Temple and Tartan – Psalms, Poetry and Scotland

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Abstract

In this Creative Research Project, Poetry ('*Word and Weave*') and Thesis ('*Temple and Tartan*') make a bifocal engagement with the Old Testament Psalms to provide substantial new insights. The Thesis examines how other poets have responded to the Psalms, and considers their reception history in Scotland. It shows how this creative response to the Psalms was birthed, shaped and developed using seven distinct roles of the poet.

The first chapter introduces the writer and his poetry, and the Old Testament Psalms, along with a Practice Review. With the poet as ***enquirer***, it explains how *Word and Weave* was planned in five sections, like the Psalms themselves. With the poet as ***interpreter***, the poetry is placed in the wider context of hermeneutics, inspiration and exegesis, how other poets have treated Psalms, and how Psalms 1 and 2 frame the poetry as well as the Psalms themselves.

'Temple' - a contemporary key to understanding OT theology – links the material present of politics and personal experience with the transcendent, where the poet is ***wonder-struck***. 'Tartan', with its complex history and its links with music, introduces synaesthesia, and shows the poet as ***dresser*** (even sometimes closet rebel).

The poet as ***curator*** remembers and presents history in chosen ways, as in epic poetry. Themes of character, rule and equality – in early Scotland, medieval Scotland, and reformation Scotland – are central to the Psalms, and run through many of the individual poems. The poet is also ***prophet***: in *Word and Weave* the poetry picks up both the identity of Israel and the sense of identity of Scots past and present. The poems research this dual identity, and tensions which Scots still live with.

Finally the poet as ***weaver*** works the creative research of this Project into a vision for Scotland today, using a lens of five key words – lines, tribes, land, capital, leaders – and the Thesis adds a postscript on the theology uncovered.

Contents

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My two supervisors, Doug Gay and Alan Riach, kept me on track, encouraged me with their friendship, and inspired me with their ideas and literary connections. Special thanks to them (and Hugh Pyper and Colin Herd, examiners at the Viva).

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any other degree or professional qualification. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been duly acknowledged.

Signed

Dated

6th January 2021

Chapter 1 Introduction – The Poet as Enquirer

> 'One thing I asked of the Lord . . .
> . . . to inquire in his temple.' (Psalm 27:4)

1.1 Project Aim

This Research Project, writing poetry on all of the Old Testament Psalms, is **first** the creation of a work of art which will allow readers to experience the 'reach' of the Psalms through time and space, through inner worlds and outer worlds, through selected characters and concepts in Israel, Scotland and the contemporary world.[1] This will be expanded in 1.5 and developed in the rest of the Thesis.

It has been argued[2] that the theologies of Judaism and Christianity embrace three beliefs:

(1) There is nowhere God cannot be found;[3]

(2) All human life is found within the Psalms, as Athanasius put it;[4]

(3) The Psalms model a way of finding transcendence alongside immanence, something which is an issue for the contemporary arts in general,[5] and for public life,[6] as well as theology,[7] although older poets took it for granted.[8]

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[1] Accepting the challenge set by Iain Crichton Smith: 'The Bible stands like a big rock which no one attends to . . .' ('The Bible' from *New Collected Poems*, Carcanet, Manchester 2011).

[2] See for example Patrick Woodhouse, *Life in the Psalms*, Bloomsbury, London 2015, 19-20.

[3] As in Psalm 139:7-12.

[4] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, ed. and trans. A Religious of C.S.M.V., Mowbray, London 1953, 116. He also said they help a person recognise his own voice ('Psalms 11 and 12 he will use as the expression of his own faith and prayer', *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*, http://www.athanasius.com/psalms/aletterm.htm, accessed 8/9/19). Alec Ryrie disagrees, arguing that the Psalms rather reflect aspects of the Protestant experience (*Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 101 2010, 128*).*

[5] See Jeremy Begbie, *Redeeming Transcendence in the Arts*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2018.

[6] Rowan Williams discusses how to keep the public sphere open 'to the possibilities of the transcendent' in *The Way of St Benedict*, Bloomsbury Continuum, London 2020, 82.

[7] See for example John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers*, IVP, Nottingham 2007.

[8] Coleridge in 'The Ancient Mariner' continually balances the two. In his book on Coleridge (*Mariner*, Hodder, London 2017), Malcolm Guite cites the poet David Jones responding to the poem with Psalm 42:7. Other than that, he would see the power of imagination connecting the two (*Faith, Hope and Poetry*, Ashgate, Farnham 2012, 243).

The poetry reflects these beliefs.

Second, the Thesis sets these poems in the context of other writing on the Psalms, and show how they shed light on the history of Scotland and on some contemporary questions, by exploring connections between issues and periods which may not have been made before,[9] in the spirit of the Jewish tradition of interpreting Torah,[10] and the 'Democratic Intellect' in Scotland.[11]

It is unusual for a PhD thesis to have this kind of broad reach, rather than be focused on a detailed area of research.[12] While there have been studies of individual psalms, a study of the whole Psalter invites a different approach. This also acknowledges the 'vision for a university' of three writers:

> (1) J. H. Newman, who gave a number of lectures in Dublin which paved the way for a new Catholic University, published as a book in 1873.[13] Without excluding vocational studies or specialisation, Newman argued for a liberal education which would explore relationships between subjects.[14]
>
> (2) George Davie, who argued that a priority for education should be enabling people who will pursue different disciplines to share common knowledge, before later specialisation.[15]
>
> (3) Alasdair MacIntyre, who defended Newman against the charge of being irrelevant to the modern university, and suggested that his more

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[9] See Chapters 5 and 6.

[10] 'The later interpretive texts of the Jewish tradition show the multiplicity of connections of meanings and directions inherent in Torah' (Barry Holz in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, Touchstone, New York 1984, 17, citing *New Directions in Literary History*, ed. Ralph Cohen, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1974, 125-47.)

[11] George Davie, *The Democratic Intellect*, Nelson, Edinburgh 1961. A section expanding this has been excised from Chapter 4 for lack of space.

[12] The two theses referred to in footnotes 39 and 40 are typical of the specialised research approach.

[13] J.H. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. I.T. Ker, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1976 (based on the 1889 edition, revised by Newman and published in London by Longmans, Green and Co.).

[14] Newman 1889, Discourse VII, especially 145, cf. Alastair McIntosh, *Healing Nationhood*, Curlew Productions, Kelso 2000, 126-7. Cf. T.F. Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind*, Helmers & Howard, Colorado Springs 1989, 142-3.

[15] Davie worked this out in two books, *The Democratic Intellect* (1961), and *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect*, Polygon, Edinburgh 1986, in continuity with the 'common sense' philosophy of Thomas Reid (Davie 1986, 186).

> controversial claim (that theology was the key to all knowledge) was also relevant to the aims of science today.[16]

The poet is therefore engaging in a broad enquiry, which specialises in bringing together things normally separate. While a few of the connections are made to my knowledge for the first time, what is new is the way they are applied in a Scottish context, to shed light on both Scotland and the Psalms.

1.1.1 Conventions

I use 'Presentation' for the poetry, and 'Project' for the 'Presentation + Thesis'.

OT is used as an abbreviation for Old Testament, NT for New Testament, MT for Masoretic Text, LXX for Septuagint, ANE for Ancient Near East. NRSV is the New Revised Standard Version, REB is the Revised English Bible, SBL is the Society of Biblical Literature.

When 'verse' is used, it refers to the psalm; with the poems, 'stanza' or 'couplet' (etc.) is used ('line' can refer to either). In the Thesis, biblical psalms are numbered in normal type, poems are numbered in italics, with their title in italics and single quotation marks.

'Chapter' is written with upper case when referring to a particular chapter of the Thesis, otherwise with lower case. Psalms with upper case refers to the whole collection, particular references e.g. to Psalm 1 with upper case, otherwise lower case.

'English poetry' just means 'poetry in English' unless the context shows it is English poetry as opposed to Scottish poetry.

Hebrew orthography follows in part the Handbook of Jewish Languages author guidelines, and in part Western academic convention; ^{e} represents the *shewa*, and êîôû are used for strong vowels with *yôth* and *wāw*; <u>k</u> is used for soft kh etc. Since the main text font does not support some letters with a dot underneath, ts

[16] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'The Very Idea of a University: Aristotle, Newman and Us', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 57:4, 347-362, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8527.2009.00443.x. The relevance to Scottish education will be considered in 6.4.3.2.

or ch are used. When familiar words are used, like *torah, midrash, targum* or *tanakh*, they are used with English lettering.

I use the English 'pibroch' for the Gaelic *piobaireachd*.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is used to quote psalms, unless otherwise stated, and the verse numbers refer to that version.[17]

All books and other writings referenced directly are included in the Bibliography, and books cited by these authors are also included where I have read them. References and minor points are generally put in footnotes.

1.1.2 Themes, Structure and Method

The title of the Project includes **a major and a minor theme**. The major theme, 'temple', is both an image and a metaphor, and was used as the title of a collection of poems by the Elizabethan poet George Herbert. When R.S. Thomas made a selection of Herbert poems, in his Preface he said: 'The poet invents the metaphor, and the Christian lives it'.[18]

What Thomas said of the Christian in that context, can be said of anyone who reads the Psalms,[19] which are organised in the Hebrew Bible into five books. Different aspects of the meaning of 'temple' are explored as the Presentation moves through these five books, even though the books themselves are not arranged in such neat categories. I will argue that 'temple' is a concept which joins a building with the cosmos, and the cosmos with a worshipping people, and expand this in Chapter 3.

The five books of Psalms have different themes and different emotions, even within one psalm. But overall they form a 'tartan' (the minor theme) with different coloured threads, some running 'horizontally' within the history of Israel (and the life of King David in particular), within human life and wisdom

[17] In the Hebrew the superscriptions often take up a verse, and in such cases displace by one the verse numbers following.

[18] Cited by A.N. Wilson in *The Book of the People*, Atlantic, London 2015, 131.

[19] Rowan Williams, 'Augustine and the Psalms', *Interpretation*, Jan 2004, 1-2.

more generally; and some running 'vertically' with lament, complaint, praise and thanksgiving.[20]

The poems of Book 1 approach that tartan[21] as a blaze of different colours.[22] Those of Book 2 and 3 look more at the horizontal threads, the human journey, with Book 2 poems mainly about the journey of David and Robert the Bruce, Book 3 poems about exile and migrants. Book 4 and 5 poems pick up more of the vertical, the former as a pibroch (theme and variations) grounded in the tragedy of the *Iolaire* (a troop ship wrecked at Stornoway in the early hours of January 1st 1919), the latter as a tapestry of worship.

Structure. Early chapters introduce the Psalms, Temple and Tartan; later chapters show how the Psalms relate to the history and life of Scotland:

> Chapter 1 introduces the Project, and this poet as an enquirer. It includes a Practice Review.
>
> Chapter 2 looks at the poetry of the Psalms, how they are interpreted, the role of the first two Psalms, and how poets (especially ones writing in Scotland) as interpreters have treated the Psalms.
>
> Chapter 3 explains the major 'temple' theme, how it is found in the Psalms and in other Jewish and early Christian writings, with some examples of how the theme is used in other literature. Here the poet is wonder-struck.
>
> Chapter 4 describes the minor 'tartan' theme, tartan having now left behind its bland associations with tartanry, [23] yet retained its ambiguous association with what it is to be Scottish (culture, politics, fashion). The poet functions as a dresser,[24] but also as a rebel.
>
> Chapter 5 selects a number of periods and situations in Scottish history, on which the Psalms and the Presentation shed some light. Here the poet is curator, exhibiting the past in fresh ways.

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[20] This metaphor is related to the stratification of reality by Alister McGrath in *A Scientific Theology*, Vol. 2, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 2002, 226.

[21] See Chapter 4.

[22] I have used a wide variety of metres, stanza forms and lengths (as did Sir Philip Sidney, though my poems are not versions like his – David Jasper, *Heaven in Ordinary*, Lutterworth, Cambridge 2018, 87).

[23] Christina McKelvie refers to 'the tartan that is our modern nation' (headline, *Sunday National*, 25/10/20).

[24] The classic example of a dresser (or valet) in literature was P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves – who was at times an effective closet rebel (though Wodehouse has also been accused of reinforcing the social structure of his times).

> Chapter 6 shows the poet as prophet, a role which references later and current Scottish history, but also borrows from the five previous roles.
>
> Chapter 7, with the poet as makar, relates the Project to Scotland today through categories of vision and transcendence, then sums up the connections illustrated by the Project.

The **method** of the Thesis uses logic and intuition in conjunction with research into the Psalms and their reception in Scotland, and into how past figures and contemporary poets have used the Psalms in their work (if at all). How logic and intuition test and support each other has some similarity with the way that reason and faith co-operate on each rung of the ladder of insight.[25] The ladder in that illustration is a model, which in turn requires imagination.[26]

1.2 Practice Review

With 'creative practice as research', it is usual to include a Practice Review, parallel to a Literature Review in traditional PhD theses. This short review focuses on contemporary practice,[27] and is expanded to look more generally at poets who write on the Psalms in 2.6.

> Practice as research involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry, and where a practice . . . is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry.[28]

While this Project meets such a definition, the writer is unaware of any similar creative practice on the Psalms.[29] There are three relevant pieces of creative writing which came to my notice before and after the long *poem on* Book 4, in the shape of a pibroch, was written: the 18th century pibroch song poem

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[25] A simple way to describe how Anselm thought of faith and understanding (Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, trans. Ian Robertson, SCM Press, London 1960, 16).Cf. also McGrath 2002, 239.

[26] John McIntyre discusses how models require imagination in *Faith, Theology and Imagination*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1987, 128-9.

[27] 'Though historical knowledge is not effaced, my notion of a practice review focuses on what other practitioners are achieving in synchronous space and time.' (Robin Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2013, 54.)

[28] Nelson 2013, 8-9.

[29] There is of course continuing preaching on the Psalms, and writing which claims contemporary application, like Patrick Woodhouse, *Life in the Psalms: Contemporary Meaning in Ancient Texts*, Bloomsbury, London 2015.

'*Moladh Beinn Dorain'* by Duncan Ban MacIntyre,[30] then afterwards the poem by Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Lament for the Great Music',[31] and the 21st century novel by Kirsty Gunn, *The Big Music*,[32] whose chapter heads use pibroch variations. Synaesthesia (see 4.2.3) in a wider musical context is more common, as with Tony Conran's nine 'symphonies'.[33]

Some creative poems on Bible themes have come from the Theo-Artistry Poets' Scheme, a collaboration between Stanza and St Andrews University, but their first publication had no psalm poems in it.[34]

Edward Clarke of Oxford has now written poems on all the biblical Psalms.[35] Although his own PhD at Trinity College Dublin was on 'Wallace Stevens in Creative Conversation', and included reference to Dante and Psalm 114,[36] it was not on the Psalms as such. His subsequent decision to write poetry on all the Psalms is recent and coincident with my own.[37]

1.2.1 What this Project is not

'Practice as research' is applied in a number of different ways in current practice. As with the apophatic theology of Psalm 18:11 and *Poem 18*,[38] here are three things this Project is not.

> (1) While it is about the OT Psalms, the Presentation is not a modern translation or 'version' of the Psalms.[39]

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[30] Duncan Ban MacIntyre, *Praise of Ben Dorain: the original Gaelic poem with a new English version by Alan Riach,* Kettillonia, Angus 2012.

[31] In *Stony Limits, and other poems*, Gollancz, London 1934.

[32] Gunn, Kirsty, *The Big Music*, Faber and Faber, London 2012.

[33] In Tony Conran, *Three Symphonies*, Agenda Editions, Mayfield, East Sussex 2016, Symphony 8 is called 'Fabrics'.

[34] Maria Apichella *et al*., *The Song*, 2020.

[35] He is the only other person I am aware of having done this. There have been others who have completed versions of all 150 Psalms, like Laurence Wieder (*The Poet's Book of Psalms*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1995).

[36] Conversation with Edward Clarke in February 2019; his Dublin University thesis is currently being digitised and unavailable.

[37] Edward Clarke, *A Book of Psalms*, Paraclete Press, Brewster MA 2020.

[38] 'God is not – not this, not that . . .'

[39] In 2013 Simon Smith, now of Kent University, offered a new literary translation of the poems of Catullus for a Glasgow University PhD, with a thesis about the popularity of Catullus in English.

(2) While it references Scottish literature, the Thesis is not about one particular poet (though MacDiarmid has an important place).[40]

(3) While this Project, like other creative practice PhDs, does use poetry as a tool of inquiry, it is not using poetry simply to assist another discipline.[41] (The sciences now welcome poetry as an aid to learning[42] - or using poetry as a way to improve the learning of concepts in a different subject like economics.[43] Poetry is valued in educational research also.[44])

Rather, the Presentation and Thesis aim to demonstrate a particular way of approaching the Psalms, which can stand on its own as poetry, but can also show the relevance of the Psalms to Scottish history and current issues of life and thought. While this has involved looking at how the Psalms have been understood in the past and in more recent times, it is not an exhaustive study of Psalms reception.

1.2.2 Genre of the Presentation

The Presentation includes what might be called 'prophetic poetry' (see section 1.4), but is in general a poetry of enquiry, a poetry of exposition and documentation rather than lyric self-expression, a connection of the outlook and morality of the psalms with contemporary society, but as poetry rather than philosophy. While only two sections of the poetry are long poems, these do share some features of the epic poem.

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[40] In 2014 Russell Jones presented his own poems with a thesis on the scientific fiction poetry of Edwin Morgan for an Edinburgh University PhD.

[41] Though a proper example of creative practice – on 2/5/18 I presented a poem to a Napier University Conference on the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, https://twitter.com/DrNazamDz/status/991616737564119046.

[42] E.g. In 'Poetry as a Creative Practice to Enhance Engagement and Learning in Conservation Science', https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/68/11/905/5103314 accessed 20/6/19: 'We encourage a more explicit linking of conservation science and poetry by engaging scientists in poetic practice . . . to consider how scientists can learn from creative practices in poetry to enhance their scientific practice.'

[43] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1477388017300956 accessed 20/6/19.

[44] https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032003029 accessed 1/7/19. 'Developing a poetic voice prepares scholars to discover and communicate findings in multidimensional, penetrating, and more accessible ways.'

Bernstein, starting from Kipling's 'tale of the tribe', suggests four characteristics of the epic poem:[45]

> (1) An epic is a narrative of the author's own cultural and historical heritage
>
> (2) It will therefore speak of different values significant for social wellbeing
>
> (3) A lyric is addressed to the individual, an epic to the citizen
>
> (4) The epic offers lessons for individual and social survival

The Psalms are addressed both to the individual and to the citizen, except that the 'state' to which the Jews belonged was a holy nation which only resembled the modern state (with its own land and government) for a limited period, so that it is simpler to say that they are addressed both to the individual and the community.[46] But they certainly deal with issues of survival, both for David as an individual, and for the people who spent a period in exile in Babylon.[47]

1.2.3 Creative Practice and Academic Research

The Proquest database identifies 660 (eliminating duplicates) English language theses and dissertations on the Psalms written in the last forty years, which I analysed by type of psalm, by topic, and by country of reference. Seven involved original musical compositions, which could be called creative practice; 75 of the 150 psalms were named in titles individually, and the rest included in twelve other theses which covered a range of psalms.

Of these, 23 of the writers were at Scottish Universities, but only three theses connected with Scotland, and they were concerned with singing or using the psalms for meditation. 12 other theses did relate the Psalms to English and overseas poets. While it has therefore not been possible to place this Project in any immediate similar context, either in content or style, it shares with more

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[45] Michael Bernstein, *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the modern verse epic*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1980, 14.

[46] See Thesis 1.3.

[47] Compare the way Psalm 59 is linked with Saul's attempt to kill David, and Psalm 74 is linked with exile.

traditional academic theses a concern for hermeneutics, and for how poets use the Psalms.

Chapter 2 will include a summary of how hermeneutics has developed, negotiating the subjective and the objective poles of knowledge. The creative practice of poetry may appear to be located at the subjective end, but a number of contexts pull the poet into the middle of the range of discourse, the worlds of past and present as well as the text of the Psalms in this Project.

> Throughout the process of research a key question is 'Where am I in the text?' . . . The process of research is ontological as well as epistemological – how does the researcher experience their field of knowledge? . . . It is in the practices of the research itself that the creative subject is being constituted.[48]

The contexts of these practices are intertextual[49] and inter-disciplinary. The poems themselves have benefited from many books and commentaries on the Psalms, and from writings in fields as diverse as brain science and astrophysics, music and politics as well as poetry. Some of these are in the bibliography.

Academic research is 'conducting a research inquiry to establish new knowledge', but a softer definition is 'to provide substantial new insights'.[50] This is more appropriate for creative practice as research, which follows a less predictable process than traditional academic research:

> Rather than seeing inquiry as a linear procedure or an enclosing process, research acts can also be interactive and reflexive whereby imaginative insight is constructed from a creative and critical practice. Oftentimes what is known can limit the possibility of what is not and this requires a creative act to see things from a new viewpoint.[51]

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[48] 'Ways of Knowing and Being' in Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley (eds.), *Creative Arts Research*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam 2009, 25, 29.

[49] The Psalms themselves relate to other parts of the OT and are cited in other Jewish and Christian writings.

[50] Nelson 2013, 25.

[51] Graeme Sullivan, 'Arts-Based Research in Art Education', *Research Acts in Arts Practice*, Studies in Art Education, Vol. 48, No. 1, National Art Education Association, 2006, 19-20.

1.3 The Biblical Psalms

The Psalms are part of the third section of the Hebrew canon, the Writings (*k*^{e}*tûbîm*), which significantly include the Wisdom literature. In Jewish tradition, the first letter of Psalms and Job (ʾ), the first letter of Proverbs (*m*), and the *t* for *t*^{e}*hillîm* (praises, the Hebrew title of the book of Psalms), spell out the Hebrew word for truth.[52]

Until the 19th century the Psalms were generally assumed to be written by David,[53] Asaph and others given in the headings.[54] During that century the rise of critical scholarship in Germany began to affect the view of the OT in Scotland.[55] Four key developments bring us to present day approaches to the Psalms:

> (1) Herman Gunkel (1862-1932) focused on the literary genres of individual psalms,[56] and argued that the psalms were set in the cultic life of the community rather than in particular historical events.[57] Since then a variety of genres have been identified, like royal psalms, wisdom psalms, temple psalms, psalms of lament or complaint, psalms of praise of thanksgiving; some like 31 have a mixed genre; or the psalms have been put in categories, like psalms of orientation, disorientation, new orientation.[58] Psalms like 72 combine several categories. The Psalms themselves resist neat classification.
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> (2) In 1928 the Ras Shamra Ugaritic texts were discovered in Syria, with similarities to the language of e.g. Psalms 29 and 96, indicating that some of the Psalms had Canaanite antecedents.[59] This and other

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[52] William P. Brown (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, Oxford University Press, New York 2014, 2.

[53] Jewish interpretation was even stricter in asserting David's authorship of all the psalms (Brown 2014, 254).

[54] In the 17th century, Samuel Rutherford, erstwhile Professor of Humanity at Edinburgh University, was referring to David as the author of Psalm 10, even though it has no heading – Hugh Martin (ed.), *Selected Letters of Samuel Rutherfurd*, SCM Press, London 1957. In 1741 Ebenezer Erskine suggested Psalm 132 might have been written by Solomon (https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015005869766&view=1up&seq=7). In the 19th century Alexander MacLaren generally refers in his sermons to 'the Psalmist' but will mention David where there is the appropriate heading to the psalm (*Psalms Vols. 1 and 2*, reprinted on Amazon). Stanley Jaki takes Jeremiah as the author of many psalms, plus Solomon and even Samuel (Psalm 99) – *Praying the Psalms*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2001.

[55] William Robertson Smith was appointed to the chair of Hebrew in the Free Church College at Aberdeen in 1870, having already visited Germany twice, but was dismissed by the Church in 1881 for his liberal views on the OT.

[56] Philip Johnston and David Firth (eds.), *Interpreting the Psalms*, IVP, London 2005, 37.

[57] Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, SCM Press, London 1979, 509.

[58] Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, Augsburg, Minneapolis 1984.

[59] William Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years*, Fortress, Minneapolis 1996, 19.

discoveries opened up a dialogue with ANE texts (see Chapter 3 and *Poem 29* in 7.1.3).

(3) The name of Brevard Childs is linked with the recovery of an emphasis on the canon of Scripture,[60] which accompanied an interest in the process by which the Psalms were compiled into five books. Books 1 - 3 have 'royal' psalms at the seams (Psalms 2, 82, 89), with Books 4 - 5 responding to the loss of the Davidic kingship by proclaiming the reign of God.[61]

(4) Some psalms have obvious additions, like the last two verses of Psalm 51. Other psalms move from third person to first person: Psalm 27 was thought by Gunkel to be two psalms.[62] With greater respect for the process of compilation, psalms are now treated as a unity, and apparent contradictions or non-sequiturs are more likely to be seen as fruitful for further enquiry rather than as 'mistakes' in the text to be corrected on the assumption that the text has got corrupted.[63]

Some psalms like 67 pray for the community of Israel; Psalm 45 is addressed to the king, and 72 is a prayer for the king; some like 49 and 117 are addressed to 'all peoples'; but the majority of the Psalms feature the individual in the context of the community; even a short Psalm like 131 has a final verse which refers to 'Israel'.[64]

Individual psalms even in the same book were composed at different times. The earliest psalm has been dated to the 10th century BCE, the latest to the 3rd or even 2nd century BCE.[65] Some like 29 reflect older Middle Eastern poetry, some like 137 reflect the experience of exile in Babylon. Others are less determined: Psalm 61 has been dated to the 10th century BCE, just after Absalom's rebellion, to Jehoiachin's captivity in Babylon after 597 BCE, and to 315 BCE following the

[60] Childs 1979.

[61] Brown 2014, 350-1.

[62] Goldingay 2006, 391.

[63] Benjamin Sommers in Richard S. Briggs, Stephen Campbell, and Richard Rohlfing (eds.), *New Song: Biblical Hebrew Poetry as Jewish and Christian Scripture*, Lexham Press, Bellingham WA, forthcoming.

[64] See also Childs 1979, 520; Goldingay 2006, 58-60.

[65] Gerald H. Wilson, *NIV Application Commentary*, Vol. 1, Zondervan, Grand Rapids 2002, 13; Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, Norton, London 2007, xv.

death of Alexander the Great![66] Psalm 99 has been dated in the pre-exilic, the exilic and the postexilic periods.[67]

We know that Books 1 - 3 were originally separate books because of the duplicates – Psalms 14 and 53, Psalm 40:14-18 and Psalm 70; likewise that this collection was separate from Books 4 and 5 by the special ending of Psalm 72, which completes the third book. Judging from the (later) headings, there are three smaller collections of 'David Psalms' within the whole (3 – 41, 51 -72, 138 – 145).[68]

However there is no consensus on dating the collection as a whole. Robert Alter thinks the Psalms were all put together by the 4th century BCE,[69] Gerald Wilson thinks Books 1 - 3 were together by the 2nd century BCE and Books 4 - 5 by mid 1st century CE.[70] The recent *Oxford Handbook of the Psalms* avoids giving any date.

It is probable that the five books of Psalms were arranged in parallel with the five books of *Torah*[71] - not the only such arrangement, since the English historian Bede compares the five languages in Britain, including Irish which at that time was allied with Gaelic, to the five books of the divine law.[72] This is relevant to the main theme of the Thesis, because Psalm 1, which introduces not just Book 1 but the whole Psalter,[73] uses the sacred garden symbols of Genesis 2. In fact

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[66] W.H. Bellinger, *A Hermeneutic of Curiosity,* Mercer University Press, Macon GA, 1995, 40-41.

[67] John Goldingay, *Psalms,* Vol. 3, Baker, Grand Rapids 2008, 126.

[68] 2 Samuel 1:17-27 is evidence of a lament song by David being included in (another) written collection. 21st century scholarship is more sympathetic to the view that David may have been the composer of at least some of the psalms attributed to him (see for example Geoffrey Grogan, *Psalms*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2008, Introduction).

[69] Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, Norton, New York 2007, xviii.

[70] Gerald H. Wilson, 'The Structure of the Psalter' in Philip Johnston and David Firth (ed.), *Interpreting the Psalms*, Apollos, Leicester 2005, 231-2.

[71] Brown 2014, 3, also Susan Gillingham in Brown 2014, 206. Eugene Peterson says the Psalms 'have the *Torah* for their mother, the Prophets for their father . . .' and that the five books of Moses are matched by five books of Psalms 'like two hands clasped in prayer', *Answering God*, Harper and Row, San Francisco 1989, 16 and 33.

[72] Wilson McLeod and Michael Newton (eds.), *The Highest Apple: an Anthology of Scottish Gaelic Literature*, Francis Boutle Publishers, London 2019, 20.

[73] Widely accepted, see for example Wilson 2002, 92.

both Psalms 1 and 2 are thought to introduce the Psalter,[74] and the first two chapters of Genesis both describe the world with the language of the ANE cosmic temple.[75] Putting the relationship the other way round, the Waltons say that 'the Torah has no role apart from the sanctuary'.[76]

From Psalm 3 onwards, all the psalms of Book 1 (except 10 and 33) are linked to David in the superscription.[77] These headings were added later on, and while it is possible that some go back to David,[78] a psalm like 29 is obviously different in its language, and the headings were probably added during the time of collection - the (long) period of the second temple (early 6th century BCE to 1st century CE).[79]

The Septuagint (Greek version) links a few more of the Psalms to David, and even adds an extra one at the conclusion, celebrating David's victory over Goliath.[80]

Poem 16 'Bless my Kidneys' suggests we are reading the psalms 'in the wake of David', and the juxtaposition of 'warm' and 'choppy', then 'sweet' and 'salty', in stanza 2 indicates both the passion and the variety of the Psalms.

> Bless my kidneys, one might say,
> reading Hebrew body language
> with a knowing smile: away
>
> with careful, icy comprehension,
> make for the warm choppy wake
> of David, his sweet and salty passion
>
> for a God who wants to ravish,
> sandblast, sort and wrap the soul
> secure within its deepest wish . . .

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[74] They lack the superscriptions which begin at Psalm 3, and may have been a single psalm at one time – Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1998, 9. See also Thesis 2.5.

[75] See Chapter 3.

[76] Walton and Walton, *The Lost World of the Torah*, IVP, Downers Grove IL, 2019, 116.

[77] The Hebrew *l*^{e} before David (*l*^{e}*dāwid*) in a psalm heading can mean 'for David' or 'in honour of David' as well as 'by David', although many Jewish and Christian commentators have taken it in this sense. 'David's' is a more open translation.

[78] Psalm 18, for example, is duplicated in 2 Samuel 22.

[79] Susan Gillingham in Brown 2014, 202.

[80] Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries*, Blackwell, Vol. 1, Oxford 2008, 8.

Poem 26 'Aye right' accepts the Davidic tradition but plays on the contradiction between the assertion of integrity in the psalm and the life of David as we have it in the books of Samuel.[81]

With Book 2 the headings start to vary, including some linked to the Korahites, even though Psalm 72:20 concludes Books 1 and 2 with 'The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.'

Book 3 has Psalms of Asaph and others, and a firm conclusion in Psalm 89:52, 'Blessed be the Lord forever. Amen and Amen.' Gerald Wilson thought that the first and last psalm in each book was specially chosen to make a 'frame',[82] others limit the framing to Psalm 1 and the final *Hallel* of Psalms 146-150.[83]

While Books 1-3 have a number of psalms of lament, Books 4 and 5 are generally praise psalms, and include the long Psalm 119 and the sequence of 'Psalms of Ascent' (120-134).

1.4 My Voice

I started writing serious poetry ten years ago when I was nearly 70, mostly on politics, economics, nature and modern life. Five years ago I began to write on Bible themes, and have published two book of poetry and conversation on Old Testament books.[84] I realised that writing 'poetry on poetry' – as with the Psalms – would be different and difficult, and so took the opportunity of this new PhD offered by Glasgow University which incorporates creative practice.

Poetry is always about making connections, positive or negative. Some important ones for me are between:

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[81] According to Donald Harman Akenson, David 'may be the first figure for whom we have a biography' (*Surpassing Wonder*, University of Chicago Press, Montreal 1998, 40).

[82] Gerald H. Wilson in Johnston and Firth 2005, 229f.

[83] Each of those psalms begins and ends with 'Praise the Lord'.

[84] *From Cosmos to Canaan*, Sacristy Press, Durham 2017, *From Ruth to Lamentations,* Handsel Press, Edinburgh 2020.

> Faith, politics and economics – from my experience in the steel industry, and living in Africa where for the first time I appreciated how politics impact ordinary people.
>
> Religion and spirituality – from working as a parish minister, and also leading retreats for people exploring their own spirituality.
>
> Arts and science – from my education, where I transitioned from classics to science, then to economics, only discovering 'literature' later in life.
>
> 'Conservative' and 'liberal' – from both appreciating and questioning the values of my own upper middle class background.
>
> Transcendent and immanent – from my own conversion to Christian faith as a teenager, my understanding of science and the arts, and the miracle of conscious life.

The challenging link for George Herbert was between poetry as 'invention' and poetry as 'copying' – by which he meant listening to a friend whisper about love.[85] While this was a tension for Herbert, who decided to renounce his position as Cambridge Orator which had depended on his skill as a wordsmith, for me – as an admirer of Herbert's inventiveness (which was never quenched by his spirituality) - it is an invitation to use poetry to reflect the riddling presence of God everywhere, and how the Psalms bear their own witness to this in their own context.

That context is Jewish, and I acknowledge the significance of this small nation, and this particular people, in a short *poem on Psalm 117*, called *'Nae Hairm'*: 'Wee psalm, nae hairm intendit. / Jist the scandal o particularitie.'[86] The poem uses Scots, like a few other poems in the Project. That signals a concern with Scotland, and the different linguistic strands of her history. I do not speak Gaelic, but I have published diglot books in English and Gaelic,[87] and read English translations of important Gaelic poems.[88]

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[85] In his second poem called 'Jordan', in *The Complete Works*, Digireads.com, Milton Keynes 2013, 89.

[86] 'Scandal of particularity' as a critique of faith dates from the Enlightenment.

[87] Through the Handsel Press, which I manage.

[88] For example, Ronald Black (ed.), *An Tuil*, Polygon, Edinburgh 1999, and McLeod and Newton 2019. Gaelic literature deserves far more attention than I am able to give it.

My poetry is seldom lyric or epic. If it were not pretentious, I would call it prophetic.[89] It is certainly not limited by Norman McCaig's dictum, 'If you want messages, go to Safeway.'[90] Shortly after starting this Project, I read Tessa Ransford's poem 'Two Halves',[91] and wrote this immediately after, with an epigraph by Louis MacNeice:[92]

God Chatter

'We jump from picture to picture, and cannot follow
the living curve that is breathlessly the same'

Breathlessly the same. No dragon fire,
no wolfish pant or howl, no lion breath
to give a whiff of danger, scratch of ire;

but breathless is no euphemistic death,
no loss of grip, no lack of spark or wit,
no test of loyalty, no shibboleth;

instead it gives us God's identikit
as waiter, watcher, blowing in the air
a cloud of bubbles, what will come of it

God wonders, leaving humans with a flair
for prophecy to plunder graphic files,
or excavate another subtle layer

of Bible soil to fix in frozen piles.
Stay breathless with a God who could complete
the Ironman, then add a thousand miles,

but says, 'Been there, got the T-shirt'; so delete
that option, click on 'Do you want to see
a wave with Plato surfing on his feet

with Paul Celan?' or 'Would you rather be
an eagle with a taste for chocolate,
Benedetti in the groove, or me?'

God chattering is more than just a bit
of poetry, but taken to the wire
our world is breathless, ripe for some of it.

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[89] The anthropologist John Leavitt uses 'prophetic poetry' and 'poetic prophecy' as similar terms, the latter as a 'grappling with the unknown'; it is something understood through a repertoire of nuance that is 'structured by tropological relations within an overall context of dialogue' (John Leavitt (ed.), *Poetry and Prophecy*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1997, 188).

