and internalise the Psalm; (3) Determine the genre; (4) plot the patterns of repetition; (5) locate the major breaks and peaks; (6) Sketch out the compositional structure; (7) do a complete word study and a detailed thematic outline; (8) analyse the poetic features of the individual verses; (9) determine the main “speech acts” and the personal interaction; and (10) Do a trial translation, comparing other versions.

Wendland then goes on to summarise these ten steps into five primary procedures (:209) for exegeting a particular Psalm tabulated below:

1. Determine the Psalm’s overall communicative purpose, that is, its genre; then take note of the major speech functions plus any associated emotions within the various discourse parts.
2. Plot the Psalm’s compositional structure, that is, its major and minor divisions and how they fit together to form and convey the main message of the whole text.
3. Formulate a thematic outline which is, in effect, a summary of the main content units of the Psalm and its constituent stanzas.
4. Interpret the verse-by-verse meaning as highlighted also by the text’s rhetoric and artistry—all key terms, figures of speech, ellipses, rhetorical questions, allusions, points of emphasis, etc.
5. Make a comparison with similar passages in both the OT and NT (using several versions), noting any close correspondences in form and content.

These five procedures will form the headings under which the three test Psalms will be analysed in the following three chapters.

Summary

In this chapter we introduced the application of our suggested method for Biblical Spirituality to the Psalter as a whole and recommended three test psalms as representative of such a study. Before a detailed analysis of these psalms is tackled in subsequent chapters, it was necessary to go into the background of the Psalter and choose a specific exegetical process to follow, one that takes seriously the

literary aspects of the Hebrew language as well as a dedication to replicate this as far as possible to a modern audience. It was decided that the method proposed by Ernst Wendland would best fit our study. He is also a good choice of a scholar that fits our criteria of an academic who possesses the necessary language, biblical background and spiritual application knowledge needed for the discipline of Biblical Spirituality.

CHAPTER 7: TEST CASE ONE: ANALYSIS OF PSALM 1 – EXEGESIS AND SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

As the first of our three test Psalms to be studied in terms of its language, exegesis and continued meaning, more time will be spent on its background and position in the Psalter. This is because all three of our test psalms are from Book I and current research trends have shown the importance of deliberate placing of individual psalms in the final shape and consequently also the message of the book as a whole. The analysis will follow Wendland's five procedures for analysing any psalm, as introduced in the previous chapter, which will thus form the headings of the present chapter.

- 1** Blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of *the* wicked;
nor does he stand in *the* way of sinners;
nor does he sit in *the* assembly of mockers.
² Instead, in the law of Yahweh *is* his delight,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
³ And so, he is like a tree planted by streams of water
that gives its fruit in its season;
its leaf also does not wither.
Therefore all that he does prospers.
⁴ Not so the wicked.
Instead, *they are* like the chaff that *the* wind scatters.
⁵ Therefore *the* wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of *the* righteous;
⁶ for Yahweh knows *the* way of *the* righteous,^a
but *the* way of *the* wicked will perish.

7.1 Introduction to Book I of the Psalter

From a canonical perspective one needs to look at the placement of Psalms in the Psalter. As has already been argued, it is widely recognised that the book of the Psalter was purposefully edited and arranged in the order we have today. It is therefore a natural deduction that the first Psalm would serve as an introduction to Book I and the Psalter as a whole. The immense importance of this Psalm could hence not be underestimated. Its placement is pertinent to an understanding of the message of a book, that time and history has greyed from our eyes, ears and hearts,

so that what remains is only a 'glimpse in a mirror'. In line with this, Tuell (2009:278) states the following:

Psalm 1 was not placed at the opening of the Psalter by accident: indeed, this poem may have been composed to introduce the book. In the Leningrad Codex, on which the standard critical edition of the HB⁴⁴ is based, the first Psalm is unnumbered, suggesting that it stands as a heading to the Psalms that follow.

Textual evidence is important to cement the argument for placement, but once established what is of even greater importance is that we explore the theme of Psalm One as an introductory work. Tuell (:278), elaborates on this as follows:

...Ps 1 seems an odd place for this book to begin. In Hebrew, the Psalter is called *Tehillim*, or "praises"; yet, the first Psalm is not a song of praise. Numerically, the book of Psalms is dominated by prayers for help, and yet Ps 1 is not a prayer. As James Luther Mays observes, "The Book of Psalms begins with a beatitude. Not a prayer or a hymn, but a statement about human existence" (Psalms, Westminster John Knox, 1994, 40).

Russell (2005) goes a step further in stating that Psalm One is not merely the first step or entry into the Psalter, but rather a key or guide to making sense of all of life. He states the following:

Psalm 1 serves as a hermeneutical guide to the rest of the Psalter. It is not merely a starting point for a journey from *orientation* to *disorientation* to a *new orientation*⁴⁵. Rather it offers its audience a key to navigating the vicissitudes of the life of faith as chronicled by the Psalter.

7.2. The Psalm's overall communicative purpose:

A wisdom psalm, unlike lament or praise psalms, reflects on the meaning of life. A common theme in these sorts of wisdom writings is that of ethical living. One often sees a juxtaposition of those who do wrong against those who would live upright lives. Psalm 1 fits well into the category of wisdom or instructional psalm when evaluated using the above criteria in that it is reflective on the meaning of life; happiness or blessedness is its overarching concern; and it constantly contrasts the

⁴⁴ Hebrew Bible

⁴⁵ See, Brueggemann (2002).

life of the righteous person with that of the wicked. At first wisdom in Israel took the form of a common-sense understanding of right and wrong in life. These norms were then gradually attributed to the expectations of Yahweh and endowed with a certain aura of respect or fear. Finally, these general norms became identified with nothing less than the specifics of 'Torah obedience'.

Psalm 1 gives practical advice about how to live a 'good' life. It encompasses the elements mentioned above in that it promotes a delight in the 'Torah' as key to being 'righteous', a safeguard against following and eventually becoming wicked, the exact opposite of a happy or blessed life. In the exilic context this would be essential advice to ensure a moral, God-fearing society that follows the way of Yahweh and not the lifestyle of the new world that the Israelites found themselves in. Also, in doing so, the Torah provided identity and meaning to life, an anchor in a time of disorientation. De Claisse Walford (2006:465) supports this argument:

In the absence of king and court, nation and independence, for a people living under the thumb of foreign powers, the Torah might well be perceived as a path to identity and survival. And the living out of Torah in Torah Piety might be perceived as a means for God (and wisdom?) to dwell in the midst of the people and for the people to find a sense of meaning and order, an ethos, for their lives.

7.2.1. Major themes/words:

There are various themes linked to specific Hebrew words in Psalm One. These words carry great significance and are crucial for an understanding of the message as a whole. They are as follows:

7.2.1.1. Torah (law or teaching)

This Hebrew word often translated 'law' carries with it a great deal more meaning than the English translation or rendering thereof. Words are vessels of meaning, both textually and extra-textually. Inherent in them is cultural, as well as lexical information. Over time information is added and various uses may occur for single words. Sometimes words even acquire a completely different or opposite meaning. One of the most significant words in the Hebrew language, culture and religion is that of 'Torah'. The most common meaning attributed to 'Torah' is that of the Ten Commandments handed down by God to Moses at Mount Sinai. Ancillary to this are

the so-called secondary laws found in the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, which just so happen to be named 'The Torah'.

The word "Torah" is one of those very important words in the Hebrew Bible; it may well be its most important single word. It is usually rendered in English translations as "law" and, in particular, it is used of the Law of Moses. (Cox, 2007:65-66)

Psalm one is not only a wisdom or instructional Psalm as noted above, but it revolves around the Torah or teachings of Yahweh. It is also part of a group of Psalms (1, 19 and 119) known as 'Torah Psalms'. Their origin and purpose are described below in an insightful article by Botha and Potgieter (2010:1):

Torah-Psalms form part of a group of 'interpretational' or 'exegetical' Psalms. In these 'exegetical' Psalms, theologians from the late Persian period sought to provide a perspective from creation and from the history and literary heritage of Israel to enable worshippers of Yahweh to live a fulfilled life in the present and hope for a blessed future under the divine rule of Yahweh.

It would seem from the above that these three psalms were intentionally written to provide purpose and meaning to the Israelites in a time of great bewilderment and perplexity, following the exile. They could no longer rely on king or country for a sense of belonging and national pride, but had to look to Yahweh for social cohesion and identity. One can already see in this the possible future roots of the Israelites becoming known as the 'people of the book'.

One can see from all this that 'Torah' is not only central to Psalm 1, but a major theme of the Hebrew Scriptures as a whole. If one were to follow the argument above, it is logical to deduce that Psalm 1 was deliberately placed at the beginning of the Psalter as an exegetical key to interpreting and understanding the Psalms in order to provide meaning in life for the exiled Israelites. This approach is three tiered in that it looks to their past, their present and their future to provide present orientation and future hope for a disoriented people.

7.2.1.2. Ashreh (happy or blessed)

Another key term in Psalm 1 is 'ashreh'. As has been stated above, this individual Psalm, Book I of the Psalter, and the Psalter as a whole begin with 'ashreh'. In addition, Book I is framed or bracketed by 'ashreh' sayings in its introduction and

conclusion. Again, as with 'Torah', 'ashreh' carries a richness of meaning, that will be explored below. In Hebrew the first word of a phrase, sentence, paragraph or book carries great significance. This is partly due to the fact that Hebrew is an inflexional language and the specific part of speech is inherent in the word itself. Word order can thus be changed almost at random to create stylistic variations and emphases. Hence when Psalm one begins with 'ashreh' it should be seen as a clue to the message and meaning of everything that follows. 'Ashreh' features prominently at significant junctions in Book I of the Psalter as expounded on by Kang (2009:33):

The eight ashreh sayings in Book I of the Psalter (1–41), forming a prominent structure at the beginning (Pss 1–2), the middle (Pss 32–34), and the end (Pss 40–41), evidence structural unity and purposeful arrangement.

The Psalter opens up the path to happiness and wisdom in life through the ashre sayings. Each ashre saying in the Psalter entails God's promises of justice, deliverance, guidance, care, and protection. (2009:45)

Having established the significance of 'ashreh' beginning the Psalter, it is now also necessary to probe the possible reasons for this choice. As is customary in Hebrew acrostic poetry the reason for starting with 'ashreh' could be purely that it is the first letter of the alphabet. Yet there are many Hebrew words beginning with 'aleph', so why this one in particular? Apple (2012:180) proposes the following argument in support of this selection:

According to Yalkut Shimoni on the first verse of this Psalm, David, the traditional author of Psalms, wanted to begin his book where Moses had left off in the Torah. "Moses said, ashrekha Yisra'el {Fortunate are you, O Israel; Deut. 33:29}; here David begins with the words ashrei ha-ish.

At first glance such an argument might seem plausible. However, it is virtually unanimously agreed upon by modern scholars that neither Moses nor David had anything to do with the writings traditionally attributed to them. A post-exilic setting would lean more to the reason being that this is a 'wisdom psalm', as has already been argued for. Apple continues (:181) by stating that:

...beginning the Book of Psalms in this way, prioritising a Wisdom poem, bolstered the case for the hakham, the sage and scholar, as against the hasid, the holy pietist, placing study and contemplation above cultic and

private devotions. It may have been part of an ancient struggle to define the ideal Jewish type. This is not necessarily a revolt against religion but a debate within it.

We can see from this that the term 'ashreh' is very significant in the understanding of the Psalter, and in particular also Psalm 1 as portal to Book I. The strategic placement at the beginning, end and at other crucial junctions highlights the importance of the quest for peace and happiness in a world gone wrong.

7.2.1.3. Hagah (meditate)

The term meditate in this context can be easily misunderstood if we superimpose our modern understanding of it onto the biblical text. Meditation in the context of the Psalms is not to be equated with Eastern mysticism or yoga, where the focus is on an emptying of one's mind. Rather it is a focus on the words of (in this case) the 'Torah', in which one softly repeats them so as to fix them in memory. The hope is that they will become so entrenched in one's being that they will impact or transform one's entire life. Vos (2004:252-3) explains it in the following way:

Modern biblical research has proved that the Psalter is to be understood as a text meant for meditation. Its preamble, Ps. 1, welcomes the user of the Psalter as someone who continuously 'murmurs the Torah' and the 'directives of Yahweh': His joy is the Torah of the Lord; he murmurs his Torah by day and by night (verse 2). The Hebrew verb גָּהַג, which is translated here as 'to murmur,' does not denote an intellectual reflection, but it means 'to recite, to repeatedly utter words in an undertone' (Braulik 2003: 5).

7.2.1.4. Tsadikim (wise person) / Reshaim (fool)

As is typical of wisdom literature in general, Psalm One highlights the plight of the wise person in contrast with the wicked or the fool. As wisdom is meant to improve the quality of life of those who adhere to its directives, the 'potential difference' between the two highlights the cognitive and emotive force necessary to bring about the desired change. However, these extremes are artificial in the sense that the opposites are not nearly as pertinent in the experienced reality of those the message is directed at. Hence it becomes either a matter of reinterpretation and assimilation, or outright rejection of the specific directive. Angel (2010:164) has the following to say with regard to the difference between the wise and the fool in the Psalter:

There are two poles depicted within the Book of Psalms. Sometimes the wise person clearly understands God's ways whereas the fool does not. At other times, nobody - not even the Psalmist - understands. Sometimes, it is assumed that the righteous person necessarily will live a happier life than the wicked, at least in the long run; at other times, nobody can perceive this justice.

Ultimately, however, the main difference between the fool and the wise person is their reaction to the gap between faith in a just God and the reality of injustice in society. The fool, according to the psalms, gives up on his belief in such a God or just denies the involvement of God in the affairs of people. The wise person on the other hand defers judgement so to speak and hopes for ultimate justice, but is not afraid to question or even complain to God. In this way the relationship between the wise person and God is kept alive although under constant tension, whereas the fool gives up altogether and goes his own way.

In light of what has been said thus far, Psalm 1 lays the hermeneutical foundation for an understanding of life viewed through the eyes of the various psalm writers, editors and collators. From the outset the exiles are given direction as to how to live if they wish to see ultimate happiness, meaning and order. Without a prerequisite understanding of the above Hebrew words, poetic devices and literary theory, one could right from the outset misunderstand the crucial message of this Psalm.

7.3. The compositional structure of Psalm 1

The compositional structure of any Psalm is incredibly important, because the shape and form of Hebrew poetry contributes and contains much of the message and meaning inherent in it. As can be seen from the structure of Psalm 1 below, the divide between the pious person described in verses one to three and the wicked or evil person in verses four to six, is clear. Subsequently the textual markers that highlight the various contrasts are easily identified.

Psalm 1 consists of two strophes or stanzas (BRATCHER, Robert G and Reyburn, William D, 1991):

Strophe 1: (v.1-3) – The truly pious person...

- (v.1) What he refuses to do;
- (v.2) What he does;
- (v.3) Describing him as a healthy tree.

Strophe 2: (v.4-6) – The wicked or evil person...

- (v.4) Compared to chaff, blown away by the wind;
- (v.5) Will not share the future happiness of the righteous;
- (v.6) Instead, will be destined to destruction.

The Psalm is brief and tightly knit, based on contrasts or oppositions, which are sharpened forcefully and logically by the use of well-placed markers at the beginning of the following verses:

2a – “Instead”

4a – “Not so”

4b – “Instead”

5a – “Therefore”

7.4.A thematic outline of Psalm 1

Following on from the compositional structure outlined above, we can now use this structure to extract the major themes of the Psalm with greater ease. We will then be in a place to interpret the verse by verse meaning of the psalm – moving from the general to the more specific.

Verse 1: (Has three parallel lines as opposed to the usual two):

(Lines 1-2) Consists of a metaphor (to walk, stand and sit) referring to the “wicked” or “sinners”.

(Line 3) (Usually the second) Narrows down the general “wicked / sinner” to the more specific “scoffers”.

The happy person is described in a negative sense as compared to the behaviour of the wicked, “one who does not do as...”

Verse 2: (Has two positive parallel lines, establishing the first contrast and marked as such by line 2a – “Instead...”

(Line 1) His delight in the law of the Lord, forms the basis for

(Line 2) His meditation on the law of the Lord (the consequence of his delight)

[Thus the contrast between verse 1 and 2 has been established and forms the basis for further contrast.]

Verse 3: Is in the form of comparison and parallelism is not emphasised.

Image of a tree is used instead of pure metaphor

The tree is planted in a productive place, where it is fruitful and dependable.

It summarises the destiny of the good – they prosper and it anticipates the opposite fate of the wicked that ultimately perish (verse 6).

[THE DIVIDE TAKES PLACE HERE, MARKING THE CONTRAST]

Verse 4: Strongly reinforces the opposite or contrast with verses 1-3:

“Not so the wicked...” and “Instead” - contrasts worthless chaff being blown away by the slightest breeze with the solidly planted tree, which poetically heightens the difference.

Verse 5: Opens the conclusion to the Psalm and returns to the “wicked” and “sinners” of verse 1.

They will not be able to “stand (different verb to verse 1) in the judgement” – a common expression, nor be part of “the congregation of the righteous” – a heightened level of vocabulary.

This marked contrast and intensification of language leads to the pivot point of the Psalm, where “the righteous” are introduced as a way of speaking about the kind of person who has all along been the focus of attention, but until now has never been named!

Verse 6: Completes the conclusion

“The righteous” introduced in verse 5b is repeated for emphasis and again contrasted with the wicked.

The syntactic order is also contrasted in the two lines of this verse to highlight the contrast yet again:

(6a) – (VO) verb then object

(6b) – (OV) object then verb

Also, “the way” introduced in verse 1 is repeated, tying the beginning to the end like a loop.

The above thematic outline might seem rather technical in nature and overly focused on language structure, but Hebrew poetry is unlike that in English, relying a great deal on textual design to highlight its main point(s) or message. This aspect will be cemented in the detailed exegesis to follow in the next section.

7.5. Interpret the verse-by-verse meaning:

The interpretive format that will be taken for the verse-by-verse meaning will be by way of quoting the verse, followed by a brief introduction, then actual commentary from various sources (using various key words), and finally summative remarks about each.

Verse 1:

*“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked;
nor does he stand in the way of sinners;
nor does he sit in the assembly of mockers.*

Introduction

A first reading of this verse might give one the impression that life is simple and that the psalmist is introducing a formula for happiness. However, after a cursory view of our own society, it becomes clear that this statement is not always reflective of the status quo. The commentators below interact with this discrepancy by highlighting various points about the text itself and also about life in general. Kampaore focuses on literary features of the text while Hobbins deals with ethical questions resulting from the content of the text.

Commentary

“Happy is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked”...is presented as an informational statement – the reality of the world. At the same time it is expressive (expressing an opinion), persuasive (the author clearly wants his reader to ground himself in God’s law), and poetic. Legal literature has the explicit communicative purpose of telling others to do something (persuasive), but it also is informative (how to do things), expressive (God’s opinions about how things should be, including degrees of importance) and poetic (with parallelisms). (Garber Kampaore, 2004:7)

One often forgets that there is a purpose behind every act of communication and that the 'speaker' may have a deliberate aim with each particular speech act. At times this goal may be easily deduced from the section of discourse under investigation. At other times, this purpose is hidden in what may seem to be a neutral statement. As in the case above, a closer inspection of the text is required. Hobbins (2012:2) highlights one possibility of authorial intent in verse 1, a statement of what should be.

