

Psalms in Biblical Worship

David W Ponter

Christian worship has undergone profound changes in the last 2000 years. The problem is that all too often we forget how our worship has changed, we imagine that our “present” form of worship is the fixed and correct form of worship. What motivates and grounds this attitude is often puzzling to me. Behind all the contemporary “worship wars” storming throughout evangelical Christianity seems to be an attitude, a quest to seek the *right* style, or better *form* of worship. Today, Christian men and woman are, I would argue, suffering from an identity crisis. This crisis pertains to the issue of certainty and of rest regarding worship styles. Thus, today we have those advocating high liturgical worship that is almost, if not already, Anglican in its form. And this, too, not by Catholics, but by self-conscious Protestants. On the other extreme, we see many of our charismatic and pentecostal brethren going as anti-liturgical in worship as they can. In many ways, I would propose, they have fallen into the same error the original Corinthian church found themselves trapped in. Then, too, there are all the gradations in between these two extremes.

I am of the conclusion that much of worship is bound to culture and cultural expectations and character. To use myself as an example, I come from the Presbyterian Church of Australia. The Australian Presbyterian Church is for the most part very low-church. Even though this church has its ecclesiastical roots in the Scottish church tradition, the Australian church has evolved. It has moved on, so to speak. My church realised back in the 70s, and again even more so in the 80s, that the church needs to change if it wishes to not only survive, but to continue the mission set given to them by Jesus Christ. Our leaders and pastors came to see that there were two problems within our denomination: Aging and irrelevancy. The Australian Presbyterian church realised that the bulk of its membership was now of the grey generation. Further, they came to see that they were not growing, nor were not retaining their young people. Now of course, they knew that they cannot merely change to suit the, at times, fickle demands of culture and people. But they came to see that the packaging of the gospel, the form it is presented in, through, and under, need not be seen as timeless. In this the Australian Presbyterian church took sharp notice of the “Sydney Anglicans.” The Sydney Anglicans are an evangelical body of Anglicans in an Anglican communion which is for the most part either liberal or Anglo-Catholic. The Sydney diocese realised that if they were to survive, if the Gospel witness was to be proclaimed, they would have to meet the sinners in the market place of today, not the idealised market place of yesteryear.

Now having said all that, in my own life, I have experienced a sharp contrast, even within my Australian experience. I was once a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.¹ This church held to a strict application of the Regulative Principle of Worship² which led them to hold to the position that it was wrong to sing anything other than the biblical 150 psalms. We are not authorised, indeed, we are forbidden, they would say, to sing anything outside of that psalter in public worship. Add to this that no instruments were allowed to be used either. All singing was a *cappella*. The other problem was that in adopting this strict application of the RPW, the church became culturally and evangelistically irrelevant. Having come to the USA to study, I have discovered that the debates regarding worship are by far more intense here than they are back in Australia. For in Australia, the strict application of the RPW has for the most part been regulated to obscurity.

Why am I mentioning all this? My thought is that ever since the Reformation, the Protestants have attempted to lay down a foundation of worship over and against Rome. To achieve this they invoked the RPW. The problem is that what becomes a principle easily becomes a law. To this end, people will now speak of the Scriptural *law* of worship.³ It seems to me that what many people want is some sort of ideal *form* of worship which is universal and absolute. We see this attempt in the recent work by Terry Johnson.⁴ Now at this point I need to stress clearly I am not trying to challenge the RPW, but merely a certain application of it. And here I know I am being provocative. I am treading on dangerous grounds in the minds of some, no doubt.

¹This denomination has absolutely no connection with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church here in the USA. Indeed, they could be no more opposite in theology and in ethos.

²I shall refer to this as the “RPW” from now on.

³See for example: Carl W. Bogue *The Scriptural Law of Worship* (Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1988).

⁴Terry Johnson, *Reformed Worship, What that is According to Scripture* (Greenville, South Carolina: RAP, 2000).

But my desire here is to lay out something of the historical background of the use of the biblical psalms in worship in order to supply some historical context for the biblical worship of God. My contention is that for many of us, even in Australia, even we low Presbyterians, is that we all too often want the piety of David, but not the psychology of David. We love his piety in his psalms, but we rationalise away his psychology, his humanity, as he worships his God, which is our God, our Redeemer Yahweh. We have forgotten this in my opinion. Thus, I ask myself, what has happened? From my research I think it is because we have become closet Platonists. For we have followed the Greeks who considered the mind as the seat of the person. For Plato and for Aristotle, a person is a *rational* soul. Yet Hebraic thought saw the seat of the person as the heart, and this heart expressed itself through the mind, through the will, and through the emotions (affections). In this manner, Hebrew worship of our Redeemer Yahweh took on a very different form than does our modern worship.

What I want to do here in this paper is look at certain aspects of Hebrew worship in the use of the psalms and in and out, in of the OT Temple, and with the use of instruments. Then I want to examine the true historical nature of Synagogue worship, followed by a brief discussion of early church use of the psalms and the creation of a new Christian Hymnody. My aim here is not to be polemic or contentious, but to try to establish a historical context from which one can more ably examine the assumptions of many of the protagonists in the modern worship wars. Further, I hope to deal with a few venerated myths regarding OT worship, of Temple and Synagogue. I will not discuss the dating of the psalms. I am aware of the current debate in many liberal circles regarding whether or not the psalms were written before or after the exile, or before or after the Babylonian Captivity, even beyond. As one committed to inerrancy, I will assume that any psalm titled as authored by David, and others, was indeed written by them, and not merely as some sort of kingly ascription. Obviously then, I will assume that David, as with Asaph, *et al.*, were the principal writers of the psalms as we know them. Therefore, these questions and issues will not be addressed here.⁵ No doubt, all this notwithstanding, it is a major task to attempt given the limitations of this paper.

The Significance of the Temple to the Devout Jew

To address this issue I want to detail two key issues in regard to the temple and to psalmody. Firstly, there is a long-standing traditional view that is of the opinion that the psalms were primarily written by individuals for the purpose of private meditation. These private prayers were then adopted and adapted for use within the Temple at a later date. This tradition was widely accepted by the Puritans and it is the one that has shaped much of our post-Puritan piety. What this assumption has effected is a movement to individualisation of the psalms, a sort of privatisation and atomisation of the private worship. It was not until the turn of the 20th century among more liberal scholarship that this assumption began to be challenged. One pioneer in this new understanding of the role and use of biblical psalmody was proposed by Herman Gunkel. Mowinckel explains:

The man who pioneered the way for a new understanding of the psalms, and laid the foundation for a cultic interpretation, was Herman Gunkel. By his ‘form-critical’ or ‘form-historical’ method (*formgeschichtliche*) and type-critical (*gattungsgeschichtliche*) methods he has proved beyond doubt that in Israel, also the original of psalm poetry is to be found in the public cult: the different types of psalms have come into existence in connexion with different cultic situations and acts to which they originally belonged.⁶

⁵I would insert here, though, the point that one of the reasons many modern scholars reject Davidic authorship of many of the psalms, Mowinckel included, is because many of the Davidic psalms refer to the “House of Yahweh” and so the reasoning goes, there was no “house” in David’s time, therefore he could not be the author of these psalms. However, the problem is that even Mowinckel will acknowledge that in 2 Sam 12:20, for example, David arose and went into the house of Yahweh. Mowinckel explains this as probably referring the tabernacle kept in “some sort of palace chapel,” (Mowinckel, vol., 2, p.,80.) However, if this is true, then why not accept the Davidic authorship of the Davidic entitled psalms?

⁶Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, trans., by D.R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdom Press, 1962), vol., 1., p., 13.

Importantly, what Gunkel did was to look at the psalms freshly in the light of contemporary pagan practices. The thesis is that in many ways the Hebrew worship of Yahweh was not to be seen as sharply discontinuous with the cultural milieu around them. This is not to say they imbibed or borrowed the content of pagan worship, but that, he argued, one cannot make the sharp cultural distinction between the Hebrews and their surrounding culture as we with our 21st century minds are wont to make. Mowinckel concisely explains Gunkel's method:

By tracing the peculiarities of the different types [of psalm poetry] back to the attested or supposed cultic situations from which they sprung, light falls both on the types and on its style as a whole, and on all its motifs and its formal peculiarities in their relation to one another. This is very important; Gunkel has by his method laid the foundation for a real historical and literary understanding of psalm poetry.⁷

The problem is that as Mowinckel notes well, Gunkel, even though he discerned the cultic elements in the psalms, relegated the degree of cultic influence to the "low poetry." Mowinckel again:

Gunkel himself thought that the direct cultic connexion was true only with regard to the original, now mostly lost, psalm poetry; the now extant psalms were to be considered as a later evolution, a free, 'private' poetry, unconnected with the cultic situations, but imitating the style and the motives of the older one. In this case, we should have the following evolution of psalm poetry: from cultic origin to private individual poetry, and back to the cult again.⁸

What Mowinckel has sought to do in his treatment is to establish the level of greater cultic connexion between the psalms and the temple. Mowinckel, in this wants to press the original argument by Gunkel further and harder, establishing a more thorough-going basis for a greater cultic connexion than hitherto realised.⁹

Thus we must now discern firstly the meaning and import of the cult, and of the cultus for worship:

Cult or ritual may be defined as a socially established and regulated holy acts and words in which the encounter and communion of the Deity with the congregation is established, developed and brought to its ultimate goal. In other words: a relation in which a religion becomes a vitalizing function as a communion of God and congregation, and of the members of the congregation amongst themselves."¹⁰

The cult and the cultic worship in ancient times was a representation or enactment, visible and audible of the relationship between the congregation and God.¹¹ Importantly, it was through the cultic event that life from God was communicated to the congregation, to the people of God. This "life" was taken holistically, inclusive of such basic material needs as rain, sun, fertility, tribal safety, and temporal and spiritual salvation, indeed, everything pertaining to the exigencies of the congregational life. Further, the reception of life in the form of rain, sun, survival, salvation, and so forth, were regarded as blessings to the recipient.¹² This was, therefore, an important motif operating in the attitude and in the operation of the cultic worship, and that was that life itself was mediated through the cultus. As Christians, we should instantly be sensitive to the implications of this for us, as Jesus himself, his life and his body forms the new

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p., 14.