[90] Michael Symmons Roberts has a subtle and beautiful allusion to 'messages' in 'Barfly' (*Mancunia*, Jonathan Cape, London 2017: 'His countless eyes are locked on mine / and he has messages for me.' After delivering the message the fly drops into the poet's glass of Scotch and dies, utterly at peace.

[91] Tessa Ransford, *Not Just Moonshine*, Luath Press, Edinburgh 2008, 203-4.

[92] From 'August' in *Collected Poems*, Wake Forest Press, Winston-Salem NC 2013.

The poem is written in *terza rima* – Dante has a particular significance for this project because of the way he understood Psalm 114.[93] But the voice of poetry has to come from the future as well as from the past and present.[94] Hence the (risky) element of prophecy. For a poet and practising Christian, that means keeping a lookout for God and responding appropriately: '. . . and I'll be the poet who sings to your glory / and live what I sing every day.[95]

So, in the words of Andrew Philip,

> Let this angel of the Lord
> dissolve your empty diary, unread notes
> into singable incense – the psalms
> of an unrestricted throat.[96]

1.5 The Presentation

1.5.1 Book 1 Poetry (Psalms 1 - 41) CARPET

Because the temple is itself a model of the universal temple where God resides as priest and king, Psalm 27:4 ('Inquire in the temple') is not just an invitation to 'ask the minister' but to seek God who is everywhere.[97] Using 'carpet' in the title is therefore not only to suggest a firm place to stand when we pray, or even prayer which 'carpets everything' but to signal a 'magic carpet' which can take us anywhere. Yet Book 1 psalms have a serious note also, and so we are also 'on the carpet' before God's judgment.[98]

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[93] See 2.3.

[94] See Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, BN Publishing 2008, 36, which speaks of 'the seemingly uneventful and inflexible moment when the future sets foot in us'.

[95] Psalm 61:8 in *The Message*.

[96] From 'MacAdam Takes to the Fire', in *The North End of the Possible*, Salt Publishing, Norfolk 2013, 68.

[97] See N.T. Wright, *History and Eschatology*, SPCK, London 2019, xvii. That verse is the biblical correlate of Herbert's 'Teach me my God and King / in all things thee to see'.

[98] In the Bible, 'judgment' is not only the condemnation of the wicked, but the 'sorting out' of people and situations; while the wicked will receive their deserts, the intention is to preserve and enable 'God space' as something holy and right and fair (Psalms 7, 58). Judgment requires wisdom (119), establishes the king's rule and protects the poor (72).

Because we are exploring the cosmos, there is little obvious connection between poems (as between many psalms) - but as a 'poetic conceit', every poem is linked to the one behind and the one after by a common word or phrase.

1.5.2 Book 2 Poetry (Psalms 42 – 72) JOURNEY

Here we have a long poem comparing the life of David and the life of Robert the Bruce, two men whose lives followed a similar trajectory; and appropriate to the history of Scotland which has been marked by the Bible and the OT in particular.[99] The poetry, as a ballad (though using two different forms)[100] lets these histories speak for themselves. Since the Psalms are associated with David, this part of the Presentation celebrates his life and its significance for Israel and other nations. So the theme is 'Journey'.

In this section, the temple is the place of 'common weal' – of humanity, of good character, of hope in spite of adversity.[101] Leadership and providence are seen in this long poem related to these shared values.

1.5.3 Book 3 Poetry (Psalms 73 – 79) MIGRANTS

Although the obvious psalm from exile is 137, two psalms in this third book also speak passionately about the experience of exile.[102] There is disappointment, shame, struggle and home-coming. So the theme chosen is 'Migrants', and the temple is the place of sanctuary:[103] sanctuary for the body, sanctuary for the mind and spirit.[104] These common themes link all the poems, which include two stories of Scottish migrants.

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[99] See Wright, David F (ed.), *The Bible in Scottish Life and Literature*, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1988.

[100] Micheal O'Siadhail in *The Five Quintets*, Baylor University Press, Waco 2018, also uses quartet and tercet extensively, for a bigger scale project.

[101] See Psalms 42:4, 43:3, 46:1-4, 48:9, 52:8, and 65:4 in Book 2 of the Psalms.

[102] Psalm 74:1-11, 78:56-64.

[103] Psalm 27:5, 76:2-3, 84, cf. 1 Kings 8, Daniel 9:17.

[104] Psalm 73:16-17.

1.5.4 Book 4 Poetry (Psalms 90 – 106) PIBROCH

A pibroch comprises a theme and variations, with a return to the ground theme at the close. The opening and closing psalms in each book seem specially chosen as 'bookends', and since Psalm 90 is entitled 'A Song of Moses', and Psalm 106 is largely a rehearsal of the journey of the people with Moses, the form of a pibroch fits Book 4, with polyphony, different sounds, as one aspect. While the overall Hebrew title of the Psalms (*t^{e}hillîm*) is rightly translated 'praises', the Hebrew word included crying out as well as song.[105] We should not read back the douce singing of an elderly Scottish congregation into the Jewish temple.

The 'ground' remembers the loss of the *Iolaire* just outside Stornoway at the close of 1918. There is indeed a pibroch written by Donald MacLeod called 'The Lament for the *Iolaire*', and this tragic story challenges the theology of Psalms 91 and 93 in particular, but the poetry in its variations uses the story – and these psalms - to explore how we react to difficult experiences, and how psalms help us move on. Music and memory is one aspect.[106]

'Temple' here is taken as the place of sound, even though we know little enough in detail of the music of Israel. Two psalms speak of accompanied singing, whether this was unison melody or polyphony.[107] Music has a particular power to express human emotions, especially difficult ones.

> Outside the window of the world
> the midges dance above a bush
> making a complex music holding
> a language for which there is no key.
> That they are dancing there helps us
> to communicate even in the negative.[108]

Nearly all the laments are found in the first three Books of Psalms (Book 4 only has Psalm 102); with the Davidic kingship given a final lament at the end of Book 3, Book 4 celebrates a new song, where the Lord is the true king.[109] Book 4

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[105] The cognate Arabic word means 'shouting of praise'.

[106] Psalm 92:2-3, 98:1, 5, 6; cf. 68:24-25.

[107] Psalm 92:1-4, 98:4-6.

[108] W.S. Graham, 'Thirty-six Implements' cited in *The Caught Habits of Language*, ed. Rachel Boast, Andy Ching, Nathan Hamilton, Donut Press, Bristol 2018, 125.

[109] Psalm 96:1-6, 98:8-9a, 100:1-2, 105:2-3.

poetry expresses the transition from lament to praise, attempted cautiously after the lapse of 100 years.

The 'pibroch' follows a sequence; while Book 4 Psalms generally lend themselves to this, Psalm 102 is a rude interruption. This was handled by introducing a second 'ground' into the sequence, which is found in older (though not modern) pibrochs.

1.5.5 Book 5 Poetry (Psalms 107 – 150) TAPESTRY

While Book 1 poems are intentionally 'scattered around the cosmos', Book 3 poems consider migrants and the experience of exile and settlement, Book 5 poems are more focused, and closer to the psalms themselves.

These poems address the theme of 'temple' as a centre for praise and learning, persons in community engaged in worship and education. In the middle of Book 5, however, comes the unique Psalm 119, like the text in the centre of a sampler, followed by the Psalms of Ascent (120-134) - a reminder of *Torah* and pilgrimage in the middle of a tapestry. Tapestry is the generic form of a carpet: 'As the sum of threads woven into a carpet transcends the individual threads and creates a new identity, so our sentences are woven into a new textual identity.'[110]

Some of these poems (like their psalms) pick up themes from the first four books - Cosmos,[111] Journey,[112] Migration,[113] Transition,[114] all feature. And whereas the vertical stripe of tartan is more evident in the fifth book, the horizontal is always present, not least because some of the psalms are attributed to David.[115]

Just as the five Books of Psalms reflect the five Books of Moses, the Presentation itself roughly follows the pattern of the Pentateuch, beginning with the cosmos

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[110] Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, SCM Press, London 1991, 85.

[111] Psalms 148 and 150.

[112] The Psalms of Ascent (120 – 134).

[113] Psalms 135 and 136.

[114] Psalm 107.

[115] Primarily Psalms 108 – 109, 139 – 145.

and humanity (Genesis 1 - 11), then the journey to the land of promise (Exodus to Numbers) which is marked by a single place of worship (Deuteronomy 12:5), the festivals of remembering (Deuteronomy 16), the warnings of exile and tragedy (Deuteronomy 28), the hope of return (Deuteronomy 30) and the praise song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32). But like the Psalms, and like a tapestry,[116] the poems also repeat themes. Overall, they seek to reach out, and reach in.

[116] Mary Sidney in her version of Psalm 139 spoke of human body parts as 'in brave embroid'ry fair arrayed' (Jasper 2018, 90).

Chapter 2 Poetry and the Psalms - The Poet as Interpreter

> 'I run the way of your commandments,
> for you enlarge my understanding.' (Psalm 119:32)

This chapter considers the poetry of the Psalms, the wider hermeneutic context, the significance of Psalms 1 and 2, and how poets (Scottish especially) treat the Psalms.

2.1 The Psalms as Poetry

There is no Hebrew word for 'poetry', only *šîr*, that which is sung; in Ugarit myth, there is a craftsman God Kothar who could make music; while in English, 'poetry' is derived from 'that which is made'.[1] But we can look at the psalm texts.

Features like alliteration, onomatopoeia and planned line length are common to poetry in most languages, including Hebrew.[2] Likewise metonymy, as in Psalm 21:8, and metaphor,[3] as in Psalm 22:3, an expression only found here:[4] 'Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.' This Project poetry does use such features, but not tied directly to the Hebrew.

While ANE poetry has narrative and non-narrative poetry, Hebrew Bible poetry has only the latter, used for lament, argument, prophecy and praise; there is no epic poetry in the Psalms;[5] what we have is a kind of lyric poetry, using a variety of verbal resources – headed in the Hebrew psalter 'songs of praise'.

The Hebrew Psalms do not have fixed metres as in traditional Scottish or English poetry, no obvious rhyme, but rhythm and word stress are certainly present, typically two or three or four beats to a line, described as cola (singular colon).[6]

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[1] Murray Lichtenstein in Holz 1984, 107.

[2] Gerald Wilson 2002, 39.

[3] 'The Word / that's nailed to metaphors' – Clarke 2020, in Psalm 14.

[4] Goldingay 2006, 328 – though it is also implied in the narrative of 2 Chronicles 20:21-22.

[5] F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp in Brown 2014, 83.

[6] Goldingay 2006, 39.

I have not tried to copy this for each psalm, but I have kept clear stress beats in the poetry, with a variety of line lengths. I have at times made a nod to seven important features of Hebrew poetry:

(1) Parallelism – different ways of repeating a colon or cola. Often simply to express the same thought a different way, or to add a little to it – Psalm 31:12 'I have passed out of mind like one who is dead / I have become like a broken vessel.' In *31 'Holocaust Denial'* that particular verse is used as a chorus – a common form of repetition in English.

Something significant may be added ('advancing parallelism') as in Psalm 1 where the Hebrew has three verbs, 'walk', 'stand', 'sit' for growing intimacy of contact with the wicked.[7] Or 'opposite parallelism', as in the last verse of that psalm. Or 'responsive parallelism', as Psalm 118:5.

(2) Antinomy or antithesis – a wider case of opposite parallelism. Psalm 118:5 above in Hebrew literally contrasts 'narrow spaces' with 'broad places'. In Psalm 1, verses 1-3 on, the wicked are contrasted with the righteous in verses 4-6; likewise Psalm 112 verse 9 and 10. In Psalm 23, green pastures contrast with the darkest valley – represented in *23 'Shepherd Sonnet'* by snakes and ladders.

(3) Merism has opposing words set in contrast to cover all between, as in Psalm 91:5-6,

> You will not fear the terror of the *night*
> or the arrow that flies by *day*,
> or the pestilence that stalks in *darkness*
> or the destruction that wastes at *noonday*.

(4) Chiasm, originally 'crossing' (from the Greek X) and therefore putting things back to back – a literary structure typically taking two words or ideas A and B, with variant forms Aº and Bº, and presenting them as A, B, Bº, Aº. Some commentators talk about stepped parallelism instead: here is an example from Psalm 29, simplified by John Goldingay (using the NRSV variant reading of verse 9a):[8]

> Trees (v. 5)
>
> Animals (v. 6)
>
> Wilderness (v. 7-8)
>
> Animals (v. 9a)
>
> Trees (v. 9b)

[7] Mark Smith, *Psalms: The Divine Journey*, Paulist Press, New York 1987, 14.

[8] Goldingay 2006, 419.

29 'Canaanite Conquest' not only reckons with the Canaanite background to this psalm but is laid out with a stepped structure.[9]

If Psalms 20 and 21 are taken together, Psalms 15-24 as a group have a chiastic structure, with Psalms 15 and 24, for example, both having an entrance liturgy ('Who shall dwell on / ascend God's holy hill?').[10]

(5) Repetition. Psalm 107 has a chorus repeated four times: 'Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, / for his wonderful works to humankind.' Psalm 8 repeats the opening two lines at the close:[11] 'O Lord, our Sovereign, / how majestic is your name in all the earth.' In the Presentation I have ignored the most extreme example of repetition (Psalm 136) but used a chorus line to pick up the repetition in Psalms 31[12] and 107.

All five above could be described as a form of Hebrew parallelism. There are two other features which are less common, but found in English as well as Hebrew.

(6) The pun, an occasional feature of Hebrew poetry, I have used frequently,[13] but not in exact correspondence to the Hebrew.[14] Puns are more common in the prophetic books of the OT,[15] but for example in Psalm 2:11-12 rulers are invited to serve the Lord (*ʿibḏû*) lest he be angry and they perish (*tʾbḏû*) from the similar verbs *ʿābaḏ* and *ʾābaḏ*.[16] Jewish Midrash has punning and wordplay, as an indication of how seriously the rabbis took the sacred text.[17]

(7) Alphabet poems, where the first letter of each line is in alphabetical sequence.[18] The best known is Psalm 119, where each section of eight lines begins with the same letter, and continues in alphabetical sequence.[19] Rather than repeat the form in *119 'Fair and*

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[9] See 6.5.2.

[10] Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries*, Vol. 2, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2018, 101.

[11] Common in the closing praise psalms of the Psalter, with 'Praise the Lord!' at the start and finish – sometimes called *inclusio* (Wilson 2002, 52).

[12] Where the sense of verses 1-8 is repeated in verses 19-24.

[13] For example, 'moves' and 'proves' in two lines of *17 Eye to Eye*, stanza six, are each puns: 'The battle moves within / the soul, where God proves all.' Eugene Peterson has a pun in his version of Psalm 57:10, 'Every cloud is a flag to your faithfulness', where 'cloud' has a double meaning in English but not in Hebrew.

[14] Although in the section of poetry for Psalms 60-65 I have made a pun out of the Vale of Succoth in Psalm 60:6, since *sukkâ* means booth or shelter.

[15] E.g. between *qāyîts* and *qēts*, Amos 8:2.

[16] Or Psalm 28:3, where peace with their neighbours (*rēʿêhem*) is contrasted with evil (*rāʿā*) in their hearts.

[17] Holz 1984, 189.

[18] In Psalm 145 (for which my poem is also alphabetical), *śîn* and *śîn* are treated as a single *śîn*, making up the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This form is not quite the English acrostic, which usually has the initial letters making up a word sequence instead.

[19] This time allowing either *śîn* or *śîn* in the relevant section.

> *Square'*, I have acknowledged the sequence with 'letters sailing A to Z' and 'mark each passage with eight riding lights'.
>
> Numbers in Hebrew are marked by particular letters, and Hebrew *gematria* plays with their significance.[20] I have used this idea with the *Song of the Fifteen Steps* for the Psalms of Ascent poems.

In ancient Middle East poetry and story-telling, the climax often comes in the middle, not the end as typical of Western story-telling.[21] But while Lamentations in the OT illustrates this, it seldom features in the Psalms, perhaps because they are not narrative poems.[22]

The Psalms like other Wisdom Books deal with ideas, but they share the general OT habit of holding body and soul together, as in Psalm 127. This is reflected in the way 'hymns and psalms' feature alongside 'favours under the blanket' in a more recent Gaelic poem:

> That life
> was to be everlasting . . .
> It would be sweet
> with butter and fish,
> and good company,
> hymns and psalms,
> favours under the blanket,
> and porridge in the morning.[23]

2.2 Inspiration

Few would disagree with Martin Luther that the Psalms are 'the very best words of the saints'[24] but what does 'inspiring' mean? That it simply affects the mind and heart of the reader or listener, or that it is inspired by something or

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[20] Holz 1984, 21. See also Alfred Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah,* Longmans, Green & Co, New York 1917, 659, 692, and 3.1.2. It opens up other lines of enquiry, for example, is it a coincidence that the three 'Torah Psalms' (1, 19, 119) have those numbers?

[21] Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1976, 50.

[22] Psalm 78 comes close to this genre, Psalms 105-107 to some extent, but Psalm 68 (assuming the psalm is a unity) illustrates it with the arrival of God in the holy place half way through, in verses 17-18. While Psalm 68 is often regarded as 'the most difficult of all the Psalms' (Goldingay 2007, citing Augustine and Albright in support), I have not come across any commentary which points out this climax in the middle.

[23] Derick Thomson, 'Everlasting Life' from 'The Ark of the Covenant' in *Creachadh na Clàrsaich* (1982), cited in Black 1999, 198.

[24] Luther, Preface to the German Psalter of 1531 (http://www.cprf.co.uk/quotes/martinlutherpsalter.htm#.W8WM8vYo_BV).

someone beyond the human spirit,[25] however we choose to name it?[26] Indeed, can the poet be like God, as Paul Valéry hinted? 'The poet is recognised . . . by the simple fact that he causes his reader to become "inspired".'[27]

Seamus Heaney in his essay 'The Government of the Tongue' cites Osip Mandelstam's 'conversation' on Dante. Mandelstam is pointing out that Dante is not ruled slavishly by metre and Thomas Aquinas, but that his three line stanzas are 'formed from within like a crystal, not cut on the outside like a stone'. Heaney in summary comments that Dante's tongue is like a conductor's baton, containing within 'all the elements of the orchestra':[28] an image combining the inspiration and authority of crafted words.

Inspiration can be claimed in at least two ways: as a doctrine, that when the text was written and incorporated in the biblical canon, God inspired this;[29] or that when a reader listens to a text she is inspired to understand it in a certain way (by the same God or other agency).[30] Athanasius said that the psalms 'become like a mirror to the person singing them'.[31]

Stanley Jaki looked at the process one stage back and wrote:

> Some psalms indicate that the Jews composed songs that served as the nuclei of future psalms . . . The factor that drove and governed the transformation of a mere song, however inspirited, into an

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[25] 'The ancients had no doubts about such inspiration. Ovid begins the Metamorphoses by invoking the gods. He asks them to inspire his work . . .' (Summary of Book 1, accessed 21/6/19 in https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/metamorphoses/context/)

[26] During the Cambuslang revival, psalm verses would come into the mind of those affected, 'often interpreted in a very personal way as direct communications from God' - Elspeth Jaidelska, '"Singing of Psalms of which I could never get enough": Labouring Class Religion and Poetry in the Revival of 1741', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 41 (1), 2015, 93.

[27] Paul Valéry in *Poetry and Abstract Thought*, cited by Edward Hirsch, *How to Read a Poem*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York 1999, 115.

[28] In Seamus Heaney's eponymous book, *The Government of the Tongue*, Faber and Faber, London 1988, 94-5.

[29] Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his last writing, *The Psalms, the Prayer Book of the Bible*, says, 'The Psalms are God's Word no less than the rest of the Bible. Does that mean that prayers addressed to God are at the same time God's own Word? We find that puzzling.'

[30] See, for example, Ronald Wallace, *On the Interpretation and Use of the Bible*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1999, 43.

[31] From his *Letter to Marcellinus*, 5-6 (http://www.athanasius.com/psalms/aletterm.htm accessed May 2019).

> inspired psalm, was the reverberation of the words of that revelation on the lips of the Hebrews.[32]

Yet that mirror, or the process, remains mysterious. Paul Ricoeur qualifies the idea of personal communication from God with the knowledge of God's hiddenness.[33] Psalm 97:2 indicates that God is surrounded by 'clouds and thick darkness'.

The Psalms occupy a book which is claimed by Jews, Christians and Muslims[34] to be inspired by God. If that is so, then the saying attributed to one of the Pilgrim Fathers that 'God hath still more light to break forth from his Word' fits a strong 'reader-response' approach.[35] While we still try and discover what the original writer meant, documents become bigger than their writers.[36]

Another approach locates inspiration not in God but in human experience:

> The experience of reading the Bible becomes a way of reading off our own experience and backslidings and emotional life against the template of the Myth . . . in no other book of Scripture is this more the case than in Psalms.[37]

'The Myth' in this case is the life and faith and history of Israel in the OT, according to A.N. Wilson. The Psalms are not read in a vacuum. Many of these songs have 'occasions' and 'stories' attached to them as an introduction, either because this is what was handed down or because this is what was thought appropriate later on.[38] Such superscriptions, however loosely they may apply to

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[32] Jaki 2001, 9.

[33] Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1992, 73, citing Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, L. Mudge (ed.), SPCK, London 1981, 89.

[34] E.g. Qu'ran 4:163, 17:165; in 21:105 Psalm 37:29 is cited. There are also many references in the Qu'ran to the Torah and the Prophets as inspired by God.

[35] Northrop Frye affirms this, using the word 'polysemous' for the Bible text (*The Great Code: the Bible as Literature*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1982, 220).

[36] The poet Charles Olson cited the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead in the poem 'A Later Note on Letter #15': 'no event / is not penetrated, in intersection or collision with, an eternal / event.' He concluded, 'The poetics of such a situation are yet to be found out.'

[37] Wilson 2015, 131. Adam Kirsch said that Rosenberg (whose *Poet's Bible* includes many psalm versions) is 'replacing the doubtful miracle of divine inspiration with the genuine miracle of poetic inspiration' ('The Prophet's Pen', *New Republic*, retrieved 14/9/2017) – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Rosenberg_(poet), accessed 15/9/19.

[38] For a discussion of how the Psalms relate to the history of Israel, see Woodhouse 2015, 8-15, or Alter 2007, xiii-xviii.

a particular psalm, tell us that those who compiled the books of Psalms would have agreed with Wilson.

In typically paradoxical fashion, the atheist Hugh MacDiarmid expressed a high view of the inspiration of the Psalms:[39]

> Interviewer (DG): You still believe in inspiration then, Dr Grieve?
>
> MacDiarmid: Oh no, no, not inspiration. Inspiration means something coming from above, although in Scotland it comes from below as a rule! We have a shepherd poet here who writes doggerel. Well, he says to me, that's where shepherds have the advantage, they get away up in the mountain-top and there is nothing between them and God and it simply flows in upon them. And I said, yes, any examples of this process? He couldn't give me one. I gave him one. I said, the Psalms of David, but that was the only one in history.

Paul Valéry's affirmation (above) moves the question from the Psalms to the poetry written about them, albeit at a modest level. For example, when I link 'bow down toward your holy temple' in Psalm 138:2 with 'Samson bowed with all his might' in the temple of the Philistines,[40] is that inspiration, lateral thinking, or both? The question must be answered by the reader.

Working from Wallace Stevens' saying, 'God and the imagination are one,' I noted the following in a diary I kept in 2018, working on Book 1 poems:

> Book 1 of the Psalms is related to Genesis, creation and the journey of Abraham. So with the Temple idea, I should go anywhere in the cosmos. And reading wisdom's part in Creation in Proverbs 8:30, the two meanings 'master worker' and 'little child' – I have got to play as well as do a good job constructing these poems. One of the 'fun things' I can do is for every poem to have a word or phrase in common with the poem before, and the poem after.
>
> Architects like Gaudi in Spain knew how to play.[41]
>
> At Firbush[42] with Jeremy Begbie.[43] Rhythm built in to creation. Good music will blend order and freedom – so will good poetry.

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[39] Angus Calder, Glen Murray, Alan Riach, *The Rauchle Tongue: Selected Essays, Journalism and Interviews by Hugh MacDiarmid*, Carcanet, Manchester 1998, 562.

[40] *138 Hair*.

[41] Gaudi would come back later in *118 Space Temple,* one of the more imaginative poems.

[42] Edinburgh University Outdoor Centre on Loch Tay.

[43] Begbie teaches 'Theology and the Arts' at Duke University.

> It's easier to write poems on narrative passages of Bible, but the link of worship temple to cosmos temple makes writing poems on psalms simpler (think of Psalm 27).
>
> A sculptor may start with a plan, but he finds that the material he works with has its own ideas – so especially with the poems I wrote this week at Scargill – after I started, they wrote themselves, took me in directions I had not planned.

2.3 Interpretation

Jews share with Christians the idea that the Bible is a commentary on life, and that life is a commentary on the Bible.[44] Text and reader interact: 'Open the text again, for it is true, / the Book you open always opens you.'[45]

But they have a complex relationship. Is the text, or the reader, sacred – or both?[46] As far as the text is concerned, Bultmann's 'demythologisation' of the biblical text in the mid-20th century sought to strip away unnecessary and maybe false historical material in order that the biblical text might speak clearly to the existential situation of the human being today.[47] At the other end of the scale lies, say, the horror of Peter Rollins that we should try to 'master' a text in such a presumptuous way.[48]

Up to the start of the 20th century, the main focus of Bible interpretation was the text, with a major difference between those who limited meaning to that

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[44] Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant and Conversation*, Koren Publishers, Jerusalem 2009, 2. Paul Ricoeur said, 'If Herodotus was the father of history, the fathers of meaning in history were the Jews', *Memory, History, Forgetting*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2004, 397.

[45] Malcolm Guite expresses this common idea in a sonnet, 'Bible Study' (*Parable and Paradox*, Canterbury Press, Norwich 2016, 10).

[46] A question for any translator, as with Alan Riach's decision to secularise the Trinity at the start of *The Birlinn of Clanranald*, by Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, Kettilonia, Newtyle 2015, 9.

[47] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, SCM Press, London 1960. 'Demythologising is an hermeneutic method', 45.

[48] Peter Rollins, 'The Fidelity of Betrayal: Give Me a Master I can Dominate', http://peterrollins.net/the-fidelity-of-betrayal-give-me-a-master-i-can-dominate in Iain Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture*, Baylor University Press, Waco, TX 2017, 544: 'Every time we attempt to master the text . . . the master pushes back on us.'

intended by the writer, and those who accepted that the text takes us beyond that.[49] Since then, the reader has become more prominent.[50]

In this Thesis, we are more concerned with what the reader makes of the text, and less concerned with the issues which are well summed up by Susan Gillingham:

> So, by the end of the nineteenth century, psalmic scholars . . . pursued their critical and analytical interests either by . . . attending to the text per se, or by joining force with sceptics and relativists and reading the psalms within the more general context of the ancient Near East.[51]

Having thus concluded her analysis of the effect of the Enlightenment on psalm studies, Gillingham ended her first volume on the reception of the Psalms with a chapter on the 20th and 21st centuries which indicates that even if new initiatives had 'made little impact on the relevance of psalmody within a secular culture', Jews and Christians were now working together on the Psalms in 'the reversal of a two-thousand-year tradition of disputation'.[52] And their poems would no longer threaten each other, as they are so often concerned with our common humanity:

> Like David the pursued I raise my eyes to the mountains:
> so slight are the differences of the valleys that indicate
> the map of helplessness in his days and in mine.[53]

2.3.1 Hermeneutics

Francis Watson advocates a modest understanding of hermeneutics as 'theoretical reflection on interpretative practice'.[54] Hermeneutics in the

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[49] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, Texan Christian University Press, Fort Worth 1976, 92 in Lewis Mudge's introduction to Ricoeur 1981, 16.

[50] This has two different strands. The first concerns the Bible's authority; the second concerns the focus on the reader, expressed by Jeanrond 1991, 73 citing Paul Ricoeur 1976, 87f.: 'The sense of a text is not behind the text, but in front of it. It is not something hidden, but something disclosed . . . understanding has less than ever to do with the author and his situation . . . To understand a text is to follow its movements from sense to reference: from what it says, to what it talks about.'

[51] Gillingham 2008, 203, 242.

[52] Greatly assisted by a fresh understanding of second-temple Jewish thinking (Wright 2019, 118).

[53] Gabriel Preil, 'Like David' (from Psalm 121:1), in David Curzon (ed.) *Modern Poems on the Bible*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia 1994, 291.

[54] Colin Gunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, 66.

narrower sense concerns how we interpret texts, in our context the OT Psalms. There is a long history of such interpretation, discussed by Thiselton and Provan,[55] and although it can be divided into pre-modern, modern and post-modern there are overlapping concerns.

Should the text should be taken 'literally'? By the medieval period, the literal interpretation of the Bible was distinguished from the spiritual interpretation, of which there were three levels:[56]

> (1) The typological sense, which sees the narrative as an allegory which relates to the life of Christ or Christian doctrine.
>
> (2) The moral sense, which draws lessons for life and behaviour.
>
> (3) The anagogical sense, which derives heavenly meanings (or sometimes prophetic futures) from earthly things.[57]

Dante, who took Psalm 114:1-2 to refer to his own *Commedia*, saw interpretation not so much as a series of levels, but a single process, like a plant growing out of a seed.[58]

The Reformers returned to the literal interpretation, partly because they felt it was what God intended to teach through the Bible, but also because they saw in the medieval system a rigidity of interpretation which restricted the freedom of the Holy Spirit.[59] Umberto Eco cites how Dante in his 13th letter pointed out that this allegorical treatment could turn the Bible into a 'closed' text.[60]

Yet 'literal' is not straightforward. The text, especially because it is poetry, has layers of meaning. 'Temple', for example can refer to the cosmos (or the heart)

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[55] Thistleton 1992, Provan 2017.

[56] Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 'Interpretation', IVP, Leicester 1980. Cf. Ricoeur 1981, 52.

[57] Susan Gillingham calls this 'analogical', praying the words of scripture (Gillingham 2008, 81).

[58] Frye 1982, 221-2.

[59] LW 1.283, cited in Stephen P Mueller, 'Luther and Biblical Interpretation', https://www.cui.edu/aboutcui/reformation500/articles/post/luther-and-biblical-interpretation).

[60] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1979, 51, saying that the theory of allegory developed by Augustine, Aquinas and others was 'a cardinal point of medieval poetics'.

as well as a building.[61] Allegory, so often the 'villain' of exegesis, is the stuff of poetry.

The poems on Psalms 25 and 26, both linked in their headings to David, consider his life experience. They share the phrase 'lexicon'. In 25 'it's age that opens a new lexicon', using a pantoum to slow down and underline the life process. 'A new lexicon' is not just about discovering new words for human experience, but about interpreting it differently - as we age, and as we view the Psalms from a different age. In addition, the form of the pantoum brings together the start and the finish of the poem, and the start and finish of David's life, with each of them opening 'a new lexicon'; this has a number of layers of meaning, including:

- the way a child learns new words, and their meaning – in David's case from the Hebrew language and from his heritage
- the way we reinterpret the meaning of life as we age
- the way words will be fulfilled and reinterpreted after death, whether this is understood for the individual himself, or for those (like us) who come after and read these words in a new context.

26 ends with a look at how 'lexicon' can become a narrow word – like the rigidity the Reformers railed against – when it describes jargon like 'being born again', something very deep which may be trivialised in contemporary use:[62] so David longs for it, but 'wioot yon lexicon'.

Poem 26 is one of the poems written in Scots, partly to reference the tradition of humorous poems in Scots about David (as in 'muckle Goliath' and 'wee Davie'), and partly because of the links between David and Robert the Bruce which will be explored in poems on the second Book of Psalms.

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[61] Michael Morales (ed.), *Cult and Cosmos: Tilting toward a Temple-Centred Theology*, Peeters, Leuven 2014, reviewed by Philip Jensen in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 67.1 (April 2016) 180-182. Cf. also Ernesto Cardenal's translation of Psalm 150 (Curzon 1994, 297). See also Chapter 3.

[62] As in use by the American 'Evangelical Right' and politicians wishing to curry their favour.

2.3.2 Jewish Hermeneutics

Jewish interpretation of the Tanakh (OT) was carried out in two forms:

> 1 ***Haggadah*** took the form of dramatic narrative, such as the Passover *Haggadah* (comprising poems, prayer hymns and prose commentary).[63]
>
> 2 ***Halakah*** was concerned with the interpretation of the Torah, ethical and theoretical, to which was later added allegory, under Greek influence. The important centre for the latter was Alexandria, which reached its height with Philo in the 1st century CE. Philo distinguished the literal external meaning (the body) and the inner meaning (the soul).[64]

Midrash is 'an intense searching of the biblical text for meaning beyond the surface sense', but does not necessarily follow the Neoplatonism of Philo. It is 'oral Torah', filling in the gaps of the written Torah.[65]

A less formal modern understanding comes from Susan Handelman, who cites texts comparing scripture to a mother, and to a beautiful maiden. Scripture is probed in a dialogue where the questions go both ways.[66] Torah is 'shared space between you and God'.[67]

Jewish interpretation today stresses the 'interactive, dynamic spirit of Torah and commentary', in line with the reader-response approach to be mentioned below. Wolfgang Iser in an essay, 'The Reading Process: a Phenomenological Approach', says, 'The reader, in establishing these relations between past, present and future, actually causes the text to reveal its potential multiplicity of connections.'[68]

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[63] Cecil Roth (ed.), *The Haggadah*, *a new edition*, Soncino Press, London 1959.

[64] Nigh, Adam and Speidell, Todd (eds.), *Divine Interpretation*, T.F. Torrance Collected Studies, Vol. 2, Wipf & Stock, Eugene OR, 2017, 21, 27.

[65] In Susan Felch (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Religion*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2016, 189, 193.

[66] Felch 2016, 186, 196.

[67] Felch 2016, 200.

[68] In Ralph Cohen (ed.), *New Directions in Literary History*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore ML 1974, 125-47, cited by Holz 1984, 17.

2.3.3 More Recent Approaches to Hermeneutics

F.D.E. Schleiermacher is regarded as the 'father' of modern theology; although modern theology is individualistic, he believed that thinking presupposes shared experience and language, so that hermeneutics is the problem of human understanding as such – and more akin to what is involved in seeking to understand a friend.[69] There is 'grammatical hermeneutics' (about texts) and there is 'psychological hermeneutics' (about people).[70] Schleiermacher balanced these two concepts, calling them 'comparative understanding' and 'divination' (which he regarded as the masculine and feminine aspects of hermeneutics);[71] so he has something in common both with the 'hermeneutic of trust' typical of pre-modern hermeneutics, and with the 'hermeneutic of suspicion' typical of post-modern approaches.

Paul Ricoeur is a key figure who mediated between extreme positions, trying to recover the power of symbols, metaphor and narrative,[72] pointing out (against Bultmann) that myth is not alien to modern readers. He called for 'a second naivété' before symbolic language.[73] He wanted to 'free the Bible from culture-bound subjectivising as well as from fundamentalist objectivizing interpretations by asking us to listen carefully to what biblical discourse testifies.'[74]

Umberto Eco distinguished texts which transmit content, and texts which form semiotic networks of matrices to generate further meaning.[75] The Psalms are largely in the latter category, and a poet is working with many of these networks, which include:

- Other parts of the Bible
- The history of Israel
- Music and culture

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[69] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 205.

[70] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 217. In an article for the Scottish Journal of Theology 21.3 (1968), T.F. Torrance wrote about Schleiermacher, 'He insisted that along with the traditional philological discipline, there must be another in which we probe into the author's mind . . .' – Adam Nigh and Todd Speidell (ed.), *Divine Interpretation*, Wipf & Stock, Eugene OR 2018, 181.

[71] Thiselton, *New Horizons,* 222.

[72] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 14.

[73] Ricoeur 1981, 6-7.

[74] Ricoeur 1981, 23.

[75] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 9.