Ethical discourse speaks of truths as self-evident even if they are not. We say, for example, that all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In point of fact, people are created in unequal circumstances. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, furthermore, are *alienable* rights. They can be taken away. They often are. But they shouldn't be. Truth greater than fact is inscribed in this Psalm. The Psalm only makes sense in the heat of conflict. Imagine its words on the lips of children on their way to the gas chambers. Then you will understand that they are fighting words.

Here we see how the discrepancy between stated fact and the reality of life is an important indicator of possible ethical issues, which require further investigation. One cannot simply assume the statement about the 'blessed man' in verse 1 to be a life principle to be assimilated, when experiential knowledge is directly opposed to such a proposition. However, this is exactly the type of weak exegesis prevalent in many ecclesiastical circles. Part of the reason for this is our distance from the original text and context. The so called 'prosperity gospel' can be attributed to a direct appropriation of texts such as found in verse 1. Members might even be reprimanded for not experiencing success, as a sign of their moral failings. .

Instead, '*blessed / happy*' in verse 1, is an expression regularly used in the Old Testament. According to Bratcher and Reyburn, the 'happy' or 'blessed person here refers to someone...

...in a good situation who deserves to be congratulated. The Hebrew word does not imply precisely that God blesses or rewards such a person. Rather, said person is happy, fortunate, deserving congratulations.

Knowledge of Hebrew is very important in understanding the concept of being happy or blessed in this Psalm and elsewhere in the Old Testament writings. Such know-how will help counter the overly simple interpretations that result from a lack of

source language proficiency. This is made clear by Hobbins (2012:2) in the following way:

O the blessings of is the way a blessing or *macarism* begins in Hebrew. Ps 1 is an extended macarism. *Blessings* refer to more than concrete benefits that accrue or not accrue; it refers to *the happiness of the one* who enjoys particular benefits. *The happiness of the one* who has not gone the usual way but delights in another way is the subject of this Psalm.

Again, it is clear here that without the requisite Hebrew knowledge this valuable piece of information would be inaccessible to the reader.

Wallace (2009) highlights the importance of 'ashreh' within the Psalter and states that it is only used when speaking of humans and never to describe God. He goes on to say that 'ashreh' is always about a present state and not at all about something hoped for in the future. Furthermore, there is always a requisite response or action required from the person in question. He explains this as it relates to Psalm 1 in the following way (:12):

In Psalm 1, the man's blessing is associated with what he does not do, namely, follow (lit. 'walk in') the advice of the wicked, associate (lit. 'stand') with sinners or sit with scoffers. Not only do these three expressions cover all possible forms of illicit endeavour, from the active to the intellectual, they also convey a sense of movement, from 'walking' through 'standing' to 'sitting'. The final act implies permanent residency and stability.

It has been shown above how a thorough grounding in Hebrew not only provides us with the necessary word knowledge, for example to differentiate between the various terms that have all been translated as happy, but also how this skill gives us the ability to define the meaning of each occurrence of 'ashreh' in its particular context.

The man

Besides this Psalm having been written in a patriarchal society where 'man' may be used to refer to a person in general; some commentators have tried to emphasise the importance of 'haish' here as significant for eschatological reasons. In my opinion this would be a stretch and said commentators would be guilty of reading the New Testament back into the Old.

Walk / Stand / Sit

The next three expressions are synonymous and describe the same kind of behaviour in different ways, using Hebrew verbs in a figurative way, showing both movement and intensification.

Walk → Stand → Sit

Who does not walk in the advice of the wicked

The Hebrew verb “to walk” is often used figuratively to describe the behaviour, actions or a way of life. The counsel or advice here refers to “instruction” or “teaching” given by one person to another and does not signify an opinion.

Walk in advice, truth etc. is an idiom that occurs with certain regularity in ancient Hebrew. Someone may walk, metaphorically, ‘in light or darkness’ (Isa 2:5) and ‘in truth’ (1 Kgs 2:4).

The figurative usage of the Hebrew verbs above accords well with the English usage and no loss of meaning occurs. However, this would not be the case in other languages that might prefer other metaphors to describe this process. The one clear difference, however, is the use of counsel or advice in English. This does not carry the same meaning as the Hebrew phrase that refers to teaching and not advice or opinion, as stated above.

Wicked and righteous

רשע [rasha'] *wicked* and צדיק [tsadiq] *righteous* are adjectives that serve to designate classes of people. Moral categories are in view. The unprincipled, the unscrupulous, are termed רשעים ; the principled and scrupulous are termed צדיקים . The terms reference a black-and-white distinction, like our forensic terms ‘guilty’ and ‘innocent... A צדיק is more than a blameless person. A צדיק is a benevolent person, active in good deeds. (HOBBS, John :3)

There are some difficulties in interpreting this part of the passage, especially in light of the remarks about the discrepancy between life and text mentioned earlier in this section. The distinction between the wicked and the righteous is not so clear in modern society. Also, much of our framework for delineating such is culturally and

religiously programmed. In a religiously pluralistic society this would depend greatly on which perspective one was viewing the topic from. Also, no one person can be completely righteous; hence this would be more of a sliding scale than a black and white distinction. Furthermore, the added element of a righteous person being “active in good deeds” is often not in view in terms of our modern classification of a righteous person.

Nor does he sit in the assembly of mockers

The ‘mockers’ refer to people who openly ridicule God. We see here a progression from the general to the specific, as is typical of Hebrew poetic parallelism. The ‘wicked’ or the ‘sinners’ are now called ‘mockers’.

To ‘stand in the way’ is figurative language for following a determined course of action and to ‘sit in the seat’ is a way of describing becoming settled in such a way of life. Hobbins (2012:3), however, brings another aspect of ‘to sit in the assembly of mockers’ to our attention:

In ancient times, one *sat in a seat (cathedra, as in ex cathedra)* to judge or teach. *Scoffers*: those who laugh at the moral order attributed to God, [are] convinced that he does not enforce it. They mock those who conform themselves to it.

The context of those who ‘openly scorn God’ here refers to the Hebrew god Yahweh and one should be careful not to directly apply this to whichever deity one chooses, nor use it as a defence against legitimate criticism of one’s religious views. If one is not familiar with Hebrew parallelism, one could easily miss the fact that the term ‘mockers’ is not another category of person, but an intensification and further description of the wicked. The English phrase to stand in someone’s way is opposite in meaning to the Hebrew phrase which here means to go along with or take part in. Our modern courts also have people ‘sitting in judgement’; however, teachers seldom sit. Instead they often stand in front of large lecture halls or classrooms. Here also, the moral order is reversed in that it is not the righteous but the wicked that ‘sit in judgement’ or ‘mock’ those who follow ‘God’s moral order’. This role reversal serves to further highlight their self-elevation.

Deductions

The importance of happiness or blessedness in this Psalm cannot be overstated in the mind of the Psalmist. This is perhaps the single most important desire or hope of the one (or those) who “penned” these words. What is life, if not one that is so lived? However, as can be seen from the above commentary, this is often more a desired state or hope for the future; as the present reality is far removed from this proposition. For a people living in exile in a foreign land, forcibly removed from their country and home, what joy or blessedness could there possibly be for them? And yet, according to the Hebrew text there must be some sort of present element of blessedness, which one could only assume to be the inner reward of following God’s way. Perhaps it would therefore be more prudent to look at these statements as advice given to those who would make sense of life. Directives on how to live with hope and expectation that ultimately there is a god who will vindicate and deliver justice to those who continue to trust and follow said god’s ways (advice or wisdom), even when present experience does not evidence this...yet.

How to attain such a state of happiness is not, however, given positive practical advice and direction. On the contrary the first following statements are negatively focused as a warning of what not to do (who not to listen to, follow or befriend). These are the so-called ‘wicked’, ‘sinners’ and ‘mockers’.

Verse 2:

² Instead, in the law of Yahweh *is* his delight,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

Commentary

According to Bratcher and Reyburn (1991), “the person(s) whose behaviour is directly opposite to that mentioned in the previous verse is now introduced in the positive.” The word *instead* is a distinctive marker and contrasts what is coming with what has already been said in verse 1. However, the English translation is on the weak side and a better translation according to them would be, “on the contrary”. This not only makes the distinction sharper, but also emphasizes the total opposition

between the two ways or paths followed by the yet unknown object of this wisdom instruction.

The law of Yahweh is his delight

The law of Yahweh here denotes the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Torah. Authorship of the Torah has customarily been ascribed to Moses, though modern scholarship does not agree with such a position. The law spoken of here refers to the instruction that Yahweh uses to guide the Hebrew people. It is not law in the sense that we refer to our present day legal system. As such, it represents the complicated relationship between Yahweh and his chosen people and their journey of faith ultimately recorded in these five books of the law. Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) make it clear that it is *“obedience to the law and not the law itself that makes a person happy”* and also that it is the law or teachings that *“come from Yahweh not about Yahweh”* in view here.

Yahweh is the specifically Hebrew name for God in this context and it should be noted that although some translations use the term “LORD” it is misleading, as reference is here made to the god of the Old Testament and not Jesus Christ, also referred to as “Lord” in the New Testament.

The use of delight could also be a reference to and strengthening of the opening phrase of the Psalm, i.e. “happy / blessed is ...”

On his law he meditates day and night

The Hebrew verb means to “read in an undertone” (see Joshua 1:8), meaning intensive, careful reading and study. (BRATCHER, Robert G and Reyburn, William D, 1991)

Subsequent to due attention having been paid to the activities the ‘blessed man’ is strongly urged to avoid, a description of the positive attributes and activities of such a man is now given. The conjunction sometimes translated but or instead must be emphatic of contrast or opposition and hence would better be translated, “on the contrary” as Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) recommend. The meditation spoken of here is that of careful observance as the above definition illustrates and once again

refers not only to mental assent but practical obedience (hence the inclusion of 'day and night').

Deductions

The contrast between those who follow (and ultimately) become the wicked and those who do righteous acts (and ultimately) become the righteous is strongly emphasised in the polarisation of this verse. However, it is not only the actions that form the basis of each one's destiny (although this is certainly a vital part thereof), but also the heart attitude. To delight (or take pleasure) in something has to do with what one values, enjoys and desires. Why some seem to have a propensity more for temporal pleasure or evil and others more for a lasting state of contentment is not the object of study here, but rather the resulting person who has chosen either path. In the case of the righteous person, he or she has chosen to follow and subsequently delight in; or because of said person's delight in, has chosen to follow Yahweh and his 'Torah' or teachings. This isn't just a passing fascination however, but is an all-consuming passion that leads to constant meditation on these teachings (day and night) like someone who is in love. In conclusion, 'law' here is not to be confused with our legal system, accompanied by punishment for not abiding by it. This Torah is one that is voluntarily followed for the benefits and rewards thereof.

Verse 3:

³ And so, he is like a tree planted by streams of water
that gives its fruit in its season;
its leaf also does not wither.
Therefore all that he does prospers.

Commentary

The term translated "*and so*" here could be better rendered, "therefore" as it is a consequence of verse 1 and 2. *He is like a tree planted by streams of water* (see *Jeremiah 17:7-8 and Psalm 92:12-14*) describes a person 'planted' like a tree, in other words secure, firm, not easily moved and even the barren landscape of the near east cannot destroy it, because it is planted next to streams of water that nourish it all year round. As a healthy tree, it bears fruit at the right time or always bears fruit in season, year in year out. Withering leaves are often a sign of a dying

tree, which this one is certainly not. It is a sign of health and consistent growth that its leaves do not wither. If the tree were the subject of this phrase it would mean that everything it produces would be prosperous or healthy, large and abundant. However, if the person is the subject, then it refers to the fact that he will succeed and prosper in everything he does. This prosperity would be in all areas of life, both spiritual and financial. One also needs to be clear that this person refers to the one described in the previous two verses and not get too caught up in the picture of the tree.

Line four of this verse refers back to the person mentioned in line one and lines two and three are a description of the tree this man is likened to. This is a typically Hebrew arrangement of the 'abba' structure.

Wallace (2009:13-14), on the other hand, introduces a completely different set of interpretational possibilities with the use of an intertextual⁴⁶ hermeneutic as set out below. Intertextuality as an academic discipline is still in its infancy with regard to its scope and methodology and particularly as applied to the biblical text as part of a literary interpretational theory. However, an informal intertextual interpretation has been in use in a scriptural context from the time of the writing of the New Testament and biblical examples abound. This is especially noticeable in the accounts of the life of Jesus and his widespread reinterpretation of the Old Testament.

The metaphor in Ps. 1.3 recalls Jer. 17.8, which also describes those who trust Yahweh. More importantly the image of a tree planted by life giving streams echoes the idea of the divine enclosure with its life-giving waters and supernatural trees. There are similarities with the description of Eden (Gen. 2.4b–3.24) but more particularly with the temple precincts and images of trees planted within them (Pss. 52.8; 92.12-14; and especially Ezek. 47.12). However, the stress in this passage is on the *Torah* observance of the man. The *Torah* functions in this Psalm just as the temple does elsewhere, as the 'place' of divine presence and the source of the man's security and life.

There is a definite correlation of words and ideas between Psalm 1 verse 3 and the other passages from the law and the prophets. This intertextual reading, although not obvious when reading the text in isolation of the rest of the canon of

⁴⁶ Intertextuality refers to "that characteristic of a text that connects it to all other texts" (VASSAR, John S, 2007, p.1)

Scripture brings about further interpretational possibilities which should not be frowned upon. For centuries Rabbinic and Christian commentators have encouraged the practice of using Scripture to interpret Scripture. This approach is further encouraged in the reading of the Psalms by the division of the Psalter into five books to correlate with the fivefold division of the Pentateuch. For a more comprehensive understanding of the intertextual relationship between the Psalms and the Pentateuch⁴⁷, see Vassar (2007) as he expands on the landmark work of Ben-Porat (1978).

Deductions

The righteous person that does not do those things spoken of in verse one but does those things mentioned in verse two is now compared to a healthy tree planted and established next to a nourishing stream. The source of this nourishment is the delight in (hence by extension obedience to) and meditation upon the teachings of Yahweh. The resultant life is therefore one of permanence (planted), health (leaves do not wither), fruitfulness, constancy (in season) and prosperity. What more could one possibly wish for?

Verse 4:

Not so the wicked.
Instead, they are like the chaff that the wind scatters.

Commentary

Verse four is the turning point in the entire psalm and as such presents a strong contrast to the entire preceding clause. In the Septuagint the contrast is even stronger, *“The evil are not like this, not at all like this”*. The implicit contrast of “not so” needs to be made clear in that it refers to verses 1 to 3 in their entirety. Therefore, it might be better translated as an explicit statement, for example, *“But evil people do not succeed at all”*, or *“But evil people fail in all they do”* as Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) suggest.

⁴⁷ Cf. (AICHELE, George and Phillips, Gary, 1995); (BUCHANAN, George Wesley, 1994); (EVANS, Craig A and Talmon, Shemaryahu, 1997) and (FEWELL, Danna Nolan, 1992).

The contrast is made even clearer by the phrase “instead” or “but rather”. Here the picture of the healthy tree referring to the good person is being contrasted with chaff, referring to the evil person. Chaff is worthless, dead, and the slightest bit of wind blows it away, whereas a tree is strong, valuable, green, alive and solidly planted, not easily moved. A possible replacement for chaff could be “*dead or dry leaves*” (Bratcher and Reyburn, 1991) to follow the picture of the tree.

Wallace (2009:14) brings to the fore another nuance to the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. He highlights the intertextual relationship between Psalm 1:4 and the prayer in Psalm 35:4-5, in which the same imagery is used. Hence, he states that it is paramount that the wicked get driven away in order for the righteous to keep standing, because the wicked are like a parasite that feeds on the innocent.

Deductions

In verse four an entirely different fate or result awaits the wicked. The sharp contradistinction is a turning point in this Psalm. All the benefits and blessings of the righteous described until now are totally out of the reach of the wicked person. For the wicked the consequences of a life so selfishly lived is compared to the most worthless byproduct of the harvest, namely chaff that the wind drives away. The properties of chaff are well chosen when contrasted with the tree. It is temporal (easily blown about), dead, and ultimately will be driven away. There is no chance of it being brought back to life and bearing fruit. It will either be burnt up or blown away so as to disappear forever, leaving not a single trace of its existence behind.

Verse 5:

*⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*

Commentary

Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) state that “Therefore” is a marker introducing...

the consequence of the worthless nature of the wicked and should be formally represented in translation, for example, *“For this reason”* or *“On account of this”*.

Verse 5a repeats the “wicked” from verse 4, whereas verse 5b uses the equal term “sinners”. These two terms refer to the same group, therefore the reason for the varied usage is to intensify or carry further the meaning and destiny of the first.

The phrase *“Will not stand in the judgement”* can be easily misunderstood as to mean “to get off the hook” or to “not be judged”, whereas the exact opposite is true. This is partly due to the use of the expression “stand” a reflection or parallel of verse 1b. It might be better in this case to rather say *“will not withstand the judgement”* or *“will not be able to stand up to / against the judgement”* (Bratcher and Reyburn, 1991).

Lines 5a and 5b are typically parallel in that “judgement”, a common term, is replaced by “congregation of the righteous”, a rarer more literary expression. The second line carries the condemnation of the wicked even further, “What’s more, they (“the wicked” now called “sinners”) will not be part of God’s own people” (Bratcher and Reyburn).

Bratcher and Reyburn also introduce a question of primary importance to Jews and Christians alike as to whether the “judgement” referred to here is a reference to divine justice experienced by some in this life or to the “day of judgement”, a future event to be witnessed by all, both sinners and righteous alike. They also maintain that the “congregation of the righteous” refers to “all God-fearing Israelites”, citing Psalm 111:1 as intertextual referent. They maintain that the “judgement” mentioned here is relevant to both the here and now and the afterlife. Also, the reference to the “congregation of the righteous” is not to be misunderstood as any “organised religious group”, but is simply an expression of all people who revere God.

Wallace (2009:14) remarks that the grammatical order of this psalm is a mirror image of the real life actions and destiny of the both the righteous and the wicked. The wicked think that they are secure by preying on the righteous, only to discover that the righteous are, through their actions and God’s favour, planted like an

unshakeable tree sustained by God's life-giving water. The wicked, on the other hand, end up dry, shrivelled and driven to extinction, far removed from God's favour and people. They were comfortable in their wicked lifestyles, but in the end are unable to stand against the judgement that befalls them. Strangely, Wallace uses Hosea 13:3 as intertextual reference, which is a description of judgement on Israel for turning to human rulers for security and forgetting the God who brought them out of Egypt. This would infer that the wicked in this psalm are not outsiders, but insiders (Israelites) who have turned from their God.

Hobbins (2012:6-7) focuses on the legal aspect of this verse and states that reference here is made to the "judgement phase of a trial" citing especially Deuteronomy 1:17 as intertextual determinant because of the Hebrew word used in both texts, i.e. "bemishpat" (in judgement / in judicial proceedings). He goes on to say that the judgement spoken of here is not the final result of the wicked being blown away, but the requirements of the law being met.

In any legal system worth its salt, commitment to justice involves ensuring that (1) the wicked do not prevail in the very place the innocent seek redress, a court of law; and (2) predators are segregated from actual and potential victims. Law and order that is devoid of such practical consequences is not law and order at all.