⁹There is one potential problem which I discern, yet which is beyond my parameters and expertise to test and fully evaluate, and that is the possible relationship with the form-critical method and their thesis. It may be that there is a necessary connection between the form-critical method and the thesis regarding the psalms cultic connection, such that if the form-critical method is wrong, then so too is the thesis that the psalms were written primarily with the cultus worship in view. However, given the evidence that the psalms were cultically orientated, my response at this point is that there is no necessary connection between the form-critical method and the proposed new thesis.

¹⁰Mowinckel; *ibid.*, vol., 1, p., 15.

¹¹Ibid., p., 16.

¹²Ibid., p., 17.

cultus for the believer.¹³ Jesus is the newer and greater temple for the believer. This too must give us a greater awareness of Jesus' language in Jn 6:47-51, 53-58. For we must eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ if we are to receive life from him.

Regarding the argument that the psalms are primarily directed to cultic worship, Mowinckel presents a decisive case. Regarding what could be classed as external¹⁴ evidence, firstly, he notes that the very title of the book of Psalms in Hebrew is *Tehillim* which, he argues, means "cultic songs of praise." To this Mowinckel also says: "This tallies with the indications we have that the songs and music of the Levitical singers belonged to the solemn religious festivals as well as to the daily sacrifices in the Temple." He adds: "Such evidence is found in the book of Chronicles and in Ecclesiasticus."¹⁵ Further evidence, he adduces comes from the Mishna and Talmud regarding a series of psalms which were used on different occasions in the temple cult." And to this he notes that the very titles of some of the psalms sustains this idea. For example, Ps 92, the title notes that this was a song for the Sabbath day. Mowinckel argues that this song was sung after the drink offering at the daily morning sacrifice. Furthermore, notes from the LXX and from the Mishna and Talmud identify certain psalms with festal days of the week. For example, Ps 24 was sung for Sundays, Ps 48 for Mondays, Ps 82 on Tuesdays, Ps 94 on Wednesdays, Ps 81 to be sung on Thursdays, and Ps 93 to be sung on Fridays. All these clearly have overtones of public cultic devotion.

Furthermore, during the 7 day feast of Tabernacles, at the Musaf sacrifices, they sung the special festal Pss 120-134 at the great water-pouring rite on the eight day, the great day, of the festival. And again, Ps 81 was sung at the musaf on the New Year's day, the feast of Tishri (Trumpets). Ps 47 was sung as a New Year hymn. At the feast of Dedication of the Temple of David, Ps 30:10 was sung, as the title indicates. Again, this psalm was sung at the formal presentation of the First Fruits. From the Mishna, we know that the so-called 'Egyptian Hallel,' Pss 113-118, were sung at the slaying of the paschal lamb and at the feast of Tabernacles, even the feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and again at the feast of Dedication.

Mowinckel also notes that from a very late source (Talmud Sopherim 18) psalms were sung at the respective feasts of Dedication, Purim, the first day of the six-day Passover feast, and on the seventh day of Pentecost, and again at the Lamentation of the eighth day. From the title of Psalm 100, we learn that it was used at the special Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.¹⁶

Next, more evidence of an internal nature is presented by Mowinckel. Firstly, he notes that Pss 24, 68, 118 and 132 "obviously presuppose, and are made for, a festal procession." He explains: "They can only be understood in connexion with a vision of the procession itself and its different acts and scenes. The interpreter has to use both the descriptions of such cultic processions and the allusions to them in other Old Testament texts and his own imagination."¹⁷ In support of this idea, he notes that Ps 24 divides into 4 main parts which were used during the procession on the way to the Temple, before the gates, and the procession winding its way through the gates. Ps 118, he affirms, starts before the Temple and "resounds while the 'procession' marches through 'the Gate of Righteousness' and encircles the altar of burnt-offerings." Further, part of Ps 132 is a text for a dramatically performed procession re-enacting the search for the ark and its return to the sanctuary. Furthermore, Ps 5:7 directly mentions coming into Yahweh's house and worshiping towards the temple. Ps 66:13, the faithful come into Yahweh's house with a burnt-offering. In Ps 63:2-4, the worshiper comes at dawn to the sanctuary for help in time of distress. Ps 26:6, the worshiper serves at the Altar of Yahweh. Regarding Ps 51, Mowinckel is probably correct in his identification of the cleansing with hyssop in reference to the temple ritual cleansing. Ps 84 refers to the psalmist longing for the temple courts of Yahweh.

¹³Jn 2:19-22.

¹⁴I should state, I would not want to press the distinction between external and internal evidence to sharply. I use the labels merely to supply an interpretive grid to Mowinckel's arguments.

¹⁵Mowinckel, vol 1., p., 2.

¹⁶C.f., Lev 7:12, 22:29; and 2 Chron 33:16.

¹⁷Mowinckel, vol 1., p., 5.

From this, Mowinckel lists a string of Psalms that have reference to such things as Jerusalem, Salem, The Holy Mount, Zion, Yahweh's tent, the House, the dwelling place, the Gates, the City, and so forth. Add to this the varied references to full moon feasts, new year festivals, vigils in the Temple, varied offerings (such as voluntary, sin, burnt, purification, drink, and fat offerings for example) and sacrifices (of bullocks, rams and goats), and we definitely start to form a picture of public cultic worship. These are: Pss 22:7, 20:4, 27:6, 66:13, 116:17, 51:19, 73:13, 116:13, 18:27. See also the references and contexts of Pss 81, 65, 134, and 28. Given the nature of these sacrifices and offerings, the focus is definitely the Temple.¹⁸

Another line of argumentation that the focus of the psalms is on the Temple and its rites is taken from the very titles of some of the psalms themselves. For example, Ps 4 is said to be "For the director of music, with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David." Ps 5, "For the director of music. To the Neholoth. A Psalm of David." And again Pss 6, 8, 9, 11-14, 18-22, 32, 36, 39-42, 44-47, 49, 51-62, 64-70, 75-77, 80-81, 84-85, 88, 109, and 139-140. The presence of these specific titles indicates that these psalms were not written for the use of private--and perhaps songless--piety.¹⁹

To be clear, Mowinckel freely acknowledges that even though the psalms were primarily directed to worship at the cultus, he does not deny that in terms of the individual, his interpretation does not mean to imply that the psalms do not reflect private needs or private moods and experiences, nor that the psalms could not be expressed in free poetic form as an expression of those private desires and needs.²⁰

Thus these Psalms have as their focus cultic ritual, not so much as private internalised meditations. Mowinckel drives home his point well. Speaking of the psalmist as the suppliant, Mowinckel states:

Again and again the suppliant declares that he presents himself at the 'altar of Yahweh' and he prepares offerings of all kinds... He testifies that he is 'pure', 'pure both in heart and in hands', he 'washes his hands in innocency and walks around the altar' (28:6), or asks to be 'purified' or 'redeemed', and 'purged' with hyssop that he might be clean (51:9)... At times he comes in 'mourning' or 'sackcloth'. He 'kneels' and 'prostrates himself' 'before Yahweh', 'lies on the threshold of God's house', 'stretches out his hands' in 'humble prayer' and 'laments' or cries out' his 'praise' and employs all his usual cultic expressions.

He does all this, not when alone in the his closet, or in the fields, but in 'the midst of the Great Assembly', in the 'congregation', 'before his brethren', *i.e.*, his fellow believers. In these exercises he feels himself a member of the 'house of Jacob', of 'Israel' ...²¹

Later, Mowinckel states categorically, and very effectively, that the psalmists, time and time again, speak of their external and internal relations within the Temple. They will speak of it with veneration and awe, with love and confidence, for in the Temple, the psalmist beholds God, and from it flows the fountain of life. It is a sacred place in which the psalmist dreams of living within it forever and ever.²² Again the Christian must see this love for the house of Yahweh now transferred to Jesus, as the true temple, the true source of life, the true refuge for the believer, and our true Ark.

Classification of the Psalms

Here is not my intention to spend too much time in discussion of the classification of the psalms. My aim here is not so much as to identify the respective types of psalms but their *use* in worship. The contention of this paper is that the psalms were written and used primarily for the various aspects of public temple worship, worship around and related to

¹⁸Ibid., p., 7.

¹⁹It must be remembered that it is important to note that there was no singing in the Synagogue until the 9th century A.D. Therefore the references to the "director" has no bearing upon any alleged synagogue worship.

²⁰Ibid., p., 14.

²¹Ibid., pp., 7-8.