- Warfare and politics
- Human psychology and mood
- Experience and practice of worship
- Meditation and mysticism

A different kind of network is the community out of which literature is interpreted. Stanley Fish makes the case that the interpretive community, rather than author, reader or text, determines the meaning of a text.[76] Of course, communities change, and communities have rebels, which for Fish provides enough stability for the interpretive battles to go on, and just enough shift to ensure they will never be settled.[77] It also raises the question of what it takes for a paradigm shift,[78] whether in exegesis, literary criticism or poetic style, and how a Project like this 'fits' with other poetry – hence my research into other contemporary writing on the Psalms (2.6).

At the mild end of 'postmodernism' there is reader-response criticism; at the extreme end, there is the deconstructionist claim that the reader determines the meaning. The text, whether primary text (the Psalms) or secondary text (the poems), is to some extent a puzzle that the reader must solve in order to gain understanding, signs to be interpreted correctly to 'break the code' – hence the science of semiotics. Structuralists see these signs embedded in the text itself,[79] post-structuralists emphasise the role of the reader in making the text intelligible.[80] And for Fish (above), meaning is generated by the community the reader or interpreter belongs to.

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[76] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* Harvard University Press, Cambridge MS 1980, 16-17, 168.

[77] Fish 1980, 172.

[78] As in Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1962, discussed by Steve Fuller in *Kuhn vs. Popper*, Columbia University Press, New York 2004.

[79] As criticised by Edward Clarke in his poem on Psalm 14: 'The fool has taken to heart an Idiot's Guide / the fool has said in his heart, There is no God: / they are perplexed / they say that meaning's functional, that cat / is cat because it isn't cap or bat. / The fool rejects / mysterious immanence of meaning in signs / the iconic language we speak, the Word that shines / as things do through it . . .' (Edward Clarke, 2020, 20).

[80] Provan 2017, 534.

2.4 Poetry and Exegesis

These two things seem very different. Poetry does not have a clear starting point: every poem begins in the dark, the writer does not know where she is going until 'something happens'.[81] This parallels Derrida's commentary on an exhibition of prints he hosted at the Louvre, where he suggests that drawing proceeds from a structural blindness, begins where it cannot see or know.[82]

At first sight, the difference is one of constraint and freedom: the exegete is tied to 'the meaning of the text', using interpretive tools, while the poet is free to run with her own vision. But the constraints have weakened - while traditional exegesis would not hesitate to 'compare scripture with scripture' (1 Corinthians 2:13 in KJV, better translated 'interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual' NRSV), today feminist exegetes (for example) would be asking whether the perspective of Psalm 2 is biased by its assumption of male despots,[83] and these questions may set a poet off in new directions.

The Scottish poet W.S. Graham wrote:

> To bisect the angle between God and Man and find the earliest distance between heart and head. To join Man and Word and project his consciousness of the prophetic in the language into the world. To be the labourer carrying the bricks of his time and on the scaffolding of an unknown construction . . .[84]

Derrida and Graham in different language express the distance between the poet and especially the older exegete. This distance is mirrored in the unwillingness of modern hermeneuts to take anything for granted.[85] However, accepting the obvious differences – exegesis is prose, and tied more closely to the text – there are things that the poet and especially the modern exegete have in common.

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[81] 'The poet does not write what he knows, but what he doesn't know.' Michael and Margaret Snow (ed.), *The Nightfisherman: Selected Letters of W.S. Graham*, Carcanet, Manchester 1999, 14.

[82] James K.A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, Baker, Grand Rapids 2012, 194.

[83] See Provan 2017, 592f. for a general discussion of this; or Gale Yee (ed.), *The Hebrew Bible, Feminist and Intersectional Perspectives*, Fortress, Minneapolis 2018.

[84] *Poetry Scotland* no 3 (1946), cited in Snow 1999, 381.

[85] Thiselton 1992, 124ff.

Derrida recognised that before any hermeneutic of suspicion there is language, a kind of pledge,[86] what he called elusively a promise of spirit, 'a *yes* before all opposition of *yes and no* . . .'[87] In Wittgenstein's terminology, doubt comes only after belief; lying is a language-game that is dependent on practices of truthful communication.'[88]

After the positives of Psalm 1 and *Poem 1* come the questions in Psalm 2 and *Poem 2*, in keeping with how J.K.A. Smith reads Derrida: 'The fundamental movement of deconstruction is a celebration of commitments, the promises that ground discourse – and the academy.'[89] Affirmation and questioning continue throughout the Presentation (as in the Psalter itself), but are signalled in these opening two poems.

The two are not always separate. The KJV opening of Psalm 121 confused them by mistranslating 'from whence comes my help' as a statement, not a question – the Hebrew context implies a question – and the contemporary poet Toby Martinez de las Rivas picks this up in a poem:

> He would lift his eyes past mine to the hills
> '. . . from whence cometh my help . . .' & I could not
> detect whether that was statement or question.[90]

Here is what poetry and exegesis share:

> (1) Both, in different ways, affirm and question, though the poet will affirm more obliquely[91] and the exegete will question more carefully.
>
> (2) Both reach beyond the text, though the poet will travel much further. But like the exegete, she can be open not only to the text and its meaning in an impersonal sense, but in a personal sense to the God (or for some 'the transcendent') behind it.

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[86] Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, 129-30 cited in J.K.A. Smith 2012, 193. (In these notes at the back of the book on giving Derrida's lecture to a Paris conference in 1987, it is not always clear whether the Derrida is giving his own views, or just analysing Heidegger, e.g. on pages 131ff.)

[87] Derrida 1989, 129 cited in J.K.A. Smith 2012, 192.

[88] Thiselton 1992, 21.

[89] J.K.A. Smith 2012, 194.

[90] 'Letter to my Children' in *Black Sun*, Faber, London 2018, 5.

[91] 'Tell all the truth but tell it slant' (Emily Dickinson, poem 1129 in *Complete Poems,* Martin Secker, London 1928).

The task of the poet is to see, and to sing – and the poet's song 'may reach where the words of the philosopher do not reach',[92] or as MacDiarmid wrote: 'For I've nae faith in ocht I can explain, / and stert whaur the philosophers leave aff.'[93]

This starting place, according to Psalm 139, is God's knowledge of us, and Augustine relates this specifically to the memory.[94] Rowan Williams develops Augustine's view as follows:

> Thus, the most spiritual reading [of the Psalms] for Augustine will always lead us most directly to humility. Where literalism is to be rejected, it is because it proposes to us a static object of knowledge capable of possession and thereby fails to stir us to longing for the greater fullness of God. So there is a paradoxical dimension to his hermeneutics: what most locates us in our earthly experience in all its reality is what most opens up the fuller sense because it most prompts desire . . . the Psalms offer a particular way of structuring the time of the believer's life, so that the present is always oriented to Christ's future.[95]

It is a paradox that such humility – if indeed there is 'more' beyond the text – helps us to discover new things. Long before Ezra Pound in Canto LIII, Quintilian – the ancient authority on the memory[96] – spoke about 'making things new'.[97] Such new things come both from the memory, which embraces our life experience, and from the transcendent. Just as the Psalms themselves hold together the transcendent and the immanent,[98] so a nuanced understanding of God as in all as well as over all will encourage the imagination of the poet as well as the application of the exegete.[99]

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[92] John MacQuarrie, 'Burns: Poet, Prophet, Philosopher', *Expository Times* 86, 1975, 112-114.

[93] From 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', in Alan Riach and Michael Grieve (eds.), *Hugh MacDiarmid, Selected Poems*, Carcanet 1992, reissued Penguin, London 1994, line 153.

[94] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Pusey, Dent. London 1907, 10.24.35. 'Nor have I found anything concerning Thee, but what I have kept in memory . . . Thou residest in my memory, and there do I find Thee.'

[95] Williams 2004, 23.

[96] Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1966, 24.

[97] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6.6.51, cited in 'Transfiguration: Christology and the roots of figurative exegesis in St Augustine', *Studia Patristica XXXIII*, Peeters, Leuven 1997, 47.

[98] Psalms like 42 and 43 as well as Psalm 139.

[99] Guite 2012, 243. 'I have been concerned to demonstrate the essential power of the imagination to bridge the gap between immanence and transcendence.'

Preachers and poets work at different levels, and produce very different material, but share these issues of hermeneutical concern.

2.5 Psalms 1 and 2

Eugene Peterson in his discussion of Psalm 2[100] refers to two different groups, one carrying 'Are you saved?' placards, the other 'Ban the Bomb' ones, each trying to startle people into facing an urgent question, but never talking to one another. While Psalms 1 and 2 likewise confront the personal and political, they do talk to one another.[101]

As Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the Thesis, so Psalms 1 and 2 introduce the OT Psalter.[102] Unlike the Davidic collection which Psalm 3 begins, they have no superscription. They may at one time have been a single psalm, framed by 'Happy are . . .' at the start of Psalm 1, and 'Happy are . . . at the close of Psalm 2.[103] On its own, Psalm 1 might well be associated with the Pentateuch, and Psalm 2 with the Prophets, but here they are at the start of the Psalter.

Psalm 1 begins with a statement, Psalm 2 with a question. Psalm 1 is about wisdom and the personal, Psalm 2 is about authority and the political. 'The Psalms make it possible to say things that are otherwise unsayable,'[104] and to travel anywhere in the cosmos (1.5.1). According to Peterson, the two psalms are 'a binocular introduction to the life of prayer.'[105]

2.5.1 Psalm 1

Athanasius wrote in one of his letters that each book of the Bible 'is like a garden which grows one special kind of fruit. By contrast, the Psalter is a garden

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[100] Eugene Peterson, *Where Your Treasure Is,* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1993, 4.

[101] Gillingham 2018, 12, indicates that these two psalms have often been read as a composite unit. Their themes overlap: for example, both contrast good and bad behaviour.

[102] Alter 2007, xix.

[103] Goldingay 2006, 94.

[104] Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences of God*, Fortress, Philadelphia 1980, 6-9, cited by Goldingay 2006, 22.

[105] Peterson 1993, 10.

which, besides its special fruit, grows also some of all the rest.'[106] Although he does not cite Psalm 1 till the middle of his letter, he might have had it in mind.

In medieval times it was common for Psalm 1 to be illuminated, without a number, at the start of a manuscript on the psalms. It was considered that this psalm introduced the whole of the collection,[107] possibly because it is a Torah psalm and a wisdom psalm.[108] Later Hebrew anthropological thought would contrast the *yētser hatōv* and the *yētser harāᶜ*, the good and evil inclinations within the human being,[109] to which Torah relates both in its narrower sense of law, and in its wider sense of teaching.[110] Psalm 1 describes the fruit of these inclinations, the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous,[111] in the opposing parallels of vv. 1-3 and 4-6, with a final chiasm in v. 6 to underline the contrast.

Like Genesis 2, the good scenario is set in a garden (trees beside a river in Psalm 1). But whereas the story of Eden leads into paradise lost for ever, humankind cast out of pleasure gardens into wild land to be farmed, here the watered garden is a metaphor illustrating the choice between good and evil which is still before us.

The search for a new Eden takes place in the present, and we seek it knowing good and evil, original sin and original blessing[112] coursing our veins and showing themselves in strange and unexpected patterns.

> Evil and good stand thick around
> in fields of charity and sin

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[106] Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms* (http://www.athanasius.com/psalms/aletterm.htm).

[107] Wilson 2002, 92.

[108] See the way verses 1-3 contrast with 4-6.

[109] Gesenius and Robinson, *Hebrew Lexicon*, 428, cf. Gerald Abrahams, *The Jewish Mind*, Constable, London 1961, 217.

[110] See Genesis 6:5, Exodus 19:5-8, 35:29, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 11:6-28, 30:15-20.

[111] The particle *ki ᵓim*, used in verses 2 and 4 to emphasise the contrast, occurs only here in the Hebrew Psalter.

[112] A common shorthand for the implications of Genesis 3 and Genesis 1.27-8, after consumption of fruit from the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil' in Genesis 2:9.

where we shall lead our harvest in.[113]

English poetry ranges in form from strict metre and rhyme to free verse and prose poem, and may present stark alternatives like Edwin Muir, or reject simple dichotomies, as modern-day Hebrew poems on Psalm 1 often do:

I am a man planted beside streams of water,
but I can only weep it,
and sweat it, and urinate it
and spill it from my wounds –
all this water.[114]

Rilke is one of many who use the metaphor of a tree for the idea of transcendence.[115] David Rosenberg is another modern poet who prefers transcendence to Torah in his version of Psalm 1:

Happy is the one
stepping lightly over
paper hearts of men

and out of the way
of mind-locked reality
the masks of sincerity

he steps from his place at the glib café
to find himself in the world
of the infinite . . . [116]

Because Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm, and a preface to the Psalter, the *Poem 1 'Temple Garden'* relates a major theme of the poetry - 'temple' - to God, creation and fall, from Genesis 1-3. The Psalms water God's people, get under our skin, and nourish an underground railway[117] which is code for the genes which influence but do not eliminate our choices.

The way the 'cosmic temple' of Genesis 1 relates to the 'garden temple' of Genesis 2 will be developed in Chapter 3. Meantime, *Poem 12 'Watch God's Lips'* acknowledges the inclinations to good and to evil, which are like two rivers from

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[113] Edwin Muir, 'One Foot in Eden', *Collected Poems*, Faber & Faber, London 1979, 227.

[114] Yehuda Amichai, 'I am a man' (Curzon 1994, 270).

[115] 'So I am sometimes like a tree / rustling over a gravesite / and making real the dream / of the one its living roots / embrace' - Rainer Maria Rilke, *Book of Hours*, Penguin, New York 1996, 51 (1, 5).

[116] David Rosenberg, 'Blues of the Sky' in *Blues of the Sky interpreted from the Original Hebrew Book of Psalms*, Harper and Row, London 1976, 1-2, cited in Gillingham 2018, 24-5.

[117] See Linda Chalker-Scott, *How Plants Work*, Timber Press, Portland, Oregon 2017, 39f.

Eden, but ends with a positive statement about God and the world – against the dualism of Psalm 1.

2.5.2 Psalm 2

If Psalm 1 offers personal security to the individual and the community in following Torah, God's law, then Psalm 2 offers political security to the king and his people in trusting God's rule over the nations.

> At the centre of history is no longer the struggle of the great world powers for existence, but God, whose relationship with the earthly powers will determine their destiny.[118]

Iain Provan discusses the literal sense of Psalm 2.[119] As an individual psalm, it seems to function as a royal coronation psalm, celebrating the moment when God 'installs' his king on Zion and adopts his as a 'son'. But why is it now one of the two key introductory psalms of the Jewish Psalter, put there long after the monarchy had disappeared? It has to be anticipating a kingdom that is still to come – one day there will be an anointed king, and this king will be opposed by the nations. (Seen like this, the NT use is not so allegorical as it might appear – and will be examined in 3.5.)

The psalm opens with a question. It comes from the mouth of the psalmist, but the implication of the rest of the psalm is that God is asking the same question. This view that the questions we ask of God are also the questions God asks of us has a long pedigree, right from Job chapter 38 to modern theologians like T.F. Torrance.[120] It is analogous to the less transcendent view that poets pose questions which question us in turn (see 2.2 above), so that it is the arts themselves which interrogate us.[121]

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[118] Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, SCM Press, London 1962, 111.

[119] Provan 2017, 95.

[120] T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, SCM Press, London 1965, 49, 117, 235. See also Nigh and Speidell 2017, 14.

[121] George Steiner, *Real Presences*, University of Chicago / Faber, London 1989, 143.

Poem 2 'Irony Redeemed' invites God to plant his own questions in a human frame, softening the strictness of verse 9.[122] This picks up the Jewish, European and Scottish story tradition of the king (or God) incognito among his people, asking questions to find out how things really are.[123] God is the one who asks the questions, but he does it as one of us.

2.6 How Poets treat the Psalms

Up to the 19th century, the Tyndale and King James Versions of the Bible 'gave to English literature a treasury of phrases and language which ensured [they] found a central place within the wider canon of poetry and prose'.[124] This intertextuality would include references to the psalms, consciously or unconsciously, an example being Hopkins' poem 'God's Grandeur':[125]

> The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
> It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
> it gathers to a greatness . . .[126]

A later less trusting response would be Edward Blunden on Psalm 37:25,

> I have been young, and now am not too old;
> And I have seen the righteous forsaken,
> His health, his honour and his quality taken.
> This is not what we were formerly told.[127]

Today the Psalms seem peripheral. Responses from thirty well-known poets in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland who have used the Bible in their poems, plus others who teach literature, revealed that it is rare for the Psalms to

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[122] Subversion is an old tradition, found in OT stories like Ruth and Job. In the NT, Mark' use of the text subverts the violence of Psalm 2:9 by invoking Isaac and the servant of Isaiah (Stephen Ahearne-Kroll in Brown 2014, 274).

[123] E.g. James V, known as 'the good man of Ballengeich', a district in Stirling where he would wander incognito (Neil Oliver, *A History of Scotland*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 2009, 202).

[124] Jasper and Prickett (eds.), *The Bible as Literature*, Blackwell, Oxford 1999, 2.

[125] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems and Prose*, Penguin, London 1953, 27.

[126] The psalm in question is 71:19, noticed by Kevin Hart in *Poetry and Revelation*, Bloomsbury, London 2017, 12.

[127] Cited in Gillingham 2018, 229.

feature in their writing, even if they do cite other passages in the Bible. It is more common in the Americas.[128]

A check of all the poems written in five major poetry journals since the start of the 21st century found only three instances of a poet referring to a psalm in a poem (two of them in Scots), though another 27 were found in a sample of several thousand poems in contemporary pamphlets and books (excluding Psalm 'versions'). This is a small sample of almost 434,000 new poetry ISBNs published between 2000 and 2018, the number of which multiplied between 2017 and 2018.[129]

It would be logical to expect this kind of change, given four factors:

- The rapid decline of church membership
- The change in religious education, away from learning the Bible
- The multiplicity of Bible versions in place of the 'literary' King James Version
- The secularisation of Scottish society

The Psalms are a literature known by Scots well into the middle of the 20th century.[130] Of the 19th century 'Ettrick Shepherd', it is said that the Psalms were 'the central literary text which Hogg himself paid tribute to',[131] although strangely, James Hogg is typical of many Scottish writers when he always refers to people singing the Psalms rather than to the Psalms themselves.[132]

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[128] For example from Americans Scott Cairns, William O'Malley, Jacqueline Osherow and Carla Grosch-Miller; and Ernesto Cardenal writing last century in Nicaragua.

[129] Figures supplied to the writer by Nielsen Bookdata. See also sales figures in https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jan/21/poetry-sales-soar-as-political-millennials-search-for-clarity, accessed 1/3/19.

[130] I recall Psalms 23, 100 and 121 being sung on public occasions as a boy. Back in 1922, the first Scots Labour MPs left St Enoch station in Glasgow to the singing of 'two covenanting psalms' (23 and 124) – R.K. Middlemas, *The Clydesiders* (London 1965) cited by T.C. Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People*, 1830-1950 (Collins, Glasgow and Yale University Press, New Haven 1986), 271.

[131] Wright 1988, 100.

[132] In Hogg, James, *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. Garside, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2001, Hogg refers to singing part of the 10th Psalm (102) and part of the 119th psalm (227). In *The Shepherd's Calendar* (Edinburgh University Press 1995) where you might expect some reference to the 23rd Psalm, he only refers to the singing of psalms, and the reading of Ezra. In his poems, we get no further than 'The psalm was read' in 'The First

Indeed, *all* the classic texts in the *Scottish Religious Poetry Anthology*,[133] if they mention the Psalms, cite them simply as something sung, and when they mention the Bible, always refer to doctrine and story rather than explicitly citing the Psalms.[134] Robert Allan writes naturally: 'O wha will gang to yon hill-side / to sing the psalm at e'en?'[135]

It is true that Dallan Forgaill's 'Elegy of St Columba' says, 'God fixed the Psalms'. There is the prose version of Psalm 100 in that *Anthology*, since it was written by a Scottish poet, along with the prose version of Psalms 23 and 128. There is the reference to psalm tunes in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night'. But citations from the psalms *in the poems* are absent from this Anthology, while angels, apocalypse, ascension, Christ and his work, creation, grace, Job, judgment, law and Moses, love, Mary, saints and popes, sabbath, Satan, the Song of Songs, the Trinity, are frequent.

Robert Henryson's 'The Preiching of the Swallow', a religious poem, is about the swallow as a bird of nature, without reference to Psalm 84 (though the title suggests familiarity). The brown stag of Donald Macdonald is on the moor, not in Psalm 42. Nan Shepherd's 'Licht amo' the hills' has nothing to do with Psalm 121. Donald Macaulay 'listened to the psalm' – while 'the tune was mysterious', that is all we get.[136] Catriona Montgomery's 'blackness of the pit' might have come from a dozen psalms if she had not included 'black', making it come from none.

In their Introduction to the anthology, the authors suggest that the Scottish poetic tradition is better represented by those like Norman MacCaig and Sorley Maclean who manage to link the sublime and the mundane without positing a contrast between this world and another world, since they stay 'locked in the

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Sermon' (James Hogg, *Selected Poems*, ed. Groves, Scottish Academic Press 1986, 170), and a reference to 'Salem's harp' in 'The Pilgrims of the Sun'.

[133] Meg Bateman, Robert Crawford, James McGonigal (eds.), *Scottish Religious Poetry, an Anthology*, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 2000.

[134] This is in contrast to 20th century continental European writers like Paul Celan, Paul Claudel, or Anna Kamienska, American writers like Denise Levertov, Marianne Moore or Gabriel Preil, contemporary American writers like Scott Cairns or Jacqueline Osherow.

[135] Bateman *et al.* 2000, 164. Other authors cited are from the same source.

[136] In his poem 'Gospel' – Bateman *et al.* 2000.

human cage'.[137] So among Scottish writers it is more common today to find 'psalm' used in a vaguely spiritual sense, as John Burnside writes of 'the people in a psalm . . . arriving here by chance, just passing through',[138] or Samuel Tongue refers to a biblical psalm in a stained glass window.[139]

With the perseverance of psalm singing in the Highlands and Islands it is not uncommon to find a Hebridean context, as when 'the psalms lift and fall in long waves' in a new poem by Kenneth Steven.[140] But 'psalm' has been used for a religious lay in earlier generations, as in 'A Psalm of Ben More' written by John Blackie about Mull in the late 19th century.[141]

A few contemporary British poets, like Michael Symmons Roberts[142] and Maria Apichella,[143] have hinted at 'psalm' in the title of their books.[144] References are normally solemn, even satirical (Roberts writes about King David as an old man – see 6.1.1). In an unpublished poem called 'The Wren', Harry Smart muses on the idiocy of someone setting Psalm 46 to the tune 'Dambusters', with the terrible collateral effect of the bombs downstream of the dam:

> And my mind had turned to the Möhne Dam:
> how the voice of engines went over the waters,
> the voice of the Lancasters,
> the bombs of glory thundered, the bombs of God.[145]

This paradoxical psalm has the words 'Be still and know that I am God' in the mouth of one who 'breaks the bow and shatters the spear'. Maoilios Caimbeul writes in a lighter vein:

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[137] George Campbell Hay cited in *Scottish Religious Poetry* 2000. Ironically it is atheistic writers like these two (and MacDiarmid) who refuse to 'escape' from the world who stay close to the OT worldview.

[138] *Scottish Religious Poetry* 2000, 'Canticle', 297.

[139] In his poem 'Capel-y-Ffin'.

[140] 'Hallin' in *The Spirit of the Hebrides*, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 2019, 2.

[141] John Stuart Blackie, *Lays of the Highlands and Islands*, Walter Scott, London 1888, 101-108.

[142] *Drysalter*, Jonathan Cape, London 2013.

[143] *Psalmody*, Eyewear Publishing, London 2016.

[144] Roberts wrote 150 poems all with 15 lines, reflecting ideas and emotions from the psalms without a one to one correspondence; he emphasises that 'Drysalter' is spelt without a p. Apichella presented her partner as a 'contemporary David' in her long poem.

[145] Smart has also written a number of unpublished 'Psalm Sonnets 2009-10' on texts including Psalms 86 and 118.

Ministers
in black clothes,
buses coming from the communions,
and we singing psalms. Elders
praying and laughing . . .[146]

Poems referring to particular psalms are found in minority languages like Gaelic (Maoilios Caimbeul), Scots (Jock Stein), Shetlandic (Christine de Luca).

This indicates how rare it is for published writers in Britain to feature a verse from the Psalms.[147] One obvious reason for this is that the Psalms are already poetry. That, however, has not stopped poets using epigraphs from the Classical poets; of the poets consulted who do write on the Psalms, some have simply worked psalm themes into their poetry, and some (like Caimbeul) have used psalm epigraphs.[148] It is unusual to find contemporary poets (like Edward Clarke,[149] Malcolm Guite,[150] Diana Hendry,[151] Theresa Lola,[152] and Lyn Moir[153]) who have written directly on a psalm without simply making a devotional text.

In five years of attending poetry readings in Scotland, I have only heard one poem focused on a psalm,[154] though devotional poetry on the Psalms may come to light in websites like *Church of Scotland Weekly Worship*, or *Sanctuary First*.[155]

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[146] 'Borve, Lewis' in Black 1999, 611.

[147] Historical novelists do of course – Walter Scott frequently (*Heart of Midlothian*, *Peveril of the Peak*), and today James Robertson (*The Fanatic*).

[148] See *Gràs / Grace*, diglot publication, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 2019.

[149] *Eighteen Psalms*, Periplum, Plymouth 2018.

[150] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPVMhjZAsHQ&feature=youtu.be, accessed 1/7/20.

[151] *Twelve Lilts*, Mariscat Press, Edinburgh 2003.

[152] 'Psalm 151' riffing on Psalm 51 (*In Search of Equilibrium*, Nine Arches Press, Rugby 2019).

[153] Allusions to three psalms in 'Sea Leopard'.

[154] 'Do I hate them with perfect hatred?' by Helena Fornells of Barcelona (on Psalm 139, unpublished).

[155] For example, a meditation on Psalm 77, 1st July 2019, (http://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/daily-worship/drawing-well).

Chapter 3 Temple – the Poet as Wonder-struck

> 'We ponder[1] your steadfast love, O God,
> in the midst of your temple' (Psalm 48:9).[2]

This chapter describes how 'temple' has become a key to understanding OT theology, and how the words of 'place' in the Psalms link heaven and earth. It then considers how 'temple' has been used and understood in other ancient and modern writings.

'Wonder' is a staple of poetry: 'A poem is a temple in which epiphanies happen.'[3] It is present too in the Psalms.

3.1 Temple and Cosmos

Michael Morales comments that the temple cult is now the '*omphalos* [navel, literary centre] for the discipline of biblical theology.'[4] But 'temple' is more than a cult – it stands for the presence of God in all the cosmos:

> The OT tabernacle and temples were symbolically designed to point to the cosmic eschatological reality that God's tabernacling presence, formerly limited to the holy of holies, was to be extended throughout the whole earth.[5]

Psalm 78:69 affirms this ancient view that an earthly temple was supposed to be a symbol of the whole cosmos which is a heavenly temple: '[God] built his sanctuary like the high heavens, / like the earth, which he has founded forever.'

Here the cosmos is God's greater temple, in which God 'rests' – as God rested when the work of creation was completed (Genesis 2:3, Exodus 31:17, the only two occurrences of *šābat* with God as subject).[6] 'Rest' in the OT (as picked up in Hebrews 3 and 4) is not a state of relaxation. It is a state of peace where things

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[1] The Hebrew word *dāmâ* in this context means 'imagine' (Gesenius and Robinson 1962), and the psalm is all about wonder at God and God's works.

[2] In Judges 13:19 (REB) the link is explicit: Manoah is struck by 'him whose works are full of wonder'.

[3] Francesca Knox and John Took (eds.), *Poetry and Prayer*, Ashgate, Farnham 2015, 25.

[4] Morales 2014, 4.

[5] G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, IVP, Downers Grove 2004, 25.

[6] John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, IVP, Downers Grove 2009, 71f.

can now proceed to happen, properly ordered.[7] In Psalm 132:1-8, the temple is not only where God dwells, but where he rests, called 'Zion' in 132:13-14. Divine rest in temples in the ANE was a condition for God to rule over all things. 'The temple was the command centre of the cosmos.'[8]

The poet is thus a mundivagant. In religious terms, she is a worshipper, in secular language she is wonder-struck at what she finds in unexpected places. The cosmos is awesome, and it is the vocation of the poet first to be in awe, and then to try to put something of that into words: 'Le travail par lequel une rêverie devient un objet d'art . . .'[9]

Book 1 poems 'inquire in God's temple' (Psalm 27:4), with this biblical and theological basis for writing poetry which celebrates and explores God's presence everywhere,

> somehow befriending
> these strange temples, this new world,
> riding pillion with a God far bigger
> than the one we used to know . . .[10]

3.2 ANE Religion, Genesis and Psalms

In 1.3 and 1.5.5 the five books of Psalms were set alongside the five books of the Pentateuch. They share with Genesis and ANE religion a common background understanding of the world as sacred: and this sacred nature of the cosmos is intimated in Genesis 1 and 2 through the metaphor of the temple.

3.2.1 Symbols and Connections

Temples in the ANE were primarily residences for the gods, rather than places of worship.[11] They were the centre of the cosmos and of social good. The principal temple of Babylon was called 'the temple of the foundation of heaven and

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[7] Jon D. Levenson, 'The Temple and the World', *Journal of Religion, V*ol. 64 no. 3 (July 1984), 288.

[8] John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, IVP, Downers Grove 2015.

[9] Baudelaire in *Oevres Posthumes*, cited by J.L. Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu*, repub. Read Books, Milton Keynes 2013, 166.

[10] '*Taorluath* Singling: Over the Hump' in Book 4 poetry.

[11] Iain Provan, *Convenient Myths*, Baylor University Press, Waco 2013, 99.

earth'.[12] The temple is the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain, and that represents the primordial hill that first emerged from the waters covering the earth in creation.[13] So all that can be said about sacred mountains can be said about temples.

On this mountain there is a spring of the water of life, which features in the Garden of Eden,[14] as well as in Ezekiel's ideal temple. Ezekiel describes Eden as 'The garden of God'.[15] In Psalm 36:8: 'They feast on the abundance of your house, / and you give them drink from the river of your delights.'

The temple is associated with Eden itself,[16] with a sacred river, and with the tree of life, and is oriented to the cardinal directions and to stars like the polar star.[17] As ziggurats they express the idea of an ascent towards heaven. The temple is the central unifying institution of a nation, and God's word is revealed in the temple.[18]

> The *Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira* (Hebrew text) sees the daily offering in the temple as like the rainbow, and the high priest like the sun, moon and a star of light – the very celestial bodies which Psalm 148:3 commands to praise God because God 'has made them stand for ever and ever'.[19]

The language of the psalms sometimes echoes older language. The word *hêkāl* for temple probably comes from Sumerian *é.gal* meaning big (gal) house (é) and palace in particular.[20] In 2 Chronicles 3:5 *habbayi<u>t</u> haggādôl* 'the big room' is

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[12] Eric Burrows, 'Some Cosmological Patterns in Babylonian Religion' (from *The Labyrinth: Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. S.H. Hooke, SPCK London 1935, 43-70) in Morales 2014, 33-35.

[13] Egyptian texts cited by e.g. Walton 2009, 29.

[14] Genesis 2:10. See Walton 2009, 81.

[15] Ezekiel 31:9. Of course, the prophets did not approve of sacred gardens dedicated to other gods (Isaiah 1:29, 17:10).

[16] The King of Tyre was 'in Eden, the garden of God . . . on the holy mountain of God' (Ezekiel 28:13-14).

[17] John Lundquist in 'The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East' (from *The Temple in Antiquity*, ed. Truman G. Madsen, Brigham Young University, Provo UT, 1984, 53-76) in Morales 2014, 53.

[18] Lundquist in Morales 2014, 54.

[19] C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, Routledge, London 1996, 51.

[20] Victor Hurowitz: 'Yhwh's exalted house: aspects of the design and symbolism of Solomon's temple' in John Day (ed.), *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, T&T Clark, London 2005, 73

used, which in Ugarit myths is used for Baal's heavenly palace, while in biblical poetry it is used for YHWH's heavenly abode (Psalm 11:4, 18:7).[21]

The construction of the Israelite tent or 'tabernacle' in the wilderness is parallel to the account of creation in Genesis 1.[22] In Genesis 1 humans are rulers of creation, in Genesis 2 humans are priests, looking after the garden of creation. The vocabulary is like that of Numbers, where priests are there to serve the temple – and the entrance to the garden is on the east side, as in the temple.[23] Priests were sometimes referred to as gardeners.[24] In fact, Adam is a servant priest and king.[25]

Judaism identified Eden not only with Mt Zion but with Mt Sinai: 'The three of these were created as holy places, one facing the other.'[26] So we find in Psalm 18 God comes from his temple mountain with the same kind of language as we have around Sinai in Exodus 19; and in Psalm 68:

> With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand,
> thousands upon thousands
> the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.[27]
> You ascended the high mount . . .

which is followed later by a description of worship in the earthly temple.

Psalm 1, which along with Psalm 2 sets the scene for all the Psalms, is a wisdom psalm focused on a book and a tree, found in the temple and in a sacred garden, while in Psalm 2:6, the king is set on God's holy mountain. Creation, kingship and temple find their visual expression on Mt Zion: 'Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? / And who shall stand in his holy place?' (Psalm 24:3)

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citing P.V. Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake IN 2000.

[21] Hurowitz in Day 2005, 73.

[22] See J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, Baker, Grand Rapids 2005, 84.

[23] Beale 2004, 74.

[24] Morales 2014, 64.

[25] Beale 2004, 70.

[26] Jubilees 8:19, in Beale 2004, 78.

[27] Some versions have God being *at* Sinai, but the connection is the same. The Jewish *targum* has the high mount as Sinai, linking Sinai directly with the 'heights' which other psalms call Zion.

In this psalm, 'holy place' and 'hill of the Lord' are in parallel. But we also read in v. 1 that 'The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it', and in vv. 7-10 the eternal doors of the temple are opened, suggesting that God is going up to his heavenly temple, as well as entering a temple in Jerusalem.[28] God, cosmos[29] and temple are intimately connected in Israelite thought, as in ANE religion generally.

But Israel went further than other ANE religions. The *Tanakh* stories had no other gods and goddesses – only one God, creator of heaven and earth.[30] Other religions had temples in which were placed the images of their gods; for Israel, the only image of God in the cosmos was man and woman.[31]

This affected their style of worship, which allowed no images. But the temple remained a place where God met with humans, whether with sacrifices as in Psalm 51:19 or with festival as in Psalm 42:4. In any case God had to 'come down' as well as 'go up', as in '*Song of the Fifteen Steps' (125)*:

> I guess Mount Zion comes and goes
> like that, somewhere above our woes:
> it leaves us hoping that the Lord our God
> might ski or leg it down, meet us roughshod.

3.2.2 Numerology

Gematria has been part of the system of Jewish interpretation, especially in Kabbalistic writing.[32] In the Hebrew number alphabet, the first letter is 1, and the last 400. A sum totaling 888 is significant as coming just before 999.[33] An example with Psalm 23:3 would be that the three Hebrew words for 'he will

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[28] John Goldingay, *Psalms,* Vol. 1, 362-3.

[29] 'Cosmos' speaks today about the scale of the universe – but 'universe' is closer to the Hebrew *ʿôlām* than the original Greek *kosmos* which had the sense of 'something tidy, something reasonable' (see Ludwig Köhler, *Hebrew Man*, SCM Press, London 1973, 131).

[30] George Knight, *Theology in Pictures*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1981, ix-xiii.

[31] Genesis 1:27, Exodus 20:4. See Iain Provan, *Seriously Dangerous Religion*, Baylor University Press, Waco 2014, 80-82. There are a few examples in ANE texts of a man as an image (for example, Enkidu in the *Gilgamesh Epic* is described as a 'double' of Gilgamesh) but they function differently – see Middleton 2005, 94.