These parallels though insightful and meaningful, are nevertheless only as valid as the state of such a legal system and proceedings at the time of the writing of this psalm. If such an organised system were not in place at this time, Hobbins is guilty of reading a modern context back into the text, which is not a good hermeneutical principle.

Deductions

Because of the types of lives lived by the wicked as exemplified in the previous four verses of this Psalm, they will subsequently, and perhaps consequently, not have any part in the rewards of happiness or the blessedness of the community of the righteous. They will be separated and judged according to their actions in this life and will perhaps also ultimately be judged by Yahweh in the hereafter. Either way the lifestyles they practised became so ingrained, that having settled in such (sit)

they will not be able to rise nor to exercise control over the righteous again. Justice will ultimately prevail under the hand of Yahweh.

Verse 6:

⁶for Yahweh knows *the* way of *the* righteous,^a
but *the* way of *the* wicked will perish.

Commentary

The textual marker “For” gives the reason why the destinies of the righteous and the wicked are different. The “know” in line a is that of care, concern and guidance, in other words, “*Yahweh guides and protects the righteous*” (Bratcher and Reyburn). The outcomes of the two separate groups are portrayed as “ways” or “roads” or “paths”; one of which is safe and secure, while the other leads to destruction and death (see Psalms 68:2; 73:27 and 92:9).

Wallace (2009:14-15), is of the opinion that verse 6 should be interpreted eschatologically, because of the very stark contrast between the destinies of the righteous and wicked described here and the opposing experience in reality. He maintains therefore that the ‘judgement’ and the ‘company of the righteous’ are evidence of ‘life’ in the hereafter. This would seem a rather grim outlook for the present life, but Wallace softens the blow by stating that the ‘future hope’ is at least in part a ‘present reality’, due to the ‘happy state of the blessed man’.

Hobbins (2012:7), on the other hand, is more concerned with motive than content and reminds us that “The conceptualization of the moral imperative as a choice between two “ways” is a prominent trope of ethical instruction.”

Deductions

Following on from verse five, verse six gives the reason why the righteous will prosper and the wicked perish. The answer is that Yahweh ‘knows’ the way of the righteous. There are two ways to follow in life; our own way or one guided by the teachings of Yahweh. The expression ‘to know’ is something intimate and alludes to Yahweh caring for, watching over and even controlling the movement of the

righteous down the pathway he has made for them. But the pathway of the wicked leads to the edge of a steep cliff so to speak where they will meet their demise and forever disappear.

Conclusion

As was said in the introductory remarks about this Psalm, the picture painted here is not always a present reality. This is perhaps also the reason that the Psalm has often been interpreted eschatologically. The injustices of life are not denied in this Psalm, but those who experience them are given hope for a future where truth will become reality. In the meantime they are not only assured of future judgement for the perpetrators of 'wickedness', but also a present inward reality of peace and contentment in the face of hardship and suffering. Perhaps one could say that integrity is its own reward.

7.6. Make a comparison with similar passages in both the OT and NT (using several versions), noting any close correspondences in form and content.

As has already been noted in the preceding point with regard to an intertextual reading of any biblical book or passage (in this case the Psalter and in particular Psalm 1), there are several Old and New Testament passages that have either formal (textual) or thematic correspondences with this psalm. These are to be found in all the various groupings of books in the Hebrew canon, namely the law, the prophets and the writings. Not only does the fivefold division of the Psalter mimic the division of the five books of the law, but there is also a correspondence in content. If the Psalter and Pentateuch are to be read in tandem, it would open up a fresh interpretation and application of the biblical text. Some of these correspondences have already been explored in this study, namely the grouping of Psalms 1 and 2; 40 and 41; as well as various other pairings within and between the various Books of the Psalter, for example Psalms 68 and 92. Other links outside the Psalter are dealt with more concisely for the sake of brevity and open up the avenue for further study beyond the scope of the present study. These include the books of Joshua (1:8), Jeremiah (17:7-8), Matthew (5:3-11) and Revelation (22:1-5). Of interest perhaps is

that these four corresponding passages all describe a tumultuous time in Israel's history when a new era was about to be ushered in: the entering of the promised land, the exit into exile, the birth of a new era with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and the promise of eternal life. It is therefore not insignificant that the writing of Psalm 1 should commence the entire reading of the Psalter; perhaps as an entry into a new spiritual era, first for the Israelites and later also for Christians. The revelation passage is also noteworthy in this regard as the portal to a new era beyond the present life to that which comes in the afterlife. This must, however, be seen more as a reinterpretation or further interpretation of the Psalter and cannot be read back into the Old Testament.

Summary of Thesis

The importance of Hebrew in coming to grips with the spirituality exemplified in Psalm 1 is evident both textually and thematically. On a textual level, the meaning of the psalm is not only dependent on, but also inherent in the Hebrew language. This is evident from the literary shape, which consists of the compositional structure and poetic devices unique to Hebrew poetry. Key also to responsible exegesis of the passage, are the specific Hebrew words used that are rich in cultural information, easily misinterpreted and difficult to translate. Furthermore, textual markers highlight turning points in the poem, which would be missed without knowledge of their use and meaning. Finally, specific Hebrew verbs are used to highlight movement and intensification. On a thematic level, the psalm is rich in practical life advice particular to the Hebrew wisdom tradition. This might be overlooked if reading the psalm purely as a hymn and overlooking the fact that it is in fact beatitude. As introductory psalm to the whole Psalter, this dramatically impacts on the overarching theme of Book 1 and the collection as a whole. Finally, the thematic parallels in other Biblical texts further enrich a reading of Psalm 1 when studied intertextually.

CHAPTER 8: TEST CASE TWO: PSALM 8 – EXEGESIS AND SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

Unlike Psalm 1, less time will be spent on the background and placement of Psalm 8 within Book I of the Psalter and within the Psalter as a whole. The focus will be more on the technical aspects of the Hebrew language and their importance in making difficult exegetical as well as interpretational choices. Psalm 8 also has a rich hermeneutical history with opposing views held by Jewish and Christian interpreters.

Yahweh's Glory in Creation

8 For the *music* director, on the Gittith.^a A Psalm of David.^b

¹Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic *is* your name in all the earth,
who put your splendor above the heavens.

²From the mouth of children and infants you have founded^c strength
on account of your enemies,
to silence *the* enemy and *the* avenger.

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and *the* stars which you set in place—

⁴what *is* a human being that you think of him?
and a child of humankind that you care for him?

⁵And you made him a little lower than heavenly beings,^d
and *with* glory and *with* majesty you crowned him.

⁶You make him over the works of your hands;
all *things* you have placed under his feet:

⁷sheep and cattle, all of them,
and also *the* wild animals of *the* field,

⁸*the* birds of *the* sky and the fish of the sea,
everything that passes along the paths of seas.

⁹Yahweh, our Lord,
how majestic *is* your name in all of the earth!

An analysis of Psalm 8

As in the previous chapter, we shall again be following Wendland's (2002:204-209) "ten-step method" of exegesis, which he summarises into "five primary procedures".

8.1. Determine the Psalm's overall communicative purpose, that is, its genre; then take note of the major speech functions plus any associated emotions within the various discourse parts.

According to the NIV Study Bible (:864), Psalm 8 is a so-called "praise psalm". The writers of the study notes see Psalm 1 and 2 as a dual introduction to the Psalter as a whole and go on to divide Psalm 3 to 14 into two very distinguishable groups, each

of which ends with a psalm that characterises the human condition (8 and 14). This would then be an extension of “the righteous” and “the wicked” of Psalm 1 and tabulated as follows:

Psalm 3-7: Consists of 5 prayers and 64 lines

[*Psalm 8: Praise of the Creator (the glory of God bestowed on humans) (NIV SB)*]

Psalm 9-13: Consists of 5 prayers and 64 lines

[*Psalm 14: The folly of humankind (“The LORD looks down...to see...All have turned away”)* (NIV SB)]

If this line of argument is followed, it is logical to assume that Psalm 8 would be classified as a hymn of praise or a praise psalm. The study notes continue with a very Evangelical Christian slant and assume much with regard to the interpretation of the passage. It has the following to say about Psalm 8 in particular [*Italics added to emphasize bias*]:

Subject: Humiliation and glory

Messianic: Verses 4b – 8

NT Proof: Hebrews 2:5-10 and 1 Corinthians 15:27

Contextual Evidence: All things are under his feet (v.8), *which cannot apply to human beings*.

In praise of the Creator (not of human beings – as is evident from the doxology that encloses it, vv. 1, 9) out of wonder over his sovereign ordering of the creation. Genesis 1 (particularly vv. 26-28) clearly provides the lenses, but David speaks out of his present experience of reality. Two matters especially impressed him: (1) the glory of God reflected in the starry heavens, and (2) the astonishing condescension of God to be mindful of puny mortals, to crown them with glory almost godlike and to grant them lordly power over his other creatures.

This Psalm has a sharp counterpoint in Psalm 14, which highlights the disgrace of those who live as if there were no God.
(NIV Study Bible)

As is clear from the above, many Christians believe this to be a Messianic Psalm and read back into the Old Testament, particular New Testament understandings thereof. This is one of the reasons for choosing this specific Psalm, to illustrate the differences in interpretation between Jews and Christians and how

we can benefit from a more holistic hermeneutic in exploring the richness of these texts and subsequently benefiting spiritually from the experience. For example, the elevated state of humanity as set above and over all of creation is denied by this Christian interpretation and seen as only possible in describing Jesus the Christ. Jewish interpreters, to the contrary, see this as the natural order of things; that humans have immense value and are given a place in creation only superseded by God. Both believe in delegated authority over creation, but the above commentary has a problem with the expression “all things” (v.8) being placed under “his feet”. Is this referring to one man, perhaps David; all people; or the Christ who was yet to come?

It is here that the understanding, that the writers of the biblical text were under the divine influence, plays a prominent role. Those who carry such beliefs, would state that although these words were ‘penned’ for a particular audience, at a specific time in history; they were nonetheless (unbeknown to the author/s) intended by God to refer to the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ) – a view described as prophetic perspective.

The main themes or key words found within this psalm are those of the creator, the creation, humanity and domination or subjection; themes echoed in the creation narrative found in the book of Genesis.

8.2. Plot the Psalm’s compositional structure, that is, its major and minor divisions and how they fit together to form and convey the main message of the whole text.

Psalm 8 is composed of five thematic units:

Unit 1: (v.1 – 2a) – In praise of God’s majesty

Unit 2: (v.2b) – God’s power is shown against ‘his’ enemies

Unit 3: (v.3-4) – The greatness of creation over against the seeming insignificance of humanity

Unit 4: (v.5-8) – The delegated greatness of humanity over all of creation

Unit 5: (v.9) – In praise of God’s majesty

8.3. Formulate a thematic outline which is, in effect, a summary of the main content units of the Psalm and its constituent stanzas.

According to Bratcher and Reyburn,

Psalm 8 begins and ends by praising God "in all the earth."

The "all" of the earth is shown in stages of downward movement from the heavens to the creatures of the seas. The order of creation in Genesis 1 is followed (but not every example of it).

At the very thematic centre the poet has placed the question about man in two lines that are the same in meaning and in word order. No other lines are treated in this way.

Therefore the poem balances at this midpoint of the contrast of man with the rest of creation.

From the above one can deduce then that the main themes of Psalm 8 are the greatness of God compared to creation, which is tiny in comparison. However, when seen from the eyes of humanity, this creation is vast and incomprehensible. And yet God has seen fit to elevate humankind to a position of control over creation, thus making them inferior only to God himself. The pivot point in this psalm is the question about the place of a mere human being in the grand scale of the universe and why Yahweh would even bother to concern himself with such an insignificant creature. For this reason the present author would differ with the NIV Study Bible and venture to say that this psalm is more about the age old question of the meaning of life than it is a psalm of praise. The structure of the psalm is laid out below and the common Hebrew poetic element, that the second line often emphasizes, expands on, or specifies the first, is very clear to see.

Verse 1:

(Line 1) Yahweh, God's unique name revealed to the Israelites, is identified with by the Psalmist in the term phrase "our Lord". This exclusive name is then described as "majestic" in all the earth.

(Line 2) The "majesty" is then reiterated and strengthened through the use of "splendour" and the greatness of Yahweh extended beyond the earth to even include the heavens and that which is above them.

Verse 2:

(Line 3a) Should be included with line 2 to contrast the majesty of God with the lowliness of people. This is further emphasised by using the double description of children and babies. The use of “mouth” could also be to link this line with the “name” in verse 1.

(Line 3b) Should be joined with lines 4 and 5 to mean that God has built a stronghold;

(Line 4) against the enemies

(Line 5) To silence the enemy and the avenger – an expansion of who the enemy is in line 4 and also to contrast ‘to silence’ with the vocalization of praise to God in line 3.

Verse 3:

(Line 6) The “heavens” is revisited and Yahweh’s glory and splendour is no longer just above the heavens, but the heavens owe their very existence to Yahweh, who created them with just his fingers.

(Line 7) The heavens are now elaborated on from the general to the specific “the moon and the stars” are included, which Yahweh put in place.

Verse 4:

(Line 8) The wonder at the pure size and magnitude of creation and of the Creator instils in the Psalmist a sense of humility. This evokes a response of awe and marvel, leading to the double question in this line and the next.

(Line 9) The move is once again from the general to the specific; from human being to child of humankind and from Yahweh thinking of him to actually caring for him. Also, the child picture once again highlights the contrast between Yahweh’s vastness and the tininess of humanity.

Verse 5:

(Line 10) This line is in stark contrast to the preceding verses, where the focus is on the diminutive role of humanity. Suddenly human beings are now only created a little lower than the heavenly beings; and

(Line 11) Crowned with glory and with majesty, attributes previously belonging only to Yahweh.

Verse 6:

(Line 12) The “crowning” in the previous line is now extended as to rule over the works of Yahweh’s hands, previously described as shaped by his fingers.

(Line 13) “All things”, in other words all of creation is “placed” under the feet of a human being. This alludes to the opposite of the “moon and stars” that Yahweh set in place above, with that which is below. Here we see ‘top-down’ spatial movement (from the heavens to the earth), as well as figurative ‘top-down’ movement using a body metaphor (from hands to feet). Of course ‘under his feet’ could simply refer to the earth in general, which Yahweh has created for humanity to inhabit.

Verse 7 and 8: (Genesis and Job come to mind)

(Line 14) Refers to domestic land animals

(Line 15) Refers to wild land animals

(Line 16) Refers to birds and fish

(Line 17) Is a strange category and perhaps refers to so-called “sea monsters” (cf. Leviathan), to show that humanity has dominion over ‘all’ creatures.

Verse 9:

(Line 18 and 19) A repetition of line 1 in which the superior greatness of Yahweh is reiterated.

8.4. Interpret the verse-by-verse meaning:

Verses 1-2:

1 Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth,
who put your splendor above the heavens.

2 From the mouth of children and infants you have founded strength
on account of your enemies,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

In the opening line of the psalm the Psalmist invokes Yahweh (the Israelite's unique name for God) and then acknowledges him as Israel's 'Lord'. This personal God is then described as so majestic that the whole earth knows his name and thus by extension his reputation. As has already been stated, there are various technical difficulties in this Psalm and in verses 1 and 2 we encounter several of these. There are a number of issues at stake here. The first issue is the how to interpret the phrase 'who put your splendour'; the second is whether the phrase 'from the mouth of children and infants' belongs with the preceding verse 1b or with the phrase directly following it 'you have founded strength' in verse 2b; and third is the complexity of the phrase 'you have founded strength' and also its connection to either the preceding or following phrase. So we see both meaning and placement are crucial factors for a proper understanding of these two lines. Bratcher and Reyburn state the following in this regard:

It is difficult to decide how to translate the last part of verse 1 and connect it to the first part of verse 2. The end of verse 1 in the Hebrew is "whose glory you are to place above the heavens." "You are to place" represents the imperative of the verb for "to give" (so Briggs, who omits "whose" as a scribal addition, and translates "O set Thy splendour above the heavens!"). HOTTTP takes the Masoretic text form to be the infinitive of the same verb "to give," meaning here "you have set"; so NIV. But the Koehler-Baumgartner lexicon (K-B) takes the Masoretic text form to be the imperative of another verb, "to recount, tell."

Most commentators and translators regard the Masoretic text as deficient, and several solutions are proposed:

- (1) to place different vowels with the consonants of the Masoretic text so as to get the passive form of the verb "to tell," namely, "whose glory is told (or, praised)"; so AT, RSV, NEB, TEV;
- (2) to place other vowels with the same consonants to get the perfect form of the same verb: "your name which tells (or, proclaims)";
- (3) another solution, proposed by Dahood, is to maintain the consonants of the Masoretic text but to divide them in such a way as to arrive at a form of the Hebrew verb meaning "to serve, worship, adore"; so ZÜR "I will adore your majesty."

There are other proposals which involve a change in the consonants of the Masoretic text:

- (1) Change to the perfect of the verb for "to give," yielding "(which) you placed" (Oesterley; NAB);

(2) Change to the verb meaning "to spread, stretch out"; so NJV "You who have covered the heavens with Your splendor"; SPCL "your glory extends beyond heaven!"

The researcher has deliberately chosen to include this rather lengthy quotation to highlight the intricacy of the task of interpreting such a problematic Hebrew text. Without a more-than-thorough grounding in this source language, along with a grasp of all the text-critical skills needed to decide between manuscript renderings, it would, to say the least, be an impossible task to do the process justice. In light of this one can see why there would be the temptation to merely go along with the majority of modern translations.

One can see the complexity of the problem for non-English Bible translators here, who do not have the luxury to just follow the 'majority of modern versions'. A decision has to be made, options have to be weighed, and a 'best' choice be settled upon. As modern Bible readers (especially in English), we far too often settle for the norm, either unwilling or unable (as the thesis of this dissertation proposes) to process the necessary information in the source languages, so as to make valid and useful interpretive decisions for ourselves. Of course, the highly specialized nature of the process described above would leave most of us floundering, unless we were to see the task of interpretation as crucial to our faith and thus take the time and make the effort to become proficient in the source languages of the biblical text (in this case Hebrew).

Moving on to verse 2a, we see 'the whole earth' narrowed down to include even praise from the mouths of children and infants. It is thus logical to include verse 2a with verse 1 and not with the rest of verse two as many translations have done. Here again we take a look at Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) to highlight the linguistic complexity of this Psalm:

The first line of verse 2 is also variously understood; the Masoretic text has "from the mouth of infants and children you have founded (or, established) strength," which some interpreters take to mean that God has built his defenses out of the praise offered him by children and infants (Kirkpatrick, Oesterley, Weiser; so KJV, SPCL, NJV, TOB). The interpretation followed by most modern translations, however, is to connect "from the mouths of infants and children" with what precedes in verse 1, and begin a new sentence with "You have built a stronghold...." This is the best way to handle the text.

Hence, the last part of verse two would look something like this, “You have built a stronghold against your enemies, to silence both the enemy and the avenger”. The second parallel line accordingly specifies the general in the first. In other words the general ‘enemies’ (plural) now consists of a specific enemy (singular) and an avenger (identities to which we do not have access).

Verse 3-4

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars which you set in place—
4 what is a human being that you think of him?
and a child of humankind that you care for him?