²²Mowinckel, vol., 2, p., 89-90.

the cultus. Furthermore, I chose not to spend too much time discussing the types of psalms for the reason that the underlying assumption behind much of the classification schemas lie the form-critical method. This, for example, finds expression in statements such as the one Oesterley makes regarding the *attempts* to avoid the divine name Yahweh, wherein *elohim* is substituted.²³ The underlying classifications notwithstanding, current scholarship tends to agree that the Psalms as we know them were generally divided into 5 books, and the idea behind this five-fold division is a reflection or image of the division of the Torah. The first book consists of Pss 1-41, the second book, Pss 42-72, the third book, Pss 73-89, the fourth book Pss 90-106, and the fifth book consists of Pss 107-150. Oesterley also identifies certain psalms which were grouped together by subject. He cites the “enthronement” psalms (Pss 93, 97 and 99), the hallelujah psalms (Pss 111-114, 116-118, 135, 136, and 146-150), the songs of Ascents (Pss 120-134). This last group of songs were sung by pilgrims as they ascended Mt Zion for the great annual festivals.²⁴ Oesterley also recognises the work of Gunkel, Mowinckel, and Hans Schmidt for their work in classifying the Psalms. Accepting the results of the form-critical method, Oesterley follows Gunkel’s classification as following:

- 1 Hymns or songs of praise, a special class is formed by the “enthronement” psalms.
2. Laments of the community.
3. Royal psalms.
4. Laments of the individual.
5. Thanksgiving of the individual.

To these larger groups, Oesterley he smaller groups are added. These include:

6. Blessings and curses.
7. Pilgrim psalms.
8. Thanksgiving of the Israelite nation.
9. Legends.
10. Psalms dealing with the Law.
11. Prophetic psalms.
12. Wisdom psalms.²⁵

Regarding these groups, Oesterley notes that every class has its own special form, with a characteristic introduction and conclusion. For example, he notes, “The hymns always begin with an introduction in which the singer says that he is about to praise Yahweh, or calls others to do so. Then follows the reason; sometimes it is because of the mighty deeds that have been wrought in the past, through creation or history, sometimes it is because of a more recent event.”²⁶ Regarding ‘Enthronement’ psalms, Oesterley notes that Gunkel refers to these as a very special class of hymns and are characterised by the opening formula “Yahweh is King!” or “Yahweh has become King!” To this, Oesterley connects Pss 93, 97, and 99. “They suggest,” he reasons, “a ceremonial procession, following the great acts of enthronement, anointing and coronation.”

Psalms of Lament of the Community were adapted for the use in ritual fast-days. Of this group are such psalms as Pss 44, 74, and 80. “They begin with a plea for a hearing, or with a bewildered wonder as to why calamity has fallen on the people.” Oesterley continues: “Sometimes this is omitted and the psalmist passes directly to a recollection of the great deeds done by Yahweh in the past... There is naturally some description of the calamity which has led to the great day of humiliation and prayer... As a rule, such psalms end, or at least include the conviction that the prayer will be answered as the worshiper desires.”²⁷

²³W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (London: SPCK, 1962), p., 2.

²⁴Ibid., pp., 2-3.

²⁵Ibid., p., 6.

²⁶Ibid. Oesterley lists Pss 113, 117 and 135 as fitting into this category.

²⁷Ibid., p., 7.

Royal psalms are not the same as “Enthronement” psalms, notes Oesterley. For the latter hymns celebrate the reign of Yahweh, yet the former are prayers for the prosperity of an earthly king.²⁸ Within this group are such psalms as Pss 18, 45, 72, and 110. Oesterley also reminds us that in the Ancient East, the king was not considered to be so much as an individual but as the epitome of the nation. These psalms were normally sung at the coronation of the king or on his birthday (Ps 45). The “Laments of the Individual” form a large block and were adapted for use on a number of occasions. The implication for some of them is that the worshiper would stand at the altar as he is about to make his sacrificial offer, there is singing so as to induce Yahweh to deliver him from his troubles.²⁹ Of these psalms Oesterley notes:

Psalms of this class not infrequently include a small liturgy, in the course of which a divine oracle is given, promising to the worshiper the satisfaction of his need, and enabling him to close with thanksgiving for the coming benefit. The words of the oracle sometimes have to be assumed, but the happy ending shows that they were used in this actual ritual. Illustrations may be seen in Pss 7, and 56; Ps 20 may be the latter part of such a psalm, giving only the divine oracle and the final expression of confidence. To this class belong also some of the so-called “penitential psalms.”³⁰

After this, Oesterley notes the Psalms of Thanksgiving which are psalms for the thanks-offering or for the fulfilment of a vow. “They naturally recount the special occasion which has called for thanksgiving, and are sometimes so to be read as to allow an interval for the actual presentation of a sacrifice on the altar.”³¹

Before moving on, it is necessary to make mention of the so-called I- or we-forms of the psalms. The issue pertains to the move by modern scholarship to locate the context of the psalms in the ritual involvement of the cultus. If that is true, the question then becomes, how do we explain the apparent I-form psalms, the psalms which indicate an individual song of praise? For does not the presence of these I-form psalms militate against the modern thesis. To respond to this, an extended quotation from Mowinckel is in order:

The simplest solution would be to say--like Gunkel and others--that the I-form means there is an individual who is speaking, a Mr So-and-so who is in need of that special cultic act, or a certain person who has composed the psalm or has had it composed to express his personal situation and experience. Only the psalms in the we-form are then congregational psalms proper.

There can be no doubt that this view contains a substantial truth. The psalms may be divided into those which concern the congregation or the people, that is *national* psalms or *congregational* psalms, and such as are connected with the individual's, possibly a private person's, religion and ritual need, that is *personal* or *individual* psalms.

But the problem is not solved yet. The matter cannot be decided simply on the basis of I-or we-forms. There are also psalms where there is no doubt that the ‘I’ in question speaks on behalf of a plurality (as in Ps 118), or where the ‘we’ appears together and in the same sense as an ‘I’ (e.g., Ps 44). There are also ‘I-psalms’ where the matter that caused the supplication to Yahweh obviously is a public one, concerning the whole people, and not only a single person (e.g., Ps 66).

To this may be added that it is only to us moderns that it seems a matter of course that the natural form of plurality would be ‘we’. In reality this is compared to the old corporate one--a mental attitude proper to each individual person who has begun to be conscious of his own individuality, the congregation being a sum of ‘I’s (a ‘we’). In the religion and common prayer of ancient peoples and civilizations the I-form is the usual and natural one, because there it is the whole and not the individual that is given reality, a ‘corporate personality’ which may act through a representative personality who ‘incorporates the whole.’ According to such an attitude

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., pp., 7-8.

³¹Ibid., p., 8.

it will be natural for the representative of the collective prayer to use the I-form. We see this for instance in the Babylonian hymns, and it has persisted through the ages...

But there are also real I-psalms where the suppliant is the single member of the congregation. They belonged to the cultic acts performed on behalf of the individual as a 'private' person--no matter who he was, a king, or a nobody. That Israel had such cultic acts is seen from many of the ritual laws of the Pentateuch. There is, then after all, a reality in the distinction between congregational or national psalms, and individual psalms.³²

Regarding the collation of the psalter as we know it, there are many problems here in regard to the current conclusions of liberal scholarship. For example, the current thesis is that the current Psalter is the result of several smaller and older Psalters. Yet here the difficulties begin, for scholars will speak of first Davidic Psalter, and then the second Davidic Psalter, the Korahite Psalter and the Asaphite Psalter. The first Davidic Psalter will be combined with the so-called Elohist Psalter, all of these conclusions depend upon the assumptions of form-criticism. What can be affirmed is that by 130 B.C., the Psalter as we know it was formed. Further, by 100 B.C., 1 Maccabees cites Ps 79:2 as scripture, which indicates a wider public acceptance of the psalms as canonical. Therefore, given the evidence, a safe date would place the latest possible acceptance of the Psalter as canonical by 200 B.C. The oldest date, says Mowinckel, can be no earlier than 350 B.C. However, he prefers a date closer to 300 or 250 B.C.³³ Further, it is safest to assume that the purpose of the Psalter was as a song book for the temple worship. It cannot have been a song book for the individual for his private meditation, for most people at this time could not read. Mowinckel: It may put it in this way: the learned 'traditionalists' wanted to collect and to keep whatever they could find of sacred inspired poetry from the time of the fathers."³⁴

Temple Singing

So far this paper has been about the goal of tackling certain popular myths that have evolved over the centuries regarding the singing and use of the psalms. Another popular myth has to do with the aspect of the actual *singing* of the psalms. It is often proposed that within the Temple, the congregation or the individual sang the psalms. This is not so, argues Mowinckel. Rather, what does appear to have happened is that the temple singers sang on behalf of the suppliant, whether the suppliant be an individual or a congregation (e.g., the pilgrims). Where did these singers come from? One of the earliest references to these singers is from Ezra 2 where there is mention of the 128 descendants of Asaph (v 41) who are "singers." It was David who instituted and established the temple singers. In 1 Chron 25:1, we read: "David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals." The balance of the chapter is taken up with documenting the names of the families and persons so charged and with noting their supervision and roles. Further, these singers were Levites, who served as lower temple personnel. And yet, as already noted, the singers were identified with the act of prophesying, Mowinckel:

Evidently a close connection existed between temple singers and temple prophets. Therefore it is no mere chance that the latter temple prophets were classed among 'the Levites' in the later sense of the term, and that in the book of Chronicles a Levite among the singers appears as a cultic prophet; the Chronicler uses the term 'prophesy' about the office of the temple singers and considers singing praise to be an outcome of prophetic inspiration.³⁵

It should be noted that in ancient times, poetry itself, was considered to be inspired.³⁶

Regarding the actual activity of the singers in the temple, there is little detailed documentation from external biblical sources. According to the Mishna, the singers would stand on the steps leading from the court of the people--that is in

³²Mowinckel, vol., 1., p., 39.