[32] Holz 1984, 21, 325. See for example the *Sepher Yetzirah,* trans. W. Westcott, https://www.hermetik-international.com/en/media-library/kabbalah/william-wynn-westcott-sepher-yetzirah/ accessed 15/11/19.

[33] 888 also happens to be the numerical value of the Greek letters for Jesus.

restore my soul' are (without the pointing) *npšî yšôbb ynchôt* which have a numerical value of 440 + 320 + 128 which is 888. The Hebrew words in Genesis 2:4 for 'the Lord God made' are *ʿśôt yhwh ʾlhîm*, which have a numerical value of 776 + 26 + 86 which is also 888.[34]

The significance of this is not so much in the numerology[35] as in the link between the devotion of the Psalms and the creation story. This is paralleled in the Creation Symphony of William Wallace (1860-1940) which also embeds the numerical values (in English of course) of his name and his wife's name into the structure of the work.[36] Just as 'the heavens are telling', and their voice goes 'to the end of the world' (Psalm 19:1-3), so the words of Torah give out the decrees of the Lord, and 'revive the soul' (19:7-9). The praise of Psalm 8:5-6 directly echoes Genesis 1:26-27.

John Clerk of Penicuik (1676-1755) used part of Psalm 51 for his cantata *Miserere Mei Deus*. In the Hebrew '400' alphabet, Elohim adds to 86. Three sections of the cantata are 86 bars long. The five sections add to 400 bars, representing completion. At the centre point (bar 200), the text ceases to focus on sin and asks God for a pure heart, the word heart being at the centre of the work.[37]

3.3 Temple Words

We have already seen the links between God and the cosmos in ANE thought – connections which seem complex to us, but would have been simple and obvious to them, as they could not conceive of God separately from the world they occupied and observed.[38]

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[34] https://www.thelivingword.org.au/bringing-sons-to-glory/more-watermarks-of-God.php, accessed on 16/11/19.

[35] Because of the way the number series is formed, there are more of these 'coincidental' relationships than you might expect.

[36] Liner notes by John Purser to the Hyperion CD of that Symphony.

[37] Purser 2007, 192.

[38] Walton 2009, 18-19. Cf. 'the living curve' of Louis MacNiece referred to in Chapter 1, which we cannot follow because 'we jump from picture to picture'.

A modern misunderstanding concerns the 'three levels' of ancient thought: sky, earth and underworld. ANE temples were (a) the bond of heaven and earth (b) the bond of the land or lands (c) the bond of earth and underworld.[39] There was a move to 'demythologise' such thought last century, without appreciating the way such symbols actually work.[40]

> Neither the early Jews nor the early Christians were Epicureans. Even those Jews (like Philo or the author of Wisdom) who drew on Stoic and Platonic ideas nevertheless retained central elements of the quite different Jewish worldview, and none of these schemes supported the heaven/earth split of Epicurus . . . and if you thought that heaven and earth could come together in a building here and now, you rather obviously did not think that 'heaven' was simply a location a long way up in the sky.[41]

An example of how they were understood symbolically in ancient Israel is Solomon's prayer when he dedicated the temple.[42] A parallel but slightly different use of symbols is found in the design of ancient temples, which were built to reflect the pattern of heaven and earth (Psalm 78:69 quoted above). The outer court represented the world where humans lived, the holy place the visible heavens and its light sources, the holy of holies the presence of God.[43]

The number of different words used in different Bible versions underscores the point that temple is a metaphor for the presence of God in many ways and many places.[44] The words in Psalm 61:3, 'Let me abide in your tent forever, find refuge under the shelter of your wings' are translated thus by Eugene Peterson: 'A place to get away from it all, / A life-time pass to your safe-houses.'[45]

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[39] Burrows in Morales 2014, 28-29.

[40] Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, SCM Press, London 1958, 15, and comment by Ricoeur in 2.3.3. Bultmann was even more outspoken in an earlier essay, 'modern man is convinced that the mythical view of the world is obsolete' (Hans Werner Bartsch, ed., trans. Reginald Fuller, *Kerygma and Myth*, Vol. 1, SPCK, London 1964, 3). Gregor Smith wrote that first-century thinking was defective, mythological and involved 'the loss of real transcendence', *Secular Christianity*, Collins, London 1966, 33.

[41] N.T. Wright, paper for a Biblical Studies research seminar on 'Cosmos, Temple, Sabbath' at St Andrews University, 1/2/2018, cf. Wright 2019, xvii, 152, 164.

[42] 'Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!' (2 Chronicles 6:18).

[43] Beale 2004, 31-2.

[44] And like all metaphors it has its limitations – 'palaces' were condemned in Hosea 8:14.

[45] Psalm 61:4 in *The Message*,

In the light of this network of understanding, it is not surprising to find a long list of Hebrew words and expressions in the Psalms which connect with the idea of 'temple' – what follows is a choice of psalms illustrating the more common ones. While the general word for temple in Hebrew is *hêk̲āl*, it is not always translated as temple – indeed Waddell[46] translates *hêk̲āl* with *halie hame* (27:4), *halie biggen* (65:4), *howff o' yer ain* (68:29), *howff o' yer halidom* (79:1), or *halie howff* (5:7,[47] 11:4, 18:6, 48:9, 138:2), not with the Scots word *tempil*.

3.3.1 Psalm 48 – Mountain

> His ***holy mountain***, beautiful in elevation,
> is the joy of all the earth,
> ***Mount Zion***, in the far north,
> the city of the great king. (Verses 1c-2)

'In the far north' (NRSV) in Hebrew is literally 'Mt Zaphon's heights' (and *tsāpôn* came to mean 'north', hence the NRSV translation). Verse 1 is saying that *har-qādšô*, YHWH's holy **mountain** – which is also Mt Zion - is higher than the rival god Baal's Mt Zaphon in northern Syria.[48] Literally, Mt Zion is a small hill in Jerusalem, so already we are in the realm of symbolic speech. Which is perhaps why Psalm 121 has been so popular in Scottish psalmody (as well as elsewhere): 'I lift up my eyes to the hills . . .'

These hills in themselves are less impressive than Scottish hills, and indeed were often full of forbidden altars.[49] But they were a symbol of God's protection: 'As the mountains surround Jerusalem / so the Lord surrounds his people' (Psalm 125:2).

After the enigmatic 'Selah' – translators have had to guess at its meaning, whether 'pause', 'stand up', or 'musical riff' (see the end of *75 'Selah'*) - there comes (before another reference to Mt Zion), Psalm 48:9-10:

> We ponder your steadfast love, O God

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[46] P. Hately Waddell, *The Psalms: Frae Hebrew intil Scottis*, Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen 1987 (reprint of original edition of 1871).

[47] Misspelled 'howf'.

[48] Goldingay 2007, 86.

[49] In 1 Kings 3:2 the people sacrificed at the high places because there was no temple in Jerusalem, but by 2 Kings 17:32 they are still doing it.

in the midst of your ***temple***.
Your name, O God, like your praise,
reaches to the ends of the earth.

The fact that *hêk̲āl* means palace as well as temple, alerts us to the ways in which ancient temples were designed, and to the magnificence of Solomon's temple[50] in particular.

3.3.2 Psalm 27 - Presence

One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after:
to live in the ***house*** of the Lord all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his ***temple***.
For he will hide me in his ***shelter*** in the day of trouble:
he will conceal me under the cover of his ***tent*** . . . (vv. 4-5)

As well as *hêk̲āl* there are three other words here with temple connotations: *bēt̲*, *sukkâ*, *ʾohel*. All suggest a more intimate meaning of temple.

Donald Caskie found sanctuary for Scottish soldiers in the gallery of a church in occupied France during the 1939-45 War, and cited verse 5 in a popular book.[51] *27 'From Caskie to Cosmos'* sets the intimacy of God's temple friendship in its cosmic setting: 'Tent or temple . . . find a door / which opens to a vault of stars.'

While priests were always available to handle inquiries in a local sanctuary (as in 1 Samuel 1:9-18), inquiry in greater temples of the Lord has drawn scientists[52] and explorers like John Muir.[53] But the psalms express a tone of intimacy with God:

'Come,' my heart says, 'seek his ***face***!'

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[50] Although he spent 13 years building his own house, compared with 7 for the temple, according to 1 Kings 6:38 – 7:1.

[51] *The Tartan Pimpernel*, 1957, reissued by Birlinn, Edinburgh 1999.

[52] The 18th century philosopher and scientist William Paley, writing of the phenomena of nature, said, 'The world thenceforth becomes a temple and life itself is one continued act of adoration.' Paley, *Natural Theology, Works*, 135, cited by Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2015, 158. Later scientists express the same idea of reverence but generally without 'temple' language (e.g. Einstein's 'reverence for the rationality made manifest in existence', *Out of My Later Years*, Philosophical Library, New York 1956, 30).

[53] John Muir worshipped in the temple of nature. He said, 'In our best times everything turns into religion, all the world seems a church and the mountains altars.' (Quoted in the display in the John Muir Museum, Dunbar)

Your ***face***, Lord, do I seek.
Do not hide your ***face*** from me. (vv. 8-9)

Here is a different kind of temple word, used in Hebrew to describe the **presence** of the Lord. *Pānîm* is usually in the singular as 'your face' or '[God's] face'.[54]

The Psalms address God in both the second and third person, sometimes within the same psalm (as here with Psalm 27). But the Psalms all relate to God in some way – even when it is to God's absence rather than God's presence, and even when they are addressed to the community rather than to God directly. To relate to God is to relate to God where God is, in God's holy place. The different words used are words of presence rather than distance, whether majestic words like God's mountain, or intimate words like tent, house or shelter.

God's 'place' can be anywhere. In Psalm 18:19, God brought David out of danger into 'a broad place'. In 32:7, God is David's 'hiding place' in a context which has nothing to do with any place of worship. In 33:14, God's place is in heaven, from where he sees all people and all actions; in 29:10 God is enthroned 'over the waters', but his voice brings his presence and power through the forests, into the wilderness, across the nations.

3.3.3 Psalm 78 - Sanctuary

'He built his *sanctuary* like the high heavens, / like the earth, which he has founded forever' (Psalm 78:69). The word *miqdāš* means 'holy place'; the root *qdš means 'holy'* and is found in other forms: '[God] brought them to his ***holy hill /*** to the ***mountain*** that his right hand had won' (v. 54).

Here God brings Israel to his abode, though the language is not yet as striking as in Psalm 114:2 where Israel actually becomes God's **sanctuary** (*qdš* again). But Psalm 78 has a mixed scenario, since Israel rebels:

When God heard, he was full of wrath,
and he utterly rejected Israel.
He abandoned his ***dwelling*** at Shiloh,

[54] Gesenius and Robinson 1962, 815.

the tent where he dwelt among mortals . . . (vv. 59-60)

Here we have the word *miqdāš* again, which the NRSV translates 'holy place' or 'sanctuary' (Psalm 68:24, 35) as well as (here) 'dwelling'. But as the psalm draws to a close God affirms his choice of Judah (rather than Joseph), and calls them 'Mount Zion' – after which comes the statement that God built his sanctuary like the high heavens (verse 69).

There are other words, like *miškān*, dwelling (84:1); *môᶜēd*, appointed meeting place (74:8); *sēter*, hiding place (NRSV 'shelter' in 91:1); *mᵉnûchâ*, resting place (95:11); *dᵉbîr*, inner sanctuary (28:2). And words where a particular part of the temple stands for the whole, like *chātsēr*, court (84:2); *mizbēach*, altar (84:3); *hădōm*, footstool (99:5); *šaᶜar*, gate (100:4).

Book 3 poems continue the journey of Book 2, but no longer confined to David and Robert the Bruce. The poems of Book 3 are about exile and return, about refuge and refugees, which reflects both the content of many Book 3 psalms, and the second temple context when the Psalter was put together.[55] **Sanctuary** is a relevant word in *78 'Israel – a Melting Shop'*:

> God drew them back to sanctuary,
> a place of dark as well as light
> to match the mystery of the journey,
> echo patchiness of sight.

The title comes from the steel industry, where the open hearth furnaces of Ravenscraig were the centre of a melting shop where iron was refined to make steel.[56] The poem is a pantoum, which slows the journey down and reflects the way that Israel – as a model of the human race[57] – could take two steps forward and one step back. The last verse relates the journey of Israel to our human

[55] The Psalter is often called the hymn book of the Second Temple (as in Richard Gordon, *Celebrating the Psalms*, New Generation Publishing 2018, 9).

[56] The poem does not mention the Holocaust (the fire is simply 'sacred') but the nature of fire and the effect of an event like this on national identity is considered further in 5.1.2.

[57] See T.F. Torrance, *Incarnation*, IVP, Downers Grove, 2008, 41-2.

journey, with the fire of the melting shop furnace[58] sacred because it is God's fire:[59]

> A sacred fire, a melting shop,
> God draws us into sanctuary,
> an earthly tent, a mountain top
> to match the mystery of the journey.

Moses received his call when he turned aside to see the burning bush,[60] the fire that was not quenched, which became the logo of the Church of Scotland, *nec tamen consumebatur*. Although Psalm 78 ends up with David, up to verse 55 it is entirely a rehearsal of events under the leadership of Moses - whose other formative experience with fire was on Mt Sinai, a 'temple mountain' (3.1 above).

3.4 Relevant Jewish Writing

This section looks at how Jewish writers have understood 'temple'. Sections on NT and later writing will follow.

The temple is a place of worship. Isaiah saw in a vision the heavenly temple, with *seraphim* calling: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; / the whole earth is full of his glory.' In Isaiah 6:3, 'full' is in fact a noun in Hebrew, so it means, 'the fullness of the world is God's glory'. Jon Levenson continues, 'The *trishagion* is a dim adumbration of the rabbinic notion that the world proceeds from Zion in the same manner that a fetus, in rabbinic embryology, proceeds from the navel.'[61]

The rabbis say the navel of the world was located at Zion (Psalm 50:2).[62] In Ezekiel 38:12, those who are gathered from the nations live at the navel

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[58] In Deuteronomy 4:20 (and Jeremiah 11:4), the experience of living in Egypt is described as being in an iron-smelter, or blast furnace (which makes iron from iron ore and coke, prior to it being refined in a steel-making furnace).

[59] Key biblical references to holy or unholy fire are Exodus 3:2, 13:21, 19:18, 32:20; Leviticus 6:13, 9:24, 10:1; Deuteronomy 5:22, 12:31; 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 17:31; 2 Chronicles 7:3, 33:6.

[60] Daniel Hays thinks there may be a connection between the bush *s^{e}ney*, and the mountain *Sînay* - *The Temple and the Tabernacle*, Baker, Grand Rapids 2016, 32.

[61] Levenson 1984, 283, citing Mircea Eliade.

[62] Levenson 1984, citing Rabbi Eliezer the Great, *b. Yoma* 54b.

(*tsabbûr*) of the world. In ways like this, rabbinic thought joins 'temple' with God and creation, people and worship, past and present and future in a network or tapestry of understanding to which the Psalms make their own contribution. Here for example is the missionary eschatology of Psalm 65:

> Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion . . .
> To you all flesh shall come . . .
> We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
> your holy temple . . .
> You are the hope of all the ends of the earth
> and of the farthest seas . . .
> The river of God is full of water . . .
> You crown the year with your bounty.

The connections are made in great detail. Josephus said of the Mosaic tabernacle, that 'every one of these objects is intended to recall and represent the universe . . .' e.g. the 12 loaves of the bread of the presence represent the 12 months of the year.[63]

Josephus and Philo discuss a number of ways that the temple or parts of it symbolically reflect the cosmos, for example:[64]

- The outer and inner court, and the holy of holies represent earth, sea and heaven
- The seven lamps represent the seven (visible) planets
- The outer veil and curtains were made to represent the four elements of the cosmos (earth, air, water and fire)
- The jewels on the breast-piece represent the twelve constellations

Richard Middleton points out how Jewish commentators compare the sevens of Genesis 1 with Solomon's building of the temple during the seven day Feast of Tabernacles (which is in the seventh month).[65] He adds that given the prophetic critique of the temple, it perhaps should be a contrast. There are similarities with the earlier tabernacle – in Genesis 1 the sun and moon are described as *m^{e}'oro<u>t</u>*, lights, the same word as for the sanctuary lights. The end of the

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[63] Levenson 1984, 284, citing Josephus, *The Jewish War* 3, 7:7.

[64] Beale 2004, citing Josephus, *Ant.* 3.145, 181; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.71-145, *Quaest. Exod.* 285.

[65] Middleton 2005, 83.

creation account in Genesis 2:2 (God finished the work) is like Exodus 40:33 (Moses finished the work).[66]

The links are convoluted, not unlike the branches of the vine referred to in Psalm 80:8: 'You brought a vine out of Egypt.' An Aramaic *targum* of early Judaism identified the vineyard of Isaiah 5:2 as Israel's 'sanctuary' (i.e. temple).[67]

45 of the mss found in the Judaean desert (the Dead Sea Scrolls) were psalm scrolls. They tell us about the process of compilation of the Jewish Psalter, and will assist the production of the forthcoming SBL Hebrew Bible, but are not direct commentary on the text.[68]

> The Scrolls give examples of at least four aspects of reception history: copying of Hebrew texts, distinctive liturgical collections for both public and private prayer, new psalm-like imitations . . . and brief commentaries on psalms . . .[69]

The Scrolls do tell us how 'temple' was understood. According to George Brooke, there are ten temples mentioned, which can be reduced to three:

> (1) The earthly temple in various guises, none of which satisfies what God requires.
>
> (2) Heavenly worship which gives an inkling of a heavenly Temple, but which requires an earthly counterpart in a new act of divine creation.
>
> (3) The community as temple, a human anticipation of things to come.[70]

Rabbinic commentaries from the 4th to 9th centuries CE comprise *Midrash Tehillim*,[71] which are more interested in the psalm superscriptions and in lessons for life – but Menahem Meiri proposes that 'holy mountain' is 'a metaphor (*māšāl*) for heaven'.[72] Alfred Edersheim refers to Midrash on Psalm 90 which

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[66] Provan 2014, 32-34.

[67] Beale 2004, 183.

[68] Peter Flint in the *Oxford Handbook* 2014, 229f.

[69] Gillingham 2008, 11.

[70] George Brooke, 'Ten Temples in the Dead Sea Scrolls' in Day 2005, 417.

[71] See Gillingham 2008, 117-8.

[72] Alan Cooper in the *Oxford Handbook* 2014, 257.

contrasts the temple which men build and the messianic temple which God will build.[73]

While the Psalms played little direct part in early Jewish education, certain psalms were used in synagogue worship, particularly the seven daily psalms (24, 48, 82, 94, 81, 93, 92 from Sunday to Saturday),[74] and the *Hallel* (113-118).[75] Psalms 145-150 are recited at the weekly *Shabbat* service, setting a mood of spiritual focus before the *Shema*.[76] The only parallel to Christian practice is in the use of Psalms 148-150 in the morning prayer of the cathedral office.[77] While Christian choice of psalms would spiritualise temple references, Jewish use of the Psalms preferred psalms with verses speaking of the beauty of the physical temple (like 26:8 and 84:4).[78]

In fact, Donald Akenson points out that with the destruction of the Second Temple, Jewish thought moved the temple 'into every home' as holy text. The Babylonian Talmud says that when you study Torah, that is equivalent to offering temple sacrifices.[79]

Psalm 137 is recited on the eve of Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of both temples, the major day of communal mourning in the Jewish calendar. That psalm

> opens the liturgy, and sets the tone for the day. The liturgy of Tisha B'Av includes a wide array of *kinot*, poems of sorrow and mourning, giving voice to themes of exile and longing. But this ancient psalm, older than the *kinot*, captures the pain of exile from the Land of Israel perhaps most eloquently of all.[80]

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[73] Edersheim 1917, 720.

[74] Numbered as in the Hebrew Bible.

[75] Cooper, *Oxford Handbook* 2014, 258.

[76] Alan Mintz in Holz 1984, 418

[77] Morning and evening prayer, compared with the seven daily monastic offices (Gillingham 2008, 42, 45).

[78] Susan Gillingham refers to sixth and ninth century examples of the *Siddur*, the Jewish prayer book (Gillingham 2008, 71).

[79] Akenson 1998, 311, 370.

[80] https://www.myjewishlearning.com, accessed 19/10/19.

In all this there is no formulation of a 'Jewish theology' as in the Graeco-Roman tradition. Teaching was based on story, on law, on specific passages and verses,[81] with a historic sequence following the *Tanakh* text itself:

> Talmud (up to the completion of the Babylonian Talmud in 7th CE)
> Midrash (commentary on Scripture and Talmud)
> Medieval commentators like Rashi and Maimonides
> The *Zohar* and Kabbalah

In Kabbalah, the *Bahir* speaks of the divine realm as 'the secret tree', and there is an earlier text, *Hekalot* ('palaces' in this context), which describes how adepts may ascend through the seven heavens and their palaces).[82] The 'Kaballat Shabbat' service on a Friday evening consists of a hymn plus recitation of Psalms 95-99 before the Shema – representing the practice of a group of mystics in Safed, making Psalm 99:1 present experience.[83]

There is a midrash on Psalm 27 which relates the psalm in sequence to the Exodus, to David's encounter with Goliath, to David's war against Amalek and to a New Year judgment scene. It moves from the distant past to the preacher's present, and puts into practice the rabbinic dictum that everything in the Psalms applies to David, to all Israel and to all times.[84] It is in this spirit that Book 2 poetry was composed, and the Psalms linked to the history and issues of Scotland in Chapters 5 and 6.

It must also be said that there are different traditions outside Judaism but within Jewish poetry. For example, the poet Hayim Nahman Bialik – 'prophet cum poet laureate'[85] in early 20th century Israel – wrote in 1905 of 'the burnt palace of God on the Temple Mount' and 'the last ember of God going out'.[86] In

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[81] Jeremy Rosen, *Understanding Judaism*, Dunedin Academic Press, Edinburgh 2003, 101.

[82] Lawrence Fine in Holz 1984, 309.

[83] Alan Mintz in Holz 1984, 422.

[84] Cooper in Brown 2014, 260. Cf. the teaching of Jewish commentator Saadiah Gaon (Gillingham 2008, 73).

[85] *Songs from Bialik*, ed. and trans. Atar Hatari, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 2000, xv.

[86] In 'The Scroll of Fire', Hatari 2000, 146, 148.

writing like this, Bialik had to cut himself off 'from the Jewish cultural-rabbinical tradition of thousands of years'.[87]

3.5 New Testament and Early Church

The Psalms feature strongly in Jewish worship, but the rabbis show less interest in discussing them, focusing more on Torah and on other wisdom books like Proverbs. By contrast, Christian writers cite them frequently.

3.5.1 New Testament

The NT writers alluded to psalms in 22 of their 27 books,[88] with Psalm 110 the most frequently referred to.[89] Since David was regarded as the author of the Psalms, and (along with Moses) was a key figure in Jewish thought of the time,[90] this wide use is not surprising. Over a third of the OT citations are from the Psalms, but 'David' speaks now about Jesus Christ.[91]

At first sight, the NT claims that the OT prophesies forthcoming events[92] in a way which has been widely resisted by interpreters, not least Jewish ones, who have wanted to limit proper interpretation to 'what was intended at the time of writing' or final editing.[93] Against this, it has been argued that a claim of fulfilment is not the same as a claim of prediction. Rather, the OT *prefigures* the NT, allowing the reader to work out an interpretation which is based on a dialogue between text and a wider theological understanding of who Jesus is.[94]

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[87] Hatari 2000, xlv.

[88] Stephen Ahearne-Kroll in Brown 2014, 269, citing the 27th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

[89] Christian versus Jewish understanding of such psalms is a major point of separation (Wilson 2002, 31).

[90] Ahearne-Kroll, Brown 2014, 271-2.

[91] Gillingham 2008, 14.

[92] For example, Matthew 2 has four OT references, of which three specifically use fulfilment language, and the fourth implies it.

[93] Geza Vermes explains a number of non-messianic ways in which Psalm 2:7 was understood at the time of Jesus (*Jesus the Jew*, Collins, London 1976, 194).

[94] An intertextuality of reception rather than production, in the words of Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards*, SPCK, London 2015, 2.

Iain Provan proposes that Jesus and his apostles read the OT in a literal way, not 'spiritually' nor (for the most part) allegorically. For example, with Psalm 110:1 (which has the temple word 'footstool') and Mark 12:35-37, Provan points out (from Qumran texts) that a messianic interpretation of that Psalm was already current.[95]

Jesus is presented as both the son of David (Matthew 21:15, citing Psalm 8:2), and greater than David (Matthew 22:41-16, citing Psalm 110:1). Jesus told stories implying he was God's son, with a right to judge, and Luke 20:17 cites Psalm 118:22-23 in that context. Perhaps the greatest claim is in Luke 24:44:

> These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.

Most of the connections made with 'temple' in the NT are theological, and the link with a psalm comes indirectly. A few examples:

> (1) The creation story in Genesis ends with God entering his rest (2:2), which is temple language. There is a warning in Hebrews that the rebellious will not enter God's rest (3:11, citing Psalm 95:7-11).
>
> (2) Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1 is described as 'God's anointed one' (his *messiah*),[96] and the last verse in the Hebrew Bible, 2 Chronicles 36:23, speaks of God's charge to Cyrus to build a temple in Jerusalem. The NT makes several different connections with this:
>
> > (a) John's Gospel identifies Jesus as *messiah* (1:41), as restorer of the temple (2:13-17 along with Psalm 69:9) and as himself the new temple (2:19-21).[97] In Matthew 12:6: 'I tell you, something greater than the temple is here' and in 27:51 the veil of the temple is torn in two when Jesus is crucified.[98] The Aramaic rendering of Isaiah 53:5 says that messiah will 'build the sanctuary which was profaned for our sins.'[99]

[95] Provan 2017, 110. Other scholars hold that the Qumran texts have little to say about a messianic figure (e.g. Akenson 1998, 174-6).

[96] For the meaning of anointed in that context, see Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, Collins, London 1976.

[97] 'In John's narrative, the Temple becomes a figural sign for Jesus' body' (Hays 2015, 92).

[98] On that veil was the embroidery of the starry heavens (Beale 2004, 189).

[99] Beale 2004, 194.

(b) Paul identifies God's people as the new temple (as did Psalm 114:2 uniquely in the Psalms)[100] and the body of a believer as a temple.[101]

(c) Matthew's Gospel ends with a charge to make disciples, fulfilling the mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 by rebuilding the temple as a body of disciples from all nations.[102]

(3) A major NT theme is the transformation of the temple, into the body of Christ (both the person of Jesus and the community of his followers, Ephesians 2:20-21), and into a heavenly city which paradoxically has no need of a temple within it (Revelation 21:22). In this transformation, ideas from the Psalms are used, understood as being prefigured not predicted.

(a) When Jesus drives the traders out of the temple, the disciples remembered Psalm 69:9, and in the ensuing argument with Jewish leaders Jesus says 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' referring, says the evangelist, to his body.[103]

(b) Hebrews 8:2 speaks of a sanctuary and a true tent which is set up by God – an echo of the cosmic temple, but one where Jesus is seated at God's right hand as high priest, which appropriates Psalm 110:1. Edward Clarke writes thus on Psalm 110:

> The temple's gone
> In which this Psalm was first performed. Not far
> Above our feet, in inhospitable space,
> The words remake their place.[104]

(c) In this kingdom where God sits on the throne, the first heaven and earth have passed away (Revelation 21:1), and the new city is both equated with the church, the bride of Christ (21:9-10), and also presented as a new place of worship (22:3) for God's people. In this flurry of intertextuality Psalm 89:27-8 features, the original promise to David fulfilled in 'those who conquer' (Revelation 21:7).

3.5.2 After the New Testament

The early Christian writers used the Psalms extensively. Justin Martyr offers a Christian interpretation of Psalm 22 in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Irenaeus and

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[100] This level of identification is found elsewhere, as in Isaiah 46:3 'Israel my glory'.

[101] 1 Corinthians 3:17, 6:19.

[102] Beale 2004, 176-7.

[103] John 2:19.

[104] Clark 2020, 118.

Tertullian used psalms like 24, 45, 68, 72, 82, 132 to show how Christ fulfilled the Davidic kingdom prophecies.[105] This is true also of the later Fathers of the Church, usually with more of a pastoral emphasis:

> The Church Fathers . . . claimed to be following the apostles in the way that they approached biblical interpretation; it was upon this apostolic authority that they depended, in particular, when departing from what they thought of as the literal sense of Scripture and reading it in other ways.[106]

Cassian tells us that the Desert Fathers in the 4th century read the Psalter, which was 'the substance of the common prayer'.[107]

Two of the most important Patristic writers on the Psalms are Athanasius and Augustine. By this time it is taken for granted that the Psalms point forward to Jesus Christ as ascended Messiah, occupying a heavenly temple.[108] Athanasius wrote a long epistle to Marcellinus[109] in which he commends the study and singing of virtually every psalm for one purpose or another, and says that he is passing on what he learned from an old man. When he comes to Psalm 110, he writes:

> also in 110, *Out of the womb, before the dawn, have I begotten Thee.* Whom else, indeed, should any call God's very Offspring, save His own Word and Wisdom?'
>
> The Psalter further indicates beforehand the bodily Ascension of the Saviour into heaven, saying in Psalm 24, *Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in!* And again in 47, *God is gone up with a merry noise, the Lord with the voice of the trumpet.* The Session[110] also it proclaims, saying in Psalm 110, *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.*

Augustine begins his *Confessions* with a quotation from Psalm 48 which he changes from third to second person, in keeping with his writing the book as a

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[105] Gillingham 2008, 25-6.

[106] Provan 2017, 106.

[107] Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*, Collins, London 1962, 105.

[108] There are exceptions. Writers of the Antiochene School, especially Theodore of Mopsuestia, sought to interpret the Psalms from the OT (Gillingham 2008, 32).

[109] http://www.athanasius.com/psalms/aletterm.htm.

[110] I.e. the seating of Messiah at the right hand of God.

prayer.[111] Like Athanasius he sees the Psalms speaking of Christ (as well as the history of Israel and much else), and in particular that the psalms represent the unifying of the divine and human voice in Christ.[112]

Even more than Athanasius, he makes a theological interpretation of the Psalms, as with Psalm 66:5, where Augustine describes the cry as 'God appealing to God for mercy'.[113] On Psalm 85:1 he says Christ 'prays for us as our priest, he prays for us as our Head, he is prayed to by us as our God', but in the whole of his *Confessions* the closest he gets to the concept of 'temple' is in Book X11 where he discusses Psalm 148:4 and the 'heaven of heavens', which is for him the invisible presence of God.[114] When he cites Psalm 8:3, the heavens as the work of God's fingers, he refers to the praise of babes to stress humility,[115] which Williams takes as the chief mark of his *Enarrationes*.[116]

3.6 Some Examples of Temple in Literature

'Temple' has become an important contemporary theme in biblical studies, because of its complex associations (described earlier).[117] It is sometimes used in literature as a metaphor,[118] and some relevant examples follow.

3.6.1 Dante

The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) has been compared to a great cathedral,[119] but it pictures paradise more as a 'happy court' than a temple,[120]

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[111] Augustine 1907, 1.1.1.

[112] Williams 2004, 18 (referring to Augustine's *Ennarationes in Psalmos*).

[113] Williams 2004, 19.

[114] Augustine 1907, 12.2.2.

[115] Augustine 1907, 13.15.17.

[116] Williams 2004, 20f.

[117] Temple and Sabbath were key themes of Tom Wright's 2018 Gifford Lectures in Aberdeen.

[118] A simple example is the saying, 'Your daily life is your temple and your religion,' by Kahlil Gibran in *The Prophet*, Heinemann, London 1926, 91.

[119] Introduction by Robin Kirkpatrick, xviii, in Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, Penguin, London 2012. Ronald Gregor Smith goes further, 'The cathedrals of the middle ages, and the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, may be regarded as reflections in the realm of art' of a precarious harmony between nature and supernature, Aristotelian philosophy harmonized with Hebrew thought. (Gregor Smith 1966, 31).

[120] Kirkpatrick 2012, Canto 32.97.

though a biblical temple had its courts.[121] The poem contains allegory, but Dante also invites us to contemplate the literal design within the universe.[122]

Dante reveres David as a great composer, and takes him as model for both penitent sinner and religious artist.[123] He refers to psalms like 51:15 in the Vulgate,[124] and cites Psalm 92:4.[125] See also 5.3.4.

3.6.2 Isabella of Castile

The British Library contains the late 15th century Breviary of Isabella of Castile.[126] (One of its illuminators also worked for James IV of Scotland.) The Breviary depicts the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple, with references to the Psalms. The new temple was the sign of a new age, utopian imagery of the 'Age of Discovery' – Isabella was patron of Columbus' voyage to the New World. The idea of a new paradise also occurs in works like *Utopia* by Thomas More and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.[127]

3.6.3 Herbert

The Temple is the name given to the edition of George Herbert's poetry (1593-1633) published after his death by his friend Nicholas Farrer.[128] The titles of the poems describe a sequence from church-porch to altar, then from sacrifice up to Good Friday and Easter; there follows a long sequence of spiritual themes, some titles repeating, as varied as Jordan, church music, the bunch of grapes and judgement. Herbert was a man who found 'temple' a universal theme, with all things related to God, his poetry full of dramatic metaphors for the spiritual life, and allusions to the NT, but a poet who like many after him seldom uses the

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[121] Unless you choose to relate the circles of paradise (and hell), or the terraces of purgatory, to an ancient ziggurat.

[122] Kirkpatrick 2012, xxxiv.

[123] Peter Hawkins in Brown 2014, 99-100.

[124] Purgatory Canto 23, line 11, with '*Labia mea, Domine*'.

[125] Purgatory Canto 28, line 80-81 with '*Delectasti*'.

[126] https://www.moleiro.com/en/books-of-hours/the-isabella-breviary.html#descripcionarticle.

[127] Gillingham 2008, 128-9.

[128] George Herbert, *The Complete Works*, Digi-reads 2013.

word 'temple', and hardly ever cites the Psalms directly,[129] though Jasper says the book is modelled on the Sidney Psalter.[130] If he writes about dust, it has no connection with Psalm 90.

In his poetry he refers to the saying of Christ about his body as the temple, and sets out his 'Altar' poem in the shape of an altar. Beyond that, he has one reference in his poetry to Solomon's temple, and one reference to the church as a temple (which does link it with the transcendent):

> Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
> this glorious and transcendent place
> to be a window, through thy grace.[131]

The Psalms certainly feature at arm's length ('the church with psalms must shout')[132] and in the paraphrase of Psalm 23.[133] Beyond that, Drury thinks that Psalm 23:5 relates to 'so I did sit and eat' in Herbert's famous poem 'Love Bade Me Welcome'. He is certainly correct to find Psalm 144:1 in a line of 'The Sacrifice', but that is the clearest link.[134] And yet the spirit of the Psalms is never far away – as when he writes 'Onely to Man thou hast made known thy wayes / . . . And made him Secretarie of thy praise.'[135]

3.6.4 Edersheim

Alfred Edersheim was a Jew who converted to Christian faith in the 19th century, a biblical scholar who wrote a book called *The Temple*, a detailed account of the Second Temple and its services as he understood them from the OT and from his Jewish background.

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[129] Susan Gillingham sees more references to the psalms in Herbert, e.g. with 'The Altar' and Psalm 51:16-17 (Gillingham 2018, 311), but Herbert simply writes 'a broken ALTAR' and 'O let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine'. She is on firmer ground with 'Easter', which has 'Awake, my lute' (Psalm 57:8, Gillingham 2018, 334).

[130] Jasper 2018, 89, 94.

[131] Herbert 2013, 60 (41 'The Windows').

[132] Herbert 2013, 49 (23 'Antiphon').

[133] Herbert 2013, 146.

[134] John Drury, *Music at Midnight: The Life and Poetry of George Herbert*, Penguin, London 2014, 141-2. Susan Gillingham finds other references, Gillingham 2008, 176-7.

[135] Perhaps even alluding to Psalm 8 – in his poem 'Providence', Herbert 2013, 100.