Verse three and four consist of two parallel lines apiece, in each case the subsequent line narrowing down the general in the first to the specific in the second. Furthermore, verses three and four are themselves opposites, emphasising the distance both textually and semantically between God and ‘man’. This distance or separation is a prelude to the startling revelation expressed as a question in verse five – a pivot point in the composition of the entire Psalm. Verse three shows that the vastness of the heavens is overshadowed by God who created them with just his fingers. Placing the moon and stars in their respective places shows not only the strength but also the attention to detail of the creator. With that powerful picture in mind, the Psalmist moves on to the wonderment of how insignificant human beings are when compared with the scope of the universe; and yet God not only considers humanity, but goes so far as to actually care for the least of them. Bratcher and Reyburn (1991), comment on the phrase ‘son of man’, an expression frequently found in the Bible:

It should be emphasised that the Hebrew phrase translated son of man means "human being," with emphasis on the creature's frailty and mortality, as one made of the dust of the earth.

Verse 5 – 8

5 And you made him a little lower than heavenly beings,
and with glory and with majesty you crowned him.
6 You make him over the works of your hands;
all things you have placed under his feet:
7 sheep and cattle, all of them,

and also the wild animals of the field,
8 the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea,
everything that passes along the paths of seas.

Verse five is the turning point of the Psalm. In spite of Yahweh's greatness and humanity's insignificance, he nonetheless elevates us to a position of authority over all of creation. The body metaphor is once again used to show that humanity was given a place of honour, care and responsibility over all creatures, under the 'hand of God', who delegated this authority and placed the immensity of creation 'under the feet of' human beings. Detailed description of the categories of wild and domestic animals is then given to show that "all things" refers to every single creature that navigates air, land and sea.

Another difficult theological expression to 'translate' is that of 'elohim' in this context referring to humanity's position just beneath the 'heavenly beings' (as one translation puts it). 'Elohim' has various context-dependent translational possibilities, namely, 'God'; 'angels'; 'the gods' or 'a god'. Generally speaking it refers to divine beings as a separate category from human beings. Referring to the phrase 'made him a little less than' does not mean that we are almost God or demi-gods. Bratcher and Reyburn expand on this as follows:

The verbal phrase translated made him little less is the causative of the verb "to lack," followed by the adjective "little": "you have caused him to be little less than...." Little less than God is not to be taken as rough equality with God, but viewed as higher than the rest of creation. In order to make clear the relation of less than and "inferior to," it is sometimes necessary to indicate a complement of made; for example, "you made people to have a place only a little beneath you" or "you created people and gave them a place which is below only you."

Again, it would seem an impossible task to interpret this Psalm responsibly without being well versed in the culture of the Ancient Near East, as well as being proficient in the Hebrew language. And yet, this is what happens all too frequently today.

Verse 9

9 Yahweh, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all of the earth!

The final words of the Psalm reiterate and emphasise the starting point of the Psalm; a hymn of praise to Yahweh for his care and concern for humanity, in spite of our diminutive size and function. This repetition forms part of a literary device known as inclusion and is crucial for a 'correct' understanding of our text, as Wendland (2002:108) states:

Inclusion...is one of the most common literary techniques in Hebrew (and in most other world literatures as well, including the Greek New Testament). It is important because it serves to demarcate a complete textual unit, whether small (strophe) or large (an entire Psalm).

In this type of text *bounding* device, one element occurs at the beginning and it's parallel at the end of a given compositional unit. The second element is similar in several key respects to the first—in terms of form and/or content. This is also known as an *inclusio*. It signals that the unit "includes" everything between the A and B lines. It is a device frequently used in the hallelujah Psalms: the repetition stresses the purpose of these hymns as proclaiming universal praise to the LORD (e.g., 103:1a, 22b).

Conclusion

This Psalm was specifically chosen for its technical difficulties, to highlight the utter significance of being well versed in the Hebrew language, in order to make tough interpretational choices. There are various points in the Psalm where this is evident, such as the delineation of text units in lines one and two; the focal point in the middle of the Psalm about the place of humanity in God's scheme; and the distant parallels of verse one and nine that form an inclusive unit and give an 'answer' to the question in the centre (that in the light of our insignificance, we can draw significance from our role as overseers of creation and by praising God for the mystery of life and the questions we do not yet have the answers to).

8.5. Make a comparison with similar passages in both the OT and NT (using several versions), noting any close correspondences in form and content.

An intertextual reading of this Psalm with other Old and New Testament passages highlights some of the divergent theologies evident both within and outside of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Jewish interpreters would highlight the correspondences with Genesis 1:26 where the wonder of creation is described in a

positive light and also Job 7:17, a negative account of suffering by Job at the hands of God. These passages highlight the two extremes of the wonderment of birth and the subsequent question of suffering throughout life. No neat theological answer is given and the relational tension between creator and creation is maintained. New Testament and subsequent Christian interpreters on the other hand want to find answers to life's mysteries and hence we find parallel passages in Hebrews (2:6-8) and 1 Corinthians (15:27) where the expression 'son of man' (perhaps quoted from this Psalm) is equated with Jesus of Nazareth, and purported as being evidence of his divinity. This view is possibly supported by the passage in Matthew 21:16, where it could be said that Jesus was claiming praise due only to God.

Summary

The importance of Hebrew for an understanding of the spirituality of Psalm 8 is evident in the textual and extra-textual issues associated with this poem. The difficulties that pertain to this are contained in the technical textual structural aspects of the Psalm. As is typical of Hebrew poetry, there is a central pivot point on which the two halves of the song are balanced. In this case this central tenet is in the form of a question relating to the meaning and purpose of humanity in Yahweh's grand scheme of things. Movement is evident alongside this structure from general to specific and back again to general. The extensive use of body metaphors contributes extensively to the impact of the overall 'picture' highlighted in the Psalm. What makes an understanding of Hebrew even more relevant to an understanding of Psalm 8 is the meaning and placement of specific phrases, for example 'elohim' and 'son of man'. The different premises for interpreting this Psalm from Jewish and Christian perspectives consequently bring about two rather differing views on its message. Jewish commentators focus on the anthropocentric thrust derived from the Psalm's central point and also an understanding of the phrase 'son of man' as strengthening humanity's connection to the earth. On the other hand, Christian commentators emphasise the 'inclusio' created by the first and last verses, which support a more theocentric approach praising the greatness of Yahweh. This is further justified by attributing the phrase 'son of man' to Jesus believed to be God in the New Testament.

CHAPTER 9: TEST CASE THREE: PSALM 41 – EXEGESIS AND SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

As with Psalms One and Two, Psalms Forty and Forty-one form a pair, and together they enclose the first book of the Psalter. This inclusio is formed by a repetition of the ‘ashreh’ sayings from the beginning of Book I, but with the extended responsibility that living a life of ‘Torah’ obedience brings, namely care for the needy. This ‘ABBA’ structure is represented as follows (Kang, 2009:40-42):

- A Happiness in delighting in God’s Torah, not associating with the ways of the wicked (1:1-2)
- B Happiness in taking refuge in God (2:12)
- B Happiness in trusting God (40:4)
- A Happiness in having concern for the needy (41:1)

This rather simplistic ‘formula’ for happiness is not a recipe for a trouble free existence. The thematic strand threaded through the entire Psalter is sufficient proof that the message of this ‘book’ is about hope flying in the face of trouble and suffering; searching for meaning and divine order in a world hopelessly devoid of such. Kang (2009:45-47) affirms this as follows:

God’s people are continually encouraged to live in a godly way in the disoriented world (Pss 40–41), striving to conform themselves to the ideal, exemplary individual depicted in Psalms 1–2. Despite ongoing tensions between the godly and the wicked and between the godly self and the sinful self, hope and happiness are there because God forgives, protects, saves, and does justice for his people when they keep on obeying God’s instruction (Pss 1:1-2; 40:8), trusting in him (Pss 2:12; 34:8; 40:4), and caring for others (Ps 41:1).

In line with the thesis of this dissertation (on the importance of Hebrew for a Biblical Spirituality), Wendland (2002:169-170) highlights some of the structural difficulty in translating (in our case interpreting) Psalm 41; elements which would be missed and therefore mistranslated (misinterpreted) without the necessary proficiency in the source language. He notes that “Psalm 41 is distinguished by a somewhat different pattern of variation in personal reference.” This variation needs to be kept in mind as a key in the wider discourse structure. This necessitates that the macrostructure or metatheme be considered in the process of deciding whether a literal rendering of the poetic device in question is to be followed.

Thanksgiving for God's Provision in Time of Sickness

41 For the *music* director. A Psalm of David.^a

¹ Blessed *is the one who* has regard for *the* poor;
in *the* day of disaster, Yahweh delivers him.

² Yahweh protects him and keeps him alive;
he is blessed in the land,
and you do not give him
into the will^b of his enemies.

³ Yahweh sustains him on *his* sick bed.

In his illness, you ₁restore to health₁.^c

⁴ As for me, I said, "O Yahweh, be gracious *to* me.
Heal me,^d for I have sinned against you."

⁵ My enemies speak evil about me,
"When will he die and his name perish?"

⁶ And when one comes to see *me*, he speaks falsely;
his heart gathers disaster for itself.
He goes out to the street; he speaks.

⁷ All who hate me speak together against me.

Against me they assume the ₁worst₁.^e for me:

⁸ "A ruinous thing is poured out on him,
and *now* that he lies down, he will not rise up again."

⁹ Even ₁my close friend₁,^f whom I trusted,
who ate my bread,
has lifted *his* heel against me.

¹⁰ But you, O Yahweh, be gracious to me and raise me up
that I may repay them.

¹¹ By this I know that you delight in me:
because my enemy has not shouted in triumph over me.

¹² As for me, you have upheld me in my integrity,
and you have set me in your presence forever.

¹³ Blessed *be* Yahweh, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and Amen.

An analysis of Psalm 41

Wendland's (2002:204-209) "ten-step method" of exegesis, which he summarises into "five primary procedures", will again be followed with this last test psalm.

9.1. Determine the Psalm's overall communicative purpose, that is, its genre; then take note of the major speech functions plus any associated emotions within the various discourse parts.

Psalm 41 concludes Book I of the Psalter, but also forms part of and concludes a group of four adjacent Psalms (38-41) with very similar themes (NIV Study Bible):

- 38 – Prayer for relief from serious illness and enemies: a confession of sin.
- 39 – Prayer for relief from serious illness and enemies: a confession of sin.
- 40 – Prayer for relief from troubles (serious illness?) and enemies: a confession of sin.
- 41 – Prayer for relief from serious illness and enemies: a confession of sin.

The genre of Psalm 41 is disputed and while some see it as a hymn of thanksgiving, others label it a hymn of suffering or complaint. Bratcher and Reyburn have the following to say about the main theme and structure of this Psalm:

The Psalmist is sick (verse 8) and is insulted by enemies and abandoned by friends, who consider his illness as God's punishment for sin.

The Psalm opens with a statement of faith in God (verses 1–3), who protects and blesses those who are concerned for the poor. Then the Psalmist describes his situation: ill, abandoned, friendless (verses 4–9); so he prays to the Lord for health, confident that the Lord will answer him because he does what is right (verses 10–12).

Verse 13 is not properly a part of this Psalm; it forms the conclusion to Book One of the Psalms (Psalms 1–41).

In light of the above, a suitable heading for this Psalm might be something like 'God restores a broken man'. This makes plain that there is a threefold theme running throughout, namely declaration of God's justice, lament for suffering, and finally thanksgiving for restoration (proof of the declaration made at the start). Although verse 13 might not be part of the Psalm, it is not out of place in its praise of Yahweh, who has shown himself faithful and just.

In terms of language theory [as one of the three important elements required for Biblical Spirituality as an academic discipline (mentioned in previous chapters), along with exegesis and continued meaning] it is important to take note of the speech acts occurring within the Psalm and their function. Wendland (2002:176) describes the dominant speech act in this psalm to be declarative; a twofold declaration about God and man. The purpose thereof may be described as:

...an utterance that asserts or teaches some fact about the nature and works of God or man, something concerning his/their attributes and actions.

Blessed is he who has regard for the weak [assertion about man]; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble [assertion about God]. (Ps. 41:1)

9.2. Plot the Psalm's compositional structure, that is, its major and minor divisions and how they fit together to form and convey the main message of the whole text.

In its structure, the Psalm is very symmetrical, composed of four stanzas of three verses each. The first and fourth stanzas frame the prayer with expressions of confidence; stanzas two and three elaborate the prayer. Verse 13 is actually not part of the Psalm but the doxology that closes Book I.

Psalm 41 consists of four stanzas:

Stanza 1: (v.1-3) – God blesses those who care for the poor

Stanza 2: (v.4-6) – A prayer for healing and deliverance

Stanza 3: (v.7-9) – Betrayed by friend and foe

Stanza 4: (v.10-12) – A prayer for vindication

[Doxology: (v.13) – Blessed be Yahweh, Israel's God, from beginning to end]

9.3. Formulate a thematic outline which is, in effect, a summary of the main content units of the Psalm and its constituent stanzas.

Verse 1:

(Line 1) The blessed is the man of Psalm 1 is repeated in this the conclusion of Book I again as "blessed is the one", but here it refers to those who have regard for the poor.

(Line 2) Day of disaster presupposes that in life one is bound to have trouble at some stage, but because of care shown for the poor, Yahweh will deliver such person.

Verse 2:

(Line 3-6) The generality of verse 1 is made more specific here, in that deliverance is now described as to protect and keep alive; blessed is explained as blessed in the land and not being given over to enemies.

Verse 3:

(Line 7-8) Yahweh sustains is juxtaposed with you restore to health, as the person is on his sick bed with his illness. There is also movement away from speaking about Yahweh in the third person to speaking to Yahweh. Yahweh likewise occurs at the beginning of both verses three and four, which highlights that it is Yahweh who both protects and sustains.

Verse 4:

(Line 9-10) The Psalmist now contrasts the blessedness of the person mentioned in verses one to three, with self and uses the phrase “as for me”. The tense also moves from present to past which seems to indicate that the remainder of the Psalm, up to the end of verse ten, contains the content of the prayer for healing and deliverance. The Psalmist is looking back at the time of illness and betrayal. Yahweh is again mentioned by name and asked to be gracious and to heal. The last part of line ten “for I have sinned against you” is rather strange and could be a confession of sin either committed knowingly or unknowingly, which would then be better rendered “if I have sinned against you”.

Verse 5:

These verses start with a wish veiled in the form of a question posed by the Psalmist’s enemies that he would not only die, but that his name will die out with him.

Verse 6:

One of the Psalmist’s enemies comes to him pretending to be a friend, but is on a fact-finding mission and then goes out to spread gossip in the streets. The picture is one of coming and going, perhaps showing their unreliability and possibly even a veiled reference to Satan?

Verse 7:

The singular enemy is then expanded to include all those who hate him speaking in a united voice against the Psalmist assuming or perhaps even hoping for the worst.

Verse 8:

The question in verse five now becomes a statement of the ultimate demise of the Psalmist that he will not rise again.

Verse 9:

The downward spiral is completed when even the Psalmist's closest friend, whom he trusted, has betrayed him in the worst possible way.

Verse 10:

Here the contrast is clear as there is a return to verse four where Yahweh is once again called upon to be gracious and not only heal but to raise the Psalmist up (contrasted with "he will not rise again"), with the aim of taking revenge.

Verse 11:

Here there is a return to the present tense where the Psalmist seems assured not only of forgiveness (if the illness was caused by sin), but even Yahweh's delight, because his enemies have not triumphed over him.

Verse 12:

The "as for me" of verse four is revisited and the Psalmist not only has been raised up physically from the sick bed, but his integrity has also been upheld, thus hinting at the idea that his illness was not caused by sin.

The Psalmist refers now to being set (in contrast with the coming and going of the enemy) in the presence of Yahweh forever.

Verse 13:

The closing doxology of not only this Psalm but also Book I as a whole, giving praise to Yahweh, using the term Psalm One started with – "blessed", this time referring to Yahweh not human beings (and as such 'baruk' is used when referring to God and not 'ashreh'), the unique and eternal God of Israel.

9.4. Interpret the verse-by-verse meaning:

Verse 1

*Blessed is the one who has regard for the poor;
in the day of disaster, Yahweh delivers him.*

Verse 1 as with Psalm 1, begins with 'ashreh' (blessed or happy) is 'he' who has regard for the poor. There are several ambiguities in this sentence, for example who does the 'he' refer to? Does it refer to the narrator, a person in general, or perhaps even David himself as the superscription suggests? Bratcher and Reyburn concur:

“Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble.”

The difficulty here lies in the first line: to whom does “he” refer? ...There is also an ambiguity in the pronoun “him”: Does it refer to the “he” or “the weak” (singular in Hebrew) of line A? A wider discourse perspective might help answer this...

The second point that needs clarification is the phrase “to have regard for the poor”. Is this purely a consideration in terms of treating them with dignity or actual care and provision? Thirdly, does this “regard” only apply to the day of disaster (which is in itself vague), or does it refer to the statement that Yahweh will deliver either the poor or the one who has regard for them or perhaps even both when disaster (either specific or general) occurs?

Verse 2

*Yahweh protects him and keeps him alive;
he is blessed in the land,
and you do not give him
into the will of his enemies.*

Again in verse 2, Yahweh is said to protect 'him' (as above for the variety of options for this person/s) and keep 'him' alive. Verse 2b speaks of 'him' being blessed in the land. Here one is immediately again drawn to Psalm 1, where the righteous are said to be blessed through 'Torah obedience'. The land referred to here would seem to refer to the land of exile if looked at in the present; but, if this Psalm is about hope for the future, it might be speaking of return to the Promised Land – Israel. The 'will of the enemies' subsequently mentioned could refer to the foreigners in whose land

they now find themselves or just to those who would see the demise of the poor and weak in general. Looked at another way, however, verse two could be a further elaboration or explanation of the 'blessed' person of verse 1 – a technique already discussed as typical of Hebrew parallelism. In other words, the blessing would consist of being protected, kept alive and not being given over to his enemies. Bratcher and Reyburn comment on this verse as follows:

There is some uncertainty over the exact form and meaning of verse 2b, he is called blessed in the land; but in general the thought seems to be that such people will have happiness as they live their lives in the land of Israel (see 37.29 and comments). The Hebrew expression "he will be called" can mean "he will be." But the expression can be taken to mean that such a person will be highly thought of by his fellow citizens. If land is not described clearly, it may simply mean in the "country" in contrast to the "city." Accordingly it will sometimes be better to say "land of Israel."

The expression the will of his enemies implies what his enemies may do to him, and therefore in some languages it is necessary to say, for example, "he will not abandon them and let their enemies harm them."

Verse 3

*Yahweh sustains him on his sick bed.
In his illness, you restore to health.*

Verse 3 is again vague in that it refers to Yahweh sustaining 'him' on 'his' sick bed and the reverse parallel restoring 'him' from illness to health. Here again verse 3 could be an explanation of illness referring to 'the day of disaster', and the restoration being further proof of Yahweh's deliverance. Verses 1 to 3 are written referring to the third person and therefore serve as prelude to verse 4 onwards written in the first person. Again Bratcher and Reyburn highlight the difficulties in translating the Hebrew words and phrases:

In line a the verb translated sustains means here "to help," "to strengthen"; In line b the Hebrew is "you will change all his bed in his sickness," which means that Yahweh transforms the person's illness into health, he restores him to health; NJV, with a marginal note that the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain, translates "You will wholly transform his bed of suffering."