³³Mowinckel, vol., 2., pp., 198-200.

³⁴Ibid., p., 204.

³⁵Ibid., vol., 2, p., 82.

³⁶Ibid., p., 92.

the times of the first temple and onwards--and from there sing. From Scripture, we learn that men and women were involved in this singing, Ps 68:25. For the festal songs, two priests would also blow on horns from behind the musicians and singers. This singing accompanied both sacrificial and processional occasions. The input of the congregation would come from the collective shouts as 'amens' or 'hallelujahs' or 'forever and ever' at certain times during the singing. Here Mowinckel is of the opinion that the term 'selah' refers to this congregational shouting.³⁷ From this, Mowinckel concludes that even for private sacrifices, or thanksgivings, or purification rites, one or more of the temple singers would render the psalm supposed to be sung by the suppliant. Thus, Mowinckel concludes:

So when it says in the psalms 'I (i.e., the worshiper) will sing' or the like, and when it was said in the preceding chapters that the person in question would 'sing' his lament or thanksgiving psalm in the Temple, this means that he did so through one of the temple singers, who would render the psalm in his place."³⁸

As I noted in a previous occasion, the Christian especially should be sensitive to the covenantal nuances here. For now the Christian needs no earthly mediator to sing his praise to Yahweh. For he has the very God-incarnate, Jesus Christ, who has entered the throne-room, that heavenly tabernacle, and who has interceded on our behalf. It is because of this very work of Christ for us that we can enter the throne of grace directly and boldly.

Lastly, it should be recalled that singing was an integral part of Jewish life and spirituality. We have many examples of devotional songs to Yahweh. For example, Miriam's song, Ex 15:20-21; Moses song, Ex 15:1-18; Hannah's song in 1 Sam 2:1-10; Deborah's song in Jud 5:1-21; and David's lament in 2 Sam 1:19-27. The implication here is clear: Whatever has been placed in the sacred text is there for a reason. Further, in narrative texts, when something specific is stated, it is so stated for deliberative emphasis. Here we have examples of Jewish piety expressing itself fully and passionately.

Temple Tunes and Music

Firstly, regarding the tunes, there is very little known about their exact nature. Indeed, in much of the literature on OT psalmody, no mention is made of the tunes. Once again, Mowinckel is about the only writer who speaks to the question of tunes. Yet even he is brief, simply because, as he himself notes, "we know nothing about the tunes in Israel's temple cult."³⁹ We can only infer the form of the tunes by reasoning analogically from the musical styles of the surrounding cultures of the day, and so we are safe to conclude that they were indeed quite simple. "It is a safe supposition that as this 'period' the verse was the proper rhythmic unit, it was also a melodic one. The 'tune' was limited to the single verse, perhaps with a marked rise or fall at the end of the last line in a 'stanza' or 'strophe.'⁴⁰ Mowinckel also notes that given the lack of sophistication⁴¹ the early music was not based on an octave scale.⁴²

It is important to note that temple tunes and singing were by far unlike what we in our churches today experience. This point cannot be understated. As Mowinckel, with others, points out, it is more likely that the singing in the temple and indeed in Semitic culture at this time, was more recitative and more akin to a simple chant--something between speaking and singing. Mowinckel makes the point very well:

[W]e must realize that the temple singing was entirely different from the singing in our churches and meetings, namely with respect to the *tunes*. To us the tune of a song is the chief thing; we can do without the accompaniment. The accompaniment is there for the sake of the tune. In the temple singing of Israel, as in all oriental music, it was the business of the instruments first of all to make the time. And the singing itself was rather more in the nature of a recitation than of tunes in the modern sense... If we are to judge from primitive

³⁷Ibid., p., 83.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Mowinckel, vol., 1., p., 9.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹I use this word carefully for I in no way mean to imply derogation.

⁴²Mowinckel, Ibid.

music elsewhere, we may imagine that what we might call the tune may have consisted in the repetition of the same series of notes, say three times, whereas the fourth line, and thus the close of the ‘stanza’ or ‘tune’ was marked by a rise or fall towards the end.⁴³

Oesterley makes the same point: “[W]here rhythmical accentuation plays [the] dominating part in musical performance, two things seem to inevitably result, at any rate in the earliest stages: melody takes a very subordinate place, and harmony is non-existent, excepting in its most elementary form when men’s voices sing, or instruments play an octave lower.” From this, it is clear that the purpose of the instruments was important in the cultic worship. The instruments were to stress the rhythm and to keep the time.

It should be pointed out above all that the very word we derive our English “psalm” from is a word, *zamar* (c.f., *zimra* and *mizmor*) bound with the meaning: ‘to sing, to play an instrument.’⁴⁴ This corresponds with the Greek *psalmos*. There were basically three divisions of musical instruments, percussion, wind and string. The instruments of percussion were the *toph*, sometimes translated ‘drum’ but more likely it was something more akin to our tambourine. It was a circle of wood with a side covered with skin drawn tightly, and may have included jangling metal tied to the wood. It was held in one hand and struck with the other.⁴⁵ We see it being used in Ex 15:20, Isa, 5:12, 30:32, 1 Sam 10:5, and importantly, Ps 68:25, where the verbal form occurs and it is said to be played by women in the Temple, and also Ps 149:2 and 150:4. After this is the *Zelzelim* described by Josephus as being two metal plates which were slapped together. The modern equivalent of these are our cymbals. Further, the *Meziltaim* historically has been classified as identical or near identical to the cymbals. It appears there was an instrument that comes close in approximation to our ‘rattle,’ the *Mea’ane’im* which comes from the root word to shake. Regarding the *shalishim*, not much is known except that it was held and used by women. Oesterley postulates that it was something like a drum.⁴⁶

Regarding wind instruments, there was the *shophar* or Ram’s-horn. This is the only instrument still to be used in the “modern” synagogue. Normally this ram’s-horn was used to signal an alert, danger or coronation. But it is used in Ps 81:3, and 98:6 for the New Moon festival. An equivalent instrument was the *keren* a horn, see: Josh 6:5, 1 Chron 25:5, and Lev 25:9. The *chazizerah* Oesterley premises was either a ram’s-horn in its early days or became a horn made of brass or silver. Its length was less than a cubit. It is cited in Ps 98:6. After this, the *chalil* which is believed to be a pipe or flute, literally a reed, if you like. There is no substantive evidence that this was used in the Temple services.⁴⁷ The *ugab* is a debated instrument. Some conjecture it was a harp, but Oesterley and others suppose it closer to what we know as a bag-pipe. If Oesterley is right, it consisted of two pipes attached to a leather bag.⁴⁸ It is cited only in Ps 150:4, where it is listed with other instruments.⁴⁹

Speaking of stringed instruments, Oesterley notes firstly that the term is derived from the general term *neginoth* from the verb *naggen* “to play with a stringed instrument,” (see, for example, 1 Sam 19:9). Stringed instruments were most likely comparable to our lyre (from *kinnor*) and harp (*nebel*). These two instruments were used in ordinary life (see Isa 5:12), and before the Ark of the Covenant, (1 Chron 16:5), and in cultic services of dedication, (Neh 12:27).

⁴³Ibid., vol., 2, pp., 83-84.

⁴⁴C.f., R.L. Harris, G.L. Archer, and B. Waltke *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), vol., 1, 245.

⁴⁵Oesterley, *A Fresh Approach*, pp., 108 and 111. Throughout this section I am going to assume the reasonable accuracy of the secondary source scholarship. Further, when I am drawing from older sources, such as Oesterley, I will for brevity’s sake follow his older spelling-pronunciation of the Hebrew. Further, for a more thorough discussion of the instruments used, see Alfred Sendrey’s *Music in Ancient Israel* (New York, Philosophical Library, 1969), pp., 262-420. Given the depth of his discussion, I have chosen to follow Oesterley’s briefer classification and descriptions.

⁴⁶Oesterley rejects the *Revised Version* translation interpretation of this instrument as a “triangle.”

⁴⁷However, see Ps 150:4.

⁴⁸Against this, see Sendrey, pp., 307-309, where he suggests the position that it was a more general and abstract term for a group of instruments.

⁴⁹Interestingly, the N.I.V. translates it as strings.

The use of these instruments, as played collectively, is sharply brought to our focus in 2 Chron 5:11-14:

The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians--Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives--stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps, and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpets and the singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: "He is good, His love endures forever." Then the Temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and all the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.

Within the psalter itself we have some key references to the praise of Yahweh with instrumental accompaniment. For example: "I will praise you with the harp," and "I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness O my God; I will praise you with the lyre O Holy One of Israel," and again, "Sing for joy to God our strength; shout aloud to the God of Jacob! Begin the music, strike the tambourine, play the melodious harp and lyre. Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast."⁵⁰ And of great importance is Ps 150:

Praise Yahweh
Praise God in his sanctuary;
Praise him in his mighty heavens.
Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.
Praise him with the sounding of the trumpets,
praise him with the harp and lyre.
praise him with the tambourine and dancing,
praise him with strings and flute,
praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise Yahweh.

Praise Yahweh.

It is perhaps now that we can begin to appreciate the true nature of OT worship of Yahweh. We can see why Mowinckel was right to say that Hebrew temple worship was *noisy*.⁵¹ Mowinckel also makes the point that in and through rhythm and music there was "a way of expressing the sense of rapture and sublime abandonment."⁵²

Dancing

"Dancing," says Sendrey, "is as old as music itself."⁵³ He goes on to note:

Dance is mentioned in countless passages of biblical and post-biblical literature. This alone would prove its outstanding importance in Jewish religious and secular life. Even more light is thrown upon the significance of dance in Ancient Israel by the fact that biblical Hebrew has no less than twelve verbs to express the act of dancing. Should we add to this the numerous terms found in rabbinic literature pertaining to this occupation,

⁵⁰Ps 43:4, 71:22, and 81:1-3.