Edersheim confirms the order of daily psalms mentioned in 3.4, from a book he calls *Tamid*, which refers to the light kept burning in the temple, and today in Jewish synagogues.[136] He refers to 54 psalms in his own book, most frequently to Psalm 118, the final *Hallel* psalm which was sung at the Feast of Tabernacles.

While he himself confines his interest to the first and second temples, he wrote a series of appendices to his two volume *Jesus the Messiah*, in which he discusses the Shekinah filling the heavenly temple,[137] and notes the Rabbinic tradition that Messiah when he comes would stand on the roof of the temple.[138]

3.6.5 John Muir

John Muir was a Scot from Dunbar who as a boy emigrated to Wisconsin in 1849 with his father, and eventually made his way to the Sierra Nevada in the 1860s. He fell in love with the Yosemite valley, and wrote to his brother in 1870:

> Yet this glorious valley might well be called a church . . . the glory of the Lord is upon all his works . . . written upon all the fields of every clime, and upon every sky.[139]
>
> I have not been to church since I left here, but God could not be more pleased at my worship in this temple [Yosemite].[140]

Muir sent an article to the *Sacramento Record Union* called 'God's First Temples: How shall we preserve our forests?'[141] He railed against 'the devotees of ravaging commercialism' who 'instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar'.[142]

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[136] As commanded in Leviticus 24:1-4. There was a book of Bible verses called *Daily Light* first published (by Bagster) in Edersheim's lifetime.

[137] Edersheim 1917, 661.

[138] Edersheim 1917, 729.

[139] *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, ed. Terry Gifford, Baton Wicks Publications and The Mountaineers, London and Seattle 1996 (originally by the Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston 1924), 112-3.

[140] *Meditations of John Muir: Nature's Temple*, ed. Chris Highland, Wilderness Press, Birmingham AL 2001.

[141] Published on 5/2/1876.

[142] John Muir referring to Psalm 121 in *The Yosemite*, Century, New York 1912, 261-2, cited by Naomi Klein in *This Changes Everything*, Penguin Random House, New York 2015, 184.

Although no biblicist, Muir was in tune with the temple theology of the OT, linking trees and mountains and rivers with God, and saying that no temple made with hands could compare with Yosemite.[143]

3.6.6 Edwin Muir

This Muir (1887-1959) only uses the word 'temple' once in his poems, referring to 'temples and curious caverns in the rocks' at the site of Troy's harbour now 'deep in the fields with turf grown over'. But he has other expressions sometimes used with biblical temple connotations:[144]

> (1) In 'Ballad of the soul' he writes: 'And then what seemed a palace lay / like ruins of the sky.[145] 'Palace' is the extra-biblical meaning of *hêk̲āl*, but more important, the poem has the feel of ANE or Norse religion, as opposed to many of his poems which are based on the Greek myths. The description of the sea in Part I echoes Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner',[146] Part III has sun, serpents and clouds fighting like armies. But the context is not the creation of the world, or the worship of God's people, but the purification of the soul.
>
> (2) 'Variations on a Time Theme' are introduced with a quotation from the book of Daniel, and Part VI has Jehovah (*sic*) coming down to Mt Sinai, with 'the stream like-winding from his secret throne', and then Moses coming down Mt Sinai. Soon comes 'There is a stream / we have been told of'. The poem thus echoes Psalm 46. Eden is a persistent theme in Muir's poetry,[147] and here he talks of the one Garden and the first Tree.

3.6.7 Sheena Blackhall

Blackhall (born 1947) has written four poems on a Buddhist temple theme,[148] two on the Samye-Ling temple at Eskdalemuir, one written at Dhanakosa at Balquidder, and one at the Cave Temple at Dambulla (which is called 'Monkey

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[143] Highland 2001, 13. In a letter to Catharine Merrill, he writes: 'God flows in grand undivided currents, shoreless and boundless over creeds and forms and all kinds of civilizations and peoples and beasts, saturating all and fountainising all.' (Muir 1996, 167)

[144] 'Temple' is linked with God, cosmos and the Garden of Eden - see 3.1 and 3.2 earlier. Muir also features 'tower' – Milton has to come to 'the dark tower' before he sees Paradise, and Time is 'locked in his tower' (Muir 1984, 207, 73).

[145] Edwin Muir, *Collected Poems*, Faber and Faber, London 1984, 27.

[146] Muir thinks a wraith makes a sign to him, 'and headless things swam all around . . . a soft sea-creature caught / my bonéd hand with boneless hand . . .' (*Collected Poems*, 27).

[147] 'Eden is not escape, but acceptance, a vision of an inclusive order' – Peter Butter writing an Introduction to Edwin Muir, *An Autobiography*, Canongate, Edinburgh 1993, xiii.

[148] All four poems may be found on Poemhunter.

King', and features a begging monkey and a seller of beads). Themes of cosmos and creation appear, though in a subtly different way from how they feature in the monotheist religions.

'Samye-Ling' is about the temple and its life for monks and laity, with the trinitarian chorus 'Samye-Ling, Samye-Ling, Samye-Ling' echoing the hand bells and prayer wheels. It is 'MacDiarmid land', and MacDiarmid is a 'David, who matched the South's Goliath tongue' – 'these pebbles filled his sling . . ./ where prayer-flags cling.'

'Shrine in the Woods' is also about Samye-Ling. Nearby is a wishing-tree, which is supposed to have been an early Celtic shrine, though this poem is about the lilypool with the Buddha, the 'white marble meditator . . . / the peaceful guardian of this nook'.

'Diving for Poems' features the 'little lights set out along the shore' at Dhanakosa. 'Diving for poems / I entered the moon's reflections.' The poem might have been written anywhere, but subtly indicates her oneness with the created world which is more often found in Eastern than Western religion.

3.6.8 Mpu Tantular

A particular and poetic use of temple is found in the writing of Mpu Tantular, a 14th century Javanese poet, who wrote in the foreword to his best known work, the *Arjunawijaya*,

> The purpose of my praise is to implore Him to pay heed to the homage of one who devotes himself to poetry . . . This is what I ask as I build my temple of language on my writing board.[149]

The chapter began with a high view of temple. There could not be such a high view if building were not endemic to culture and nature, whether the library built by a writer,[150] or the nests built by sparrows of Psalm 84:3.

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[149] John H. McGlynn, 'Leaves of Palm and Temples of Language' in *Stand*, Vol. 17(1), 2019, 7 - cf Clarke on Psalm 110 (3.5.1).

[150] Walter Benjamin describes his library as a sanctuary, 'with books as the building stones', in *Illuminations*, Jonathan Cape, London 1970, 69.

Chapter 4 Tartan – the Poet as Dresser (and Rebel)

'Its priests I will clothe with salvation.' (Psalm 132:16)

Clothing covers, protects, delights: and the poet does all these, confirming and adorning what is already known, celebrating present and past with warmth and colour, serving as dresser[1] - a role which may include dressing the wounds of his people, and lining things up in order. Clothing identifies, and also signals – the identity of belonging to a tribe, yes, but maybe challenging that identity, hence the role of rebel.

This chapter explains the complexity of tartan and its relation to music; uses tartan as a symbol of contrasts in Scottish and human identity; explains the 'Caledonian antisyzygy'; and gives examples of subversion in the Psalms.

4.1 Tartan and Tartanry – Complexity and Cliché

In the weaving of tartan, pre-dyed yarn threads parallel to the long edge are warps, the other wefts. The number and pattern of yarns of each colour is known as the sett, which is repeated as often as required (across the loom) until the warp is complete, then that same sequence is woven at right angles to form the weft and the finished tartan.

'Temple' has an obvious connection with many psalms, tartan does not. But the Thesis is not introducing 'tartan' simply to put a kilt on the research; the poet may use tartan as a metaphor which yields the antinomy of yarn directions, the analogy of vertical and horizontal, the alliteration of text and textile, and the association with Scottish culture and history.[2] Clothing may be as neutral as the colour analysis of tartan, or it may be a signal, and tartan is a wide-reaching image in that context.[3] The owner of Stewart Christie the Tailors writes:

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[1] This was an important function of epic poetry like John Barbour's *The Bruce*, as well as lyric poetry today. Edward Hirsch speaks of 'the Orphic calling of the poet: to make it seem as if the very universe speaks and reveals itself through the mother tongue' (Hirsch 1999, 10).

[2] There are of course other examples of synaesthesia, as in the Celtic Psalter held in the Special Collections of Edinburgh University Library, where words and Pictish images join each other on the page.

[3] Used for example to describe the musical structure of pibroch music by John Purser in *Rannsachadh na Gaidhlig* 8, 1-16 (see 4.2).

'Tartan's international presence conjures up all the connotations associated with the nation – from unity and kinship to rebellion and pride.'[4]

Tartan has been a symbol of both cultural assimilation and of rebellion (see 4.1 below).[5] Before it could be the latter, it had to be part of a culture – as poets are part of a culture, whether their poems celebrate it or critique it. Sometimes this is official, as with the ancient bards or the modern Poet Laureate, sometimes overtly rebellious, as with the *samidzat* literature of Eastern Europe. And sometimes the signals of opposition may be disguised, in which case the poet might in a sense be called a closet rebel (although that term also means a rebel planted like a sleeper cell waiting for the time to strike).

Tartan is wool woven as a twill with a check design, but in multiple colours. The word 'tartan' comes from the French *tiretaine* - Bretons used *tiretaine* for cider made half of apples and half of pears.[6] The word was in use in Scotland at least as early as 1500.[7] Associated Gaelic words are *breacan*, a plaid wrapped round the body,[8] and *tarsainn* meaning something criss-crossed.[9] An early example was the 'Falkirk Tartan', discovered in 1934 with a hoard of excavated silver coins, dated to the third CE;[10] the scrap of cloth was used as a stopper for the jar containing the coins.[11]

> The intersections and spaces between warp and weft provide a textile template for the collisions, coincidences and ruptures that punctuate

[4] Scotsman 29/11/19 trailer for Vixy Rae, *The Secret Life of Tartan*, Black and White Publishing, Edinburgh 2019.

[5] Also true of temple – whether temples of a rival cult, or signifying a different approach to religion (as with John Muir, who would become 'Doctor, and Priest in Yosemite' - Gifford 1996, 135).

[6] Ian Brown (ed.), *From Tartan to Tartanry*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2010, 2.

[7] Stanza 3 of 'Symmie and his Bruther' in Laing and Small, *Select Remains of the Ancient Popular and Romance Poetry of Scotland*, Edinburgh 1885, 314 in a paper sent to me by John Purser, which includes a reference in 1538 to a purchase of 'iii elnis of Heland tertane to be hois to the Kingis grace' (*Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland VI*, 436).

[8] Jonathan Faiers, *Tartan*, Berg, Oxford 2008, 32.

[9] Hugh Cheape, *Tartan*, NMSE Publishing, Edinburgh 2006, 11. While there are Lowland tartans, it was traditionally associated with the Scottish *Gaidhealtachd*.

[10] Brown 2010, 23.

[11] Faiers 2008, 18.

> the development of any society, so that the merest fragment of cloth contains within its fibres 'the crystal of the total event'.[12]

If that is more literary imagination than history, a more modest metaphor comes from the Edinburgh Royal Mile Tartan Weaving Mill, which describes weaving as 'one warp yarn up, the next down – the weft goes through the shed, the space between'.

In the loom, that space is controlled, adjusted and occupied in a mechanical way. In Scottish history, that space between Highlands and Lowlands, between romance and reality, between past and present, is shared by historians, poets, musicians and all who see culture as more than the pixels of a photograph taken at random. It is the job of the poet, said MacDiarmid, to communicate the complexity of the world.[13]

In 1746, following the Battle of Culloden, the wearing of tartan was proscribed by law, with severe penalties, in an attempt to follow the military conquest of rebellion with an act of cultural repression. The Act was repealed in 1782, but it was a time of dearth in the Highlands, and it was not until Walter Scott's stage management of the royal visit of George IV in 1822[14] that tartan became fashionable in all parts of Scotland (although until the second half of the 20th century it was still largely limited to the military and to better off families).[15] Now even the Kirk has a tartan.

Hugh MacDiarmid's autobiography *Lucky Poet* (1943), says that as boys he and his brother wore the Graham tartan (his mother's). His mother's folk were farm workers, his father's mill workers, and he was always on the side of the industrial workers. But in general MacDiarmid brings together multiple identities

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[12] Faiers 2008, 291, citing Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Belknap Press, Cambridge MA 1999.

[13] Duncan Glen, *Hugh MacDiarmid, Rebel Poet and Prophet*, Drumalban Press, Hemel Hempstead, 1962, 3.

[14] See Neil Oliver, *A History of Scotland*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 2009, 384-6.

[15] See Cheape 2006 for the history, and Brown 2010 for later developments.

into a rightful claim to tartan, linking Lowlands and Highlands[16] – for 'tartan is now a bridge to a mythic identity'.[17]

In the film *Braveheart*, Wallace cuts a strip of tartan from his kilt to give to his wife, and it both represents and betrays their relationship. The strip of tartan cloth is polysemic, a token of love and an index of who Wallace is – and it ties his personal narrative of love and revenge to the national narrative of change and resistance.[18] The film did not 'dig up all [our] history with stainless steel and expertise'; star and director Mel Gibson himself notes that the film is a 'historical fantasy' and should not be taken as the accurate portrayal of Wallace's life.[19] But the film did 'graft it onto patriarchs', 'open temple doors in earthy places', and conjure up 'new threads / for the sett of holy tartan God still reels off secret looms.'[20] Psalm 105 likewise gives its own select version of Israel's history, but refines the iron of the past into the steel of a stainless exodus, worshippers encouraged to collect these new threads and weave them into a song of hope for the future.

In 1981 Tom Nairn attacked the kitsch 'tartan monster' of tartanry.[21] Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull then pointed out in 1989 that most critiques of tartanry were assuming an 'inferiorist myth', and that tartan was a much more complex image.[22] Twenty years later, Jonathan Faiers still accepted the view of the English historian Hugh Trevor-Roper that tartan had become a kind of cliché, 'Brigadoon, the fantasy of a fully tartanised society and magical landscape.'[23] Ian Brown disagrees. For all that making tartan is mechanical, he claims

> the essence of tartan – and tartanry – is an absence of certainty. The very design of tartan embodies constant dynamic tension between the

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[16] The key literary foundation of tartanry is Walter Scott's *Rob Roy*, which establishes the Highland/Lowland divide, according to Hugh Cheape in Brown 2010, 120.

[17] Alan Riach in Brown 2010, 117.

[18] Richard Butt looking at 'Tartan in Film', Brown 2010, 171-2.

[19] https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Historians+view+of+Braveheart&ie=&oe= accessed 17/7/2019.

[20] *105 Crunluath a Mach: Exegete your Story*, in '*The Iolaire'.*

[21] Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, Verso, London 1981, 162.

[22] Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*, Polygon, Edinburgh 1989, 13-14. See also 'The Fall and Rise of Tartanry' in David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: the Sociology of a Stateless Nation*, Routledge, London 1992, 180-1.

[23] Faiers 2008, 247, and against him Ian Brown in Brown 2010, chapter 6.

> clarity, even rigidity, of its grid and the literally endless potential for colour and variety contained within, and visually threatening to break, the lock of that grid. Its impact visually has been compared to that of a flower garden.[24]

The Psalms oscillate between the certainty of wisdom psalms like 1, and the uncertainty of lament psalms like 38, and often within the same psalm – as Psalm 22, which begins with a groan and ends with a cheer. Wearing a particular tartan has been a sign of identity,[25] and with loss of identity comes uncertainty. But in the modern period there has been a dissolution of boundaries between different types of dress, as with Japanese and African checks.[26] Faiers regards these as 'translations' and cites Walter Benjamin:

> A translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life.[27]

Faiers continues, 'If tartan is considered as a text as well as a textile, then as Benjamin suggests, it will continue to survive via its translations, and these translations, as its history suggests, are absolutely necessary to ensure its continuing development.'[28] Humsa Yousef was sworn in as a Holyrood MSP wearing a blend of tartan and Asian styles. And when a new tartan was created in 2019 to commemorate the 15 men who died constructing the Cruachan power station, that grave note cemented the seriousness of tartan as an image.[29]

Brown spoke of the importance of the 'grid' in tartan. Iain Provan refers to that framework in John Kselman's rhetorical reading of Psalm 22. The repeated *rāchaq* (distant) in vv. 1, 11, 19 signals the absence of God along two axes – the

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[24] Brown 2010, 1, citing John Telfer Dunbar, *History of Highland Dress*, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh 1962, 97.

[25] Although in the 18th century, tartans were often mixed – one portrait has the 'MacDonald boys' wearing four different tartans, and at Culloden, according to one painting, 23 different tartans were worn by 8 Highlanders (Faiers 2008, 42, 44).

[26] The Japanese designer Akiko Fukai formulates a 'proposal for a clothing of the future that will transcend ethnic and gender differences', Faiers 2008, 288 citing Martin and Koda, *Orientalism: Visions of the East in Western Dress* (catalogue), 1994, 75.

[27] 'The Task of the Translator' in *Illuminations*, Fontana, London 1992, 72, cited in Faiers 2008, 289.

[28] Faiers 2008, 289.

[29] As in the Presentation *Poem on Psalm 132*.

vertical axis of transcendence and the horizontal axis of lived experience. Vv. 1 and 11 enclose the psalmist's experience of that absence in the space between, feeling less than human – as the Highlanders were made to feel;[30] vv. 11 and 19 enclose that same experience tempered by faith ('my help') – just as the Psalms supported the same Highlanders.[31]

Like tartan, the Psalms have survived translation into different cultures and different times. They have kept the 'contradictions' analogous to the different directions of yarn in a tartan, but offered some kind of identity, expressed in *22 'Worm Weary'*:

> A talking, swearing, crying worm
> one minute, and the next a sperm
>
> of hope, yearning for a womb
> to offer God some living room,
>
> a womb to tend my worst afflictions,
> tomb to end my contradictions.

4.2 Music, Tartan and the Psalms - Synaesthesia

> [In exile,] if the Jews of Babylon did not offer God their sacrifices, what then could they offer? Their solution to this dilemma was revolutionary: they would offer their words and music, their prayers and hymns.[32]

John Leavitt links music and 'poetic prophecy', seeing the stress and pitch of speech homologous with dynamics and melody, similar principles of composition (like theme and variations, as in '*The Iolaire'*), and even a common inspiration in 'the music of the spheres'.[33]

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[30] See 5.4.

[31] Provan 2017, 503-4, citing John S. Kselman, 'Why Have You Abandoned Me?' in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (ed. Clines, Gunn and Hauser), JSOT Press, Sheffield 1982, 172-98.

[32] Abba Eban, *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1984, 69.

[33] Leavitt 1997, 189-90.

The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms has no chapter on 'The Music of the Psalms'. We are told that various instruments were used to accompany the psalms,[34] but we know little about the singing. John Goldingay lists these words:[35]

hālal = make a lalalala noise (22:22,23)
zāmar = make music (21:13)
rānan = make a n-n-n-n noise (33:1)
rûa^{c} = shout (95:1)

which suggests that the common translation 'sing' used in the NRSV should not be understood as Western classical singing.

The Gaelic word for music, *ceol*, might be connected with 'birdsong',[36] and Purser also says that the Picts imitated birdsong with their voice and whistling.[37] Unaccompanied Gaelic psalm singing shows an aspect of this in the grace notes 'warbled' by the precentor, and possibly also the grace notes of a pibroch. Allan MacColl notes, 'Congregational singing of the Psalms was also heavily influenced by traditional styles of Gaelic folk song'.[38] Such singing, which is not unlike singing in tongues, has also been compared to the waves of the sea.[39]
We know also that music was not confined to temple (or later synagogue) worship. The Israelites sang when they were rescued from Pharaoh's army (Exodus 15), the Song of Solomon is love poetry, and traditional Israeli song and dance is well known.

[34] For example, trumpet, lute, harp, tambouring, strings, pipe, cymbals all mentioned in Psalm 150, lyre mentioned as one of the strings in 1 Chronicles 25.

[35] Goldingay 2006, 50.

[36] Hence the verse by Kenneth Steven, 'They have all blown away / the ones who knew these hills by name, / who translated the wind, who spoke / the same language as the curlew. (In 'Greshornish', Steven 2019)

[37] Purser 2007, 21-22. This is my own observation, that both call to mind sea or moor birds. I am not aware of literature supporting it, apart from the general comments in Purser 2007, 18-19.

[38] Allan MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2006, 70.

[39] In the Radio 4 programme 'The Sound Odyssey' of 2/10/19, local precentor Calum Martin spoke of the music 'toing and froing' because we are surrounded by the sea, and a participant said, 'You can feel the waves' – cf. Psalm 42:7.

In spite of Psalm 137:4, the Jews did not give up singing, though 'chanting' may be more accurate.[40] Of more than this some say we are ignorant: 'We know as little of the martial tunes to which the Maccabees marched and set their psalms as we do of the songs the Sirens sang. When the Temple fell, instrumental music was banished from the Jewish ritual.'[41] The *Oxford Companion to Music* thinks there may be continuity between plainsong and Jewish 'cantillation': plainsong 'was influenced possibly by the music of the Jewish synagogue'.[42]

4.2.1 Cantor, Choir and Congregation

> Despite abundant evidence that Christians between the first century and the fourth were rethinking some fundamental categories of social and political life in the eastern Mediterranean, they did not wander so far from the heritage of Jewish psalmody in the home, or in the Temple, as to suppose that their gatherings should be without song.[43]

Psalmologos and *Psalmōdos* are the Greek terms both found in ancient Jewish inscriptions for 'worship music leader'.[44] Jewish and Christian worship took centuries to diverge, not least in its music – even in the 380s CE, Chrysostom is denouncing Christians who attend Jewish Passover Festivals.[45] They both sang psalms, and both had song leaders. In Latin, Jerome chose *cantor* in his Bible as the term for Jewish worship song leaders, even though Ambrose in the same period preferred *lector* to *cantor* or *psalmista*. They were speaking about the same function.[46]

For the first thousand years of the Church's life the music used in worship was the unaccompanied melody of plainsong, or Gregorian chant,[47] which one scholar thought to derive from the Jerusalem Temple.[48] The primary intention of the

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[40] *The Passover Haggadah*, Soncino, London 1959, xii, refers to the last hymn of the *seder* being chanted.

[41] Gerald Abrahams, *The Jewish Mind*, Constable, London 1961, 89.

[42] *Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. Percy Scholes, Oxford University Press, London 1938, 737.

[43] Christopher Page, *The Christian West and its Singers*, Yale University Press, London 2010, 2.

[44] Page 2020, 42.

[45] Page 2010, 43.

[46] A document dated c.475 CE has '*Psalmista, id est cantor*' (Page 2010, 215).

[47] Church of England Archbishops' Commission on Church Music, *In Tune with Heaven*, Hodder, London 1992, 25.

[48] Underhill 1962, 104f.

Quire Offices (with the Breviary, for monasteries) was to provide for reading or singing of all psalms in a week.[49] Eight 'tones' (a way of chanting) were used for singing psalms, with a ninth - the *tonus peregrinus*, or 'stranger tone' - associated with Psalm 114 ('When Israel went out of Egypt').[50]

In Scotland worship included psalms sung by a choir, with Psalm 141:2 ('Let my prayer be counted as incense before you') sung three times while the chalice was unveiled.[51] Later, organum, counter-melody and polyphony developed, culminating with the 19 part motet for choral singing composed by Robert Carver.[52] Douglas Gifford and Alan Riach suggest that

> the critical musical development from plainchant to polyphony . . . somehow reflects the emergence of a polyphonic state, a nation whose independence seems characterized by the dialogic disposition of its inhabitants.[53]

That 'dialogic disposition' will be considered later. With the Reformation, music reverted to psalm-singing in unison,[54] but by congregations rather than choirs. The session clerk or reader often acted as cantor or precentor,[55] and after the acceptance of the Westminster *Directory for the Public Worship of God* (1645) the precentor sang (or read) each line of the psalm before the congregation repeated it. Various Psalters were produced over the years, but the 'lining' of psalms continued till the 18th century, and is still practised with Gaelic psalmody today.[56]

A great variety of psalm settings are now available, usually accompanied by the organ, though unaccompanied singing continues in some churches and many

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[49] Miller Patrick, *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody*, OUP London 1949, xiv.

[50] Alec Robertson in J.G. Davies (ed.), *A Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, SCM Press, London 1972, 326.

[51] According to the Stowe Missal (William Maxwell, *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland*, Oxford University Press, London 1955, 16).

[52] M. Dilworth and A.E. Nimmo in Nigel Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1993, 141.

[53] Douglas Gifford and Alan Riach (eds.), *Scotlands, Poets and the Nation*, Carcanet, Manchester 2004, xix.

[54] Bonhoeffer was still rehearsing the same arguments for unison singing in 1939 (in *Life Together*, trans. Doberstein, SCM Press, London 1954, 44).

[55] The Revised English Bible uniquely translates *roʾš* in Nehemiah 11:17 as 'precentor' rather than 'leader'.

[56] Charles Robertson in Cameron 1993, 672.

Roman Catholic congregations make use of a cantor. Traditional Scottish tunes are now used with psalms as with hymns.[57]

4.2.2 Sacred Music and Secular Music

As in Israel, so in Scotland: there was music 'in the temple' and 'outside the temple'. How they related changed from time to time. Before the Reformation, church music was chanted, then gradually adorned with the best of contemporary 'high' music. At the Reformation, such music was banished from worship.[58] The psalms were set to popular tunes (especially the 'Wedderburn Psalms')[59] but over the years the music declined until with the revival of 'classical' music in the 18th century there was a revival of choral settings of the psalms.[60]

Composers have done more than simply provide settings for choirs to sing. Stravinsky said of his *Symphony of Psalms*, 'It is not a symphony in which I have included *Psalms* to be sung. On the contrary, it is the singing of the *Psalms* that I am symphonising.'[61] This is an example of synaesthesia.

In Scotland there were two approaches to what goes on in a church service. One said that only what is found in the Bible may take place, the other that only what is banned in the Bible may not take place. The first, which ignored biblical evidence of accompanied psalm singing, led to singing psalms (only) with voice

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[57] See for example John Bell, *Psalms of Patience, Protest and Praise*, Iona Community, Glasgow 1993, some included in the *Church Hymnary* (4th edition), Canterbury Press, Norwich 2005.

[58] In his *Introduction* to the Genevan Psalter, Calvin (surprisingly) follows Plato in expressing this fear of music distracting people, that 'there is scarcely in the world anything which is more able to turn or bend this way and that the morals of men . . . Therefore we ought to be even more diligent in regulating it in such a way that it shall be useful to us and in no way pernicious' (https://www.ccel.org/ccel/ccel/eee/files/calvinps.htm). Augustine is more positive about music in *Confessions* 9.6.14, and then worries about it again in 10.33.49.

[59] John Bell in *Worship and Liturgy in Context*, SCM Press, London 2009, 259. Some of the tunes came from Louis Bourgeois and the Genevan Psalter (Patrick 1949, 22).

[60] Generally Yuri Bashmet's view has been followed. Age 12, he formed a rock band and became a teenage idol; then he discovered classical music, and said, 'Classical music puts questions to your soul; jazz music only to your brain and body; and pop music only to your body.' (Ian Mackenzie, *Tunes of Glory*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1993, 146)

[61] Citing Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: the Composer and his Works*, University of California Press, Los Angeles and London 1966, 321. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_of_Psalms, accessed 10/10/19. Stravinsky did use Psalms 39:12-13, 40:1-3 and 150.

(only) in church; the second led to hymns, organs, instruments, but (paradoxically) in recent years a decline in psalm singing.[62]

The first approach is compatible with a love of different forms of music, but only if they are practised outside worship.[63] Alexander Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica* bears witness to this,[64] but it is also true that a narrow understanding of calvinism led to a denigration of supposed unholy art forms including fiddle and bagpipes.[65] In England, the Archbishops' report simply recognises difference of opinion on what music is appropriate for worship.[66]

Jeremy Begbie outlines two beliefs which he wishes us to navigate between: a theological imperialism where music becomes simply a gloss for conceptual truths, and a cultural imperialism (he calls it a 'theological aestheticism') in which music itself (typically classical) becomes the way to God.[67] The Psalms themselves hold creation and *Torah* in harmony.[68]

So, how does the practice of making music, whether within or beyond 'the temple', relate to the theme of tartan and how the Psalms were used and understood?

4.2.3 Pibroch, Tartan and Psalms

There is a ninth CE Frankish volume of music theory compiled by Aurelian, *Musica Disciplina,* which among other things instructs the cantor on how to relate the text and its meaning to the move from verse to antiphon in singing a psalm.[69] This may be the first hint of how a text might relate to the texture of a

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[62] Jock Stein, *Singing a New Song*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1988, 5.

[63] John Knox sometimes played the fiddle at wedding celebrations.

[64] Floris Books, Edinburgh 1992.

[65] For example, when the evangelist Duncan Campbell was converted he felt he should give up playing the pipes (Andrew Woolsey, *Duncan Campbell: a Biography*, Hodder and the Faith Mission, London 1974, 38).

[66] *In Tune with Heaven* 1992, 37. 'Psalms' only feature in two short sections of the report, and the word is not indexed.

[67] Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, SPCK, London 2008, 21-2.

[68] As in Psalm 19.

[69] Cited by Page 2010, 353-4. The issue of how far 'pagan music' can be used in worship crops up in this 4th CE literature (Page 2010, 94) as well as in reverse in the book of Daniel chapter 3.

tune, something John Purser develops in an article on musical structures.[70] John MacLeod of Inverness analysed a pibroch in terms of 'lines of poetry'.[71]

This is synaesthesia. Purser refers to the famous blind piper, Iain Dall MacKay, and how Maoilios Caimbeul wrote of him:

> Chitheadh tu le do sprùdan
> ged a bha do shùilean gun sholas
> bu mhòr na dealbhan bhiodh a' dannsa
> nuair dhòrtadh meall den cheòl bhod chorraig.
>
> *You had digital vision although your eyes were dark: many's the picture would dance when a shower of music would pour from your fingers.*[72]

Many Highland pipers believed their instrument could actually speak and that pibroch is an extension of the tales told by bards to remember the clan's history.[73] Seumus MacNeill held that the sound of the bagpipes expertly played is like a human voice singing with great emotional and psychological content.[74] Martin Schröder links the pibroch tradition with the Psalms in an unpublished thesis, and illustrates this from 'Gaelic Psalm Tune'[75] by the band Capercaillie and 'The Highest Apple' by Runrig.[76]

Another approach to synaesthesia comes in Bible texts: Psalm 146:8 says the eyes of the blind will be opened, and Psalm 142:1 says 'with my voice I cry to the Lord', which is what the blind man of Luke 18:38-39 does in hope that Jesus will give him back his sight. Psalms 146 and 147 both echo the words of Isaiah, that the Lord gathers the outcasts and sets prisoners free, words picked up in

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[70] Purser's English version of the fuller Gaelic article in *Rannsachadh na Gaidhlig* 8, 1-16.

[71] Kirsty Gunn, *The Big Music*, Faber and Faber, London 2012, 241.

[72] M. Caimbeul, 'Am Pìobaire Dall', *Breac-a'-Mhuiltein*, Coiscéim, Dublin 2007, p.296.

[73] Gunn 2012, 196, 442.

[74] Seumus MacNeill, *Piobaireachd: Classical Music of the Highland Bagpipe*, cited in Gunn 2012, 284.

[75] The piece is synthesised to incorporate the first two verses of Psalm 46 sung in Gaelic, and the band say they aim to create 'space for the praise of God' (Martin Schröder, *Transforming Tradition: Gaelic Psalms in the work of Capercaillie and Runrig*, Rostock University of Music and Drama, 2015, 11).

[76] Schröder 2015, 3.

the ‘messianic manifesto’ of Luke 4:18 which includes ‘recovery of sight to the blind’.

84 ‘The Highways to Zion’ picks up the ambiguity of the Hebrew *tsippôr*[77] and what sounds might feature in its third stanza:

> I am a bird, so flexible in flight:
> I swoop, I coo, I twitter, could be
> swallow, pigeon, sparrow, as I wheel
> around those temple courts, to see
> if I can find a holy nesting site.

That is another example of synaesthesia, the interweaving of sight and sound that a poet often pursues.[78] It can be regarded as a correlate of Psalm 139:13, which refers to the human person as woven or knitted together.[79] Purser illustrates the concept with a poem by Norman MacCaig, who ‘crossed the boundaries of music and geology’ to link the ‘melliflous din of *canntaireachd*’[80] with the ‘sandstone chord’ of Suilven:

> I listen with my eyes and see through that
> Mellifluous din of shapes my masterpiece
> Of masterpieces:
> One sandstone chord that holds up time in space
> Sforzando Suilven reared on his ground bass.[81]

Purser explores the link further with the pibroch song poem ‘*Moladh Beinn Dorain’*.[82] MacDiarmid himself wrote ‘Lament for the Great Music’, which

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[77] Although usually translated ‘sparrow’ because it is an onomatopoeic tweeting sound; see Goldingay 2007, 590.

[78] In *118 ‘Space Temple’* I link art and architecture with poetry, thinking of Blake’s Annotations to Laocoon, and how he said that the man who is not a musician, an artist or an architect cannot be a Christian - *Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, (ed.) David V. Erdman, Doubleday, New York 1998, 274.

[79] Proverbs 19:17 is more specific: ‘The hearing ear, the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both.’

[80] Pibroch music sung as vocables in order to memorise it and pass it on. See Francis Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1975, 157.

[81] Norman MacCaig, ‘Moment Musical in Assynt’, *Collected Poems*, 201, Birlinn, Edinburgh 2010 (originally in *The White Bird*, London 1973).

[82] This poem, like my own ‘*The Iolaire*’, repeats the Ground in the middle of the poem – something done by older pibroch players, but no longer in contemporary playing (Gunn 2010, 195).

'attempts to emulate in verse the open-ended, yet formally disciplined, improvisatory quality of the pibroch'.[83]

My own attempt to link pibroch and psalms in a modern poem comes with Book 4 poetry, '*The Iolaire*': in '*Taorluath Doubling: Downhill*'. I occupy Suilven to contemplate Psalms 98 - 100, psalms placed and possibly written after the disaster of Jewish exile:

> 'If I were on skis,' she said, astride
> of Suilven, 'I'd be away, downhill,
> skimming scree and stretching time
> for you to see things differently. I would
> awaken Moses, shake him, get right through
> to God: howl, groan, gasp, spit
> your prayers, real and raw as juniper.
> I'd breathe on Samuel, make him once again
> a child, living in the Scottish temple
> garden for you, hearing something new.'

Purser gives other examples, such as 'Tuis Pater' from the *Inchcolm Antiphoner* (c.1300) where 'the musical structure makes cross-currents with the poetic structure'. Then he introduces weaving, with a 1749 poem (English translation below) possibly by Lachlann MacMhuirich:

> I'm a weaver already
> who weaves very splendid poems;
> since my careful tutor left
> I should weave every poem he warped.[84]

Purser describes the pibroch as a 'woven structure'. Before the music was written with Western stave and bar notation, it was written and memorised with the *canntaireachd* vocables,[85] which are themselves a woven structure, like the *Inchcolm Antiphoner*. Purser cites General Thomason, who studied pibroch and concluded that each one was 'the music of a poem'.[86]

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[83] Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid*, John Murray, London 1988, 307. Bold points out that the poem is consciously neoplatonic, not theistic (page 310).

[84] 'Figheadóir Mise' in Ronald Black (ed.) *An Lasair*, Birlinn, Edinburgh 2001, 200-201.

[85] See Gunn 2010, 184, 196.

[86] C.S. Thomason, *Ceol Mor Notation*, East Indies 1893 and East Ardsley 1975, v and viii, cited in Purser, *Rannsachadh na Gaidhlig* 8.

In this article Purser relates texture of music to text, and through the metaphor of weaving, to textiles like tartan. Andean traditional flute music, also transmitted orally, makes a direct parallel between music and textile.[87] He also refers to the proposal that interlace patterns in early mediaeval manuscripts and stone-carving may represent a kind of musical notation, as another possible example of linking, for example having a melody associated with the opening letter of a manuscript Latin psalm.