Verse 4

As for me, I said, "O Yahweh, be gracious to me.

Heal me, for I have sinned against you.”

This verse begins with a change in voice as the Psalmist now addresses Yahweh directly with a plea for healing and grace, because of confession of sin. Again, the ‘be gracious’ in the first part is expanded on in the second part by ‘heal me’, and inherent in the phrase ‘I have sinned’, is a confession and request for forgiveness. Bratcher and Reyburn highlight that the illness is seen to be a consequence of the Psalmist’s sin against God. Subsequently the plea for healing is linked to a confession of sin against Yahweh marked by ‘for’, which should not be misconstrued to mean ‘because I have sinned against you’.

Verse 5

*My enemies speak evil about me,
“When will he die and his name perish?”*

Here we have the enemy being specified and their actions or behaviour described. They attack the Psalmist’s reputation by speaking evil of him; the content of this speech is then clarified in the second line. They desire not only the Psalmist’s demise, but a complete end to and destruction of ‘his’ lineage.

As is common in Psalms of lament, the enemies are not specifically identified, and one may only conjecture what was the reason for their hatred of the Psalmist. The last part, his name perish, may mean simply to die and be forgotten, as TEV has translated; or else, which would be worse, it may mean to die childless, leaving no descendants to carry on his name.

Verse 6

*And when one comes to see me, he speaks falsely;
his heart gathers disaster for itself.
He goes out to the street; he speaks.*

The Psalmist is attacked even further by the enemy not only wishing his demise, but taking deliberate steps to ensure it. One of them visits the Psalmist on a fact-finding mission by pretending to be sincere and then goes out into the street to further their evil cause. Some of the Hebrew expressions used in this verse are strange and awkward in translation. The following attempt at clarification is made by Bratcher and Reyburn:

Line b his heart gathers is a bit strange. Some (see Anderson) take "his heart" with the preceding words, "his heart speaks hypocrisy." "Heart" has a variety of meanings; it can denote feeling or thinking, the interior character (as contrasted with the exterior behavior), or even stand for the whole person (as it seems to here). All who hate me is another reference to the Psalmist's enemies.

Verse 7

*All who hate me speak together against me.
Against me they assume the worst for me:*

The motive behind this slander seems to be to gather support and rally against the Psalmist. At first it seems to be effective, as a group seems to form and everyone who belongs to it 'speaks against' the Psalmist and 'assumes' (rather wishes for) 'the worst' for him (in other words death and destruction). The expression "assume the worst for me" holds a number of translational possibilities, as per Bratcher and Reyburn below:

The Hebrew verb may mean "imagine" or "plan". They imagine the worst for me may sometimes be recast as "in their hearts they think up the worst things that can happen to me."

Verse 8

*"A ruinous thing is poured out on him,
and now that he lies down, he will not rise up again."*

The content of the 'street talk' of the Psalmist's enemies is now explicated in that they express that the illness that has befallen him is perhaps deserved, but nonetheless it is something that he will not recover from. According to Bratcher and Reyburn, however, it is not without merit to assume that the "ruinous [evil] thing" that has overcome the Psalmist could be describing a demonic attack or even a curse or a spell "operating like a fatal poison".

Verse 9

*Even my close friend, whom I trusted,
who ate my bread,
has lifted his heel against me.*

Here the affliction of the Psalmist is extended even further in that not only is he ill and his enemies wish his end; they cannot even wait for him to die. Instead they have the audacity to visit him to see how long he will still live; and to drive the nail further into the coffin, his close friend now also betrays him. To eat (bread) with someone was a practice reserved for those whom one trusted enough to allow into one's home and to be part of one's family. This intimacy is then shattered in the second part of the verse with one of the worst insults one can give – lifting one's heel against someone. In modern day language this would be equated with being 'stabbed in the back' or being 'kicked in the face'. The downward bodily and figurative movement is now complete, creating the expectation that what is to follow is exactly what the Psalmist's enemies have sought all along. Bratcher and Reyburn say the following:

The expression lifted his heel against me may express the idea of violence; most, however, see it in terms of an insult or of betrayal, treachery.

Verse 10

*But you, O Yahweh, be gracious to me and raise me up
that I may repay them.*

However, in the face of all hope and opposition, almost as a final cry of a dying man, the Psalmist calls out to Yahweh. One would think that this would be a plea for survival only, but the Psalmist is not done, there is still some fight left. The 'be gracious' of verse 4 is repeated but taken one step further in that there is a request for a physical *and* metaphoric rise over the Psalmist's enemies; in other words, not only an appeal for healing and a restoration of reputation, but for revenge.

Verses 11 & 12

*By this I know that you delight in me:
because my enemy has not shouted in triumph over me.
As for me, you have upheld me in my integrity,
and you have set me in your presence forever.*

In this verse there is a change in both tense and perspective. Suddenly we have the Psalmist expressing gratitude and confidence in Yahweh, because of the position he now finds himself in. He looks back and sees not only Yahweh's care, but even his

delight in him, which he deduces is as a result of his pleas and having been completely restored. This delight is listed in two ways, both in that his enemies' plans have fallen flat and flown in their faces, and that the Psalmist's integrity has been held intact. Another way of looking at it would be that the Psalmist feels vindicated as a result of his charitable deeds and good reputation spoken about in the first part of the Psalm. This can be deduced from the phrase, "you have upheld me in my integrity". The last line of the verse is rather strange in that the Psalmist expresses being set in Yahweh's presence forever. A possible explanation for this could be an expression of confidence that Yahweh has 'come through' for him once and will therefore do so again whenever needed in the future. Another would be an eschatological interpretation that what is done in the present life will continue into eternity. Bratcher and Reyburn expand on this as follows:

The meaning of verse 12b, in thy presence for ever, is the same as expressed in 16.11 and 23.6. Anderson comments: "he will be restored to God's favour, and will enjoy his blessings as long as he lives." Some take the word presence (literally "face") here to mean the presence of Yahweh in the Temple.

Dahood takes the prayer to mean that the Psalmist wants to be taken directly into the presence of Yahweh without dying, as were Enoch and Elijah, and there live forever, but this idea has not been proven. In thy presence must sometimes be translated "where you are," or "in the place where you are," or "in the place where people come to worship you."

Verse 13

*Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and Amen.*

The final verse in the Psalm is seen by the majority of commentators as not part of the Psalm, but a doxology to close Book I of the Psalter. This encloses the Psalm and the book by repeating 'blessed', this time referring not to 'man', but to Yahweh in the form of praise and thanksgiving for 'his' care for Israel from beginning to end. The repetition of "amen" at the end marks the conclusion to the prayer and should for the most part not be carried over into English as it has a specific meaning which needs to be conveyed as with all other words and parts of speech, as per Bratcher and Reyburn below:

The word Amen means "So be it" or "It shall be so"—a strong affirmation, expressing approval of, and agreement with, what has been said. If a translation is to be fully meaningful, even such terms as Amen should communicate their significance. In some languages it is best to avoid the borrowed form and introduce something equivalent to "This is certainly true" or "Indeed this is true."

Conclusion

Wallace (2009:85-86) places a great deal of importance on tenses and time for an accurate interpretation of this Psalm, in particular as it relates to the statements of confidence in relation to the occasion of the illness. Of equal importance to him are the...

singular, masculine pronouns and verb forms throughout this section in the Hebrew [that] are hidden in modern English translations for the sake of inclusivity. The ambiguity of the Psalm is thereby lost. The singular, masculine pronoun could refer to the Psalmist, i.e. David, or be used generically. In the spirit of many of the Psalms we have seen in Book I (cf. especially Psalm 1), the ambiguity is deliberate.

It is perhaps because of this ambiguity (whether intentional or not) that Psalm 41 has been attributed to various biblical characters through the ages and continues to be applicable even today for whosoever would take comfort from these words. That is after all the beauty (and difficulty) in reading and appropriating the message of the Psalms for contemporary readers. Yes, it is a work of art, which can be appreciated on its own; but it is a work of art with a rich history and depth of meaning that is waiting to be discovered once the door of the Hebrew language is opened.

9.5 Make a comparison with similar passages in both the OT and NT (using several versions), noting any close correspondences in form and content.

The similar passages in Psalm 38 – 40 and Psalm 1 and 2 have already been explained in detail above and are merely noted here for the sake of consistency.

Summary

The importance of Hebrew for an understanding of the spirituality of Psalm 41 is again crucial textually, intertextually and extra-textually. Textually, there is an 'inclusio' formed by a repetition of the 'ashreh' sayings of Psalm 1, as well as the separation of creature and creator by the use of a different word translated 'blessed' for Yahweh ('baruch') as opposed to 'ashreh' used only for people. There are also various parallels within the psalm, around groups of psalms and Book 1 of the Psalter as a whole. Thematic similarity is clear from the Hebrew words used, but not always clear in translations of the text. Of significance are the distinctive changes in voice, person and tense, time and personal pronoun use affecting the interpretation of the Psalm and its overall message. Intertextually there is seemingly a clear correspondence with Job which enriches both passages. Extra-textually again there is a difference in Jewish and Christian approaches, with the latter linking this passage to the betrayal of Jesus by his disciple Judas.

CHAPTER 10: IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FROM THE THREE TEST PSALMS ON THE ISSUES/THEMES OF FAITH IN THESE PSALMS

10.1 Introduction

Looking again at the methodology proposed by Lombaard in Chapter 3 for the discipline of Christian Spirituality, we will now take a look at the Psalms analysed in the previous three chapters and apply these principles to see what insights we can gain as a result.

The two tenets of his view on the subject (i.e. “the importance of ancient expressions of faith (spiritualities) in the Bible, and the importance of modern expressions of faith (spiritualities) as they draw on the Bible” (2011:1)) were explored under the headings: language, exegesis and continued meaning.

The last of these three (continued meaning) and by extension the second of the two tenets mentioned above (the importance of modern expressions of faith / spiritualities as they draw on the Bible, will be discussed in the following chapter.

For the present chapter it is mainly the first of the two tenets (“the importance of ancient expressions of faith (spiritualities) in the Bible) that will be explored and hence also only the first two elements of the methodology proposed for the discipline of Biblical Spirituality (language and exegesis).

10.2. Psalm 1

10.2.1. Language

As has already been argued in Chapter 5, the importance of a strong grounding in the biblical languages cannot be overestimated when it comes to understanding the Biblical texts in their contexts.

In addition, it makes possible a comparative-literary approach, which takes into account texts from the cultures surrounding that within which the Old Testament was written and therefore sheds light on the biblical text in a way not possible without a knowledge of Hebrew and the history and cultures of the ancient Near East.

Integral to any study of the Old Testament book of Psalms is the importance of knowledge of Hebrew poetry. Many of the elements contained therein are not immediately evident to those not versed in the structure and artistry of language. This is true not only for the understanding thereof in the source languages, but is also by extension indispensable for a translation of these scriptures into English.

Hebrew poetry relies heavily on parallelisms to express meaning beyond the mere words or content. These parallelisms are much clearer in the Hebrew script than in an already translated text and their purpose is (rather simplistically) to emphasize through expanding, reinforcing, or comparing ideas. Furthermore, much of the phonological expression is diminished or even lost when one moves away from the source language(s).

Below is a diagram from the NIV Study Bible giving a brief summary and rather condensed view of Hebraic parallelisms⁴⁸. This is then followed by a more comprehensive and technical explanation from Wendland on the nature of these parallelisms. An understanding of the nature of this literary device was crucial in the analysis of Psalms 1, 8 and 41 in the previous chapters. No proper exegesis of any Hebrew poetry is possible without such knowledge and application. The diagram and further explanation which follows are included verbatim to graphically demonstrate the extreme importance of a technical grasp of Hebrew for a spirituality truly based on the Biblical text.

⁴⁸ For a more detailed explanation on Hebraic Parallelism, see Wendland (2002).

NIV Study Bible (2011:859):

TYPE	CHARACTERISTIC
I. Synonymous	Repetition of same thought
Identical	Each element is synonymous
Similar	Each element is similar
Incomplete	Second element of previous line is repeated
Continued	Second element is repeated and built upon
II. Antithetic	Parallel by contrast (by use of opposite)
III. Synthetic	Building on thought
Completion	Completes a thought
Comparison	Draws an analogy
Reason	Gives a reason
Conceptual	Use of theme element
IV. Climactic	Builds on same word or phrase
V. Emblematic	Use of simile or metaphor

In the above diagram, the first column lists five types of Hebrew parallelism and their various sub-types. The second column contains an explanation of the functions of the second part of a parallel phrase as it relates to the first.

Wendland's explanation (2002:98-99):

(Line A and B in each example refers to the first and second parts of the parallel phrases in Hebrew poetry.)

Relations involving *similarity*, or *synonymous parallelism*

1. **base–restatement**: Line B is very similar in meaning to line A.
2. **base–amplification**: Line B adds some significant aspect of meaning to line A.
3. **general–specific**: Line B is a more specific instance or example of what is said in line A.

Relation involving *contrast*

4. **base–contrast**: Usually two elements in line B contrast with the corresponding segments of line A.

Relations involving *temporal* addition

5. **base–sequential time**: In line A the first event occurred, after that in line B a second event occurred.
6. **base–simultaneous time**: The events of lines A and B occurred at relatively the same time.
7. **base–circumstance**: The event in A is primary, and in B another, subordinated, circumstantially related event is reported.

Relations involving *causal* addition

8. **reason–result**: Because one event happens, therefore another occurs.
9. **ground–conclusion**: Line A provides the basis/evidence for the conclusion in line B.
10. **reason–request**: Because of the event in line A, there is a request/command in line B.
11. **means–request**: By means of an event in line A, a request is made in line B.
12. **means–result**: By means of the event in line A, the event in line B occurs.
13. **means–purpose**: A is done in order that B may occur/happen.
14. **request–purpose**: The request of line A is made in order to achieve the event in line B.
15. **real condition–result**: If the event in line A happens (or is true), then the one in line B results (or is also true).
16. **unreal condition–result**: If one event (A) had happened (it didn't), then the other (B) would have occurred (but it didn't).
17. **condition–unexpected result**: Even if/although one event (A) happens (or is true), the other (B) occurs (is true), contrary to expectation.

Relations involving *completive* addition

18. **base–attribution**: The quality in line B applies attributively to a noun or pronoun in line A.
19. **base–location**: The event of line B occurred where the main event line of A took place.
20. **base–manner**: Line B tells how the event of line A was carried out.
21. **base–response**: Line B provides a formal reply to what is said in line A.
22. **base–content**: Line B gives the content/object of the verb in line A, often a verb of speech.
23. **base–comparison**: Line B is compared to line A in terms of likeness/degree.
24. **base–addition**: The distinct content of line B is added to that of line A.
25. **base–alternative**: Line B provides an alternative to what is stated in line A.

As is evident from the above illustrations, technical knowledge of the structure of the Hebrew language is not an optional extra for an understanding and application of the Biblical text. Anyone who holds to the idea that they base their faith on the 'Bible' and yet does not deal with the text in its source languages, nor gives the reading and exegesis of such text anything less than their full effort, will in the opinion of the current author not be deriving the full benefit of the Biblical narrative for their own spiritual journey. Sadly, this is the case for the majority of so-called 'believers', countless numbers of whom have never even read the full text of the Scriptures in their vernacular.

As has been illustrated in Chapter Seven on the analysis of Psalm 1, it consists of two strophes and is "based on contrasts or oppositions, which are sharpened forcefully and logically by the use of well-placed markers". This is clear in the Hebrew. In addition to this, metaphors abound that are typical of the ancient near eastern landscape (figuratively and geographically).

The first stanza is equal in length to the second and highlights the fate of the "righteous" person as opposed to the fate of the "wicked" person in stanza two.

Much of the meaning of this particular Psalm is inherent in the language in which it was composed and written and can easily be overlooked if one is not well versed in Hebrew. Not only the parallelisms, which highlight various elements such as emphasis, strengthening, progression, opposition and intensification, but also the sound quality of the words, which link ideas together, are lost as a result. Furthermore, movement and posture (walk, stand and sit) and various other body metaphors are significant textual markers and highlight the downward spiralling into final and total destruction of 'the wicked' as opposed to the rise of 'the righteous' to blessing and prosperity under the rule of Yahweh.

The standard form of the Hebrew clause is Verb + Object and when this order is reversed or changed in any way it is usually deliberate and a significant signpost of meaning, for example to highlight an action as opposed to the person causing the event, etc. This usage is evident in Psalm One (verse 6a and 6b) where the fate of the wicked and the righteous are brought into stark contrast in this very way.

10.2.2. Exegesis

The use of the Hebrew term 'ashreh' as the opening of not only Psalm One but the entire Psalter is significant. Not only does it typically start with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, but it also summarises so much of the situation in which the authors / editors of the collection of Psalms found themselves. Why would happiness be so important, if not addressing an environment where there was a severe lack of circumstances that would allow for such? The use of the phrase also highlights the thrust of ancient wisdom writing, the purpose of which was to provide practical advice for daily living, which, if followed, would ensure a successful life.

The term translated 'happy' here would be very close in meaning to 'successful' in the modern world. This condition is alluded to as being within reach of anyone who follows the steps outlined in the verses that follow. A person (although the usage here refers to "the man") who wishes to attain this state is then provided with a list of do's and do not's. Firstly (the 'negative' aspects of behaviour"), by keeping away from those who are wicked, sinful and scornful of religion and secondly (the positive attributes to acquire), by making the law of Yahweh 'his' delight and meditating on it day and night. This would seem a simple principle to follow and therefore the allure to adhere thereto in order to be "blessed" or "prosperous" or "successful".

The following verses then show the results of this choice for the good, rather than following the choices of those who have no regard for Yahweh. The picture is clear and it would seem foolish to not follow the path of the good, with so many rewards promised (though generally, not specifically).

On a theological level one has to try and understand what this song or poem would have meant to the Israelites in exile. This state of complete disorientation must have destroyed the ideas they had about Yahweh, his temple, religious life in general and the meaning of life in a foreign land and culture. This is evident in Psalm 137, in which one finds a recollection of mourning over the separation from land and people. Stability has given way to instability with a total collapse of any religious frame of reference.

Songs or poetry are often used as a way of reflecting on society. This reflection can take the form of mirroring or of overemphasis (visual or thematic) and frequently have a 'prophetic edge'. However, in Hebrew poetry there is also the added dimension of teaching through song. Here we find the Psalmist educating the audience about the virtue of obeying the law of Yahweh, even when life does not seem to make sense, because ultimately there will be reward and an end to the present oppressive rule.

This eschatological slant is important because much of the daily life of the exiled people flew in the face of such a picture, where instead it was the wicked that prospered. Ultimate happiness is often emphasised when present reality contradicts our theology and this is very likely also the case here. Maintaining the status quo is propagated as a means of ensuring the safety and posterity of the Israelite nation. At first glance this Psalm might seem to be that of a dissident voice, challenging the people to follow the law of Yahweh (in opposition to the 'pagan' land in which they found themselves, so as to prosper). Yet it is actually a call to calm and integration and subsequently also a suppression of any form of rebellion or uprising by an acceptance of one's lot as from the hand of Yahweh (cf. Jeremiah). An example of this is the image of the tree planted by a stream; not a metaphor that emphasises the temporary nature of the exilic situation.