⁵¹Mowinckel, vol., 1., p., 9.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Sendrey, p., 441.

it could be properly stated that no other ancient language possesses this wealth of expressions describing the various aspects of dancing.⁵⁴

Sendrey then lists off these 12 verbs: (1), *mohol*, to whirl, to twist (c.f., Jud 21:21 &23); (2) *sahak*, to laugh, to play, to make merry (2 Sam 6:5); (3) *hagag*, meaning strictly, “to celebrate a *hag*, a festival.” (Ps 42:5); (4) *karar*, to whirl about (2 Sam 6:14); (5) *pazaz*, leaping in dance (2 Sam 6:14); (6) *rakad*, to skip about (1 Chron 15:29); (7) *dalag*, to leap, to skip about (Isa 35:6); (8) *kafaz*, parallel to *dalag*, to leap, skip (Cant 2:8); (9) *zal’a*, used to denote a leaping ritual dance; (10) *duz*, to leap (Job 41:14); (11) *pasah*, from ‘to pass over,’ ‘to spare,’ ‘to save,’ denoting a limping ritual dance performed at passover (Ex 12:11,23, & 27); (12) *sabah*, to move around, to encircle by solemn procession, rather than a dance in the strict sense.⁵⁵

In the Bible, in contexts outside of the Temple worship, we find instances of Hebrew dancing. For example, Ex 15:20: “Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang: ‘Sing to Yahweh, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.’” Here we see singing combined with dancing. In Sam 18:6-7, we read:

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing with joyful songs, and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.’⁵⁶

In terms of the cultic worship before the Ark, we see, for example, in 2 Sam 6:14, and 16, ‘David dancing before the ark and before Yahweh with all his might.’ For David, dancing enabled him to abase himself completely before Yahweh. The parallel account adds: ‘David with all the Israelites were celebrating with all their *might*⁵⁷ before God, with songs, and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets’ (1 Chron 13:8). Sendrey also notes that the Israelites danced during the feasts of Unleavened Bread, of Weeks, and of Tabernacles.⁵⁸ Speaking of the latter feast, he says: “dancing and singing at the Feast of Tabernacles seem to have served the sole purpose of celebrating joyfully the ingathering of the harvest and to thank God with music.” During this feast, specifically on the night of the first and second day, a torch-dance was performed in the *Court of Women*: “men of piety and good works used to dance with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises.”⁵⁹

From within the psalms themselves, Sendrey then points out and argues that there are instances of dancing, such as Pss 26:6, 118:27, 81:2-3, 87:7, (here he notes that the presence of tambourines signifies the accompaniment of dancing for these last 3 verses). Importantly, Ps 149:3 specifically says “Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp.” And again: Ps 150:4 “praise him with tambourine and with dancing, praise him with strings and flute.” In Ps 30:11-12, dancing is the result of Yahweh’s salvation: “You turned my wailing into dancing’ you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Yahweh my God, I will give you thanks forever.”

Dancing in Israel only fell into disrepute because of the influence of Greek culture with its professional male theatrical dancers. This style strikes at the very heart of the semitic concept of the community and reduces the congregation to the role of spectator. In a sense, Greek dancing could be taken as an example of Greek individualism versus Jewish communalism. The Israelite form of dancing was primarily the ‘round dance’ which was either performed by women, individually, or as groups, or the entire people, or men, even old men (Jer 31:13) in response to the salvation of Yahweh. In the dance, the pious worship God freely with all their being and person.

⁵⁴Ibid., p., 445-446.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp., 446-447.

⁵⁶C.f., 1 Sam 21:11 and 29:5.

⁵⁷The reader need only to be reminded that when Michal challenged the propriety of David’s dancing, his response was that he would even redouble his *indignity* (vs 20-22).

⁵⁸Sendrey, p., 457.

⁵⁹Ibid., p., 458.

My point in mentioning the role of dancing in Hebrew worship is to not only point out its use in the wider Hebrew culture, or that it was used in terms of the cultic worship, but also to bring home the point that to the Hebrew perspective, worship of Yahweh took on broader psychological parameters than we moderns realise. For the Hebrew, singing, instruments, and dancing, were all interconnected activities which were not sharply dichotomised, as we moderns tend to view them. To be engaged in the performance of the one was to entail, at some point, the use and performance of the other two elements of the “triplicity of music” in the Old Testament.⁶⁰

Lastly, there is the issue of whether or not praise through dancing can be rigidly separated from praise through singing, and somehow then made an inseparable aspect or component of the sacral cultic worship. There are those who insist that dancing was inextricably bound to the temple cultus and is therefore abrogated along with all the other aspects of cultic worship. I find this argument implausible if posed in this reductionist sense. For I think, just as certain forms of the singing took on a cultic aspect, yet we still sing--for not singing *per se* is abrogated⁶¹--so, too, even though certain aspects of dancing took on a cultic aspect, there is no reason to assume that dancing *per se* is necessarily abrogated. And then we have the sure examples of dancing outside of the cultus, as we do of singing and of instruments which would clearly defeat the proposed reductionist logic.⁶²

The Synagogue

No discussion of the use of the psalms in Hebrew worship can leave out a discussion of the worship in the synagogue. By way of introduction, let me begin by quoting Rowley, who in regard to the origins of the synagogue, bluntly says, ‘we have no account of its origin in the Old Testament.’⁶³ Oesterley, more than most, seeks to identify the origin of the synagogues, but even he is hard pressed to find evidence regarding their origin prior to the Maccabean period. Oesterley notes” “The Old Testament, then... gives us no information either about the origin of the Synagogue or of its nature and purpose.”⁶⁴ Mowinckel also adds: “Theological handbooks keep telling us that the synagogues originated during the Exile, that is to say shortly after the carrying off to Babylonia... but this is nowhere justified by the sources, and the idea is as unlikely as it could possibly be.”⁶⁵ Attempts to sustain their origin during the Exile have so far failed to provide substantial evidence.⁶⁶ What can be inferred is that the synagogues originated outside of Palestine but were then gradually introduced into Palestine, so that at the time of Jesus, synagogues had become prominent markers on the Jewish liturgical landscape. And importantly, the further the synagogue was from the Temple, the more significant it was to the devout Jew.

Mowinckel notes that the earliest reference to a synagogue comes from Egypt in 247 B.C. The consensus is that synagogues came into being at some point during the Maccabean period among the diasporic Jews. Drawing on much later sources, specifically Philo and Josephus, Oesterley points out that the synagogues were principally places or houses of instruction and prayer. They were never originally regarded as places of worship, properly speaking. It was never meant as a substitute for the Temple, for that would detract from the importance of the temple in Jewish religious life.⁶⁷

⁶⁰Ibid., p., 441. By way of supporting argumentation, Sendrey documents the comments of John Chrysostom, who in his writings speaks explicitly of “ritual temple dancing” Furthermore there is conclusive evidence for the performing of the psalms with accompanying dances in John Chrysostom’s writings,” Sendrey, p., 452, c.f., 154-155.

⁶¹No one would assert this position. I am not suggesting we must dance.

⁶²I am not willing to buy into the logic-chopping that simply negates and dismisses the references to extra-cultic worship as an invalid source of guiding principles for New Covenant worship. Nor do I believe that any recourse to worship outside of the cultus, in the OT, must mean we have to return to archaic instruments and forms of singing and dancing, for it is the discerned *principles* that regulates our worship in the New Covenant.

⁶³H.H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel, Its Forms and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p., 213.

⁶⁴Oesterley, *Fresh Approach*, p., 157.

⁶⁵Mowinckel, vol., 1., p., 4, fn 20.

⁶⁶Oesterley, *Fresh Approach*, pp., 153-157.

⁶⁷Ibid., p., 167. C.f., Mowinckel, vol., 1., p., 4.

They were, at most, seen as representative of the temple cultus. All that we know comes from later sources, such as Philo, Josephus, the Talmud and Mishna and from the Sopherim Tract.⁶⁸

The structure of the synagogue is delineated by various writers, of which Edersheim is fairly representative.⁶⁹ Edersheim notes that for the services, the sexes were strictly separated, and the division was secured by a grated partition. The orientation of the synagogue was such that upon entering the synagogue the worshiper would be facing Jerusalem. At the front of the synagogue was a raised platform or *bima*. On the *bima* stood the lectern, the *migdal ez*. It would be from here that the reader would read and recite the *Torah*. From this platform, too, the Rabbi would sit and discourse on the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. Prayer would be offered standing.⁷⁰ The lectern was also placed in front of an ark, being a chest containing the scrolls of the *Torah*. Seated in chairs with their backs to the ark would sit the leading men of the synagogue and community. Here would sit the Pharisees and honoured men. Facing them would be the congregation. For the service, properly speaking, the public worship would begin with the *shema* recitation. Originally this took the form of the more simple recitation of Dt 6:4-9, but later it came to include 11:13-21, and Num 15:37-41. Fixed prayers and benedictions (the *Tephillah*), were also recited during the service.