119 'Fair and Square' also refers to this kind of link as a paradox of spiritual presence:

> No life complete without God's art and music
> hidden in our sober prose, artless, silent.

In Psalm 119, the art and music of a numerical pattern is woven into the sequence of stanzas as they work through the Hebrew alphabet, painting the prosaic subject of *Torah* in a palette of different colours, inviting us to sing the praise of God's teaching in a sequence of different tunes.

4.3 The Caledonian Antisyzygy - Contradiction

> Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919) invented [the term], but Hugh MacDiarmid applied it to current European thinking, and said that the Caledonian Antisyzygy was 'the great characteristic of Scottish literature.'[88]

It has been a way of isolating a kind of antinomy thought to be peculiar to Scotland, that yoking of opposites

> delightedly accepted by MacDiarmid as both a true diagnosis of a basic element in Scottish character and literature and a clue to his own work. If we seek for MacDiarmid's concern for the divine, it will often be found in his counterpointing of the coorse and the cosmic.[89]

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[87] Citing Urszula Jorasz, as mediated by Anna Gruszczynska-Ziólkowska, *Detrás del silencio – La música en la cultura Nasca*, Lima 2013, especially 173-177.

[88] 'A Theory of Scots Letters', Scottish Chapbook 1 no 7 (Feb 1923), 182, cited by Kenneth Buthlay introducing *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1987, xxiv.

[89] Daiches 1984, 213. In an earlier book, Daiches spoke of 'the co-existence of a belief in individual freedom and extreme intolerance [which] meets us at every turn in Scottish ecclesiastical history' (David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture*, Oxford University Press, London 1964, 41).

In 'A Drunk Man look at the Thistle', high national aspirations are yoked to 'a mere weed',[90] as in:

> . . .The thistle rises and forever will,
> Getherin' the generations under't.
> This is the monument o' a' they were,
> And a' they hoped and wondered. (lines 2231-5)

However, the thistle is a gravestone as well as a symbol of hope.[91] Of course, living with opposites can induce paralysis, as caricatured by William Soutar in 'The Philosophic Taed':

> There was a taed
> wha thocht sae lang
> on sanctity and sin;
> on what was richt, and what was wrang,
> and what was in atween –
> that he gat naething dune.[92]

That may be the Greek inheritance, but the Hebrew way of antinomy calls for obedience (Psalm 1), even if a Scottish take on Psalm 26 in *26 'Aye Right'* suggests something else. MacDiarmid was in that sense thoroughly Hebrew:

> A Scottish poet maun assume
> The burden o' his people's doom,
> And dee to brak' their livin' tomb. (lines 2638-40)

MacDiarmid was following the Jewish model of Jeremiah, who used the same language as Psalm 1,[93] yet also prophesied the disaster of Psalms 74 and 79.[94] And without resurrection:

> Mony ha'e tried, but a' ha'e failed.
> Their sacrifice has nocht availed.
> Upon the thistle they're impaled. (lines 2641-3)

> You maun choose but gin ye'd see
> Anither category ye
> Maun tine your nationality. (lines 2644-6)

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[90] Buthlay 1987, xxvi.

[91] It is more of course – a typical MacDiarmid juxtaposition of the penis as the coorse and the national emblem as sublime (rather than divine, perhaps).

[92] W.R. Aitken (ed.), *The Poems of William Soutar*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1988, 153.

[93] Not only in his warnings to Israel, but in his going with the remnant to Egypt, knowing it would lead to death (Jeremiah 42 and 43).

[94] Jeremiah 17:7-8; Jeremiah 7:3 and 5:15-17.

In other words, there is no escape from the antisyzygy. It belongs to the 'great wheel' of fate, although MacDiarmid is able to add:

> And blessin' on the weary wheel
> Whaurever it may land them! (lines 2653-4)

While MacDiarmid spoke of the 'routh / O' contrairies that jostle in their dumfoondrin' growth' (lines 1111-2), the Psalms allow extremes to nestle together even within the same psalm, protecting paradox as a necessary fact of life, as in Psalm 23, and the opening of *23 'Shepherd Sonnet'*:

> Contradictions, with a sudden dark
> to overtake our cosiness, our rosy
> hopes. The unexpected snakes devour
> these flimsy ladders that we pick and park
> for quick ascents to happiness . . .

The extremes may not always clash. Jonathan Faiers describes how in a kilt

> The optical recession and dominance of certain colours results in a visual ambiguity that can produce an oscillation between what the viewer registers as under-check or over-check of a particular tartan.[95]

Like a kilt presenting different tones within the same video, the extremes may give us complementary views of God and of humanity, as in the MacNeice epigraph cited in 1.4: 'We jump from picture to picture, and cannot follow / the living curve that is breathlessly the same', and in Psalm 13 where God both hides his face and deals bountifully within six verses.

Not only that, the Psalms can help people to lament in dark times and celebrate in good times, without intellectual embarrassment. Lament has often been neglected. David Smith, a Scot writing for world Christianity, cites Psalm 79:2-3 to focus attention on the terrible impact of ancient and modern warfare, and Psalm 74 for the spiritual consequences of these disasters which affect so many in the contemporary world.[96] He adds that Job and Lamentations in the OT parallel the distinction between personal and communal lament in the Psalms.[97]

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[95] Faiers 2008, 15.

[96] David Smith, *Stumbling Towards Zion*, Langholm Global Library, Carlisle 2020, 18.

[97] Smith 2020, 17.

The term 'Caledonian Antisyzygy' was coined to express something of Scottish character which chimes with the OT prophets, a dour sense of responsibility to keep telling truth to power even when times change:

> For I am like Zamyatin. I must be a Bolshevik
> Before the Revolution, but I'll cease to be one quick
> When Communism comes to rule the roost.[98]

That made MacDiarmid a rebel all his life. Nor was he content to remain simply an observer - according to Alan Riach, MacDiarmid distinguished 'critical realism' (depict present evils and make the best of them) and 'Socialist realism' (concentrate on the germ of transformation): 'Transformation is as central to MacDiarmid's work as contradiction'.[99]

It is not easy to correlate the history of tartanry in Scotland with social transformation. Tartan was proscribed after the failure of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745,[100] and it was only after that time that the Union of 1707 looked secure.[101] The revival of tartanry may have been symbolic of a continuing sense of Scottish identity, but was hardly a determining factor. Even with the Romantic Gothic revival of the 1820s it remained more a Highland (and a Scottish Regimental) interest, and arguably of more significance to Scots overseas than at home.[102] In the 20th century it was associated with the 'kailyard' tradition,[103] though MacDiarmid could wear a kilt when it suited him.[104] But with the decline of home weaving it became too expensive an item for many

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[98] MacDiarmid in 'Talking with Five Thousand People in Edinburgh', *Poetry Scotland* 2 (1945), 50, cited in Ann Boutelle, *Thistle and Rose*, Bucknell University Press, Lewisberg 1980.

[99] Alan Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1991, 12.

[100] In the disarming act of 1746, operating till 1782 – Brown 2010, 6, as well as Cheape cited in footnote 7 above.

[101] Tom Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, Penguin, London 2012, 31f. Devine argues that the Union was crucial to the economic benefits which in turn swayed Scottish opinion in the end (page 59), while Neil Davidson, *Discovering the Scottish Revolution 1692-1746*, Pluto Press, London 2003, argues that the defeat of the Jacobites was more important.

[102] Brown 2010, 66-71.

[103] Brown 2010, 9 says this was a mistaken view, and in my lifetime I have observed tartan become mainstream.

[104] Bold 1988, 344. But in the 1928 photo of the founders of the National Party of Scotland, no one is wearing tartan (Brown 2010, 117).

families, until it was rediscovered in the 21st century as fashionable dress for special occasions.[105]

Tartan remains a popular symbol of identity, though much more today of Scottish than clan identity. For this Thesis, it is a metaphor for the weaving of different strands in the Psalms and in Scottish poetry, both as contradiction and as synthesis.

4.4 Suspicion, Trust, Subversion - Resistance

Faiers describes tartan as 'a textile of contradiction, simultaneously . . . traditional and rebellious.'[106] By contrast the Psalms appear at first sight traditional, the prayer book of Jews and Christians. They do not include the subversive irony of other books in the 'Writings', like Ecclesiastes and Job.[107] But if you allow their questioning of God, their situation and themselves to be called a suspicion that faith might be other than just 'simple trust', then you find a series of texts that subvert the 'religion' not only of Israel but of Israel's enemies.[108]

Section 2.3 noted a historical shift from a hermeneutic of trust, typical of the European approach to the Bible up to the end of the 18th CE, to a hermeneutic of suspicion fed equally by the rise of 'modern' textual criticism and 'postmodern' literary criticism. The current climate is different again, embracing a wide variety of perspectives within the 'methodological pluralism' that William Bellinger noted in his study of Psalm 61.[109] Narrative criticism is trusting, takes the text as it is, and is broadly sympathetic to Ricoeur's dictum, 'Beyond the desert of criticism, we wish to be called again.'[110] It is when we return to trusting the text that we allow it proper effect, when it may turn out to be

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[105] Brown 2010, 83-86.

[106] Faiers 2008, 175.

[107] Edwin Good considers six books, including two among the 'Writings', but not the Psalms, in *Irony in the Old Testament*, Almond Press, Sheffield 1981. However my *2 'Irony Redeemed'* does posit irony in Psalm 2.

[108] That is to say, a critique of false Israelite religion could not help also be a critique of religion generally.

[109] W.H. Bellinger jr, *A Hermeneutic of Curiosity*, Mercer University Press, Macon GA 1995, 6.

[110] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Beacon Press, Boston 1967., 349, cited in Provan 2017, 549.

subversive. So we look at six psalms and their accompanying poems in this section.

4.4.1 Psalm 12 What God says may be subversive

In this psalm, humankind has lost faith. Truth has given way to lies, godliness to flattery. But God's promises are pure, and will guard us when the wicked prowl around us. The latter twist words for their own purposes, and the psalmist uses the word *šāwʾ* (deception) instead of *šeqer* (lies), contrasted with the *tāhôr* (flawless) words of Yhwh.[111] The poor long for safety, and God promises this to them, subverting the oppression of those who claim to own the poor as well as their own lips.

12 'Watch God's Lips' invites us to be suspicious of flattery, deconstruct speech into those two inclinations, good and evil, those 'two rivers from Eden coursing the human race'. There is a synaesthesia in the poem, as we watch God's lips. Yet although the psalm wants God to 'cut off' flattering lips, the poem subverts even that simple judgment, since what God says 'makes one, never zero' – in contrast to the 'double heart' of the flatterers (v. 2).

4.4.2 Psalm 112 Goodness and generosity may be subversive

This is an alphabetical psalm, which is deceptively straightforward, as if it was a wisdom psalm like Psalm 1. This psalm affirms that goodness and generosity bless giver as well as receiver, but then in contrast to psalms of complaint, it affirms that such behaviour subverts the position of the wicked, who 'melt away' (v. 10).

112 'Wealth and Poverty' is suspicious of a psalm which seems to preach a 'prosperity gospel', like many right-wing regimes. The epigraph hints that great men are greedy and grasping, and that wealth – even with the generosity of Andrew Carnegie - should be scrutinised. But the poem finally acknowledges that revolutions which seek to overturn the wealthy and powerful in the name of justice often turn sour – and that sometimes, just sometimes, 'some incorrect aristocrat has made this psalm his very own'. We should allow our own suspicion

[111] Wilson 2002, 267.

of the generosity of the wealthy to be subverted, along with our ideas of what is politically correct.

4.4.3 Psalm 73 Seeing afresh may be subversive

V. 1 affirms that God is good to Israel,[112] just like Psalm 37. But a look at how the wicked prosper seems to give that the lie, subverting that other psalm – until 'Asaph' goes 'into the temple', perhaps even the ruined temple after the exile (thinking of Psalm 74 which follows) – and then he sees things afresh, sees things as they really are, as if he had awakened from a bad dream. A double subversion![113]

73 'Open Questions' picks up how the photo of the drowned toddler Alan Kurdi[114] changed how the public perceived the refugee crisis, 'changing migrant / cockroaches to human casualties in hours'. As in the psalm, when we see things or people in a new way, our wrong ideas are subverted. 'What doors / can open through a body on a reef.' Poetry preserves an idea or an image[115] which other media may lose as they pass on to another day's news.

4.4.4 Psalm 141 Prayer itself may be subversive

The psalmists, in common with all orthodox monotheist religion, believe that prayer does something beyond the individual praying, however helpful prayer may be for such a person.[116] In this psalm, prayer is directed against the evil deeds of the wicked (v. 5c). Whether the MT or the LXX should be taken for v. 5b, the context is clear from v. 4, no feasting with the ungodly; instead, pray against their actions – with the hope (v. 6) that they will come to see how delightful the psalmist's words really were. This is rare in the Psalms (7:9 being

[112] Modern versions like the NRSV emend the text, without good reason, to read 'God is good to the upright' – see for example Davidson 1998, 232.

[113] Hugh Pyper notes how Psalm 73 subverts 37, but does not go so far as citing the double subversion (*The Unchained Bible*, Bloomsbury, London 2012, 22).

[114] Aylan, but his family ask for him to be known as Alan.

[115] Cf. the function of the poet in 5.1.

[116] I.e. God pays attention to prayer, Psalm 141:1.

another example) – usually prayer is directed simply against the ungodly and wicked.

It would be convenient to think those 'words' refer to the prayer itself, congruent with Proverbs 25:21-22 and the NT command to pray for those who treat you badly (Matthew 5:4) - it is more likely that the psalmist is just wanting to escape any bad consequences for himself. But in any case, his hope is to subvert the evil intentions of the wicked.

The first stanza of *141 'Fire'* concerns the fire of praying with love to God,[117] the second stanza about praying with love to others:

> Every day cross stitches lose their place and purpose,
> need unwinding in a faithful strike of love,
> for modern tapestry's a multi-coloured fellow
> learning how to pray good in, and evil out.

The 'strike of love' refers in the first instance to v. 5a of the psalm, when the psalmist may need correcting by the righteous - but then to v. 5d, when he strikes the wicked in prayer, one aspect of the more general 'pray good in, and evil out'.

The poem sets this strike of love in the wider context of life as a 'trail of tapestry' with three different kinds of stitch. It is suspicious of the poet's own progress ('fitful craft', 'cross stitches', 'my own gaucheness'), but trusts that such weakness will in turn be subverted by 'some warp threads simulating God'.

4.4.5 Psalm 88 Submission may be subversive

This psalm is darker than even the seven penitential psalms.[118] The writer is shut in, isolated, in the depths of the Pit, under the wrath of a God who has hidden his face.[119] The subversive thing about the psalm is this: he keeps praying,

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[117] See the reference in 4.2.1.

[118] 6, 32, 38, 51,102, 130, 143.

[119] For a theological analysis of the meaning of 'Pit', see Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 3/2, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1960, 590.

probably because he sees God, not bad luck, as responsible for his plight.[120] And God is still 'God of my salvation' (v. 1)

I based *88 'The Torture of the Pit'* upon the story of Christovao Ferreira, the Jesuit who apostasised to save his Japanese fellow believers from torture.[121] Ferreira had lost even the grain of hope expressed in the psalm in a 'God of salvation' – at least the salvation from torture and death of his fellows. So he subverted his own faith, made total submission in order to save them.

It is of course a story at odds with Jewish tradition, which commends the mother who witnessed the martyrdom of her seven sons, who are tortured and killed by Antiochus Epiphanes for refusing to bow down to idols.[122] It is controversial to subvert something regarded as noble and nation-building.

4.4.6 Psalm 139 Poetry may be subversive

> 'God is the poetry caught in any religion,
> caught, not imprisoned'[123]

Les Murray's aphorism not only gives a view of God and religion, but valorises poetry as a powerful tool for shaping new ideas of God. At first sight, Psalm 139 appears to be a psalm of total trust in a God who has formed the poet in the womb and accompanied her everywhere throughout her life. But in her imagination, the poet has visited sea as well as land, darkness as well as light – places that traditional Israelite thought did not associate with God's favour.[124]

Psalm 139:12 subverts our ideas of darkness:

> Even the darkness is not dark to you;
> the night is bright as the day,

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[120] While this psalm is not attributed to David, David illustrates the attitude of believing Israelites in 2 Samuel 24:14, when he has to choose between three punishments: one involving nature, one involving enemies, one involving a plague strike from God. He chooses the third, because God can change his mind (as God does, before the people of Jerusalem die along with others).

[121] Shusaku Endu, *Silence*, Peter Owen, London 1969.

[122] See 2 Maccabees 7.

[123] Les Murray, 'Poetry and Religion' in *The Daylight Moon*, Carcanet, Manchester 1988, 51.

[124] Cf. Psalm 107:10, 25 and Davidson 1998, 356.

for darkness is as light to you.[125]

But the Psalm does more than this. By stressing the presence of God everywhere, even in the dark, it suggests that temple and tartan, religion and nation, are not ultimate categories.[126]

Genesis 1, Psalms like 8 and 19, and Psalm 139 in its own way subvert the ANE view of cosmic powers. They 'demyth the myth'.[127] And when subversion does its work,[128] and times change, threatening bodies like sun and moon lose their pagan power, and become mere ornaments in a poem:

> The icy haar o Lochnagar,
> Dreid ongauns smored in secrecy.
> Noo, aa is mild as mither's milk
> The meen's bit cosmic jewelry.[129]

[125] Ironically, in contrast to the straightforward sense of darkness in Job 10:21-22, that famously subversive book.

[126] The NT does the same thing with Revelation 21:22: 'I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God . . .'

[127] George Knight, *Theology in Pictures*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1981, xii.

[128] An example in Scottish writing would be James Hogg, *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. Garside, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2001, where Hogg subverts the power of religious fanaticism by associating it with psychological mania. The writer spins a tale in order to subvert, to change ideas.

[129] From Sheena Blackhall, 'Millennium Blues', in *Millennium Blues*, Hammerfield Publishing, Aberdeen 1999.

Chapter 5 The Psalms and Scottish History – the Poet as Curator

> 'If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
> let my right hand wither!' (Psalm 137:5)

In this chapter I discuss another role of the poet, curator; and from three earlier periods (early Scotland, medieval Scotland, reformation Scotland) focus on the themes of character, rule and equality, and how they refer to the Psalms. From this point the Thesis looks at connections between issues and periods which may not have been made before.

Gordon Donaldson wrote in 1990,

> With all the information that ultimately becomes available, it may still be impossible to form a complete and coherent picture of what Scots believed and what effect their faith had on their actions.[1]

Even when a protagonist quotes the Bible as a reason for his or her actions, what motivates individuals is always complex, and history more so.[2] And seldom would it be a psalm that is quoted – though some examples will be given – so this chapter will not claim any direct cause and effect in these sampled periods of Scottish history. In this respect, Scotland does not show anything quite like the *pesher* of the Qumran Communities who saw the Psalms being fulfilled in the events of their own time.[3] Yet the section on Medieval Scotland will show the importance of remembering, which is how identity was celebrated at Qumran, where many authors cited psalms like 78, 105, 106, 114, 135, 136.[4]

5.1 Preserving and Presenting

The poet is seldom also a preacher, but because biblical preaching uses the past, preachers share the role of curator. There has been a vast amount of preaching

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[1] Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, Batsford, London 1990, 13.

[2] Here Donaldson cites Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 1, 240.

[3] Gillingham 2008, 10. While a preacher like Alexander Henderson in 1638 could use Psalm 110:3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power', to encourage people to sign the National Covenant, this is a rather different kind of prophetic use (Alexander Henderson, *Sermons, Prayers and Pulpit Addresses*, ed. Thomas Martin orig. 1638, John Maclaren, Edinburgh 1867).

[4] George J. Brooke in Pajunen and Penner 2017, 308-9.

on the Psalms, and study of the Psalms in private and in universities, seminaries and schools, in both Jewish and Christian contexts – and certainly in Scotland. The psalms have been sung intensively, in a variety of translations and versions – before the Reformation mainly by priests and religious orders, then more widely afterwards[5] – but there has been a limited amount of poetry based on the psalms themselves.

It has been said that poetry helps us put into words things we have nearly forgotten; poetry as curation also has the task of reminding us of things we might otherwise forget, preserving memories that the historian might miss, becoming 'an antenna capturing the voices of the world'.[6] But voices captured take on the inflection of the choirmaster.

5.1.1 A Choice of Angles

In early Scottish writing, whether by poet or chronicler, it was accepted practice that in preserving stories of the past you would present them in a certain way.[7] The poet today, like the curator of a museum, no matter how fairly she wishes to preserve the past, will have to make her own choices and accept that she has an agenda. That said, any kind of history of Scotland must reckon on the way Scottish believers have seen the OT as a model for the life of other nations,[8] so that the history of Israel is full of lessons for Scotland in any age.[9]

The poetry of the Psalms presents the history of Israel as the story of God's work in that history, whether it is the mistakes of Israel that are on display, as in

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[5] 'The Psalms have rung through Scottish religious life for centuries, sung in the monasteries in Latin, sung in translation in kirks and on hillsides in the post-Reformation and covenanting years' (Bateman *et al*. 2000, xviii).

[6] Polish poet Anna Swir, cited in Heaney 1988, 93.

[7] 'The biographer of a saint had . . . to prove the sanctity of the person whose life he wrote' (Adomnan, *Life of Columba*, trans. Alan Orr Anderson, ed. Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, Thomas Nelson, Edinburgh 1961, 18). John Barbour wrote his poem *The Bruce* long after Bannockburn, to celebrate the battle: although Barrow regards him as 'more of a biographer than a romancer', he admits that Barbour reduced the number of Scots to one third of the English army to punt the prowess of his king – G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2013 (first edition 1965), 272-3.

[8] See the section 'Israel and Scotland' in Chapter 6 of the thesis.

[9] With Knox, 'the vision of a Christian nation . . . would be realised in Scotland through the preaching of the Word of God and through national examples drawn from Israel's history . . .' (William Storrar, *Scottish Identity*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1990, 28).

Psalm 78, or the survival and blessing of the nation, as in Psalm 105. Sometimes that survival is in question, as in Psalm 74, or acutely in Psalm 83:4, where 'They say, "Come, let us wipe them out as a nation / let the name of Israel be remembered no more".' *Poem 83* features anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, but *74* goes further in considering *'Identity Theft'*, and *31 'Holocaust Denial'* is based on Psalm 31:12, 'I have passed out of mind like one who is dead'.

Particular events, with their religious claims, can be airbrushed from history. A modern example is noted in *14 'Tuim-heidit'*. It uses Psalm 14:1, where 'Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God".' The poem asks why in the recent film *The Darkest Hour* there was no mention of King George VI calling the nation to prayer,[10] churches being filled with people in a way inconceivable to millennials today, and links that to the popular idea that science has disproved God.[11]

Donald Davie quotes André Malraux: 'In his library of art books or of long-playing gramophone records, the modern artist has an imaginary museum . . . more comprehensive and convenient' than any museum or gallery. Davie goes on to say that since the invention of printing, 'poetry has had [500] years of such an inhabitation'.[12] But nowadays the poet has too many mythologies to choose from, nothing to tell him which of all the galleries in the imaginary museum he should frequent,[13] and the film script-writer likewise may choose a secular mythology even though it subverts beliefs widely held in the time of the film.

5.1.2 Key Events

Museums change their displays for big events, and after the biggest events. Two such are the Union of Parliaments in 1707 and the (re)opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999.

Iain Crichton Smith was careful to write, 'Let our three-voiced country sing in a new world' for the opening of the Scottish Parliament, whereas a century

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[10] Exactly the same point could be made about the film *Dunkirk*.

[11] As popularised in the writing of Richard Dawkins, for example, *The God Delusion*, Bantam, London 2006.

[12] Donald Davie, *The Poet in the Imaginary Museum*, Carcanet, Manchester 1977 (orig. 1950), 45-6.

[13] Davie 1977, 53.

earlier, Scots and even Gaelic were not taken very seriously as literary tongues.[14] Religion is a strong feature of Gaelic literature, where pre-Christian beliefs are found alongside the religion of the Psalms.[15] It is still present in Scots literature, though less than in the past.[16]

In his Introduction to *The Faber Book of Twentieth-century Scottish Poetry*, Dunn discusses MacDiarmid's attack on T.S. Eliot, who dismissed Scottish literature as 'provincial'. MacDiarmid wanted more than Stevenson's 'strong Scotch accent of the mind'. He meant that

> the poet was obliged to remake Scottish poetry on the basis of a pre-1707 mentality. That is, write as if history had never happened; or write in such a way that history would be rewritten, and unknitted, in the work.[17]

MacDiarmid is recognising that key events in the history of a nation change the mentality of writers. This is certainly evident in Psalms like 137 which reflect the experience of exile, and in poetry written after the Holocaust, like David Curzon's poem on Psalm 1:

> Blessed is the man not born
> at Lodz in the wrong decade,
> *who walks not* in tree-lined shade
> like my father's father in this photo, nor
> *stands in the way of sinners* waiting for
> his yellow star,
> *nor sits*, if he could sit, in their cattle car,
>
> *but his delight* is being born
> as I was, in Australia, far away,
> *and on God's law he meditates night and day.*[18]

78 'Israel – a Melting Shop' presents the fire of suffering as the OT presents it, as part of the mystery of God's providence in judgment - Egypt as a refining

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[14] Atina Nihtinen, 'Scotland's Linguistic Past and Present: Paradoxes and Consequences', Studia *Celtica Fennica* 2, Jan. 2005, 118-121.

[15] See for example Kenneth MacLeod, *The Road to the Isles*, Grant and Murray, Edinburgh 1927, Carmichael 1992, as well as Bateman *et al*. 2000. The decline and 21st century revitalisation of Gaelic is discussed in McLeod and Newton 2019, 546f.

[16] See 2.6.

[17] Douglas Dunn (ed.), *Faber Book of Twentieth-century Scottish Poetry*, Faber and Faber, London 1992, xviii and xxi. MacDiarmid was 'trying to make a nation as well as poetry'.

[18] Curzon 1994, 271.

blast furnace,[19] the wilderness troubles (a feature of Psalm 78) as discipline,[20] the experience of exile as purification from idolatry.[21] Poems like Curzon's question the rationality of good and evil,[22] unlike the OT;[23] but the 'Writings' of the OT still present a choice of how to respond to cataclysmic events like the Holocaust, or lesser but significant changes in the evolving history of Scotland – the cynicism of Ecclesiastes, the despair and smidgin of hope in Lamentations, the godlessness of Esther, the protest of Job, the anger of the Psalms.

MacDiarmid claimed, 'There lie hidden in language elements that effectively combined / can utterly change the nature of man'.[24] The language of the Psalms is held by many to display this.[25] Out of the history and religion of the OT, the Psalms offer a particular kind of devotion and questioning which has proved transferable to countries like Scotland. The following examples will show:

> (a) that knowledge of the Psalms, through study and regular singing, shaped the spirituality of Scots and therefore may have opened some doors, and closed others, to the outcome of events which took place.[26]
>
> (b) that the Psalms themselves, and other poetry written on them, including the Presentation poetry, can shed unexpected light on the people and periods in question.

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[19] Deuteronomy 4:20, 1 Kings 8:51. The image is repeated with regard to Jerusalem before the exile in Ezekiel 22:17-22.

[20] Deuteronomy 8:1-5.

[21] Ezekiel 36:25. After the return from exile there is no mention of idolatry, apart from Zechariah 13:2 which is (like Ezekiel) a promise that idols will be no more.

[22] The poem ends: '*And the way of the righteous* is Abel's, / whose slaughtered lambs God chose to choose / and who was murdered anyway.'

[23] While evil human actions are condemned throughout the OT, there is also the presupposition that good and evil outcomes are both from God (Lamentations 3:38), along with a warning not to confuse good and evil (Isaiah 5:20).

[24] Hugh MacDiarmid, *In Memoriam James Joyce, A Vision of World Language*, William MacLellan, Glasgow 1956, 55.

[25] As shown by Prothero 1903, and, for example, by one of his sources, John Ker, *The Psalms in History and Biography*, Andrew Elliot, Edinburgh 1886, Preface. More recently, William Holladay wrote, 'The book of Psalms has held a unique place in the lives of both Christians and Jews' (Holladay 1996, 1).

[26] The 18th century Seceding pastor, John Brown of Haddington, wrote a liturgical manual for psalm-singing called *The Psalms of David in Metre with Notes* (1775) which annotates the metrical psalms of the Scottish Psalter (1650) and calls for them to be sung ***as a spiritually transformative act of Christian worship*** (Shelley Sanders Zuckerman, *Drew University Thesis* of 2005, abstract, my emphasis). His Kirk Session meetings consisted largely of prayer and the singing of psalms – J. Croumbie Brown (ed.), *Centenary Memorial of Rev. John Brown: A Family Record,* Andrew Eliot, Edinburgh 1887.

5.2 Early Scotland – Character

'Early Scotland' is used for the period of Columba (c. 521-597), those like Ninian and Kentigern who preceded him, and the time afterwards before the Viking invasions - the fifth to the eighth centuries. It is a less confusing term than 'Celtic Scotland'.[27] There is not so much evidence for what happened in the ninth and tenth centuries, mainly because of Viking depravation.[28]

In this period, does Scotland have a *sonderweg*, a 'special path'?

> I suppose the ideal should be that four symbolic figures – Caesar (action), Livy (right), Ovid (myth and sex), Christ (pity and anger) – exist in a symbolic balance, and it may be that Celtic Scotland's patterns and prayers were a *sonderweg* of an extraordinary people of great imaginative resilience.[29]

Christopher Harvie is suggesting that Scotland's character holds different features in balance, even if it would be hard to trace all these particular Roman links. He introduces them as symbols, and of course some of these features are common to most ancient literature, and certainly to writing about Columba.

There is an 8th CE prayer poem from the Columban School, blessing John the Baptist, which has these connections. It begins with the 'fear and fire' of lightning, and ends: 'The flame of God's love dwells in my heart / as a jewel of gold is placed in a silver dish.'[30] It also refers to 'the summits [*culmina*] of heaven', which reflects verses like Psalm 48:1.[31]

There is a Latin hymn attributed to Columba, *Altus Prosator*, which has an abecedarian structure.[32] The translation by Edwin Morgan retains its rhyming

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[27] 'Celtic' is now a word too widely used and misused to be useful – see Donald Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 2000, chapter 1.

[28] Bradley 1999, 39.

[29] Professor Christopher Harvie, in a letter to the writer of 3/6/18.

[30] Bateman *et al.* 2000, 27.

[31] That psalm goes on to link Mount Zion with the city of God, and the worshippers ponder God's love 'in the midst of [God's] temple' (v. 9). While the word 'temple' is nowadays used for some Druid remains, for example at Clava on Culloden Moor, and for St Peter's Temple remains in Lewis, *casa* or *domus* is normally used for the humbler church buildings of early Scotland, rather than *templum* (apart from references in the Latin Psalms, of course, such as 5:7 – '*adorabo ad templum sanctum*').

[32] Bateman *et al.* 2000, 3-11.

scheme in English, and (apart from sex and pity) Harvie's symbols are also present in that poem.

However, character in early Scottish writing is attached to an individual, as in many of the Psalms, not national character, and it would be centuries before Bible or Psalms could be said to shape *Scotland's* character or literature.[33] But in Early Scotland the character of individual *leaders*, whether kings or abbots, had a disproportionate effect on the character of the community, which is why the work of bards and hagiographers was of such importance.[34]

5.2.1 Ninian and Kentigern

Ninian (c. 360-432) and Kentigern are celebrated by their biographers Ailred and Jocelyn. These *vitae* refer regularly to the use of the Psalms, as when Kentigern is said to 'chant on end the whole Psalter',[35] and frequently use the language of the Psalms.[36] Kentigern (or Mungo), about whom little is known for sure, lived in the fifth century, and *Poem 86* in the Presentation, '*Mungo the Migrant*', ends: 'We owe our legends to the migrant / saints who lived and prayed the psalms.' Kentigern was the apostle to the kingdom of Strathclyde, and is honoured today as the founder and patron saint of Glasgow.

Later, Bishop Wilfred at the Synod of Whitby referred disparagingly to the Picts and the Britons (and by implication their theology) as out on a limb,[37] but the so-called 'Celtic Church' was in fact in the same biblical and theological tradition

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[33] Ian Campbell in Wright 1988, 126, speaking about the Bible: 'Its powerful if partly hidden presence supplies a dimension to Scottish literature which, though often remarked upon, has not received the scholarly attention it merits.'

[34] Ian Bradley argues for their importance in *Celtic Christianity*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1999, 35-6. John Barbour's great poem *The Bruce* is presented as 'a romance' in the tradition of earlier bards, glorifying a king and presenting his character as something to follow (Barbour/Higgins 2013, 7). The Psalm superscriptions also fulfil this function with regard to David, with arguably greater honesty (cf. Psalm 51).

[35] Ailred and Jocelyn, *Two Celtic Saints, the Lives of Ninian and Kentigern*, reprint by Llanerch Enterprises, ISBN 0947992294, 58.

[36] E.g. with Ninian, Psalm 1:3 (Ailred page 8), with Kentigern Psalm 91:11-12 (Jocelyn page 38-9).

[37] 'The only exceptions are these men and their accomplices in obstinacy, I mean the Picts and the Britons, who in these, the two remotest islands of the Ocean, and only in some parts of them, foolishly attempt to fight against the whole world.' (Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* Clarendon Press, Oxford 1969, 301.)

as the 'Roman Church'; it was discipline and practices such as the style of tonsure and the date of Easter which were a source of dispute.

5.2.2 The Columban Myth

While Ireland and England and Wales have their 'national saints', in Scotland there are two who have become the public face of early Scotland. Andrew we leave with his relics and later takeover at St Andrews. Columba is the major figure.[38] 'In the career, both legendary and historical, of Columba . . . may be traced the power of the Psalms.'[39] Legend claims that a turning point in the conversion of the Picts to Christianity was when King Brude heard 'in amazement and fear' St Columba singing one of the 'royal' psalms, Psalm 45.[40] The verses which suit Columba's mission are 4 and 5:

> In your majesty ride on victoriously
> for the cause of truth and to defend the right . . .
> Your arrows are sharp
> in the heart of the king's enemies
> the peoples fall under you.[41]

Columba was regarded as a saint to whom prayer might be directed for protection. Both Inchcolm in Scotland and Bangor in Ireland had an Antiphoner – the latter dates from the 7th century, and Bangor had links with Iona. It includes the prayer: 'Father Columba, preserve this choir, which praises you, from the incursions of the English [pirates] . . .'[42] Many of Adomnan's stories about Columba describe how he protected those in danger, and his last 'writing of the Psalter' before he died was said to be Psalm 34:9, 'O fear the Lord, you his holy ones, / for those who fear him have no want.'[43]

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[38] In Meek 2000, 171f., the author discusses how Columba has become 'a saint for all the centuries'.

[39] Prothero 1903, 55.

[40] Douglas Galbraith, 'Music, Church and People', in *Scottish Life and Society: a Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, Vol. 12, ed. Colin MacLean and Kenneth Veitch, John Donald 2006, 629ff.

[41] Bruce Ritchie, *Columba: the Faith of an Island Soldier*, Christian Focus, Fearn 2019, 367 stresses the importance to Columba of lifting up the majesty of God. The conflict between Columba and Brude was over authority: when Columba lifted up the cross, for him at least it was a sign of authority, not a talisman.

[42] Purser 1992, 45.

[43] Adomnan1961, 525.