10.3. Psalm 8

10.3.1. Language

This Psalm has a couple of complicated Hebrew phrases that could allow for a variety of interpretations or translations. It is here that a thorough working knowledge of the source language is crucial if one is to have the ability to make these decisions for oneself, or at least weigh the different options found in various commentaries and study bibles, with some degree of objectivity.

Some of the phrases that also demand attention include the use of 'son of man' in verse 4b, the meaning of which can easily be read back into the Old

Testament text from a modern New Testament understanding, as referring to Jesus of Nazareth.

Verse 2 is particularly difficult to translate as there are a variety of factors that need to be considered, for example where verse two ends and verse three begins. These options can only be weighed with a high level of grammatical expertise in Hebrew. This would include the very tricky issue of vocalisation, which could radically alter the meaning of a word and by extension also that of the phrase, sentence and even the entire psalm.

10.3.2. Exegesis

There is constant interplay in this Psalm between the small and the large, between that which is below and that which is above and between that which rules and that which is ruled over.

This use of language emphasises the distinction between Yahweh, the creator, who is over and above all of creation and the minuteness of the creation. Following on from this, human beings are brought into focus as the chosen rulers over creation, on behalf of Yahweh, who has chosen to exalt them and make them inferior only to the 'gods' or God self (once again dependent on one's interpretation of another difficult term – 'elohim').

As is evident in the previous chapter, Psalm 8 extols the virtues of humanity (although not inherent, but God-given). This is in opposition to the foolishness of those who live as if there were no God, in Psalm 14. The pictures used by the Psalmist bring to remembrance the creation narrative in Genesis, as well as the Job narrative that speaks about Leviathan, "that ancient sea monster" and God's response to Job's questioning.

10.4. Psalm 41

10.4.1. Language

Psalm 41 again begins with 'ashreh'; the same word used at the beginning of Psalm 1 referring to the person who delights in Yahweh and meditates on his law day and night. Here however it refers to the 'blessedness' of the person who cares for the poor.

There are several textual devices used in the Hebrew that delineate and emphasise the focal point of the Psalm. Stanzas one and four (expressions of confidence and trust in Yahweh) serve to frame the prayer of the Psalmist in stanzas two and three. The prayer itself uses various techniques to intensify the regression into a very lowly state where not only is the Psalmist ill, but also his friends have left him and even his closest confidant has betrayed him. The language moves from the general to the specific and posture is once again important both literally and figuratively. Tense, mood, voice and personal pronouns are all crucial to how one interprets this Psalm.

Towards the end of the Psalm, the Psalmist looks back and praises Yahweh for not only 'raising' him up from the sickbed, but also letting him triumph over his enemies, who at one stage seemed to have the 'upper hand'.

10.4.2. Exegesis

This Psalm is also reminiscent of Job in several ways. On a thematic level Job was similarly reduced from a position of wealth, health and power, to one of illness, poverty and defeat. This event could be equated with the 'day of disaster' mentioned in the Psalm. As the Psalmist is betrayed by friends, so Job's friends also leave him in his time of need and even his 'closest friend', his wife, betrays him. There is in both texts the allusion to sin and the accuser and in both instances, the main character (Job and the Psalmist) is justified and restored to a position of health and honour. In one instance there seems also to be an allusion to Psalm 51, where the Psalmist declares himself to have sinned against God, although the similarities are

far more poignant in the group of four Psalms concluding the first book of the Psalter (Psalms 38-41).

10.5. Summary

Following on from the summative remarks above about the use of language and exegesis to gain a truly Biblical Spirituality, the following concluding remarks must be made about the nature of the spirituality of the Israelite nation as found in the Psalter and by extension also the other passages of the Old Testament.

The Israelite nation found themselves exiled and as with any individual or group that has found themselves disoriented as a result of traumatic life circumstances, they too searched for the cause, purpose and meaning thereof. The events that led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exiling of Yahweh's 'chosen' people, created a chasm in the Israelite nation's view of God and their purpose in the 'divine plan' that formed their history. This massive fault line in their theology would never be closed again. This event was so significant that it would affect their history for centuries thereafter.

Having been 'abandoned by God', their place of worship destroyed, their laws obliterated as a result (there were strict requirements for the sacrifices offered that depended on the use of the temple), and their homes lost when taken as slaves to a foreign land, they were at the lowest point in their existence as a people. This place of utter defeat could mean the end of any nation, depending on their response to such tragic events. They could have let go of the last remnant of their religion and culture and immersed themselves in this new world and been completely assimilated by it. No doubt some Israelites would have followed this path. However there was a group of people that realised that for Israel to survive as a nation and for their religion to continue they needed to do something. Hence it is the proposition that some of the priests, scribes and temple singers composed and edited songs for Yahweh's people which reinterpreted the past and thus provided hope for what seemed to be an uncertain future. This is a mark of Israelite, Old Testament, and Biblical Spirituality - a spirituality that it is able to adapt to a changing world and in a very real sense, reinvent itself through the reinterpretation of its sacred literature. This crucial point in this thesis will be investigated further in the following chapters.

In the three test Psalms discussed above this reality is evident in the way that personal and national events are reinterpreted not as defeats, but as the chastising of Yahweh for the sinful behaviour of 'his' people. Hope is created and the assurance is given that there will not be a total destruction of the nation, but that through obedience to certain God-given norms (Torah piety, trust in Yahweh, confession and forgiveness of sins, and care for the poor and needy) divine order will once again be restored, and the Israelite nation established forever under the divine rule of Yahweh and no longer through an earthly king.

CHAPTER 11: IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS FROM CHAPTER TEN THAT MAY BE DRAWN FOR THE FAITH / SPIRITUALITY OF MODERN PEOPLE

The last of the three aspects of a methodology for Biblical Spirituality (continued meaning) and by extension the second of the two tenets mentioned in the previous chapter (the importance of modern expressions of faith / spiritualities as they draw on the Bible, will be discussed in this present chapter.

11.1. Psalm 1

Psalm 1 provides a wealth of understanding about the life of faith. Just as the Psalmist writes about what is required to live a happy or successful life, so too church and society are filled with books that seemingly provide 'solutions' to the so-called 'problems' of life. Our lives are also filled with dichotomy, between what we believe and the way we perceive reality and act within it. Some Christian writers have referred to this as 'practical atheism' (Groeschel, 2010), meaning that while we subscribe mentally to a set of spiritual norms, in reality our lives sometimes mimic a lifestyle antagonistic to such beliefs.

Our lives are full of contrasts and oppositions, especially in the economic sector, where the poor suffer lack on a daily basis and the rich live in lavish luxury without a thought for those who are impoverished; sometimes as a direct result of their financial exploitation and greed. Technology has played a large part in this, in that markets are driven by decisions made at the touch of a button, millions of miles away from the people affected by these decisions. Our ever increasing desire for comfort also leads us to acquire more and more things in order to make our lives easier. The expected fulfilment from these acquisitions however is short lived, which leads us to acquire even more with the hope of filling this void. The search for meaning and significance is ever present.

Others lose hope of ever achieving financial security and search instead for meaning in other areas. For these, temporal pleasure often serves as a substitute for the happiness so longed for but out of their reach. Too often, religion and sensual pleasures are the paths followed to fill this need. Oppressed people are often drawn to violence to attain what they have been deprived of and religion is used on the side of both the wealthy and the poor, either to maintain the status quo

or to try and overthrow it. However, the desires of the heart are still a misplaced picture of what makes for a truly happy life.

It is in response to situations such as these, that Psalm One provides us with another avenue or approach to life that promises both happiness and fulfilment – delight in and obedience to the teachings of Yahweh. Parallel to this, in the New Testament, the teachings of Jesus Christ evidence an application and sometimes reinterpretation of many Old Testament texts. Many of these teachings echo those of the Psalms and are grounded in justice and care for the poor, oppressed and needy. Today, many Christians no longer follow such teachings, but have replaced this theology with one of self-preservation, comfort and prosperity.

Gradually, the teachings of Jesus were replaced by the church, which took over the role of saviour and protector under the guise of servants of God and this very Christ. The manipulation and abuse that took place within this massive organisation or institution became apparent over time and as history has shown, could no longer remain hidden. This led to the various reformations and counter-reformations of the middle ages. In the ensuing era, church and science became rivals for the minds of people, and the age of exploration dawned. Various theories promulgated for centuries by the church as the divine order of things were not only brought into question but shattered. One can truly say that the world was no longer 'flat'.

Colonization and Christianity then joined forces to conquer as much physical and spiritual territory as possible, in the great missionary endeavour. Bible translation soon became an indispensable tool for both religious promulgation and trade. It was thus necessary that the Scriptures be translated and reinterpreted within each new culture of this 'new world'. Christianity, in order to ensure its very survival and posterity, of necessity thus had to be syncretised with the local cultures and folklore it was confronted with. This ensured social stability as well as continued trade.

In the meantime, however, truth and meaning in the West were being sought outside the walls of religion and great discoveries were made at the universities of the world, in the areas of science, medicine and philosophy (the search for truth and meaning outside of faith). Religion would not die a quiet death though and several

prominent theologians and archaeologists set out to prove once and for all the veracity of the Scriptures. Some proof of ancient sites mentioned in the Bible was discovered, but for the most part it was a contrived quest. Again, adjustments had to be made and scholars turned their attention instead to the literature of the Bible and the significance of the stories contained therein to provide moral guidance. This was because scientific evidence could no longer be found to substantiate the historical claims of the Biblical text.

Today we too live in an unstable world, confronted by some of the worst global issues ever faced by humanity. It is in this context that we as humans are once again looking for answers to the meaning of life and solutions to the global crisis. We are seeing a rise in religious fundamentalism, fuelled by a stability promised by fanatics who provide simplistic solutions to complex problems. The so-called return to the Bible as 'word of God' and a rejection of any knowledge that would question this are rampant. Focus on Satan as catalyst in stirring any mental assent against the Bible is reinforced through built-in safeguards, such as belief in a hell for all those who would dare disagree with its archaic beliefs.

The traditional dogmas of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments, exemplified in the Psalms as studied above focus on issues that we too are faced with nowadays – justice and care for the poor. However, modern Christianity is self-serving and focuses more on the afterlife than it does on living right while on earth. There is indeed still a place for the spiritual quest in this largely industrialised and dehumanised world in which we live. Religion however in its current form will not suffice. What is needed is a reinterpretation of the Bible that takes seriously both faith and science.

In applying this to Psalm One we immediately encounter some serious problems in bridging the gap between the biblical text and 21st century spirituality. In present society we can no longer keep away from those scornful of religion. The researcher himself is scornful of religion, but does not deny the existence of the divine. He believes in a daily interaction with God, but does not subscribe to 'the law of Yahweh', which he finds contrived and designed by people to perpetuate a certain set of ethnic and religious ideas. One may well add to Bishop Tutu's quotation, "God is not a Christian" (2011), by saying that neither is God a Jew, a Muslim or male.

We live in a world where there are more questions than answers and chaos is the order of the day. Postmodernism has provided us with an avenue to deconstruct everything that has come to be known as truth over the centuries. The author too feels disenfranchised from the church and disoriented as religious certainty has given way. However, he believes in a future filled with hope and purpose. One cannot forever remain in a place of disorientation and soon enough we must find a new way to believe that is relevant to our unique situation. Deconstruction must give way to reconstruction so that once again we can live 'happy' and meaningful lives.

How this is to happen is a process which follows a deliberate choice to go in a specific direction without knowing the outcome. Is this not the same as the faith journey of Abraham? This choice for the future must be grounded in the here and now and not eschatological in focus – we can no longer follow the rainbow to the pot of gold at its end. If there is a gap between life and faith, it is not reality that must change, but our theology. We need to start imagining an alternative future and take deliberate steps to turn that picture into reality.

The claims of Psalm 1 are counterfactual, both in the Bible and in the modern world. It is the wicked not the good that prosper in life. This, however, should not be so. To affect a transfer of power from the rich to the poor and oppressed is an ingredient for revolution. Hence perhaps the words of Jesus, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." This is true not only of secular structures, but also of the church which in a way has become a global power. To challenge the status quo and release the minds of the people held captive for centuries through spiritual abuse and superstition is fraught with danger.

The Christian church is well versed in the art of poetry and song and has used the Psalms for centuries to ensure its posterity. Every Sunday millions of people are told what to believe and how to live their lives. The remarkable thing is they voluntarily subscribe to this process, partly because their hearts are stirred through a new type of Psalm (the modern worship music movement) and partly through the preaching of the charismatic characters hosted on global Christian television networks. They have mastered the art of poetry to bring about not good change, but

conformity and personal wealth. The author proposes that perhaps these same methods rather be used to bring about change for the better?⁴⁹

11.2. Psalm 8

Psalm 8 gives us an example of the link between our faith and societal change. It brings to mind the diminutive size and significance of human beings when compared to the vastness of that which God created with very little effort. Yet God chose humans to rule over and be responsible for the care of that creation. Even though we have an elevated position over creation, we are still part of and also dependent on it. This responsibility has never been more in focus than in the past decade. Because of humanity's consistent abuse of creation over the centuries, we are now starting to reap the unfortunate rewards of our actions. Global warming has hit home and although the writing is on the wall, the industrial superpowers refuse to heed the call to stop their blatant disregard for and pollution of our planet. Psalm 8 reminds us that we are 'sons of man', made from earth with our feet firmly planted thereon. Perhaps it is because of the brevity of life and the fact that the Christian church continually speaks of the imminent return of Jesus to collect his faithful followers, that we expend our natural resources at the expense of subsequent generations.

Another theological factor that seems to give us impetus to continue our destructive path is that we forget that our authority is delegated and we are not God, but dependent creatures. We not only want to rule over creation, but also over one another, forgetting the words of the well-known 'son of man' in the New Testament who came not to rule, but instead to serve.

Of course this Psalm once again highlights the divide between church and science in that it emphasises God as creator. Science for the most part has accepted the theory of evolution as the cause of all things. The Genesis narrative alluded to in this Psalm, gives significance and purpose to humanity, by the sanction of God to populate the earth and rule over it. This era would seem to be over as global overpopulation is rampant and food resources are not sufficient to meet the

⁴⁹ See, de Botton's *Religion for Atheists* (2012).

demand. Also of significance is whether or not one could have purpose and destiny in life without a divine cause?

11.3. Psalm 41

Psalm 41 once again revisits the theme of happiness begun in Psalm One, but emphasises the social element in achieving it. Trust in God is important and so is obedience to the teachings of such God, however you may define them. But for religion to serve any real purpose, it has to take into account the social implications of such belief. What good is religion if it does not address the deficiencies in society and suggest a better way of life? Part of the moral virtue of most faiths is the injunction to take care of the poor and needy. We are all part of the human family and what happens to one affects the other. Perhaps even in our selfishness we know that for us to benefit from others, we must make some contribution to their welfare.

This is often not the case in reality though as we exploit others and are willing to stand on them in order to get what we want, whether it be financial gain or a position of power. However, none of us are immune to the illness and suffering that befalls all of humanity. The origin of illness has theologically been attributed to the opposition of Satan and the sinfulness resulting from following his wicked ways. This is biblically evident from the story of Job on the one hand and the link Jesus often made between sin and illness in the New Testament. According to the Bible suffering and hardship have their origins at the 'fall' in the Garden of Eden (if the Genesis narrative is to be taken literally).

The problem of suffering and pain have haunted humanity for centuries and many explanations given, most of which fall into the category of our failure to live godly lives. The link between confession, forgiveness and healing makes sense in light of this belief and is substantiated by modern psychology. However, the reality in life is that none of us is perfect and often terrible things befall even the innocent. Hence at some time or another in life we will find ourselves in trouble. Perhaps it is because of this that we are reminded in this Psalm to look after the poor, needy and oppressed. Not only will we benefit reciprocally in the long run from this care, but it does something for us psychologically when our lives find purpose beyond the self.

Illness and suffering are bound to remain part of the human condition for all time (at least while on earth). However, we need to stop treating this as a simple problem with a simple cause and a simple solution. Promises of divine healing and instant success create expectations that seldom materialise as much as the church purports. Suffering and illness sometimes serve no purpose whatsoever, although sometimes they create character within us, though this is not necessarily the reason for them. That would make God if not cruel then at the very least inconsistent in choosing who lives and who dies. We are ultimately part of the creation and we will thus also experience suffering, illness and ultimately death. What is important is not that we try and avoid these at all costs, but that we live life to the full while still on earth. This is more often than not a theology that the Biblical text supports; more so than one in which we are just waiting to go to heaven.

CHAPTER 12: THE IMPORTANCE OF A KNOWLEDGE OF HEBREW FOR THE INSIGHTS CONCLUDED ON IN CHAPTERS 10 AND 11.

The present author's knowledge of Hebrew has benefited him in this study in the following two general ways:

Firstly, without the limited (first year) knowledge possessed of the subject, he would not have been able to follow the information and arguments presented in the many commentaries and handbooks studied for this dissertation.

Secondly, the author has realised that in order to take the academic study of the Bible and a spirituality based thereon to the next level; one in which he hopes to be an actual participant and contributor and not merely a bystander, he will definitely need to further his studies in the various languages as well as cultures of the ancient near east.

More specifically, the benefits have been noticeable in the following aspects:

A knowledge of Hebrew has been indispensable in the exegesis of the three Psalms studied in the previous chapters as was highlighted by the difficult interpretational / translational choices which had to be made and which rendered divergent meanings as a result. These choices were also integral to a grasp of the historical issues that occurred as a result and the subsequent split between Jewish and Christian understandings of the text. These were sometimes the result of textual issues, but at other times it seemed more a matter of the exegete's worldview reading the respective theologies back into the text.

In addition, the textual markers that define so much of the message would be overlooked were it not for a grasp of the language. In the Psalms we are confronted with Hebrew poetry which is written in a completely different way from that in English. Words are strategically placed to highlight and emphasise certain points, which would not be possible in English, partly because of its prescriptive sentence structure.

Also concerning the semantics of the Biblical text, meaning is found in words that are often culturally bound and therefore difficult to translate. This is evident for example in the South African phrase 'Ubuntu', used to describe a sense of togetherness. However, words are lexical markers and as such not only carry meaning through sound quality and position, but are also referents of meaning in that they refer to something outside of themselves. These referents belong in semantic domains (categories of meaning) that more often than not overlap to create spheres or maps of meaning. These are not the same in every language and therefore each has to be identified and categorised within the respective culture, place in history, and geographic location. This is critical in order to transfer as much of this meaning cluster into another language and culture.

Finally, one also has to keep in mind that poetry is art and requires a high level of linguistic prowess in the language in which it is written. One has to know the rules of that language well in order to be in a position to 'break' them and recreate such 'language art' in another tongue.

From an intellectual as well as an aesthetic point of view one can see that in order to understand a message communicated in another language, era and culture, and for that message to have an impact on one's own spiritual journey, to the extent that it touches the 'heart' requires an adeptness in that language. Intermediaries, although useful, will never be able to bring the true richness of the message to us in quite the same way as having a personal aptitude in the source language itself would.

Spirituality based on the biblical text in all its fullness, not only requires, but demands such proficiency and expertise.

CHAPTER 13: FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this dissertation the author has sought to emphasise the importance of biblical languages (in this case Hebrew) for a spirituality both exemplified within and derived from the biblical text.