As noted, there would be a reading from the prophets, which would be followed by a sermon or address by the preacher (the *darshan*⁷¹). If the sermon was an important theological discourse, it was whispered into the ear of an *amora* or speaker, who would then explain it to the congregation in more popular terms. If the discourse was popular in content and tone, then direct communication seems to have been the method of explanation. This type of discourse was called a *meamar* literally a speech or talk. After the popular discussion there would be some limited doctrinal discussion between the honoured guests and the congregation and the teacher. Here there are echoes of the Corinthian church when Paul speaks of the women shouting across to their husbands, asking them questions and so forth.

Regarding the psalms, themselves, the common misunderstanding is that they were sung during the synagogue service. But this is not so. There is no evidence of psalm-singing during the service the early middle ages. Oesterley in his three works makes mention of psalm singing in the synagogue. His discussions are ambiguous in that he never clearly delineates a time-frame. He will cite the earliest known reference to Synagogue psalm-singing from the Sopherim Tract, which he will even date in some contexts, to 589 A.D. Oesterley will then read back into earlier periods of synagogue liturgy the very much later practice of psalm singing. However, modern scholarship is united on this point. The psalms were at most read, or recited. They were seen as teaching texts, as much as the writings of the prophets and the law were teaching texts. They would read from them, teach from them, recite from them, but never sing them. Mowinckel:

As an institution for worship the synagogue was not created to supplant the temple service, but to gather the congregation for the reading and teaching of the law and for common prayer at the appointed hours. The synagogue service was in ancient times always songless. It is quite another matter that in the course of time portions of the psalms came to be used as lessons and prayers at the service in the synagogue. That only happened after the psalms had become 'Holy Scripture' and has nothing to do with hymn singing... Not before mediaeval times did synagogal poetry and singing come into existence.⁷²

In a footnote, Mowinckel adds: "What Oesterley says about the singing of psalms in the synagogue is partly hypothesis based on testimonies which actually refer to the temple service, and partly a reference to the use of psalms or psalm verses as prayers."⁷³ Rowley confirms Mowinckel when he notes that the psalms were *read* in the synagogue, and when they were recited they were recited by individuals, not by the congregation.⁷⁴ It is clear that singing in the

⁶⁸Frustratingly, this tract is variously dated from anywhere from the 6th to the 9th century.

⁶⁹Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches in Jewish Social life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987).

⁷⁰As with other aspects of synagogue history, the difficulty is identifying the history of these various elements, when and where they were introduced.

⁷¹From *darash* to ask or inquire.

⁷²Mowinckel, vol., 1., p., 4.

⁷³Ibid., fn., 20.

⁷⁴Rowley, p., 237.

synagogue was an element of the liturgy which the Jews borrowed from the Christian church and not the other way around. What Oesterley fails to recognise is that for the devout Jew, the Temple was the very heart of the worship of Yahweh, and because of this the synagogues resisted firmly all attempts to turn the synagogue service into an alternative place of worship and praise. For all worship in praise was to be directed to the Temple. That was the point of mediation between Yahweh and the people. Oesterley's thesis assumes that the Jewish believers considered themselves free to access Yahweh directly, apart from the mediation of the Temple and its sacrifices. This point again enables the Christian to see the true significance of Christ's challenge to the Pharisees regarding his own life and person.

Psalms in the Early Church

Immediately as I write this sub-header, I am once again aware of the expanse of this topic. And given the limitations of this paper, my aim here is to only skim the early church fathers with the view of giving the reader a small feel for the use of the psalms in the early church. Here it may be easily said that the early church drew on two sources for the use of the psalms. Firstly, they drew upon the synagogues formal recitation of the psalms as prayers and as teaching tools. But they also drew upon the Temple's use of singing the psalms. Only now the psalms were given new melodies, the shape of which depended upon the given culture in which the psalm was sung. From the Greek and Eastern Fathers, one of the earliest references to antiphonal singing is from Ignatius of Antioch.⁷⁵ Clement of Alexandria writes that the psalms, as well as hymns, were to be sung before going to sleep, and also at the celebration of the Eucharist.⁷⁶ Origen writes that the psalms were being sung antiphonally with *new* melodies.⁷⁷ Dionysius of Alexandria says that the psalms were sung in the church. Chrysostom informs us that Ps 141 was recited before sleep as a salutary medicine to cleanse the soul. In regard to the service, he informs us that the custom of corporate singing, of male and female and young and old, in the service was an ancient one. Basil mentions that children as well took part in the singing. Athanasius notes that at times when the Arian soldiers were attacking the church, the deacons would be appointed to sing psalms. It would not be inordinate to say that the early church practice, Greek and Latin, of singing the psalms was as different from the OT practice, as night contrasts to day.

From the Latin church, we learn that Tertullian spoke of the singing of the psalms during the Christian worship service. Tertullian even lists a basic liturgy. The Scriptures are read, the psalms are sung, then the exhortation is given, and then prayers are offered. Ambrose mentions that women and children would responsively sing as well as the men. And like Athanasius, when the church was attacked by Arian soldiers, the whole church would sing the psalms night and day. Augustine makes many references to the singing of the psalms. During his services, the psalms were both read from the lectern and sung. Jerome enjoined his people to sing the psalms not only with their voices, but to make melody with all their hearts. Gregory the Great, among others, also insisted that the entire psalter be committed to memory and recited weekly. He also decreed that Ps 119 was to be recited daily. And in his church, no one was every promoted who could not recite the entire psalter from memory alone.

A final quotation from Chrysostom makes well the point:

If we keep vigil in the church, David comes first, last and midst. If early in the morning, we seek for the melody of hymns, first, last and midst is David again. If we are occupied with the funeral solemnities of the departed, if virgins sit at home and sin, David is first, last and midst. O marvelous wonder! Many who made but little progress in literature, many who have scarcely mastered its first principles, have the psalter by heart. Nor is it in the cities and in the church alone that, at all times through every age, David is illustrious; in the midst of the forum in the wilderness and uninhabited land, he excites the praises of God. In monasteries among the holy angelic armies, David is first, last and midst. In the convents of virgins, where are the bands of them that imitate Mary; in all the deserts, where are men crucified to this world and having their conversation with

⁷⁵Oesterley, *Fresh Approach*, p., 180. Even here Oesterley is still operating by the thesis that the synagogues sung the psalms and that it was therefore Jewish Christians who carried over this practice into the Christian church.

⁷⁶J.A. Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship* (London: The Faith Press: 1962), p., 26.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp., 26-27.

God, first, last and midst, is he. All other men are at night overpowered by natural sleep: David alone is active; and, congregating the servants of God into seraphic bands, turns earth to heaven and converts men into angels.⁷⁸

Polemic

It is not my pleasure to introduce this polemic component. I do so that we might begin to see a contrast between our modern thoughts forms thereby realising the danger of all attempts to make absolute one inculturated expression of worship. Recently I read Terry Johnson's booklet *Reformed Worship*. While there is much to commend the book, I do have certain contentions with some of his arguments. It is my contention that Johnson is not being guided by biblical structures regarding worship, but rather he is being shaped by Platonic thinking which was mediated through and by the Puritans, and then handed down to subsequent generations of Anglo-American Reformed and Presbyterian bodies. Naturally to document this is beyond the scope of this paper. But some contrasts between the style of worship Johnson proposes and the style of worship set out in the body of this paper can be delineated. When these contrasts are seen, the Platonic influence in Johnson's thinking bares itself. The main areas of disagreement I have with Johnson's arguments pertain to select points: (1) how culture shapes liturgy, (2) character of biblical worship (3) mental and emotional posture of the worshiper, and (4) the question of dance and worship. Now having said that, I want the reader to be clear, I am not here challenging the veracity of the Regulative Principle. It is patently obvious that Scripture regulates worship. One cannot simply just invent worship practices. Here my controversy is with Johnson's particular application of principles which are completely apart from the determinations of the Regulative Principle.⁷⁹ Further, I must add, I refuse to buy into the logic-chopping of the Covenanters with their rigid dichotomising OT Temple and public worship.

Let me begin by citing Johnson's words and arguments. The first major problem I have with Johnson's argument is his insistence that the baby-boomers "are perhaps the first generation in the history of the church to attempt to impose its musical preferences on the rest, and claim that only then can worship be 'meaningful' to them."⁸⁰ Johnson insists that the generation of WWII did not import the musical styles of Dorsey and Goodman into church liturgy. He adds, that the "church has had its own language and music which transcends the tastes and preferences of any particular group or generation."⁸¹ For Johnson, the solution is to return to the Genevan Psalter.⁸² However, given what has been detailed in the body of this paper, these claims must readily be seen as fairly shallow. For example, is Johnson prepared to return to recitative chanting? The very covenantal shift from Old to New Testament demanded a great liturgical upheaval and in no way could the culturally driven liturgical forms of the OT church be exported without modification into the NT church liturgy. Nor is it sound to argue that the Genevan Psalter, itself, was not shaped by its own wider cultural milieu of its century. The return to the Psalter for the Reformers was a reaction and response, rightly so, to the dominance and incoherency of the Latin Gregorian Chants among other things. And as it would be foolish for any to argue that we should wind back the cultural clock to return to a first century liturgy, I see no soundness in demanding that we likewise in effect wind back the clock to the 1560 very metrical and very Genevan Psalter.⁸³

⁷⁸Lamb., p., 30.

⁷⁹By way of example here, I mean this. The normal Covenanter polemic argues that man made hymns and instrumental music are forbidden today because they care not commanded for use in public worship. The Temple worship being abrogated provides no warrant to the use of these things in public worship today. Naturally, if one takes this line of reasoning, the church service will be of a specific character. It will be joyless, restrained, sober, and so forth. Johnson, however, cannot argue like this, for he wants to allow for hymns. Therefore he must add certain qualities that mark worship and piety which themselves are not actually a direct production of the RPW. And in doing his, he must also take certain biblical references out of balance with the *analogia fidei*.