Columba, and even more the idea of 'Celtic Christanity', is a myth which is now lightly married on to the myth of tartan as something Scottish and desirable.[44] Alan Riach says, 'John Purser could wear the kilt and declaim Columban plainchant – the myth is flexible and broad and the mission is not conquest but exploration'.[45]

Exploration in the psalms is focused on God and where God is found:

> O send out your light and your truth;
> let them lead me;
> let them bring me to your holy hill
> and to your dwelling.[46]

Poem B on Psalms 42-45 refers to Columba as 'a saint of spiritual songs / held in thrall by light and truth / those guardians of his holy life.' Inspired particularly by Columba's experience on Hinba,[47] light and truth are the two great themes of Adomnan's *Life of Columba*,[48] both associated in the Psalms with God and what God says.[49]

5.2.3 Text, Interpretation and Culture

For biblical text, Columba may have had an old Latin Psalter which pre-dated the Vulgate Bible.[50] There were 'twelve prescribed psalms' for the monks on Iona,[51] though we do not know which they were, unless this is simply a reference to the fact that twelve psalms were sung at each of the evening services.[52] Monks were encouraged to continually repeat psalms (which they would get off

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[44] *A Psalm of Ben More* (Blackie 1888, 101-108) links Ossian and Iona to the idea of 'psalm' and begins with a text from Isaiah 52:7. Invaders range from Roman to Cromwell, the Atlantic cliffs are Scotland's ramparts, the sacred flame bursts from Caledonian pulpits, and Ben More is 'Monarch of Mull, the fairest isle that spreads / its green folds to the Sun in Celtic seas'. Dating from 1888, it does not name tartan, but all the resonance is present in the poem.

[45] Alan Riach in Brown 2010, 118.

[46] Psalm 43:3.

[47] Adomnan 1961, 503.

[48] See for example Adomnan 1961, how the writer begins (pages 182-5) and how he ends (516-543).

[49] For example in Psalm 119:18, 105, 130.

[50] Ritchie 2019, 170-176 discusses all the manuscripts likely to have been available to Columba.

[51] Purser 1992, 38 – referring to the Introduction by Jane Stevenson to F.E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, Boydell Press, Suffolk 1987, xliv-xlv.

[52] Ritchie 2019, 251.

by heart), 'but it was the system of Canonical Hours which provided structure for prayer and devotion for the average monk of the Columban tradition'.[53] The northern monasteries of Iona and Bangor drew on common resources, and as their hours of daylight varied, the number of psalms recited each week would vary, but all 150 psalms would be sung or said every week, and in the darker period of the year every weekend.[54]

How were the Psalms interpreted? The *Cathach of St Columba*[55] is an incomplete psalter with Psalms 30:10 to 105,[56] and uses Psalm titles to indicate different speakers (mainly Christ, Apostles, Church).[57] Beyond that we have little idea, apart from stories like Columba felling a boar by raising his hand and commanding the boar to die: since the wild boar of Psalm 80 was seen by some Church Fathers as a symbol of demonic power, Adomnan may have had that Psalm in mind.[58] What we do know is that 'the Psalter's phrases, imagery, teaching, and portrayal of humanity before God, were driven deep into the souls of Columba and his fellow monks'.[59]

A Gaelic text of the eighth century, describing the singing of psalms, refers to 'psalmus' as 'what was invented for the cithara and practised on it'. Harp and lyre were used to accompany such plainsong.[60]

> Psalms were the staple of both the devotional and the liturgical life of the Columban Church, in whose abbeys it would not be uncommon for two to three dozen psalms to be sung at the night offices on weekdays and up to seventy-four at weekends. An outstanding ability to sing was

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[53] Ritchie 2019, 197-8.

[54] Ritchie 2019, 233-4, 251-3.

[55] Described in Ritchie 2019, 151.

[56] Dated 560-630, and listed by Stephen Holmes, 'Catalogue of liturgical books and fragments in Scotland before 1560', *The Innes Review* 62.2 (2011), Edinburgh University Press, DOI: 10.3366/inr.2011.0016, 127-212.

[57] The Psalter dates from about 630, and the use of titles echoes the prosopological use by the western Church Fathers (personalising the 'I' of the psalms) – see Gillingham 2008, 29, 54, and Ritchie 2019, 178.

[58] So Ritchie 2019, 364-5, with Adomnan 1961, 385.

[59] Ritchie 2019, 258.

[60] Purser 1992, 47.

> attributed to numerous saints; the voice of Colum Cille [Columba] was said . . . to be capable of being heard a mile away. [61]

Music and poetry and art were related in that culture, with its Irish ancestry which mingled druidic and biblical traditions.

> On the shaft of the Martin Cross outside Iona Abbey is carved the figure of David singing to Saul, while on the Dupplin Cross [now at Dunning] David is portrayed on a throne like a bard. Monks were said to carry at their belts a small harp (*cruit*) as they tramped the glens, and it is possible that these also accompanied the office psalms in their communities. [62]

5.2.4 From Saints to Kings

Michael Lynch discusses the role of the clergy in providing a tradition and role models for 'the kings of Dalriada and of Picts, who were worthy of Christian record, like the kings of Judah and Israel'. A St Andrews tomb shrine depicts David holding open the jaws of a lion.[63] The cult of Columba was starting to give way to a church of kings.

These kings were not yet kings of the whole of what would become Scotland. The north and west in particular had their own rulers – such as Magnus Erlendson, the early twelfth CE Earl of Orkney who became a saint. In George Mackay Brown's novel, Magnus reads 'from his Psalter' – this likely means the OT, since he reads passages from Ezekiel and Isaiah, with just one reading from Psalm 23.[64] The book refers also to a coat which 'in a mystical way enwraps the whole community. For consider, all the people have contributed to the making of it.' The coat is a tapestry[65] – of which tartan is one form –

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[61] Galbraith 2006, 629, citing Isobel Preece in Sally Harper (ed.), *Our Awin Scottis Use*, Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, Glasgow, 2000, 46. Also Ritchie 2019, 254.

[62] Galbraith in MacLean and Veitch 2006, 630.

[63] Lynch 1991, 36.

[64] George Mackay Brown, *Magnus*, Birlinn, Edinburgh 2008 (originally Hogarth Press 1973), 44-5.

[65] Brown was fascinated by tapestry. He wrote a play about Magnus called *The Loom of Light*, which has seven threads 'which make the shroud', and was staged in Kirkwall in 1972 (published in *Three Plays*, Hogarth Press 1984).

> stiff with jet and golden and scarlet threads, it is a storied garment, one tapestry from throat to ankle, so that a gazer may see the entire fable of the people . . . [66]

This understanding of 'the people' would find clearer expression in the Declaration of Arbroath. The leader may be a bright coloured thread, but there are other threads in the tartan, and there is the 'space between' of 4.1, which saints (and George Mackay Brown)[67] believed God occupied.[68] Moreover, the tapestry (in Brown's novel) is woven with good and bad deeds, and the fabric is endangered by bad deeds - threads may come loose.[69]

In Book 5 of the Presentation (called 'Tapestry'), *146 'Boundaries'* recognises the struggle between good and evil, events like the killing of Magnus by his cousin Hakon, and the tension between faith and politics (out of Psalm 146):[70] 'Let everyone be clear about their mission . . . / . . . let not the priest or prophet be a prince.' *141 'Fire'* also relates tapestry and morality: 'for modern tapestry's a multi-coloured fellow / learning how to pray good in, and evil out.'

Further south, in the eleventh CE with St Margaret (1045-1093), wife of Malcolm Canmore, the 'Celtic Church' was becoming more 'Roman' in practice.[71] The use of psalms in worship however was already well established.[72] Margaret herself had six sons, four called after English kings,[73] the youngest called after David,

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[66] Brown 2008, 93.

[67] Brown seems to open a space for the Kirk (and God) in his poem 'Hamnavoe': 'The kirk, in a gale of psalms, went heaving through / a tumult of roofs, freighted for heaven . . .' (and even the gull is 'tartan'). *The Collected Poems of George Mackay Brown*, ed. Archie Bevan and Brian Murray, John Murray Publishers, London 2005, 25.

[68] Iain Crichton Smith expresses this well in his play *Columcille* (mss held by Alan Riach) where Columba (in his thirties) says, 'My world of books, the world of sea and sky and earth. Their radiance, shot through with the arrows of God.'

[69] Brown 2008, 94.

[70] When the poem was written, the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018 was in mind: 'Let not the prince become a politician . . . let not the prince become a cool assassin.'

[71] In England the critical moment was the Synod of Whitby in 664 CE. The older customs lingered much longer in Scotland and Ireland. And Margaret did in fact respect the tradition of 'Celtic' communities, her keenness on 'Roman customs' was to unify practice and curb spiritual laxity (Bradley 1999, 41-2) – though this did include stamping out the use of the vernacular (Maxwell 1955, 28-9).

[72] Maxwell 1955, 15ff. There were earlier Psalters, such as the Blickling Psalter (8th CE) or the 11th CE Chancellor Reid's Psalter; then the Coupar Angus Psalter 12th CE, and several dated to the 13th CE (Holmes 2011, 127-212).

[73] Donaldson 1990, 27 suggests she might have had a hope that one of them would displace the intruding Norman kings of England.

king of Israel. The latter is said to have listened to the canonical psalms each day, and certainly founded many abbeys where the OT Psalms would be sung according to the breviary in use.[74]

The first six poems of the second part of the Presentation, 'Journey', use verses from Psalms 42 to 45 to compare the stories of Columba and Margaret of Scotland with the journeys of Abraham and Moses. The sixth poem, which begins 'What a roll call from her womb', sets the scene for Robert the Bruce and medieval Scotland.

5.3 Medieval Scotland - Rule

Scotland has two national flags, the lion rampant and the saltire:

> They illustrate neatly the double thread which for centuries ran side by side through Scottish history. The Scots were held together both by their long line of Kings and by the Church.[75]

The Psalms also have this double thread, binding religion and rule. This section will show these connections, and the hints of democracy.

5.3.1 Writing an Epic Poem

Tony Conran wrote that epics 'deliver us from the scatter of lyric moments, the divorce of the lyric moment from what is public and social'.[76] An epic has something in common with a symphony (which Mahler said should contain the world).[77]

The theme of *'Journey'*, the long poem on Book 2 of the Psalms, has its three movements – 'Blood Lines' (the prelude), 'Border Warfare' (the body), 'Broader Places' (the finale). Its form is like two different instruments (Robert the Bruce and David) who develop the theme but keep handing it back to the other. Bruce

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[74] Donaldson 1990, 27.

[75] Lynch 1991, xiii.

[76] Jeremy Hooker introducing Conran 2016, 10 (citing a 1997 book by Conran, *Vison and Praying Mantids*).

[77] Jeremy Hooker in Conran 2016, 10 (referring to an unpublished book of Tony Conran's, *Poetic Forms*).

had to escape from English kings much as David had to flee from Saul. Both display the pattern of threat, survival and ultimate triumph.

Like these characters, the Psalms 'dodge about'. Many of their verses reflect the twists and turns of David and Bruce, not because the writer planned such an outcome, but because these psalms reflect human life. '*Journey*' borrows ideas and experience from the psalms of Book 2, with direct quotations in italics.

To let the poem grow like two trees with interweaving branches, I wrote shorter poems alternatively dealing with the OT and with Scotland; David has the traditional iambic pentameters, in four line stanzas, to establish the genre, and Bruce has tetrameters, in three line stanzas.[78]

5.3.2 David and Robert the Bruce

Through the period of the Wars of Independence Scotland emerges as one country with one king. The hints of how some Scottish kings modelled themselves on the David of the OT,[79] seeing in 'the sweet psalmist of Israel'[80] a necessary link of church and state, become clearer in the life of Robert the Bruce. Did he see this himself? There are three arguments against: (1) the Declaration of Arbroath modelled King Robert on Joshua and the Maccabees, not David; (2) There was another David (born about 500 CE) associated with Wales; (3) Early poets did not connect Bruce with David.[81] But in view of 2 Samuel 11, a public comparison might have been a tricky one to make.[82]

David was generally a popular name. After 1093 the advent of charters gives us more information about names in use, and John Davies has analysed about 1350

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[78] I also wished to model the work of a bard in making connections to encourage people to think in new ways.

[79] 'Medievalists' (Hastings 1997, 1) would have no doubt about this, 'Modernists' (Hearn 2006, 85) would say it is more obvious from the Reformation era.

[80] 2 Samuel 23:1, KJV. This may have covered improvising, composing or even making new instruments, depending how *ḥāšb̲û* in Amos 6:5 is translated.

[81] 'The Epitaph of Robert Bruce' in the *Scotichronicon* of Walter Bower (1383-1437) in Gifford and Riach 2004, 18, compares Bruce to Socrates, Cato, Julius Caesar, Achilles, Ulysses, then to Samson, Solomon and one of the Maccabees – but not to David.

[82] There is also Amos 6:5, with its hint that David might have had better things to do than sit around making music.

names in documents between 1093 and 1286.[83] The most popular is Adam (500 occurrences), next Simon (247), then David (152) followed by Michael (112).

David was the name Bruce gave to his son, and more important in this context, it was the name of King David I (1124-1153). We know that legal scholars of Bruce's reign were keen to portray *that* David as the author of Scots law, and to associate Bruce with him.[84] He was the eighth son of Malcolm III (the sixth son of his second wife Margaret), and Davies says:

> We should at least notice the prophetic significance of the name David, as bestowed upon an eighth son who was to rule over a united kingdom, as the biblical David ruled over a united kingdom of Judah and Israel. Like the biblical David, as prince of the Cumbrians, he was the ruler of a southern territory who then inherited the rule of a united realm, taking in the greater kingdom to the north.[85]

This Thesis puts forward indications rather than firm evidence about David and Bruce, for David as 'type' rather than 'role model' (the latter implies something deliberate). From the poems, the following similarities are brought out:

> Nationalism has always had to defend itself against racism, so *Poem G* on Psalms 46-48 begins, 'A bit of foreign blood improves the gene pool'. David was from a different tribe than Saul; Bruce had Norman blood.
>
> In both situations, religious leaders decide that a new king is required, and make their choice. In each case, priests suffer for supporting the king of their choice.[86]
>
> Both spend time on the run or in exile, and barely survive. It includes living in caves, with legends attached. They both have to learn to wait, and not take wrong advantage:[87] 'The bishop bad im / bide is time, fur aiblins God / wad *brak the bow, ding doon the axe* . . .'[88]

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[83] John Reuben Davies, 'Old Testament Personal Names in Scotland before the Wars of Independence', in Matthew Hammond (ed.), *Personal Names and Naming Practices in Medieval Scotland*, Boydell, Woodbridge 2019, 187-212.

[84] Michael Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, Yale University Press, London 2014, 155 and an email of 23/11/19 to the writer from Prof. Dauvit Broun.

[85] Davies 2019, 197.

[86] 1 Samuel 22:6-19. Barrow 2013, 199.

[87] 1 Samuel 24:1-7; 25:2-35.

[88] *Poem H* on Psalms 46-48.

> David is saved when Saul calls off pursuit to fight in Philistine country,[89] Bruce takes advantage of Edward being away in France.
>
> Bruce kills Comyn, David arranges the death of Uriah.[90] Both are conscience stricken afterwards, though David is condemned by the prophet Nathan (then forgiven), and Bruce is exonerated within a month by Bishop Wishart.[91]
>
> Both spent time at the court of the king they would later replace, and were even offered their wives (for political reasons) by that same king.[92] In each case the death of that king, in circumstances they had no control over, would start their comeback, which was a gradual increase of power until a decisive event in each case led to full power.[93]
>
> Both men enjoyed a celebrated reign and died peacefully.

Of course there are differences – David was a commoner, Bruce a noble. David was less restrained in love than Bruce.[94] Bruce lost several family members, David seems to have saved his.[95] Bruce fought against Edward I's son, David was best friends with Saul's son Jonathan. Bruce had problems with his impetuous brother Edward, David faced a civil war because he would not manage his own extended family; David's family conflict lasted into his dotage,[96] with Bruce the De Soules conspiracy was nipped in the bud.[97]

The great thing they had in common was their role as kings to unify their country and to establish or re-establish what today we would call state religion. Nevertheless there is an ambiguity about David in the OT,[98] whereas Robert remains generally one of the great kings of Scots.

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[89] 1 Samuel 23:27-28.

[90] 2 Samuel 11.

[91] Penman 2014, 94.

[92] 1 Samuel 18:17.

[93] 2 Samuel 4 and 5.

[94] Though Bruce did father six children out of wedlock.

[95] 1 Samuel 22:1-4.

[96] 2 Samuel 13 to 19, 1 Kings 1.

[97] Barrow 2013, 389, 403.

[98] In Psalm 89:27-29 he is the greatest, but by 89:38-45 he is cut down to size.

5.3.3 Bruce's Religion

There is no reason to be cynical about the public faith of Robert the Bruce. Robert Penman says of him:

> As a bachelor in Edward I's household before 1296, and often in attendance on the English king in England and in Scotland up to 1305, Robert surely came to understand the political value of such public devotions . . .[but such] acts of piety could also reflect quite genuine personal acts of faith by Robert Bruce the man.[99]

Bruce came of a line of leaders, in blood and in role, who were more than formal in their faith. King David I in his dying hours repeated two verses from the Psalms. William Wallace standing on the scaffold begged Lord Clifford to restore his Psalter to him, a wish that was granted.[100]

According to Abbot Bernard of Arbroath, on the first day of Bannockburn Bruce himself addressed his men, and included these words:

> For us, the name of the Lord must be our hope of victory in battle. This day is a day of rejoicing, the birthday of John the Baptist. With our Lord Jesus as commander, Saint Andrew and the martyr Saint Thomas shall fight today with the saints of Scotland for the honour of their country and their nation . . .[101]

Like Thomas Becket (and the OT David), Bruce had endured hardship and exile, with the death of Edward I on 7th July 1307 a potential game changer, a 'sign from the Almighty: for "Longshanks" had been gathered to God on the Translation feast of St Thomas'.[102]

His devotion to the saints is better shown than his devotion to the Psalms; but it is unlikely that he was unaware of the kingship models in the OT, given the character of King David I, and the importance of David as a devout king in the OT.

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[99] Michael Penman, 'Sacred Food for the Soul: in search of the Devotions to Saints of Robert Bruce, King of Scotland, 1306-1329', *Speculum* Vol. 88, No. 4 (October 2013), University of Chicago Press, 1039-40.

[100] Psalm 119:121 and 86:7 (Prothero 1903, 97).

[101] Barrow 2013, 294. Walter Bower in *Scotichronicon* 6:363-5 also says that Bruce referred to 'John the Baptist . . . and St Andrew and St Thomas [Becket]' – Penman 2013, 1048.

[102] Penman 2014, 105.

5.3.4 Community as Temple

Not many Scots appear in Dante's *Divine Comedy* – but Michael Scott appears as a sorcerer in the eighth circle of hell.[103] Scott was tutor to the Pope, born in Fife (or the Borders) in 1175 and celebrated in folklore as a magician.[104] The significance of a Dante connection is twofold: (1) Robert Bruce's brilliant brother Alexander, educated at Cambridge and afterwards Dean of Glasgow, would likely have been aware of Dante's writings;[105] (2) Dante's *Divina Commedia*[106] was inspired by Psalm 114, verses 1 and 2 and 'all the psalm that's written after this'.[107] Souls are being shipped out of purgatory like the children of Israel coming out of Egypt.[108]

Poem 114, 'Exodus' therefore features Dante:

> Dante finds his feet, plays hopscotch
> with his Classic friend, blurring the line
> between the polysemous squares
> of old interpretation, adding rhyme
> to link the Exodus to all of us. He bares
> his chest: it's gospel truth, he swears.

Psalm 114 is remarkable in that it has 'Judah became God's sanctuary' (introduced in 3.3.3). Here we have a 'temple word' for the community of Israel. In 3.4, I referred to Jewish writing on the community as temple, an anticipation of things to come. George Brooke cited *The Community Rule*: 'The Council of the Community . . . shall be that precious cornerstone . . . a most

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[103] Dante Alighieri 2012, *Inferno*, Canto 20, line 116.

[104] https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle-2-15039/scottish-wizard-who-tutored-the-pope-1-466356, accessed 8/9/19.

[105] Having a Scot as tutor to the Pope was a sign of the connections between Scotland and Italy, as were the journeys made by Scottish churchmen to solicit the Pope's backing (see Barrow 2013, 238).

[106] It was begun in 1307, the year Edward II of England ascended the throne.

[107] Dante Alighieri 2012, *Purgatory*, Canto 2, lines 43-48 – the psalm is being sung by the spirits leaving. See also 2.3.1.

[108] These biblical analogies are not uncommon in literature. In Blake's 'Annotation to Laocoon' we have 'Israel deliverd from Egypt is Art deliverd from Nature & Imitation' (see Erdman 1998).

holy dwelling for Aaron.'[109] The same idea features in the NT, notably in Ephesians 2:20, where the church is described as a community

> built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple . . . a dwelling place for God.

Geoffrey Barrow entitles his book *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*.[110] The second part is significant. In the Preface, Barrow refers to his discovery that the Guardians of Scotland, including William Wallace, based their actions on the idea of 'the community of the realm' of Scotland, and that in the absence of a monarch the entire Scottish nation must act as a unit.[111] He goes on to say that Edward I of England did not believe in this, and perhaps Bruce as a young adult did not either – though later he and other Scottish leaders did, as the language of the Declaration of Arbroath testifies.[112]

Psalm 78, like the Declaration, claims a history. It also presents a leader (David), in place by divine providence (verses 70-71, though without the consent of the people as in the Declaration).[113] The psalm does something that the Declaration does not do directly, but which accords with the reference to the Maccabees both in the Declaration and in Barbour's *Bruce*.[114] It uses temple associated words for people (though not as dramatically as Psalm 114:2): in v. 67 'the *tent* of Joseph', in v. 68 'the tribe of Judah, *Mount Zion*' (my italics). For the Maccabees, the desecration of the temple of God was an offence against God

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[109] 1QS 8.5-10 in G. Vermes, *The Compete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, Penguin, London 1988, cited in Day 2005, 425.

[110] Barrow 2013.

[111] Barrow 2013, xxiii-xxiv.

[112] 'Yet if he should give up what he has begun, seeking to make us or our kingdom subject to the King of England or the English, *we should exert ourselves* at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own right and ours, and make some other man who was well able to defend us our King . . .' (italics mine, and see also the next footnote).

[113] 'Him, too, divine providence, the succession to his right according to our laws and customs which we shall maintain to the death, and the due consent and assent of us all have made our prince and king.'

[114] Book 1, line 465.

and against Israel,[115] and the *Book of Jubilees* (c. 150 BCE) focuses on the Jewish people being a holy nation, a kingdom of priests (from Exodus 19:5-6).[116]

For Israel and for Bruce's realm, God lived among his people in buildings – whether the tent of Shiloh (v. 60) or a Scottish abbey. The Scots also took the Brecbennoch of St Columba (the saint's relics) with them at Bannockburn, the equivalent for Israel being the Ark of the Covenant (e.g. 1 Samuel 4:6) – but this ark is not mentioned in the Psalms, all the furnishings of the temple having been destroyed by the Babylonians (Psalm 74). It took the destruction of the temple for Israel to start exploring new ways of being a holy nation, and it would take the conflicts of the Reformation period before the language of a covenanted nation appeared.

5.3.5 Medieval Scotland and Democracy

In general, medieval citizens were well served if their monarchs ruled with justice, and were not threatened by other rulers. In William Dunbar's poem 'The Thistle and the Rose', composed for the wedding of James IV and Margaret Tudor in 1503, the lion leans humbly and gracefully on his lady's knee, and she tells him clearly to 'exercise justice with mercy and conscience'.[117] In another poem, '*Surrexis Dominas de Supulchro*', the '*Iyone*' is pointedly Christ (not an Edward or a Richard or any English king), and Dunbar refers indirectly to Psalm 24:7-10.[118]

Ideas of democracy were awakened by the Renaissance: 'A crucial aspect of [the 14th to 16th centuries] was the recovery of classical republican and democratic ideas, and their reapplication in the early modern context.'[119] But there were other sources which challenged the divine right of kings. Scotland's problem at the start of the 14th century, explains Neil Oliver, was that King John Balliol was a lame duck. Bishop Lamberton is likely to have consulted the Scottish

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[115] Daniel 7 also seems to refer to this period.

[116] George Brooke in Day 2005, 425.

[117] Gifford and Riach 2004, 22-3.

[118] Sarah Carpenter in David Wright (ed.), *The Bible in Scottish Life and Literature*, St Andrews Press 1988, 75.

[119] Hearn 2006, 13.

theologian Duns Scotus in Paris in 1302, where Duns Scotus would tell him that the real root of royal authority was not inheritance but the consent of the people.[120] In 1309 this bore fruit in 'The Declaration of the Clergy', which declared that 'by knowledge and consent of the same people, [Bruce] was received as king . . .'[121]

It may be impossible to prove a direct connection, but the use of the Psalms by the clergy over so many years[122] must have led to what might be called a proto-democratic way of thinking. The Psalms show a people coming to terms with the loss of their king, grasping the idea that the Lord was the sole king, and that the people corporately could occupy a high place – whether as 'God's sanctuary' in Psalm 114 or as 'Mount Zion' in Psalm 78. Susan Gillingham points out that even after the final compilation of the Jewish Psalter, Zion referred not only to a place, but to the people as personifying that place: the term was 'democratised and spiritualised' to refer to people of the community of faith rather than the temple in Jerusalem[123] – as indeed by the NT writers.[124]

How far faith should be democratised and *not* spiritualised has been a matter of dispute.[125] *Poem 113, 'Height and Depth'*, celebrates the proto-democracy which the gospel writers saw Jesus inheriting from the OT:[126]

> . . . that loving hand which wraps goodwill
> around the needy, lets them sit at tables
> with the royals, rewrites morbid labels,
> raises wretched, dings to earth high heid yins

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[120] Oliver 2009, 126-7. Scotus broke away from the abstract Boethian definition of the person as an individual substance, and saw the people not as a collection of individuals but as a community – James Torrance and Roland Walls, *John Duns Scotus in a Nutshell*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1992, 13. Cf Storrar 1990, 4-5.

[121] Oliver 2009, 142; compare the language of the Declaration of Arbroath.

[122] In his catalogue of liturgical items from early times till 1560, Stephen Holmes lists two psalters from the 6th-8th centuries, ten from the 11th-13th centuries, and eight from the 15th century alone (Holmes 2011), as well as a large number of breviaries and other items.

[123] Day 2005, 312.

[124] For example, John 2:19-21, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:21.

[125] Discussed in books on political theology such as Jim Wallis, *On God's Side*, Baker, Grand Rapids 2013.

[126] For example, Psalms 24:4, 37:11, 41:1, 72 underlying the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke.

Charles Péguy said, 'Tout commence en mystique, et tout finit en politique'.[127] How that change takes place, if the OT is any guide, is through a mixture of hard events and spiritual reflection, as Jeremiah and Lamentations reflect on the fate of the king and nobles of Jerusalem. The book of Jeremiah is still ambiguous, as David's throne is to be re-occupied in coming days (33:17-26), a prophecy which before long had to be understood in messianic terms,[128] still leaving open the question, what kind of community should Messiah lead, and how should that community be led before Messiah came?[129]

The early reception history of Psalm 2 is relevant here. In the Septuagint verse 6 is reported speech, so instead of God addressing the king, the king is addressing rebel rulers – more monarchical, less messianic. Another key point of interpretation was how one of the Qumran communities understood verses 1 and 2 (4QFlor I lines 18-19), to the effect that the whole community inherit the promises to David; 'his anointed one' is in the plural so they together form a messianic community.[130] This way of thinking would be picked up later by groups like the 17th century Levellers, the 20th century Red Clydesiders,[131] or as early as the late 14th century Peasants' Revolt in England.[132]

In Scotland, the issue of the divine right of kings was still to be a matter of fuller debate, but the rights of the people had been asserted.

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[127] I have been unable to trace the origin of this well known quotation, which I first came across in English in George MacLeod, *One Way Left*, Iona Community, Glasgow 1958, vi.

[128] With the Qumran communities expecting messiahs or 'anointed ones' of different kinds, some more kingly, some more priestly, hence the confusion around the person of Jesus, noted e.g. in John 6:14-15. The Babylonian Talmud says that Messiah's arrival will bring back the dynasty of King David, after what the rabbis called 'the pangs of Messiah' (Bavli, Pesahim 54b and Kethuboth 112b, cited in Akenson 1998, 388).

[129] See for example John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1972.

[130] Gillingham 2018, 26. There may be isolated examples in other cultures of what Richard Middleton calls 'the democratisation of ideology' (Middleton 2005, 99-100).

[131] Via Marx's reading of the NT in the British Library, and Keir Hardie's interpretation of Christianity.

[132] See *Poem 20, 'Royal Rule'*.

5.4 Reformed Scotland - Equality

'It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly by the singing of psalms. . .'[133] This 1645 quotation indicated a major change in the reception of the Psalms in Scotland – from being sung in Latin by clergy to being sung in Scots by the people. Prothero describes the early collections of 'Spiritual Sangis' (which included the Psalms) as 'the true vernacular poetry of the day'.[134] Holladay sums up the Reformation as 'a shift in theological perspective, a movement of humanists, clergy, princes and commoners in northern Europe to reclaim the Bible' and credits Calvin and his followers as a primary source of congregational singing of psalms.[135]

The Reformation was more about an equality before God which obviated the need of a priest as mediator,[136] but it fostered seeds of equality in politics and education also, as this section will show.

5.4.1 Psalm-singing in the Scottish Reformation

At the Reformation all Protestant bodies used versified text. Many of the tunes as well as the words came from Geneva, but in fact the first metrical psalms in Scotland were translations of Luther, in the Dundee or 'Wedderburn Psalms' (1540s, published 1565).[137] Knox accepted the view of Calvin that nothing not biblical should be used in worship – thus cutting loose from Latin and other hymns.[138] Calvin also worried that music could influence people too much (see 4.2.2), and popularise bad words – but there was a general recognition that music could popularise good words too.[139]

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[133] http://www.epcew.org.uk/the-directory-for-the-publick-worship-of-god-links#singingpsalms.

[134] The first printed version was in 1568 – Prothero 1903, 138.

[135] Holladay 1996, 198.

[136] Luther was one of the first to articulate Psalm 51 as 'a prophecy made in the person of the church, serving as a model for all would-be penitents to use independently of the payment [of] indulgences' (Gillingham 2008, 138).

[137] Miller Patrick, *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1949, 5.

[138] Patrick 1949, 9.

[139] Timothy Duguid, *Metrical Psalmody in Print and in Practice*, Ashgate, Abingdon 2016, 26.

Erasmus and Coverdale wanted ordinary folk to sing the Psalms instead of secular songs. After Coverdale completed *Goostly Psalms*, Scottish Protestants began collecting a similar set of musical settings, with words put into a Scottish dialect,[140] and the Scottish and English traditions began to diverge.[141]

Knox in his *History of the Reformation* recounts that the night before George Wishart was apprehended at Ormiston in 1546, he said, 'Will ye sing a Psalme?' and so 'we appointed the 51st Psalme which was put in Scotishe meter'.[142] They sang a version found only in the Wedderburn Psalm Book.[143] Of the Geneva versions, William Kethe's version of Psalm 100 is still used today.[144] When these found their way to Scotland they were given music arrangements by Jhone Angus[145] in the older tradition, while Reformed Scots generally sang in unison (*a capella* in church, but with instruments in secular settings).[146]

The *First Book of Discipline* (1560) was drawn up by 'the six Johns' (Douglas, Knox, Row, Spottiswoode, Willock and Winram), and it exhorted men, women and children to 'exercise themselves in the psalmes'.[147] The complete Scottish Psalter of 1564 does not have the Wedderburn Psalms - the six Johns preferred the Genevan versions.[148] The first version of this Scottish Metrical Psalter appeared as part of the 'Forme of Prayers' in 1564, containing only the 150 Psalms, 104 with their own 'proper' tunes.[149] However, older practices continued in some places. The offices continued to be said and sung, involving the

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[140] Duguid 2016, 12.

[141] For example, in England the 1560-61 Genevan *Forme of Prayers* had a mixed reception, the English preferring the earlier editions and the Scots choosing the later versions (Duguid 2016, 40). The earliest Gaelic Psalter was not published until 1659, and only had 50 psalms (Patrick 1949, 10).

[142] Patrick comments that Knox generally preferred English (Patrick 1949, 7).

[143] Patrick 1949, 6.

[144] For example, in the Church Hymnary, fourth edition, no. 63.

[145] Jamie Reid-Baxter, Michael Lynch and Patricia Dennison, *Jhone Angus: Monk of Dunfermline and Scottish Reformation Music*, Dunfermline Heritage Community Projects, Dunfermline 2011, 34.

[146] Duguid 2016, 219, but note the Wode Psalter.

[147] Duguid 2016, 78.

[148] An Anglo-Genevan Psalter was published in 1561, and an English Psalter in 1562 (Patrick 1949, 45f.).

[149] Reid-Baxter, Lynch and Dennison, 34. They comment, 'Although [the 1564 Psalter] was succeeded by another Psalter in 1650, the 1564 one is more varied and more interesting'.

psalms,[150] and the Wode Psalter of 1566[151] is an example of polyphony within the Reformed Church.[152]

These 'older practices' were embedded in the liturgies which the Stewart kings tried to make uniform in the joined kingdom; the books contained a lectionary of psalms, and Scottish Episcopal practice of using the Psalms, in public or private,[153] continued alongside use by the Reformed Kirk.[154] At the start of the Scottish Reformation, the English prayer book was used in some places,[155] but in the Reformed Kirk it was superseded by the *Scottish Book of Common Order*, from 1560 on.[156] However the prayer book only 'fell out of favour' during the period of Presbyterian dominance in the 1590s.[157] For Episcopalians, the Book of Common Prayer of 1637 provided that the Psalms be read through every month, as did the later edition of 1657.[158]

For the Reformed Kirk, while the Westminster Assembly of 1643-53 might have resulted in a uniform Psalter for both kingdoms, in practice the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland undertook a series of revisions which led to the Psalter of 1650; that borrowed from at least twelve other versions – and

[150] Reid-Baxter, Lynch and Dennison 2011, 28. For example, Jhone Angus was 'precentor de Dunfermline' in 1552.

[151] Patrick dates it 1562 (Patrick 1949, 56), Ritchie in his thesis does not give a date.

[152] Christopher Goodman followed Knox to Scotland in 1559, became minister of St Andrews in 1560, and had in his congregation James Stewart, Earl of Moray. Moray decided that the new tunes should be in four part harmony, and commissioned David Peebles of St Andrews to set them, but told him keep it simple; Peebles was a master polyphonist, and dragged his feet, but Thomas Wode (a skilled copyist) persuaded him to do it, and the result was the Wode Psalter of 1566, using the music of Jhone Angus, David Peebles and Andro Blackhall - Reid-Baxter *et al.* 2011, 34-40.

[153] Canon Emsley Nimmo of St Margaret's, Aberdeen, in a personal comment, said that no psalms were sung in the Episcopal Church until about 1800 (as singing would have attracted attention).

[154] *Scottish Liturgies of James VI*, (ed.) G.W. Sprott, Blackwood, Edinburgh 1901 refers to 'psalms appointed for the day'.

[155] Gordon Donaldson, *The Making of the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1954, 7.

[156] Donaldson 1954, 13.

[157] Donaldson 1954, 28.

[158] Donaldson 1954, 112 (the Psalms are spread, in order, between morning and evening prayer).

remained unchanged until recent versions of the Church Hymnary began to include some modern versions of the Psalms.[159]

5.4.2 The Impact of the Psalms

Someone brought up in the Catholic faith like John Knox, who attended the song school attached to St Mary's Church in Haddington, would be steeped in the Psalms. Knox's daily devotions were built around the Psalms,[160] and on his deathbed it was the Latin numbering of the Psalms from the Vulgate that he recalled, rather than their slightly different numbering in the Protestant Bible.[161]

While a 15th century queen was mentioned in 3.6.2 writing on the Psalms, nearly all medieval poetry was written by men. Knox however had a friend living in Geneva called Anne Locke who wrote sonnets inspired by Psalm 51.[162] She sought to reclaim it for the Reformed faith,[163] and built a bridge between public worship and personal devotion. As the use of new versions of the Psalms in the vernacular became widespread in Scotland, they influenced not just Sunday worship but daily life:

> When James Melville tells his flock in 1598 to sing psalms at work and at home, as part of their daily lives, he is not encouraging them simply to whistle psalm tunes or hum psalms to entertain themselves, rather than secular songs or tunes; he is encouraging them to turn their whole lives into an act of conscious worship.[164]

The Psalms were also part of public life. John Durie, outspoken critic of James VI, returning from exile to his pulpit at St Giles' in 1582, was famously greeted at the Netherbow Port with the singing of Psalm 124 by a multitude who accompanied him up Edinburgh's Royal Mile, singing (in four parts, it is said) 'till

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[159] See https://www.churchservicesociety.org/sites/default/files/journals/1938-1939-43-56.pdf for details of the 1650 metrical psalter.