As far as Biblical Spirituality as an academic discipline is concerned, it is believed there is a great future as an ever increasing number of people grow dissatisfied with the concept of religion and the many negative associations attached to it. There is scope for the study of the current change that is taking place both within and outside of the religious sphere. Within the religious sphere, significant shifts are taking place in the Christian faith, as postmodernism impacts on the church.

On the one hand, this influence has resulted in the blossoming of fundamentalism, which has sought to enclose itself in the so-called 'return to the true message of the Bible'. This 'unadulterated' message is then equated more often than not with the reading of the oldest and hence 'purest' form of 'God's word'. For the most part, however, proponents of such beliefs refer only to translations in their own language. These translations are said to have been done 'straight' from the 'original', as if such actually exists, whereas (according to them) all modern translations were done from an intermediate text. This has led, in their eyes, to a diluted and distorted rendering of 'the word'.

On the other hand, many people have grown weary of the ecclesiastical machine and all the abuses and atrocities it has been at the forefront of over the centuries. Modern believers are struggling to come to terms with their faith in the light of science and discoveries made that bring parts of the Bible into question. Translation of ancient documents has led to a popularisation of 'stories' remarkably similar to those attributed to the Jewish and Christian narratives. The age of these literary accounts has led to a dispute regarding them being dated earlier or later than their biblical counterparts. The veracity of certain claims is forcing Christians (and Jews) to rethink their faith, as the history of their teachings is being challenged at the very core.

The response by the church has been slow at times and also very reactionary. The questioning of various truth claims held by the church over centuries has led to a modern rendition of the 'inquisitions' of old. Those found unwilling to confess certain doctrines wholeheartedly are immediately 'excommunicated' from the church. In recent times the questioning of views about hell, the afterlife, ecumenism, inter-religious cooperation, and so forth has led to even world renowned Christian preachers being labelled 'heretics' and their books, once highly sought after, relegated to sale tables.

The power of the masses is being brought to bear against those who would dare 'complicate' religion with academic insight. The mind has become the 'enemy of the gospel' in evangelical circles and followers of charismatic preachers are fed messages of health, wealth and success, which are never questioned. The Christian television networks phenomenon sways public opinion and drives sales of their own books, sermons and music. From this has emerged the 'mega church', Christianity's answer to the entertainment industry, complete with programmes to keep their followers entertained and busy almost seven days a week. People are committed to these churches, but seldom question the theology they propound. The greatest reason for this is perhaps a lack of knowledge of the very Scriptures they so dearly protect.

In spite of the above situation however, there is a rising tide of others who are willing to question the norm and yet are also aware of their need for a vibrant spirituality. This movement is alive in both religious and non-religious circles. Outside the church it has been labelled 'Atheism 2.0' (de Botton, 2012), which sees the benefits of church practices, but has no interest in the doctrines associated therewith. Inside the church, the so-called 'emergent' movement within Christianity has sparked serious reaction. Part of the problem for the church is that this movement is not defined by creeds and rules, but rather by association and a common cause. As such, the 'emergent church' cannot be objectively defined and is frequently misrepresented. Some of the beliefs they do seem to share are those of a faith that takes life on this planet seriously and as a resultant necessity engage with matters of social justice.

Interestingly the Psalms (as shown in this study), are rife with the concerns of this life and not only preoccupied with the afterlife. The church would do well to teach their members about how to live 'right' here on earth and not 'sit around' waiting to go to heaven.

On a more positive note, churches possess the infrastructure to become centres of learning. A familiarity with both the Bible and extra-biblical accounts of shared texts can lead to greater appreciation of our collective past and as a result more tolerance and cooperation in the future. Closed ecclesiastical organisations have the potential of becoming open communities of faith with a shared vision to see humanity prosper. Spirituality as opposed to theology has the potential to unite seekers from all backgrounds to find meaning and purpose in life. As we have already seen in the Psalms, life is filled with more questions than answers and we need to journey together as people in community.

The 'academy', as we have noted, has the potential to bring academic knowledge to the laity, through a popularising thereof. This will only materialise if church leaders stop trying to protect their members and start equipping them to deal with the often 'startling' revelations made by science. A destabilisation is bound to occur, but in the loving communities of faith, disorientation will give way to a new orientation as we try to make sense of this 'brave new world'.

This new world is one where everyone has an equal voice and place; one in which traditional roles are redefined as they no longer have a place in society; one in which women and men are equal in all spheres; and one in which the gap between sacred and secular (at least as far as knowledge is concerned) no longer exists.

The future of theological training will have to be redefined and integration between science and faith take place. A typical programme should include comparative religion, psychology, sociology, classical languages, ancient cultures and media studies. There also needs to be a practical component that combines academic study with the mystery of faith, experienced through prayer, meditation, music and art. And last but not least business skills need to be taught to allow future

'ministers' to be able to be gainfully employed, as the present 'full-time' role is no longer economically viable and lends itself to abuse.

CHAPTER 14: CONCLUSION

The thesis of this dissertation has been to explore “the importance of the Hebrew language for Biblical Spirituality”. The various aspects of this statement were studied through a detailed exploration of each of these elements in reverse order, starting with the general and ending with the specific. To begin with we looked at what spirituality is; its relation to the Bible and what makes it truly biblical. The focus then moved onto the language aspect and the relative importance of a knowledge of and proficiency in language theory and art, in order to derive, or arrive at, the richest and most ‘meaningful’ interpretation of the biblical text. Lastly, the general importance of language for Biblical Spirituality was applied specifically to the Hebrew language. This importance was then shown to be crucial for an understanding and application of the spirituality contained in and based on, in this case, the biblical text of the Old Testament and in particular the Psalter. This was done in the following way:

In Chapter Two, the researcher sought to define spirituality in general as a meeting with the transcendent. He also focused on the experiential dimension of spirituality, which is present even in the academic study thereof, and hence delineated Biblical Spirituality as the ‘faith’ experiences of the people described in the narratives of the Hebrew and Christian canons, as well as the faith experiences of our contemporaries that are either based on or linked to the biblical parallels. All spiritualities have a purpose or aim and Biblical Spirituality seems to have the aim of transforming the individual as well as society as a whole, although the chosen method to achieve this may vary.

In Chapter Three, he proposed a methodology for the discipline of Biblical Spirituality, which could then be applied to a variety of authors contributing to the field of Biblical studies and spirituality. This was done by studying a scholar who embodies the characteristics earmarked as constitutive of such a discipline, namely language (Hebrew) expertise, exegetical proficiency and an ability to translate this knowledge into something that the modern reader can understand, relate to and even apply.

In Chapter Four the researcher surveyed a cross-section of publications on spirituality and the Psalms to 'test the waters' in terms of evaluating these using the characteristics found present in the work of the primary scholar studied in Chapter Two. These elements of language, exegesis and continued meaning were present in some measure and combination in all of these writings and the researcher subsequently deemed them therefore as critical for this discipline.

In Chapter Five, the author examined the importance of Hebrew in particular for valid theological work and the importance ascribed to it from two divergent groups who truly believe in the value of such knowledge and examples of influential proponents from each. An interesting discovery was how both groups' work treated the Scriptures as consisting of or containing 'God's word', however that may be defined.

In Chapter Six the researcher moved from the authors to the Scriptures and introduced the Psalms as test application for our proposed methodology of Biblical Spirituality. Requisite to such an exploration was the necessity to study the background of the Psalter and choose three test Psalms for our limited application. It was also necessary to choose a specific exegetical method to follow, one most suited to the area of spirituality; in other words a process that combines an emphasis on the literary aspects of (the Hebrew) language and a determination to 'translate' the biblical message for a modern audience. It is notable that the method chosen was in fact one propounded by not only a renowned Bible translator but someone involved in 'spiritual formation'. This exegetical method was then applied to Psalms 1, 8 and 41 in the following chapters.

In Chapter Seven the importance of Hebrew for a grasp of the spirituality contained in Psalm 1 was brought into focus on a textual as well as a thematic level, with each of these informing an understanding of the other. Hebrew was vital in this interplay as much of the content is inherent in the literary structure of the Psalm. Of crucial importance were the shape, compositional structure and various literary devices unique to Hebrew poetry. Of further significance was the use of particular Hebrew words, rich in meaning, with a long interpretational history, used at critical junctions within this poem and core to its exegesis. All of these factors combined

made for a more responsible reading of Psalm 1, which would not have been the case without a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language. Finally, the placement of this Psalm as introductory to the entire Psalter makes it crucial for an understanding of the theme or message of the whole, which is then further enriched by a parallel reading of other biblical texts, in the process of intertextuality.

In Chapter Eight the importance of Hebrew was again highlighted on a textual as well as an extra-textual level. Psalm 8 is syntactically highly technical in nature due to its complex poetic structure and style. The 'inclusio' which enclosed the Psalm focused on praising Yahweh on the one hand, while the central pivot point of the poem focused on the position of humanity in and over creation. Either of these could be seen as the focal point and main message and impact on whether it should be seen as a praise or wisdom psalm. What further complicated an interpretation of this poem is the use of Hebrew words difficult to translate as they relate to spheres of meaning particular to a specific time, culture and theological paradigm. These included the phrases 'son of man' and 'elohim' both of which have very divergent and even opposing interpretations from Jewish and Christian commentators. This is where the extra-biblical factors impacted directly on an exegesis of the passage, with the one focusing more on the human aspect and the other more on the divine, but with the added error of reading a New Testament understanding back into the Old.

In Chapter Nine the importance of Hebrew in Psalm 41 was most notable grammatically. This was evident in the use of specific words with particular referents not used interchangeably in the Hebrew language. Often these words are translated with the same word in English, which loses the importance of such a distinction, which is core to an understanding of the Psalm. Furthermore, Psalm 41 is filled with changes in voice, time, and tense as well as making extensive use of personal pronouns with various possible referents which make its exegesis very difficult. Hebrew poetry also relies heavily on parallelisms, clearly evident in Psalm 41, which are often lost in translation. Psalm 1 and 41 are thematically parallel as opening and closing psalms in Book I of the Psalter, which is most clear from the repetition of Hebrew words and phrases. There are also various thematic parallels within Book I and other biblical narratives (in this case Job), which make a case for an intertextual reading of these. Thus the importance of Hebrew for an exegesis of this, as well as

the previous two Psalms cannot be overstated for a fruitful and responsible understanding and application of their spirituality.

In Chapter 10, following on from the exegesis of the three test psalms, the focus was on the spirituality found within them. Throughout the Psalter the message of certainty, loss and hope seems to be the overarching theme. This appears to be as a result of arguably the most critical event in Israelite history, that of the exile. The editing, collating and possible writing of the Psalms post-exile have a tremendous impact on the reading and understanding of them. The raw faith experiences of those we read of in its pages are what have made the Psalter so influential in the spiritual journey of countless 'believers' over the subsequent centuries. The response of a group of Jewish people to this national catastrophe is contained in the pages of the Psalter as we have them today. Their reinterpretation of the past provided hope for an uncertain future and became the hallmark of Israelite, Old Testament and Biblical Spirituality – the ability to adapt to a changing world by reinventing itself through a reinterpretation of its sacred literature.

In Chapter 11 the author looked at the implications of the spirituality of the Psalm writers for the spirituality of modern people. An application of the spirituality of each test Psalm was done separately. In Psalm 1 the dichotomy between the psalmist's proposition and the reality of life is all too evident. This same distance between our theology and circumstances is all too clear in the world today. The researcher explored this gap in the areas of economic and social justice, as well as the role of the church through centuries in propagating a theology which was instrumental in perpetuating this norm. Psalm 1 challenges us to imagine and create a world in which this is not so and hence to bridge this chasm between faith and life. Psalm 8, with its focus on our place in creation, challenges us to take seriously the role of caretaker of the environment. This responsibility not only partly answers the question it asks of the meaning of our lives, but also reminds us that we are part of the creation and as such we are affected by everything that happens to it. As such it is clear that our spirituality should be one firmly grounded in the here and now and in the global issues that face us, such as dwindling food and natural resources. Contrary to the theology of a large percentage of the church, we are not only waiting to exhale so as to go to heaven, Biblical Spirituality is focused on how we live in the here and now. Psalm 41 addresses the age old question about the meaning of

suffering and illness. Instead of addressing this issue directly, it rather offers an antidote in the form of finding purpose in life through serving others and in so doing alleviating much of the pain, illness and suffering caused by and large through inequality. Catalytic to this healing process is the practice of confession and forgiveness and true repentance shown through action. We see here proof of the transforming process of a truly biblical theology.

Chapter 12 highlighted the direct link between a proficiency in Hebrew and a responsible exegesis of the biblical text that allows for a grounded understanding of the spirituality found in the biblical narratives and therefore also allows for a balanced and healthy modern spirituality which is made possible through a reinterpretation of the biblical text to address the issues of the society in which we live.

In Chapter 13 the author made recommendations for possible further exploration in the field of Biblical Spirituality. The academic discipline has a great future as interest in religion is on the decline, but interest in spirituality gains momentum. This destabilisation has led to knee-jerk reactions from within the church and to a rise in fundamentalism. On a more positive note, there has also been a sharp increase in the number of those who are embracing this change and are contributing to the area of spirituality in a new and thoughtful way. The goal of Biblical Spirituality as stated from the outset is that of transformation. For this transformation of individual and society to take place in a way that will benefit all, responsible exegesis is critical so as to not do more harm than good. Without knowledge of the Hebrew language this difficult endeavour becomes almost impossible.

Further research

In terms of further research into the topic of Biblical Spirituality, Psalm study and the importance of Hebrew, the following are possibilities for fruitful future endeavour:

Following on from what seems to be evident with regard to the deliberate editing and collation of the Psalter; perhaps an extension of this study should be considered for the entire canon of Scripture. A deconstructionist approach to the Scriptures should be considered in terms of its history, purpose and future as a

human creation. By extension its place within the field of spirituality as a whole should be questioned and delineated. Furthermore the usefulness of religion for individual and corporate spirituality must be reconsidered, as well as the impact of a loss of religion on the faith of those who have come to question or disregard previously held religious ideas and ideals measured. Perhaps it is also time to consider the future of Christianity without a belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, if such an idea is not contradictory by its very nature. Also, could the vitality of a living spirituality possibly be restored if the canon was once again opened and modern expressions of faith explored on an equal footing with the biblical text. Furthermore, could we explore a multi-faith approach to spirituality through an intertextual reading of passages from a variety of religious texts, as well as other ancient and modern literary works (e.g. a parallel reading of the Psalms, classical as well as modern literature and poetry dealing with estrangement, along with accounts of the experiences of present-day displaced people, such as the Syrian refugees)?

The above enterprises could only be made possible through knowledge of the languages of the texts in which they were written and transmitted; both ancient and modern (as it is hoped this dissertation has made clear, through its focus on one of these, namely Hebrew).

Bibliography

[online]. Available from World Wide Web:

"<http://www.islam101.com/history/people/prophets/job.htm>"

[online]. Available from World Wide Web: "<http://hypertextbible.org/>"

ADAM, Peter. 2004. *Hearing God's Words*. Nottingham: IVP Academic.

AICHELE, George and Gary PHILLIPS. 1995. Intertextuality and the Bible. *Semeia* 69/70.

ALTER, Robert. 2000. *Canon and Creativity: Modern Writing and the Authority of Scripture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

ALTER, Robert. 2007. *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

ALTER, Robert. 2011. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books.

ANDERSON, R Dean. 1994. The Division and Order of the Psalms. *Westminster Theological Journal*. 56, pp.219-241.

ANGEL, Hayyim. 2010. The difference between the wise and the foolish in psalms: Theodicy, understanding providence, and religious responses. *Jewish Bible Quarterly*. 38(3), pp.157-165.

APPLE, Raymond. 2012. The Happy Man of Psalm 1. *Jewish Bible Quarterly*. 40(3), pp.179-182.

AVRAHAMI, YAEL. Shame or Disappointment in the Psalms. 2010. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. 34(3), pp.295-313.

BEGERAU, Gunnar. 2011. The Reading and Meaning of Ecclesiastes. *South African Baptist Journal of Theology*. 20, pp.1-8.

BELL, Rob. 2011. *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York: HarperOne.

BEN-PORAT, Ziva. 1978. The Poetics of Literary Allusion. *PTL: A Journal for Prescriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature*. 1, pp.105-128.

BLOCH, Yigal. 2009. The Prefixed Perfective and the Dating of Early Hebrew Poetry - A Re-Evaluation. *Vetus Testamentum*. 59, pp.34-70.

BLOMMESTIJN, Hein (ed). 2008. *Seeing the Seeker (Studies in Spirituality Supplements- 19)*. Leuven: Peeters.

BOSMA, Karl J. 2008. Discerning the Voices in the Psalms: A Discussion of Two Problems in Psalmic Interpretation. *Calvin Theological Journal*. 43, pp.183-212.

BOTHA, Phil J and J Henk POTGIETER. 2010. The Word of Yahwe is right: Psalm 33 as a Torah-psalm. *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 31(1), pp.1-8.

- BRATCHER, Robert G and William D REYBURN. 1991. *A Translator's Handbook on The Book of Psalms*. New York: United Bible Societies.
- BRAULIK, Georg. 2004. Psalms and Liturgy: Their reception and contextualization. *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 24(2), pp.309-330.
- BROCK, Brian. 2009. Attunement to Saints Past and Present: Clarifications and Convergences. *EJT*. 18(2), pp.155-163.
- BRUEGGEMANN, Walter. 1988. *Israel's Praise: Doxology Against Idolatry and Ideology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- BRUEGGEMANN, Walter. 2000. *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Kings*. Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing.
- BRUEGGEMANN, Walter. 2002. *Spirituality of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.
- BRUEGGEMANN, Walter. 2007. *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit*. Eugene: Cascade Books.
- BRUEGGEMANN, Walter. 2008. *A Pathway of Interpretation: The Old Testament for Pastors and Students*. Eugene: Cascade Books.
- BUCHANAN, George Wesley. 1994. *Introduction to Intertextuality*. New York: Edwiin Mellen Press.
- BURNETT, Joel S, W H BELLINGER, and W Dennis TUCKER. 2007. *Diachronic and synchronic: reading the Psalms in real time : proceedings of the Baylor symposium on the book of Psalms*. Bloomsbury: T & T Clark.
- COETZEE, Johan H. 2006. 'Yet Thou Hast Made Him Little Less than God': Reading Psalm 8 from a Bodily Perspective. *Old Testament Essays*. 19(3), pp.1124-1138.
- COLE, Robert. 2002. An Integrated Reading of Psalm 1 and 2. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. 98, pp.75-88.
- COLOMA, Sr. Hortensia. 2011. *Teresian Sisters*. [online]. [Accessed 20 July 2012]. Available from World Wide Web: "www.teresians.org/teresa.htm"
- COX, Claude. 2007. When Torah embraced wisdom and song: Job 28:28, Ecclesiastes 12:13, and Psalm 1:2. *Restoration Quarterly*. 49(2), pp.65-74.
- CRAGO, Maureen. 2003. What is Spirituality? *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy - Volume 24(4)*, December, pp.iii-iii.
- CREACH, Jerome F D. 2008. *The Destiny of the Righteous in the Psalms*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.
- CRENSHAW, James L. 2000. Wisdom Psalms? *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*. 8, pp.9-17.
- CRENSHAW, James L. 2003. Gold Dust or Nuggets? A Brief Response to J. Kenneth Kuntz. *Currents in Biblical Research*. 1(2), pp.155-158.