⁸⁰Johnson, p., 12, fn., 14. Of course, the fact that perhaps to some of us, the 1560 Genevan Psalter, even in English, with all its backward syntax and awkward grammatical constructions may detract from the sense *meaning* the worshiper should experience. My claim to lack of meaning may have some credibility here.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., p., 11.

⁸³I have not discussed the issue of *metre* in the use of the psalms in the OT for the reason of complexity. It is undeniably clear that the psalms were never chanted in anything like the metre we find in the 1560 Psalters. Hebrew metre functioned along different lines and on different bases.

The next problem I have with Johnson's argument pertains to the issue of *simplicity*.⁸⁴ By simplicity, Johnson does not mean freedom. Rather his method here is to juxtapose the complexity of the Temple ritual with the freedom of the NT worship. He notes in detail that in the OT cultic worship there were such things as furniture, garments, offerings, sacrifices, holy days, and consecration rites. In this he is right. All of these elements of the cultic worship were saturated with sacral import. Thus, given that Christ is now the fulfilment of these elements, we need them *not* in New Covenant worship. Clearly, in this sense, the NT worship is simple. But beyond that, what does simplicity mean? For Johnson, it means the absence of symbolism--agreed. It means to him, we are not to revive pomp and circumstance or extravagant worship either⁸⁵--agreed. Yet still I wonder what does that mean? For I know beyond doubt that what is pomp to me, is taken as profound simplicity to another. *Simplicity*, as he is using it, is like a cup without objective content. Clearly, sacralistic symbolism is to be avoided, but moving from that to a non-pompous and non-circumstance laden worship is problematic, for who defines those qualities in the real world?

The next question has to do with the emotional posture of the worshiper. Here Johnson is at his worst in my estimation. Johnson wants the modern worship to be *reverent* and to be shaped by a strong fear (*phobos*).⁸⁶ While he grants that this fear is not terror, it is nonetheless still a strong fear. From this, he asserts: "Old Testament and New Testament reverence is godly fear, such as might be expressed through trembling, kneeling, bowing and prostration."⁸⁷ He goes on to attack the light-minded worship that characterises much of modern worship today. He argues that *joy* as it expresses itself in public worship is not the type of joy one finds at a baseball game, but is a deep emotion, a solid joy, it is not *noisy*, it is a *reverential* joy "and in public is displayed with *restraint*."⁸⁸ There can be no displays of raising hands, of shouting, of leaping about.⁸⁹ Add to this that he wishes that all our worship be as maximally cognitive as possible. Johnson opposes and contrasts "biblical" worship to the mindless worship of the pagans.⁹⁰ He says Christian worship is thoughtful and filled with content. Indeed, we are to worship God with our minds.⁹¹ By placing these two internal postures back to back as I have done, one can detect within Johnson a particular rational piety that more reflects his own culture than biblical thought forms.

For myself, I am not prepared to chop up the piety of the Bible, rejecting all OT expressions of piety because it does not fit a simple modernist grid. While the sacral elements of the cultus have been fulfilled in Christ, why should I deem the expression of devotion, as expressed by David and others, in and out of the Temple worship, as now inappropriate? It is agreed that the sacralistic symbols through which that pious devotion was expressed is abrogated, but there is no reason to negate that expressive piety itself. Johnson merely invents the concept of 'restrained joy' as he is shaped by his subtle yet influencing Platonic emphasis on the mind and the quest for true ideal and absolute *forms*.

My last contention has to do with his comments on dancing. Here I need only to be brief. On page 55, while he acknowledges that David danced before the ark, this is by far different to the nation dancing before the Holy of Holies, or as ought to be employed in the public assembly today. He acknowledges, too, there are instances of dancing in the OT apart from the context of the Temple worship. He concedes that this so in the case of public celebrations, but he adds: "The Bible does not teach or suggest that dance is an approved and blessed element of public worship, and history knows no record of it being regarded as such in either the histories of Israel's temples and synagogues, or the Christian

⁸⁴Johnson, p., 44.

⁸⁵Ibid., p., 47.

⁸⁶Ibid., pp., 48-50.

⁸⁷Ibid., p., 51.

⁸⁸I am not all too sure James had a 'restrained joy' in mind when he extolls the cheerful (*euthumos*) to sing a psalm. Further, Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16, Paul enjoins the praising with the heart (*kardia*) which must reflect his semitic concept of the person being the seat of the person, who through the mind, the will and the emotions expresses his praise to God.

⁸⁹Johnson, pp., 52 and 53.

⁹⁰Ibid., p., 32.

⁹¹Ibid. He mis-cites Mt 22:37 as 20:37. Interestingly he only cites this part of the verse, leaving out worship with our heart and soul.

church.” Given what has been presented in the body of this paper, this claim is not true.⁹² Regarding the references to dancing in Pss 149 and 150, Johnson engages in dubious logic. His counter comes to arguing that if you insist that dancing is permitted in the public worship, you must allow your congregants to bring their beds into the service as well, for does it not also say, argues Johnson, ‘let the saints sing for joy on their beds.’ The point is, however, that in every aspect of your life, sing, praise, and worship Yahweh, from your rising to your going down to sleep. Worship him in your songs, your dances, your prayers, in all that you do. Johnson would have to demonstrate that it is inherently wrong to now dance in the public assembly. He must show that it was acceptable then, in the totality of the Old Covenant, but now sinful and inappropriate.⁹³ Further, Ps 149:1-5 actually serves to undermine Johnson’s sharp dichotomy between public and private worship, for they bleed into and out of each other. The psalmist here sings, as he stands *within* the temple courts, during the act of a cultic offering of praise, yet enjoining the saints to worship in song, and with instruments, and in dance, as an expression of their all-of-life worship of Yahweh, that is, in and out of the Temple. I am not saying that dancing must be included in our modern services, only that it cannot be *a priori* excluded on the grounds Johnson presents.

Conclusion

The arguments in this paper have three applications. Firstly, it has direct meaning for the individual believer. It is clear that in the OT, the Temple was seen as the source of life and light. It was through the rite of the cultus that one met Yahweh and obtained his favour. And this mediation via the cultus was over-laden with a hierarchy of mediators. There was not only the actual aspect of sacrifice, but of priestly intercession, not only in the seeking forgiveness for themselves, the penitent and the nation, but in terms of praise itself, this was largely mediated through the cultus. The Christian, however, now has direct access to Yahweh through the one and only mediator, Jesus Christ. This has a great leveling effect. On this side of glory, no human stands between the penitent and his God. Any attempt to reestablish mediators, human or otherwise, physical or living, this side of heaven is a direct challenge and denial of the work of Christ. It is now we can begin to glimpse at the reasons for Paul’s strong reaction to the Judaizers.

Secondly, in terms of the church, this first application extends itself here too. As much as the work of Christ impacts the individual, it impacts the collective body of Christ. The church has no head other than Christ. The Church has now no cultus of worship other than Christ. Any attempt to make a time, a place, an event the cultus of worship, likewise, only serves to undermine the work of Christ. Further, this also means that insofar as the church is not free to sin,⁹⁴ there is, however, a real sense where our freedom is much more expansive. Our freedom is no longer bound to an earthly cultus, but to Christ. It is from this principle that I would argue that for this very reason the Apostle Paul is ever so reluctant to lay down another list of rules for new covenant worship. Apart from laying down a certain non-negotiables, such as his forbidding women to teach, he repeatedly only lays down principles which should govern our Christian worship and life; such principles as love, orderliness, freedom, maturity, wisdom, and importantly, the work of Christ.⁹⁵

⁹²Ironically, even if there were instances of Temple dancing, I suspect Johnson would simply reply that such examples are abrogated along with all forms of cultic worship.

⁹³Underlying Johnson’s argument here is a subtle form of thinking that replaces the OT cultus *place*, the Temple, with an alleged NT cultus of *time* and *event*, namely the Lord’s Day service. The problem here is that Christ is the fulfilment of the OT cultus of place, and that if the OT cultus is completely abrogated, then the rules regarding Christian life and cultus worship must be grounded in the wider all-of-life worship examples of the Old and New Testaments. Further, when the import of the cultus worship is understood, the impact of Jesus’ words in Jn 2 now take on a heightened meaning. For his intent is not so much as to lay down a new liturgical blue-print (almost as Johnson implies) but to revolutionise the way we think about and worship God. The contrast is the radical (in an almost iconoclastic sense) shift of the cultus, not the shift of specific forms of worship within the cultus itself. To the Jewish mind, this shift in cultus from Temple to Jesus would have been explosive.

⁹⁴Here Johnson is exactly right when he limits our freedom as not a freedom to sin.

⁹⁵See for example the entire thrust of Col 2, and Roms 14, 1 Cor 2-4, 8, 10:23-33, 13, 15:26-40, Gal 3-5. Paul seeks to establish broader principles to govern and to guide the church.

Thirdly, I would propose a need for a radical revision of our thinking regarding corporate worship. Here is my hypothesis: We in this century and culture want to maintain Davidic Piety, while rejecting David Psychology.