- CUNDALL, Arthur E. 1969. Sacral Kingship - The Old Testament Background. *Vox Evangelica*. 6, pp.31-41.
- DE BOTTON, Alain. 2012. Religion for Atheists: A Non-believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion. New York: Vintage Books.
- DE CLAISSE WALFORD, Nancy L. 2006. Reading backwards from the beginning: My life with the Psalter. *Verbum et Ecclesia JRG*. 27(2), pp.455-467.
- DE VILLIERS, Pieter GR. 2006. Perspectives on Canon History and Canonical Criticism in the Light of Biblical Spirituality. *Scriptura* 91, pp.117-126.
- DE VILLIERS, Pieter, KOURIE, Celia, and LOMBAARD, Christo (eds). 2006. *The Spirit that Moves. Orientation and issues in Spirituality (Acta Theologia Supplementum 8)*. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press.
- DONAHUE, John R. 2006. The Quest for Biblical Spirituality. In: Bruce H LESCHER and Elizabeth LIEBERT, (eds). *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM*, New York: Paulist Press.
- DOWNING, F Gerald. 2006. Psalms and the Baptist. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. 29(2), pp.131-137.
- EATON, John H. 1967. *Psalms*. London: SCM Press.
- EATON, John H. 1979. *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah*. Southampton: Camelot Press.
- EATON, John H. 1981. *Vision in Worship*. London: SPCK.
- EATON, John H. 1984. *The Psalms Come Alive*. Oxford: Mowbray.
- EATON, John H. 1985. *Job*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- EATON, John H. 1986. *Kingship and the Psalms*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- EATON, John H. 1989. *The Contemplative Face of Old Testament Wisdom*. London: SCM Press.
- EATON, John H. 2003. *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary*. London: T & T Clark.
- EATON, John H. 2004. *Meditating on the Psalms*. Westminster: John Knox Press.
- ELLINGTON, Scott A. 2007. The Reciprocal Reshaping of History and Experience in the Psalms: Interactions with Pentecostal Testimony. *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. 16(1), pp.18-31.
- EVANS, Craig A and Shemaryahu TALMON. 1997. *The Quest for Content and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*. New York: Brill.
- FEWELL, Danna Nolan. 1992. *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.

- FINKELSTEIN, Israel and Neil Asher SILBERMAN. 2001. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. New York: Free Press.
- FINKELSTEIN, Israel and Neil Asher SILBERMAN. 2006. *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition*. New York: Free Press.
- FLINT, Peter W and MILLER, Patrick D (eds). 2005. *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception, Volume 99*. Leiden: Brill.
- FORTI, Tova. 2011. Of Ships and Seas, and Fish and Beasts: Viewing the Concept of Universal Providence in the Book of Jonah through the Prism of Psalms. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. 35(3), pp.359-374.
- FOSTER, Richard. 1978. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York: Harper Collins.
- GARBER KAMPAORE, Anne E. 2004. *Discourse Analysis of Directive Texts: The Case of Biblical Law*. Elkhart.
- GERICKE, Jaco. 2011. Possible objections to a philosophical approach to ancient Israelite religion: A critical refutation. *HTS Theological Studies*. 67(3), pp.1-7.
- GILLINGHAM, Susan. 1994. *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- GILLINGHAM, Susan. 2008. Studies in the Psalms: Retrospect and Prospect. *Expository Times*. 119(5), pp.209-216.
- GILLINGHAM, Susan (ed). 2013. *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- GRANEROD, Gard. 2006. A Forgotten Reference to Divine Procreation? Psalm 2:6 in Light of Egyptian Royal Ideology. *Vetus Testamentum*. 60, pp.323-336.
- GREENE, Colin J D. 2012. Alternative Modernities and Bible Translation: An Introduction. *The Bible Translator*. 63(3), pp.109-115.
- GROENEWALD, Alphonso. 2007. Old Testament exegesis: Reflections on methodology. *HTS Theological Studies*. 63(3), pp.1017-1031.
- GROESCHEL, Craig. 2010. *The Christian Atheist: Believing in God but Living as if He Doesn't Exist*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- GUTHRIE, George H and Russell D QUINN. 2006. A Discourse Analysis for the Use of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:5-9. *JETS*. 49(2), pp.235-246.
- HAYS, Christopher B. 2010. Bard Called the Tune: Whither Theological Exegesis in the Post-Childs Era? *Journal of Theological Interpretation*. 4(1), pp.139-152.
- HEIL, John Paul. 2005. *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.

- HELBERG, Jaap L. 2006. The relation between Psalm 1 (and 2) and the other psalms regarding enemies. *In die Skriflig*. 40(1), pp.1-17.
- HILL, Robert C. 2004. His Master's Voice: Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Psalms. *The Heythrop Journal*. 45(1), pp.40-53.
- HOBBS, John. *Psalm 1: Text, Translation, and Interpretation*. [online]. [Accessed 23 June 2012]. Available from World Wide Web: "ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com"
- HOLDER, Arthur (ed). 2005. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- HUMAN, Dirk J and VOS, Cas J A (eds). 2004. *Psalms and Liturgy*. London: T & T Clark International.
- JACOBSON, Rolf A (ed). 2011. *Soundings in the Theology of the Psalms: Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Scholarship*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- JOHNS, Anthony H. 2001. Three Stories of a Prophet. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*. Volume 3(2), p.39.
- JOHNSON, Marshall D. 2007. *Psalms Through the Year: Spiritual Exercises for Every Day*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Books.
- JOURDAIN, Robert. 1997. *Music, The Brain, and Ecstasy*. New York: Avon Books.
- KANG, Sora. 2009. Happiness Manifested in Book I of the Psalter. *Scripture and Interpretation*. 3(1), pp.33-47.
- KAVANAUGH, Kieran and RODRIGUEZ, Otilio (eds). 1987. *Teresa of Avila: The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila. Vol. 1*. Washington: ICS Publications.
- KERR, Glen J. 2011. Dynamic Equivalence and Its Daughters: Placing Bible Translation Theories in Their Historical Context. *Journal of Translation*. 7(1), pp.1-19.
- KHOURY, Jerjes N. 2007. The Figure of Job (Ayyūb) in Modern Arabic Poetry. *Journal of Arabic Literature*. 38(2), pp.167-195.
- KING, Ursula. 1992. Spirituality, Society and Culture. *The Way Supplement (72)*, pp.14-23.
- KOURIE, Celia. 2009. Spirituality and the University. *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 30(1), pp.148-173.
- KUNTZ, J Kenneth. 2000. Wisdom Psalms and the Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter. In: R A ARGALL, B A BOW, and R A WERLINE, (eds). *For a later generation: the transformation of tradition in Israel, early Judaism, and early Christianity*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, pp.144-160.
- KYNES, Will. 2011. Beat Your Parodies into Swords, and Your Parodied Books into Spears: A New Paradigm for Parody in the Hebrew Bible. *Biblical Interpretation*. 19, pp.276-310.

- KYNES, Will. 2011. Beat Your Parodies into Swords, and Your Parodied Books into Spears: A New Paradigm for Parody in the Hebrew Bible. *Biblical Interpretation*. 19(3), pp.276-310.
- LE ROUX, Jurie Hendrik and OTTO, Eckart (eds). 2007. *South African perspectives on the Pentateuch between synchrony and diachrony*. New York: T & T Clark International.
- LEWIS, Paul M (ed). 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Sixteenth edition*. Dallas: SIL International.
- LOBA-MKOLE, Jean-Claude. 2008. History and theory of Scripture translations. *HTS*. 64(1), pp.253-266.
- LOMBAARD, Christo. 2003. The Old Testament in Christian Spirituality: perspectives on the undervaluation of the Old Testament in Christian Spirituality. *HTS Theological Studies* 59(2), June, pp.433-450.
- LOMBAARD, Christo. 2005. Four South Africans' Proposals for a Central Theme to 'Scriptural Spirituality'. *Scriptura* 88, pp.139-150.
- LOMBAARD, Christo. 2006. Four recent books on spirituality and the Psalms: some contextualising, analytical and evaluative remarks. *Verbum et Ecclesia JRG* 27(3), pp.909-929.
- LOMBAARD, Christo. 2008. What Is Biblical Spirituality? Perspectives from a minor genre of Old Testament scholarship. In: F MERTENS, (ed). *Festschrift, on the occasion of the 65th birthday of Kees Waaijman (Studies in Spirituality Supplement)*, Leuven: Peeters, pp.433-450.
- LOMBAARD, Christo. 2011. Biblical Spirituality, and JH Eaton. *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*.
- LOMBAARD, Christo. 2011. The mystifying mosaic of Moses: On Pentateuch theory and Biblical Spirituality. *HTS Theological Studies*. 67(3), pp.1-5.
- LOMBAARD, Christo. 2012. *The Old Testament and Christian Spirituality: Theoretical and Practical Essays from a South African Perspective*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, Sophie. 2011. Bishops on the Chair of Pestilence: Ambrosiastor's Polemical Exegesis of Psalm 1.1. *Journal of Early Christian Studies*. 19(1), pp.79-99.
- MALONEY, Les D. 2007. Intertextual Links: Part of the Poetic Artistry within the Book I Acrostic Psalms. *Restoration Quarterly*. 49(1), pp.11-22.
- MARE, Leonard P. 2006. Psalm 8: God's Glory and Humanity's Reflected Glory. *Old Testament Essays*. 19(3), pp.926-938.
- MARE, Leonard P. 2008. A Pentecostal perspective on the use of Psalms of Lament in worship. *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 29(1), pp.91-109.

- MAYS, James L. 1987. The Place of Torah-Psalms in the Psalter. *Journal of Biblical Literature*. 106(1), pp.3-12.
- MCCANN, J Clinton. 1992. The Psalms as Instruction. *Interpretation*. 46, pp.117-128.
- MCCANN, J Clinton. 1993. *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- MCGINN, Bernard, MEYENDORF, John, and LECLERCQ, Jean (eds). 1987. *Christian Spirituality, Vol. 1: Origins to the Twelfth Century (World Spirituality, Vol. 16)*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- MCCANN, Robert. 2007. Skeptical Psalm 1. *Anglican Theological Review*. 89(1), p.103.
- MIHAILA, C. 2001. The theological and canonical place of Psalm 73. *Faith and Mission*. 18(3):52-57.
- MITCHELL, David C. 2006. Lord, Remember David: G.H. Wilson and the Message of the Psalter. *Vetus Testamentum*. 56(4), pp.526-548.
- MOWINCKEL, Sigmund. 2004. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- NAUDE, Jacobus A. 2002. An Overview of Recent Developments in Translation Studies with Special Reference to the Implications for Bible Translation. *Acta Theologica Supplementum 2.*, pp.44-69.
- NIDA, Eugene and TABER, Charles. 1969. *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: Brill.
- OLSON, Dennis T. 2009. Zigzagging Through Deep Waters: A Guide to Brevard Childs's Canonical Exegesis of Scripture. *Word & World*. 29(4), pp.348-356.
- PACINI, David S. 2000. Reading Holy Writ: The Locus of Modern Spirituality. In: Louis DUPRE and Don SALIERS, (eds). *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- PARSONS, Michael. 2011. Luther, the Royal Psalms and the Suffering Church. *ERT*. 35(2), pp.242-254.
- PIETERSMA, Albert. 2008. Text-Production and Text-Reception: Psalm 8 in Greek. In: Martin KASSER and Wolfgang KRAUS, (eds). *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontext, Lebenswelten*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, pp.487-501.
- PIPER, John. 2002. *We Are Not Professionals*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman.
- PITKIN, Barbara. 2001. Psalm 8:1-2. *Interpretation (Richmon, Va.)*. 55(2), pp.177-180.
- REARDON, Patrick Henry. 2000. *Christ in the Psalms*. Chesterton: Concilior Press.

- RUSSELL, Brian. 2005. Psalm 1 as an Interpreter of Scripture. *Irish Biblical Studies*. 26(4), pp.170-193.
- RUSSELL, Brian. 2010. Psalms 1 - 2 as an Introduction to Reading the Psalms Missionally. *Encounters Mission Ezine.*, pp.1-4.
- SARGENT, Benjamin. 2009. The dead letter? Psalm 119 and the spirituality of the Bible in the local church. *EQ* 81(2), pp.99-115.
- SARGENT, Benjamin. 2009. The Dead Letter? Psalm 119 and the spirituality of the Bible in the local church. *Evangelical Quarterly*. 81(2), pp.99-115.
- SARNA, Nahum M. 2010. *On the Book of Psalms: Exploring the Prayers of Ancient Israel*. New York: Schocken Books.
- SCHNEIDERS, Sandra M. 1987. Scripture and Spirituality. In: Bernard MCGINN, John MEYENDORF, and Jean LECLERCQ, (eds). *Christian Spirituality, Vol. 1: Origins to the Twelfth Century (World Spirituality, Vol. 16)*, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- SCHNEIDERS, Sandra M. 1989. Spirituality in the Academy. *Theological Studies* 50, pp.676-697.
- SCHNEIDERS, Sandra. 1999. *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.
- SCHNEIDERS, Sandra M. 2002. Biblical Spirituality. *Interpretation* 56(2), April, pp.133-142.
- SHAH, Sayed Sikander. 1996. Mercy Killing in Islam: Moral and Legal Issues. *Arab Law Quarterly*. 11(2), pp.105-115.
- SHELDRAKE, Philip. 2005. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Louisville: John Knox Press.
- SINNOTT, Alice M. 2008. An Earthling's Lament: Hell on Earth. In: Norman C HABEL and Peter TRUDINGER, (eds). *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, pp.103-112.
- SMITH, Mark S. 2006. *The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23: Royal Constructions of Opposition, Intersection, Integration, and Domination*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- SMITH, Kevin Gary. 2007. *The Redactional Criteria and Objectives Underlying the Arrangement of Psalms 3-8*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation.
- SMITH, Mark S. 2010. What is a Scriptural Text in the Second Temple Period? Texts between their Biblical Past, their Inner-Biblical Interpretation, Their Reception in Second Temple Literature, and their Textual Witnesses. In: Lawrence H SCHIFFMAN and Shani TZOREF, (eds). *The Dead Sea Scrolls at 60: Scholarly Contributions of New York University Faculty and Alumni*, Leiden: Brill, pp.271-298.
- SPECK, Bruce W. 2004. What is Spirituality? *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* No. 104, Winter, pp.1-13.

- STARBUCK, Scott R A. 1999. *Court Oracles in the Psalms: The So-called Royal Psalms in their Ancient Near Eastern Context*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- STARR, Mirabai. 2007. *Teresa of Avila: The Book of My Life*. Boston: New Seed Books.
- STEYN, Gert J and Dirk J HUMAN. 2010. *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception*. New York: T & T Clark.
- SUJIN PAK, G. 2011. A Break with Anti-Judaic Interpretation: John Calvin and the Unity of the Testaments. *CTJ*. 46, pp.7-28.
- SWANEPOEL, Francois A. 1994. Popularising Theology. In: J MOUTON and B LATEGAN, (eds). *The Relevance of Theology for the 1990s*, Pretoria: Sigma Press, pp.223-236.
- TATE, Marvin E. 2001. An Exposition of Psalm 8. *Perspectives in Religious Studies*. 28, pp.343-359.
- TERESA OF AVILA. 1904. *The Life of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus*. New York: Benziger Bros.
- THIELICKE, HELMUT. 1965. *The Trouble with the Church: A Call for Renewal*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- THURSTON, Bonnie. 2000. *Spiritual Life in the Early Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- TITUS BRANDSMA INSTITUTE. 2008. *With Wisdom Seeking God*. Leuven: Peeters.
- TUELL, Steven S. 2009. Between Text and Sermon: Psalm 1. *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*. 63(3), pp.278-280.
- TUELL, Steven S. 2009. Psalm 1. *Interpretation*. 63(3), pp.278-280.
- TUTU, Desmond. 2011. *God Is Not A Christian: And Other Provocations*. New York: Harper Collins.
- VAN SETERS, John. 2008. The Origins of the Hebrew Bible: Some New Answers to Old Questions Part 2. *JANER*. 7(2), pp.219-238.
- VASSAR, John S. 2007. *Recalling A Story Once Told: An Intertextual Reading of the Psalter and the Pentateuch*. Macon: Mercer University Press.
- VIETRI, Christopher Daniel. 2007. *The Journey to God through the Spirituality of Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)*. Pretoria: UNISA.
- VISHANOFF, David R. 2010. Why Do The Nations Rage? Boundaries of Canon and Community in a Muslim's Rewriting of Psalm 2. *Comparative Islamic Studies*. 6(1), pp.151-179.

- VON KOH, Yee. 2010. G.H. Wilson's Theories on the Organization of the Masoretic Psalter. In: Katherine DELL, Graham DAVIES, and Yee VON KOH, (eds). *Genesis, Isaiah and Psalms*, Leiden: Brill, pp.177-192.
- VOS, Cas J A. 2004. Theopoetical and liturgical patterns of the psalms with reference to psalm 19. In: Dirk J HUMAN and Cas J A VOS, (eds). *Psalms and Liturgy*, London: T&T Clark International, pp.251-290.
- WAAIJMAN, Kees. 2002. *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*. Leuven: Peeters.
- WALLACE, David. 2003. The Use of Psalms in the Shaping of a Text: Psalm 2:7 and 110:1 in Hebrews 1. *Restoration Quarterly*. 45, pp.41-50.
- WALLACE, Howard N. 2009. *Psalms*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
- WALTKE, Bruce K and James M HOUSTON. 2010. *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- WALTNER, James H. 2006. *Psalms - Believers Church Bible Commentary*. Scottdale: Herald Press.
- WATTS, Rick E. 2007. The Lord's House and David's Lord: The Psalms and Mark's Perspective on Jesus and the Temple. *Biblical Interpretation*. 15(3), pp.307-322.
- WEBER, Beat. 2006. Psalm 1 and its function as a directive into the Psalter and towards a Biblical Theology. *Old Testament Essays*. 19(1), pp.237-260.
- WENDLAND, Ernst R. 2002. *Analyzing the Psalms: With exercises for bible students and translators*. Dallas: SIL International.
- WENDLAND, Ernst and Philip NOSS. 2012. Bible Translation. In: Carol CHAPELLE, (ed). *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, pp.1-8.
- WENHAM, Gordon J. 2012. *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- WHITEKETTLE, Richard. 2006. Taming the Shrew, Shrike, and Shrimp: The Form and Function of Zoological Classification in Psalm 8. *Journal of Biblical Literature*. 125(4), pp.749-765.
- WILKINSON, J I Packer and Loren (ed). 1992. *Alive to God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- WILKS, John. 2003. The Prophet as Incompetent Dramatist. *Vetus Testamentum*. 53(4), pp.530-543.
- WILLARD, Dallas. 1988. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. New York: Harper Collins.
- WILLARD, Dallas. 1995. What Makes Spirituality Christian? *Christianity Today*, 6 March, pp.16-17.
- WILLIAMS, Donald M. 2004. *Psalms 1-72: The Preacher's Commentary - Volume 13*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

ZENGER, Erich (ed). 2010. *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*. Leuvenq: Peeters.

ZIMMERMAN, Benedict. 1912. *St. Teresa of Avila*. [online]. [Accessed 20 July 2012]. Available from World Wide Web: "<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14515b.htm>"