As I look around, as I engage with the literature--the pro-regulative principle literature especially--and as I observe and listen to churches, students, and friends discuss the issue of worship, the more I discern a subtle architectonic shift from what was actually the worship in the Bible, to the form of the worship today. I will try to identify some of these shifts below. This paradigmatic shift in worship, I would argue, is mostly subliminal and yet so self-conscious that one can be both seeing and unseeing at the same time, yet in different senses.⁹⁶

Let me explain. Johnson, we saw, makes the naïve claim that it was not until the 60s that Christians for the first time allowed their culture to intrude upon their worship. We saw that Johnson also invents categories that should characterise *true* worship, such as “simplicity,” “cognitive maximalism,”⁹⁷ and something he calls ‘restrained joy.’ Johnson has a love affair with the old Genevan Psalter, and he pines for its return to the modern church service. Yet, what is underlying Johnson’s epistemology, or even broader metaphysics, is his commitment to Platonic Realism. He just does not realise this, for it is the case that for everything we do, there is a historical context. At the time of the Reformation, the Roman Church was engaging in all sorts of mindless rituals, for in them, they held, grace was dispensed *ex opere operato*. Thus, the mind’s apprehension of things divine was really unessential. In response to this, the Puritans sought an exegetical and/or theological *raison d’être* to justify their rejection of the Romanist liturgy. They invoked concepts like simplicity, and even a covenantal architectonic that compared the NT worship with the sacral OT worship. They sought the true “form” of worship. They then wanted to universalise this form, making it absolute for all times and places.

But the more we press this model, especially as Johnson articulates it, the more and more we can see its severe limitations. For example, the “worship” of the NT synagogue was almost as far from our modern worship, such as found in any First- Baptist or Presbyterian church nowadays. In the synagogue, the men would sit on one side, the women on the other. There would be the formal recitation of the *Shema*, and other prayers. The Rabbi would *sit* and then exposit a section of the *Torah*. After about an hour, he would stop and then the congregation would discuss, even debate the points of the lesson. There was a great level of interaction. The whole event was seen as a corporate activity. There was no singing in the Synagogue at least until the 7th or 8th century. The Synagogue was not considered a place of “worship” properly speaking, for that was an activity performed in the Temple alone. We can see how their *culture* was very different from ours. Christian worship drew on two sources, the temple and the synagogue. From the temple, it borrowed prayer, singing and prophesy, among other things. From the synagogue the church borrowed corporate instruction.

Now it is important to note, the more church became dominated by Gentiles, it correspondingly became dominated by Greek thinking. Augustine, for example, introduced Platonism into the church.⁹⁸ As we follow our modest historical sketch, we look next to Aquinas who clearly introduced Aristotle into the Western Church. It is not that these men, along with others, did not just introduce content into the Christian theological framework, but they shaped the very framework itself. For example, and this point is often either overstated or understated. The emphasis in Greek thought was that the mind was the seat of the person. Yet in Hebrew thought, this is not so. For the Hebrews, as well as the wider Semitic community, the heart was the seat of the person, and the heart would express itself through the mind, through the will, and through the emotions. And further, the body itself was essential to human personhood. Now, it is clearly arguable

⁹⁶I must add though, that of the works mentioned that are in favour of the Regulative Principle, only Bushnell is apparently more aware of the culture shifts between the NT times and the present. Johnson is the least sensitive. On the other side of the question, Peterson is the most exegetically aware of the covenantal shift from old to new. Ironically, it is Peterson who is the Sydney Anglican and Bushnell and Johnson the “Reformed” Covenantalists. I would thoroughly recommend Peter’s book. It has been very influential in shaping my thinking regarding worship.

⁹⁷I have coined this term to sum up Johnson’s thought here.

⁹⁸Matters here are complex. Augustine embraced Ambrose’s allegorising of the OT in order to apologetically avoid the harsher “God” of the OT. Platonic Realism is the idea that there are ideal forms for all things unto which all the particulars are subsumed. It is the forms that are more real, more knowable, more rational, more true, than the particulars.

that Greek concepts of person have intruded into Western concepts of life and worship. The Puritans, though rejecting the content, *i.e.*, the specific doctrines of Rome regarding sacral liturgy, still retained the forms of thought, the structures of thinking, the conceptual categories of much of Greek thought regarding the nature of the person, specifically the primacy of the intellect. For them, worship and piety was contrasted like this: It became a case of mindful worship versus mindless worship. Yet, in the Semitic mind, its more the case of heartfelt worship versus heartless worship. And for this reason we see the many biblical chastisements such as the refrain, “they honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”

Worship and the Christian life is not so much a matter of ‘restrained joy’ (Johnson) but of heartfelt worship expressing itself through the mind, through the will, and through the emotions. This meant that for Hebrew worship, and also for Christian worship, worship and praise of Yahweh was noisy, dusty, and what I would describe as bumpy. It was corporate. It was musical. It was songful. It was prayerful. It was full of lamentation. It was full of praise. It was rooted and grounded in the Redeemer Yahweh.

I am labouring through all this for a reason. It is not only that our worship has been shaped by Greek thinking, but also our work, our society, our families, everything. Ever since Locke borrowed from the Greeks’ natural law theories that individualised human bodies, rights, duties and the basis of government, our western culture has followed this design plan. Our lives are atomistic. We live as little islands, disconnected, superficially related in an archipelago. Around each island is a body of water. Our husbands work inordinate hours. Our wives work away from the home and in the home. Our children are barged off to schools most of the sunlight hours. The post-industrial age has further worked to fracture and atomise our souls, our selves and our families.

Now I would argue that our present form of worship has only the outward form of corporate worship. I would argue that, in fact, much of our present worship is extremely passivistic, atomistic, and pietistic.⁹⁹ Because we are all doing the same thing together, at the same time, in the same way, we fool ourselves into thinking that what we are doing is really *corporate* worship. To state the matter radically, I sometimes wonder how it is that our present worship is that far from a group of people watching television. For in our present worship, my body is unmoving, apart from a few vertical shifts. Our minds are passive--we are watching lines on an overheard, we are reading lines in a hymnal, and we are listening to someone else speak. And given the nature of the modern sermon, thorough-going cognitive processing of the sermon content is not really possible. We sit in rows, but we worship very atomistically. How am I connected with the man or woman beside me? I argue that if we knew each other more intimately, our corporate worship would take on more meaning.

From this milieu our worship of Yahweh is shaped and determined.¹⁰⁰ When seen more thoughtfully, Johnson’s statement that it was not until the 60s that culture first intruded into worship is fairly absurd. Given the complexity of our modern society and our modern worship something in me grips me to want and to work for a change. I don’t know how. I have sensed this need for many years now. I think perhaps it is partly due to my own life on the outskirts of church life. I have never been able to form really close friendships based on the activities of Sunday morning and evening, and Wednesday night. I really think that deep intimate relationships cannot be attained from this alone. I have always been of the opinion that true spiritual intimacy comes from all of life communion. It comes from the fellowship that arises outside and beyond the limited ecclesiastical boundaries of our church life.

I am also aware of the corporate aspect of fellowship and praise in worship, but I am not satisfied with what passes today as corporate worship. How to implement a change? I concede the problem to be far too big for me. However, I want our men and women to be able to meet in contexts that address the whole person. I want our people to be able to meet in contexts where the tone is not “super-spiritual,” that is, where there is a feeling that we *must* only be about prayer and piety, but where we can have rightful times of just earthly friendship and fellowship, in and out of the formal service,

⁹⁹I am going to be bold here and identify pietism with Puritan piety that was Platonic, introspective and individualistic, close to inordinate levels.

¹⁰⁰I want to use *determined* here in the classic Schleiermachiian-Barthian sense of an external agent determining a passive agent. The agent is shaped by the external force.

and somehow in new contexts where our worship can take on a greater corporate identity, sense and feeling. I believe, then, that our times of prayer, singing, and piety will actually take on a greater profundity, without that feeling of pressure and rushing that seems to dominate those times right now. My thought is that if we can meet as a community, a real community, sharing such things as work, family and sports when we come together on the Lord's day, we do not need to spend our time talking "catch up." So many times have I heard conversations between the men on Sunday about who won the big match yesterday. If we could find other means and times to converse and connect in our corporate lives, maybe then we could complete the ideal requirements of the *Directory of Public Worship*. But to this end, what we must realise is that all too often, we, as the modern Reformed Church, seem to want a Davidic *piety*, without the corresponding Davidic *psychology*. We are happy with the internalistic aspects of his piety, but not with his externalistic expressions of this piety. In this light, it is hoped that perhaps some of the lessons learnt from this paper may lend themselves to a revision of our present thinking about corporate piety and worship.

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Mowinckel relates the psalms to other parts of the biblical text, the prophets in particular. Psalms can be, among many forms, of praise or of lamentation - it is especially with the later that prophetic voices can be heard. Mowinckel traces the different kinds of voices heard in the Psalms, different times and different situations influencing pieces of what much later became a more unified collection. James L. Crenshaw of Duke University provides an introduction that briefly traces the history of interpretation of the psalms, from the early church to the Enlightenment period, then through the various significant personalities involved with biblical scholarship. Start by marking "The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources" as "Want to Read: Want to Read saving now". We'd love your help. Let us know what's wrong with this preview of *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship* by John D. Witvliet. Problem: It's the wrong book It's the wrong edition Other. While psalms were used in worship services in churches, in the growing monastic movement, the practice of reciting the Psalter formed the core of the devotional practice of the community. St. Benedict (c. 480-543) developed a widely-copied rule for monasteries known as *The Rule of St. Benedict* (c. 530-540 AD). Instead of close fitting translations, these hymns were poetic paraphrases of the biblical psalms. The best known of these today are probably "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past" (Psalm 90) and "Joy to the World, the Lord Is Come" (Psalm 98). The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a near eclipse of psalm singing in most Protestant churches in North America, replaced by devotional lyrics and gospel songs with a more emotional and subjective bent.