[160] Dawson 2015, 154.

[161] Dawson 2015, 15, citing Knox, *Works* Vol. VI, 638.

[162] Psalm 51 had a particular resonance, because (a) Knox and Wishart had sung it the night before his arrest, and (b) Wishart in his response to his interrogators had cited 51 in support of making confession to God instead of a priest (William Croft Dickinson (ed.), *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 2, Nelson, Edinburgh 1949, 237.

[163] Dawson 2015, 148.

[164] Duguid 2016, 201, citing an unpublished essay by Jamie Reid-Baxter, 'James Melville and the Metrical Psalter'.

heavin and erthe resonndit'.[165] In 1588 at the Mercat Cross minister Robert Bruce assembled people to celebrate the destruction of the Spanish Armada by singing Psalm 76.[166]

On 28 Dec 1591 the St Giles congregation sang Psalm 124 in thanksgiving for the failed attack on James VI the previous day.[167] A few weeks after the coronation of the boy king back in 1567, the Earl of Moray had been appointed Regent at the market cross in Edinburgh; Moray himself sang or recited the 'royal' Psalm 72, and used the themes of that psalm in letters to his fellow peers urging them to defend the weak and uphold 'treu religion, justice and polycye within this miserable cuntrye'.[168]

Psalm 43 featured on banners, for example, 'Judge and revenge my cause O Lord', words put into the mouth of Mary's infant James, the future king, at the 'battle' of Carberry Hill.[169] The same words featured later on a banner condemning the murder of the regent Moray.

Robert Bruce was minister of the High Kirk of Edinburgh (St Giles) from 1587 to 1600 (when he had to take refuge across the border after offending James VI). His concept of God was 'grounded upon the Psalms, for in them the "face of God" and "his countenance" form an essential part' of God's nature.[170] Bruce applied Scripture equally to the individual and to affairs of State; he quotes Psalm 41:1 in the same sermon as he criticises the behaviour of some courtiers and the King himself.[171]

Later, in the 17th century, William Barton used the metrical paraphrase of Psalm 58 'against ungodly governors . . . showing their corrupt dishonesty and utter

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[165] Galbraith 2006, 629.

[166] Duguid 2016, 205.

[167] Martin Ritchie in his thesis describes the melody sung on this occasion as 'derived from plainsong, but well suited to the punchy and dramatic text . . . this metrical version demonstrated how powerful these Psalms could be in their original early modern context' (Ritchie, thesis page 167).

[168] Dawson 2015, 272-3, citing Mason (ed.), *John Knox and the British Reformations*, 216.

[169] Dawson 2015, 270.

[170] David Searle (ed.), *Preaching without Fear or Favour*, Christian Focus, Fearn 2019, xv-xvi. See also 3.2.2.

[171] Searle 2019, 298, 300.

destruction'.[172] This use of the Psalms mirrors Knox, who had sung metrical psalms with a crowd gathered outside Holyrood Palace for Mary's first night back in Scotland, singing them as 'battle hymns of the Lord'.[173]

The Covenanters at Drumclog (1679) defeated Claverhouse 'with voices upraised in Psalm 76 sung to the thunderous *Martyrs'*.[174] Victim of the same conflict, the young Margaret Wilson, tied to a stake in the Solway, defied the rising waves with Psalm 25 ('My sins and faults of youth / Do Thou, O Lord, forget').[175]

5.4.3 Democratic Ideas

Whereas later ideas of democracy focus on the idea of voting rights, at the time of the Reformation the issue was whether a people had the right to remove an unjust ruler (as implied earlier by the Declaration of Arbroath). John Major, who taught John Knox at St Andrews,[176] believed that rulers were subordinate to the whole people (though 'the people' were the nobility acting for the common good).[177] Knox clashed with Queen Mary over her freedom to marry a Roman Catholic, and when she asked him, 'What are you within this Commonwealth?' he famously replied,

> A subject born within the same, Madam. And albeit I be neither Earl, Lord or Baron within it, yet God has made me . . . a profitable member within the same.

Jasper Ridley cites an unnamed historian, 'Modern democracy was born in that answer'.[178]

Reform movements typically address the corruption or failure of authority.[179] *Poem 20, 'Royal Rule'*, cites a couplet from a 14th century English priest, and

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[172] Gillingham 2018, 336. Barton was a contributor to the 1650 Metrical Psalter.

[173] Dawson 2015, 211. Holladay 1996, 209f. has a section on 'The Psalms as Battle Hymns'.

[174] 'There arrows of the bow He brake'.

[175] Galbraith 2006, 629.

[176] Jasper Ridley 1668, *John Knox*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1968, 535.

[177] Roderick Graham, *John Knox – Democrat*, Robert Hale, London 2001, 30.

[178] Ridley 1968, 426.

[179] As in the writing of Jock the Peasant and Sir David Lyndsay in the early 15th century – arguably giving us 'an embryonic ideal of democratic egalitarianism' – Douglas Gifford and Alan Riach (eds.), *Scotlands: Poets and the Nation*, Carcanet, Manchester 2004, xx.

throws a number of ideas at Psalm 20, which is attributed to David and ends more or less with the words which start the British national anthem.[180] But, 'This psalm has lines which fling / a spanner into everything', even if it does not support 'pure democracy'; the closet rebellion is in vv. 7-8; and since the Psalms as 'word-tools' span the generations, while the original editors may have been quietist, a Qumran community could interpret them a different way,[181] as could Scots from Medieval through to Covenanting times.

In fact the Psalms (like the Bible generally) have built in spanners waiting to be picked up by theological and political engineers. Calvin, who influenced Scotland, wrote, 'For although I follow David at a great distance, and come far short of equalling him . . . I have no hesitation in comparing myself with him.'[182] Not only was psalm singing 'one of the incontestably distinguishing marks of Calvinist culture in Europe and America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries',[183] but 'Calvinists were convinced they could legitimately appropriate the psalms to themselves . . . the psalms were *their* songs which they sang as the elect people of God in a covenant relationship with Him'.[184]

By comparing himself with David, Calvin subverted the institution of monarchy in much the same way as the NT,[185] though the OT had its own way of doing the same thing - Psalm 110, in which 'the Lord will shatter kings on the day of his wrath', was sung at the coronation of James VI,[186] and James Renwick on the scaffold in 1688 could accuse the current king of being a usurper, as 'Scotland

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[180] The editors of the OT Psalter acknowledge that the Davidic kingship is past. Indeed one reading of the Hebrew text (NRSV margin) allows the 'king' to be identified with God – as in some later Psalms – although the reference to 'his anointed' in verse 6 is clearly to the king unless taken in a messianic sense.

[181] Gillingham 2008, 10.

[182] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, Vol. 1, trans. James Anderson, Amazon 2015, 28.

[183] Charles Garside, Jr. in 'The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music: 1536-1543' (*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 69, 4, Philadelphia 1968) in Holladay 1996, 198.

[184] W. Stanford Reid in Carl S. Meyer (ed.), *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, St Louis 1971, Vol. 2, 43-44, cited by Holladay 1996, 198.

[185] 1 Peter 2:9. Revelation 5:10.

[186] Oliver 2009, 232.

should be ruled by its Kirk'; Renwick quoted from Psalm 103, 'The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all'.[187]

It is better known that the Reformation changed the understanding of priesthood. The minister still offered the prayers of the people to God in public worship, but the people could pray and sing psalms in their homes. Equally important, while the minister continued to use liturgy at communion, the people sat round tables rather than coming and being served by the priest at the altar.

116, 'Common Cup', describes two elders, a Provost and an MSP, serving bread and wine to the congregation of St Mary's Haddington today. While the people no longer literally sit at tables, the equality is preserved:

> . . . and here the Provost of a Council ranked
> no higher than the least of other men
> and women. Clasping hands around the cup,
> we drink a portion rooted in a psalm . . .

The Scottish reformers were clear about the equality of all before God,[188] and this inspired their view of education,[189] although an obvious primary motive was their desire that each child should be able to read and understand the Bible.[190] John Knox had wanted a school in every parish.[191] Although it was not until the 1686 Education Act that this vision became anything like reality, it was a democratic recognition that people deserved equal access to learning; even if for the Scottish Reformers a major concern was biblical literacy, the schools were to provide 'Logic and Rhetoric and Tongues' and even rural schools should teach Latin.[192]

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[187] Psalm 103:19 (KJV), cited by Oliver 2009, 282.

[188] Cameron 1972, 46 refers to the Reformers' 'splendid notion of equality of all men in the sight of God', but it was men rather than women and children – though this did not prevent them wanting education for girls as well as boys.

[189] Children of rich and poor alike must be educated - Cameron 1972, 132.

[190] The use of a catechism alongside the Bible was to help children hold together image and idea. The history of Israel, often referred to in the Psalms, shaped 'the tools that the mind requires' (Torrance 1959, xxviii-xxx).

[191] Cameron 1972, 55.

[192] Cameron 1972, 55.

The Reformers were not democratic in a modern political sense, nor were the Covenanters,[193] unlike the later Keir Hardie.[194] But their belief in our equality before God certainly nourished what was later called the 'democratic intellect'.[195] While they generally argued from other Bible passages,[196] the psalms they sang nourished their minds as well as their hearts.[197]

It was the provision of a vernacular Psalter which enabled this new sense of equality before God, without needing priest or king. Susan Gillingham comments that translation brings 'a new kind of democratisation, in that anyone who reads or hears and memorises a psalm in their own language may now creatively use it' – but it also nourishes the potential for dispute: the Greek and Latin versions gave a sense of continuity, whereas vernacular versions mean there is no longer a common practice of liturgy.[198] However, the Scottish Psalter of 1650 would remain in use until the later half of the 20th century,[199] after which the explosion of different translations of the Bible in the 20th century became a factor in de-familiarising English speakers with the language of the Psalms.

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[193] The Covenanters were no more political democrats than were the Reformers. But in the words of J.H.S. Burleigh, 'Political liberty was not their ideal. Nevertheless they contributed not a little to its ultimate attainment' (Burleigh 1960, 256).

[194] Caroline Benn, *Keir Hardie*, Random House, London 1992, 258-9, 429.

[195] 'Reformed Scotland also expressed . . . the idea of the "democratic intellect"; not because Presbyterianism is pure democracy, for it isn't, but because it expressed the Christian concept of equality in the sight of God' (R.D. Kernohan, *The Realm of Reform*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1999, 13).

[196] Knox's advice on reading the Bible as an individual and in small groups is contained in James S. McEwen, *The Faith of John Knox*, Lutterworth, London 1961, 35f., who alludes to 'Knox's practice of extracting political theory from the Hebrew prophets' (page 40).

[197] Knox himself 'passed through' the psalms once every month, and psalm singing took place even outside of church services (J.A. Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship*, Faith Press, London 1962, 155).

[198] Gillingham 2008, 146.

[199] https://www.churchservicesociety.org/sites/default/files/journals/1938-1939-43-56.pdf.

Chapter 6 The Psalms and Scottish Identity – the Poet as Prophet

> 'I will open my mouth in a parable;
> I will utter dark sayings from of old,
> things that we have heard and known,
> that our ancestors have told us.' (Psalm 78:2-3)
>
> Rahner's conviction that God's self-communication was at the heart of human existence as an invisible and inexpressible mystery served as a gloss on Bremond's insight that the poetic gift corresponds in the natural order to what the prophetic gift stands for in the supernatural.[1]

In *Phaedrus*, Socrates distinguishes 'telestic madness' (about the past), 'mantic madness' (about the future) and 'poetic madness' (about past and future).[2] Some words, according to Leavitt, are so powerful 'they are attributed to superhuman agency and called prophecy', some are so beautiful and moving 'they are attributed to a special gift of the speaker and called poetry'.[3]

In this chapter I will consider the nature of prophecy, examine the idea of national identity, and continue from the last chapter discussing how the Psalms have given Scotland a sense of national identity through a link with OT Israel. Then a last section will introduce a number of tensions that Scots still live with, before the final chapter looks more explicitly at Scotland today.

I continue to use my own poetry to illumine past and future, as the Psalms themselves do.

6.1 Prophecy Now and Then

In *The Prophetic Imagination* Walter Brueggemann says three things about the prophet which relate to poetry and national identity:

[1] Knox and Took 2015, 5.

[2] Leavitt 1997, 3.

[3] Leavitt 1997, 3.

> (a) 'The task of prophetic ministry is to . . . evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.'[4]
>
> (b) The task of prophetic imagination is 'to bring to public expression those very hopes and yearnings that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we no longer know they are there.'[5]
>
> (c) 'Prophetic ministry consists of offering an alternative perception of reality and in letting people see their own history in the light of God's freedom and his will for justice'.[6]

These tasks mean remembering what is in danger of being lost, helping people see the present in a different way, bringing together the new (the alternative) and the old (the forgotten), both of which are celebrated in the poetry of the Psalms, and challenge the art of the contemporary poet.[7]

6.1.1 – Frailty and Risk

However, poets are frail, as Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh admits:

> I would like to be like Moses,
> inscribing the words of God;
> but a stone tablet would break my plastic pen.[8]

Not only that, but prophecy deals with risk:

> There is only the choice between fire and ice.
> Our own planet is delicately poised between fire and ice.
> Scotland, there is nothing for you but fire or ice.
> Freedom is fire. Bondage is ice.

Leadership is a theme of Chapters 5 to 7, and leaders behind their public image are frail, and try to avoid risk. When Michael Symmons Roberts portrays the psalmist king, David, as 'an old man with lungs like empty glasses', with 'the detritus of another Christmas' around him,[9] there is a prophetic edge to that

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[4] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, SCM Press, London 1978, 13.

[5] Brueggemann 1978, 67.

[6] Brueggemann 1978, 110.

[7] As in Robert Crawford, 'Scotland' (Gifford and Riach 2004, 228).

[8] This and the following quotation are from Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh, 'The Midge', being the English translation of *'A' Mheanbhchuileag'.* Gaelic version first published by Gairm 1980. English first published in *Cencrastus,* Autumn 1982.

[9] 'Portrait of the Psalmist as an Old Man', Roberts 2013, 16.

portrait of a leader which the Psalms themselves acknowledge as they bid farewell to the line of David.[10] As Hayim Bialik wrote, referencing Psalm 137:

> And from then till now there's no king in Yeshurun,
> no king – no harp and no music.
> My lyre is the sound of weeping, my harp like a dove
> sighs on the riverbeds of Babylon.[11]

Poem 74 'Identity Theft' recognises our frailty, the risk that we forget our history or have it stolen from us, or that (as in Psalm 28:1) God may turn silent. 'Our flags have gone / from mast and heart / and no one knows / the past . . .'

6.1.2 Land and Spirituality

To explore that frail national identity is risky and heroic, and as with Israel, means taking the *land* of Scotland seriously. From MacDiarmid's 'Farewell to Dostoevski',[12] Alastair McIntosh cited the snow which 'gathers there in drift on endless drift, / Our broken hearts that it can never fill' when he addressed the Russian Academy of Sciences on renewal of cultural identity. He spoke of 'the spirituality of nationhood', and how MacDiarmid saw that vested in the land.[13]

1 'Temple Garden' refers to 'our subway roots' which 'know the truth of good and evil'. It is there, unseen, that the life of a nation is nourished or starved, and the poet as prophet waits,[14] listening to what is deep in the soil.[15] The poet is frail, but the word is strong, addressed to the land and the people on it.[16]

In the time of the OT, there was the land of Israel and the land of 'the nations'. Today we have the land of Scotland, and not only the nations but a solar system where travel is starting to be possible. *28 'Pinnacle or Pi*t' uses a space capsule on its way to the sun as metaphor for the journey of life, and the risk that this

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[10] The view that Psalm 146 represents 'David laying down his crown' (after 132:18) is discussed by David Willgren in Pajunen and Penner 2017, 220. See also 6.2.2.

[11] From 'To the Legend', Hadari 2000, 16.

[12] From 'The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', lines 2228-9.

[13] McIntosh 2000, 9-14.

[14] Psalm 130:5.

[15] Psalm 1:2-3.

[16] As with Jeremiah 22:29, 'O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord!' – a counterpart to Jeremiah 7:4, 'Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord".'

might end up burnt out in a pit of silent flame, instead of reaching the pinnacle of heaven.

Land lies in the background of this chapter, and 7.1.3 will return to it.

6.2 The Psalms and National Identity

The OT as a whole has been influential.[17] What Adrian Hastings said in his Belfast Wiles Lectures (focused generally on *English* nationhood), is also true of Scotland. He said that the Bible provided for the Christian world the original model of the nation, and that 'the world is a society of nations originally "imagined" through the mirror of the Bible, Europe's primary textbook.'[18]

6.2.1 Then and Now

Hastings added that in Scotland, religion played 'no more than a subsidiary role' in forming identity.[19] He was writing in 1996, just as the modern Scottish Nationalist movement was on the upsurge, and religion was by then not the motivation of most protagonists.[20] The Psalms are seldom quoted by opinion formers today, unless at the funeral of a national figure like John Smith: on 20th May 1994 there was a reading of part of Psalm 121 as a preface to that service, and the singing of Psalm 23 in Gaelic.[21] Doug Gay's book *Honey from the Lion* has only one mention of the Psalms,[22] and Gay has to show the relevance of other OT texts in a contemporary world where 'civic discourse in Scotland and the UK is

[17] See also 5.3.

[18] Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, 185, 3-4.

[19] Hastings 1997, 185 – though he does admit that John Barbour saw Scottish resistance to the English in terms of the story of the Maccabees (195).

[20] Although Canon Kenyon Wright of the Scottish Episcopal Church was a leader of the 'Claim of Right' movement, and the Church of Scotland General Assembly consistently backed devolution – but always with the rider 'within the UK'.

[21] Information supplied by Derek Browning, the minister concerned.

[22] A reference to communal singing of Psalm 100 at the first Scottish Assembly in 1999. While the psalm, Gay writes, has its own 'claims about origins and esteem', by 2004 at the opening of Holyrood the psalmody was 'safely hidden in Gaelic' (Gay 2013, 112-13).

becoming less hospitable to books that address public policy questions from an explicitly theological angle'.[23]

The OT in popular understanding has now merged with ancient heritage in a way inconceivable to those living before 1900. It is now possible in the Church of Scotland (though not in the Scottish Episcopal or Roman Catholic Churches) to attend public worship without hearing or singing OT or Psalms. This 'dilution' of public worship reflects a tension in the Third Declaratory Article of the Church of Scotland, where the Church calls itself 'a national Church representative of the Christian faith of the Scottish people'.[24] Since the proportion of Scots professing the Christian religion has declined,[25] there is a tension between representing 'Christian faith' and representing 'the beliefs of the Scottish people',[26] which are now plural.[27]

The Psalms, like the Bible itself, reflect these two identities: Israel as the one divinely called nation, and Israel among the nations – and sometimes in combination, as when Israel is suffering uniquely among the nations. Many psalms focus on the purist identity: 147:20, God 'has not dealt thus with any other nation', but the opening and closing 'hallelujah' set it in the middle of a sequence of five poems, three of which are universalist, not nationalist; so my *Poem 147 Jerusalem* recognises 'the rasp / of rivalry between the faiths/ that claim it'.

Other psalms are clear about both identities (145:9, God's compassion is 'over all that he has made'). I explore that psalm with an acrostic poem which references both 'the synagogue' and 'earth's tragedies', and includes the mediating 'value unsuspected without faith', with a reference to Wallace

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[23] Gay 2013, xii.

[24] https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/church_law/church_constitution (accessed 1/11/19).

[25] 65% in the 2001 Census, 54% in the 2011 Census.

[26] In the 2015 General Assembly a motion to change the Third Article was defeated (http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/3470/ga10_reports_specarticle.pdf, accessed 1/11/19).

[27] As shown by the 2011 Census of Religion in Scotland. Non-established churches, whether Roman Catholic or independent, do not have this tension, whether or not the beliefs of their adherents are pluriform.

Stevens and all the extra things which can be invented from a blackbird, signalling that God may begin with Israel, but does so much more in the world.

6.2.2 Multiple Identities

As there are these two identities in the Church of Scotland – one purist, one more pluralist – so there are at least two Scotlands, one independent, the other more comfortable with a dual identity (British and Scottish), and we live today with the tension between them.[28] Ascherson went on to cite Walter Scott, for whom 'Scottish history was only safe when it was certain that the beast's limbs, the Cameronian tradition for example, had finally lost the power of movement . . . Live Scottish history was to be feared.'[29]

Scott was conservative and wanted to resolve peacefully the antinomies he recognised in his novels about the past. He was in fact mirroring the editors of the Psalms, who celebrated David when his kingdom was dead, and supported second temple religion under foreign rule.[30] 1 Maccabees 7:16-17 might be cited against this; [31] it links Psalm 79:2-3 from the Septuagint, concerning the suffering of the Exile, with the murder of martyrs in the 2nd century BCE; more assertively, Psalms of Solomon 17 'recalls psalms about the protection of the Davidic king in Psalms 2, 89 and 132 and applies them to the impending punishment on the Roman nation after the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 64 BCE'.[32] But generally the Psalms themselves simply complain (as 73 and 74). In the time of Jesus the authorities, unlike the Zealots, were quietist, and found the crowd's use of Psalm 118:26, as recorded in Matthew 21:9, threatening.

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[28] See David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland*, Routledge 1992, 201-15, or the iconoclastic Momus, *The Book of Scotlands*, Luath Press, Edinburgh 2018, or Sylvia Warner's review of MacDiarmid's *Lucky Poet*: 'a considerable tradition of being two nations' (Bold 1988, 390).

[29] Ascherson 1988, 64.

[30] Books 1-2 of the Psalms deliberately terminate 'the prayers of David son of Jesse'; the Asaph Psalms of Book 3 reflect the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and hark back to Moses and Aaron with a modest acknowledgment of David at the close of Psalm 78; in Books 4 and 5, religion is more about God, Mount Zion and the temple. See also 6.1.1.

[31] Gillingham 2008, 11-12. Verse 1 of the psalm complains that the nations have defiled God's holy temple, a central Maccabean concern.

[32] Gillingham 2008, 12.

6.2.3 Prophetic Poetry

The poet as prophet has to make choices. The Psalms can be left safely in their historical period, or made relevant to the present day – whether this is commended as 'reading out' or criticised as 'reading in'. Again, such relevance can be restricted to personal life, or extended to the life of Scotland.[33]

Typically, as in Psalm 2, the *nations* conspire against God – but their rulers are enjoined to be wise (Psalm 2:10), and Israel is instructed to live in a way that encourages other nations to recognise God (18:43-44, 98:2-3, 115:2). The nations will be judged (Psalm 9), but there is some hope that one day all nations will be blessed by God (22:27, 36:7).[34] Can poetry link this to Scotland?

Book 2 poems suggest that David is a 'type' for Robert the Bruce, and this was teased out in 5.3.2. *Poem 142 'In the Cave'* asks 'Who is in the cave with David / and his band of desperadoes?' In stanza 3, the question is turned round, 'Who is in the Scottish cave . . . ? and implies that David (and other 'real and phantom figures') huddle with us, and if David, then at least the psalms linked with him.

Although Psalm 33 has no superscription, it may well be part of Psalm 32,[35] which is 'a *maskil* of David'.[36] Psalm 33, like many psalms combines praise with judgment; so *33 'Judgment'* also does this, but judgment there has an immediate reference (to relations between the British and Irish nations) and an ultimate reference ('where bowling / is not cricket / as we know it'). Prophecy, like poetry, works with more than one layer of meaning.

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[33] An older example of the potential and need for both is in the Foreword by Daniel Jenkins to Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, SCM Press, London 1963; a newer one is in a discussion of the call of Abraham, and who he must be 'bound to', in Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, Abingdon Press, Nashville 1996, 42.

[34] Paul was to develop this Jewish belief in Acts 17:24-27, if we bear in mind that 'nation' is closer in meaning to 'people' in those early times. This belief is linked to the work of Messiah in Ephesians 2:15, and specifically to Psalm 8:6 in Ephesians 1:22.

[35] Psalm 33:1 ties up with 32:11.

[36] A *maskil* is a contemplative poem, from its etymology one that is prudent, one that has insight. 'One shout' may have more of the latter than the former.

6.2.4 Speaking of God . . .

Poem 144 'Stuff' recognises the multiple images of God in the psalm, and in stanza 1 translates them into modern images, and the idea of a 'shape-shifting God'. Both personal and impersonal images are found within many psalms, and typically bridged with the concept of 'order speaking', as in Psalm 19:1, 'The heavens are telling the glory of God'. The word of God is linked with wisdom in Proverbs 8, and more generally with Torah, and thus is not simply a *fiat* but an ongoing feature of how the universe develops[37] with a word which is contemporary as well as ancient.[38]

The relevance of this is that the existence of nations is derived by Paul in Acts 17:26 from the creation of the first man. Paul has in mind Isaiah 42:5, which says that God 'gives breath to the people' upon the earth, but 'giving breath' is associated with creation in Genesis 2:7 and in Psalm 33:6: 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made / and all their host by the breath of his mouth'. By this time 'the nations' were familiar enough to feature strongly in Psalm 33:8-12, the nations at which God laughs in Psalm 2. Paul is not saying anything unfamiliar to the OT or the Book of Psalms.

National identity, then, is recognised in the Book of Psalms, even though its focus is almost entirely on the particular nation of Israel.[39] And language, as Adrian Hastings recognised,[40] is a powerful factor in shaping identity. We now need to see in more detail how this worked out in Scotland.

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[37] Georges Florovsky cites Metropolitan Philaret ('Address on the Occasion of the Recovery of the Relics of Patriarch Alexey', *Works,* Vol. 3, Moscow 1877, 436), who expounds 1 Peter 1:25, 'The word of the Lord endures forever' (which in turn is taken from Isaiah 40:8); Florovsky then links it to Psalm 93:1 (*Creation and Redemption*, Nordland, Belmont MA 1976, 45).

[38] Isaiah 55:11, Jeremiah 16:14-15, and the whole of Psalm 119.

[39] It is really only in the prophets, e.g. in Isaiah 42:6, that Israel is given a continued calling to bless other nations. In the Torah, after the early stories of creation and early peoples, the promise to all nations through Abraham (Genesis 12:3), and the promise to Ishmael (Genesis 21:18), Israel's calling becomes limited to verses like Deuteronomy 26:19, where Israel is to be set 'high above all nations'.

[40] Hastings 1997, 3, 186.

6.3 Israel and Scotland

6.3.1 Comparison and Covenant

Ever since Jesus called twelve apostles to match the twelve tribes,[41] ever since Paul compared the Christian journey to the journey of Israel through the wilderness,[42] people have tried to compare their own pilgrimage with the history of Israel[43] - though it is already happening in psalms like 44, 78, 90 and 105. Jewish communities make a whole series of connections with Torah (with the story as well as the teaching).[44] But the attempt to compare the story of one's nation with the story of Israel goes further than a spiritual exercise for the individual. Herbert Butterfield wrote, just after the 1939-45 War, that the history of the ancient Hebrews

> was fundamentally of the same texture as our own. There is ample evidence that in their own great days . . . they looked back upon their own distant past in the way in which we now look back to *them*; and in manifold ways they express the thought with which the twentieth century itself is so familiar – the longing of Psalm 44: 'We have heard with our ears, O God, and our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.'[45]

An early, but weak, attempt at such comparison was in the *Declaration of Arbroath*,[46] which put more emphasis on the mythical journey of Scots from Greater Scythia than on the OT. It did compare King Robert to 'another Maccabaeus or Joshua', but its ethical foundation was freedom from the English rather than covenant.

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[41] Luke 6:13 – see Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone*, SPCK, London 2001, 50, and more generally J.D.G. Dunn, *New Testament Theology*, Abingdon Press, Nashville 2009, 54.

[42] 1 Corinthians 10:1-6.

[43] Though the popular story of pilgrimage, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, is based on theology and morality, not the OT.

[44] Holz 1984, 17.

[45] Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History*, G. Bell and Sons, London 1949, 72.

[46] https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//research/declaration-of-arbroath/declaration-of-arbroath-transcription-and-translation.pdf, accessed 28/10/19.

A stronger example of is the belief that Scotland, like Israel, was a 'covenanted nation'.[47] Whereas James Cameron was content to say that 'a Protestant country, according to the Reformers, is one which agrees to live in conformity with *the Gospel*' (my italics), the chapter of the *First Book of Discipline* which he is considering specifically cites *a series of OT characters* as godly examples.[48]

Jane Dawson goes further. For Knox, the reintroduction of Roman Catholic worship in England 'was a breach of the covenant the kingdom had made with God' during the reign of Edward VI.[49] Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland* was designed to call the people of Scotland to embrace God's covenant.[50] Ironically, the 'Covenanters' a century later were less inclined to model Scotland on the OT, than to assert the 'crown rights of the Redeemer', what J.H.S. Burleigh calls 'their preposterous claim in the name of Christ to domineer over the civil state',[51] and others call simply standing against crown interference in church affairs.[52] But the idea of 'covenant' itself was an important political device which the Presbyterian elites of Scotland in the 17th century used against Charles I and his successors.[53] Anthony Smith 'observes how the Hebrew idea of a community formed through a unique covenant with God has carried over to numerous "Christian" nations'.[54]

Robert Allan (1774-1841) weeps for the 'halie covenant aith / We made wi our Gude to keep;' and therefore asks, 'O wha will gang to yon hill-side, / To sing the Psalm at een?'[55]

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[47] As discussed by Doug Gay in 'Theological Constructions of Scottish National Identity', in David Fergusson and Mark Elliott (eds.), *The History of Scottish Theology*, Vol. 3, Oxford University Press, London 2019, 288-302.

[48] James Cameron (ed.), *The First Book of Discipline*, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1972, 62.

[49] Jane Dawson, *John Knox*, Yale University Press, Newhaven 2015, 83.

[50] Dawson 2015, 8. In October 1559, when the 'war of the Congregation' was in crisis, Knox was preaching on Psalm 80 in Edinburgh and Stirling: 'O Lord God of hosts, / how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?' (Lord Eustace Percy, *John Knox*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1937).

[51] J.H.S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland*, Oxford University Press, London 1960, 256.

[52] Cameron 1993, 218.

[53] Jonathan Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2006, 86.

[54] Hearn 2006, 222, citing Anthony Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, 18.

[55] Bateman *et al*, 2000, 164.

This Thesis makes no claim that Scotland (or Britain) is specially chosen,[56] simply that just as the Psalms shaped the faith of Israel (and were no doubt shaped by it),[57] so the Psalms, when known and sung, shape the faith, and therefore influence the history, of other nations.[58] Jonathan Hearn points out that religions do not simply provide solace and sources of meaning, they are also 'profound meditations on the nature of power';[59] the Psalms from 2 onwards stress the overarching power of God, even more so in the later psalms which acknowledge the demise of the Davidic monarchy, leaving God alone as king.[60]

While there are references to the psalms, and concepts like temple, in Scottish literature (as illustrated in 3.6), English literature[61] is richer.[62] However, Scotland was closely connected in social and academic circles with England[63] (and the Continent), and so reference to English literature is appropriate.[64] For example, William Law (1686-1761) wrote a devotional book which commended

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[56] Isaac Watts published a translation of the Psalms in 1719 in which he rendered 'Israel' as 'Great Britain' – Nick Spencer, *The Evolution of the West*, SPCK, London 2016; Willie Jennings in Susan Felch (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Religion*, New York 2016, 252. An extreme version of this is the British Israelite Movement, with the belief that the British peoples are the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Israelism, accessed 14/10/19).

[57] 'In the Psalms, the celebration of salvation history, law, divine rule and wisdom all contribute to the shaping of Israel's faith' - David Fergusson in Duncan Forrester and Doug Gay (eds.), *Worship and Liturgy in Context*, SCM Press, London 2009, 67.

[58] *Poem 118 'Space Temple'* sees Blake, Luther, Gaudi and Samuelson and their nations in the 'broad place' of Psalm 118.

[59] Hearn 2006, 226-7.

[60] The clearest statement of this is actually in (the contemporary) Zechariah 14:9.

[61] This thesis does not consider Gaelic literature, except in a limited number of cases in translation.

[62] In Gillingham 2008 the author reports widely from Europe and the Middle East, as well as England, but up to 1900 the book has only two short references to Scotland and Scots (Knox, and Robert Burns' version of Psalm 1), though in the last chapter the Catholic priest James Quinn, and scholars Peter Craigie, William Barclay, George Knight and Robert Davidson are mentioned, along with the designer Alec Galloway, and composers James MacMillan and Kenneth Leighton.

[63] Scottish nobles had land holdings in England at least as early as the 12th century, and when there was peace between the kingdoms, the church authorities communicated (Michael Lynch, *Scotland, A New History*, Pimlico, London 1991, 91, 93). In 1303 Alexander Bruce (King Robert's brother) graduated from Cambridge and in 1306 he was Dean of Glasgow (Michael Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, Yale University Press, London 2014, 49).

[64] The first Psalter in English authorised for use in Scotland (1564) was begun in England, continued in Geneva, completed in Scotland. Of the eight or nine contributors, three were Scots – Thomas Young, *The Metrical Psalms and Paraphrases*, A & C. Black, London 1909, 24-31 gives 8, but 9 are given in https://www.churchservicesociety.org/sites/default/files/journals/1938-1939-43-56.pdf, accessed 11/9/19.

not only using a number of psalms in daily devotion, but actually singing or chanting them.[65]

6.3.2 The Psalms and Scottish Nationhood

Psalm 144 ends with: 'Happy are the people to whom such blessings fall / happy are the people whose God is the Lord'; Psalm 33:12 gives us 'Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord / the people whom he has chosen as his heritage'. In the former and in the second half of the latter, *yām* is translated 'people', in the first half of the latter, *gôi* is translated 'nation'. However, *yām* includes in its meaning something of what we understand by nation.[66]

Although early Scotland was made up of different peoples,[67] the medieval understanding of a nation was of a people who obeyed a king, rather than an ethnic community with a single language[68] - just as the Psalms show Israel gathered first around the king of Israel,[69] then when the Davidic kingdom failed, as a people who acknowledged Yahweh as king.[70] Likewise in Scotland, the nation was gathered around the medieval kings – three of whom were children of the Margaret who was made a saint – then when kingship was shared with England in 1603, and subsequently entered a period of conflict over ideas of government (initially argued around religion and later around democracy), new ideas of national identity emerged which are still in dispute.[71]

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[65] William Law, *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, J.M. Dent, London 1906 (orig. 1728), chapter XV.

[66] See the entries in Gesenius and Robinson 1962 – although there remains a scholarly controversy over whether 'nation' is an ancient or a modern concept.

[67] Lynch 1991, 1-39.

[68] Dauvit Broun, in Geoffrey Barrow (ed.), *The Declaration of Arbroath*, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 2003, 3-5.

[69] As in the framing Psalm 72.

[70] As in Psalms 95 – 99.

[71] These range from the 'Christian vision' of William Storrar in *Scottish Identity*, Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1990 – which ends with a twist to MacDiarmid's lines, 'She canna Scotland see wha yet / canna see the Christ / and Scotland in true scale to him' (with 'the Christ' substituted for 'the Infinite') – to the McIlvanney joke, 'Having a national identity is a bit like having an old insurance policy, you know you've got one somewhere but you're not sure where it is' (cited in Stephen Maxwell, *Arguing for Independence*, Luath Press, Edinburgh 2012, 27).

Doug Gay contrasts two ideas of national identity illustrated in 20th century South Africa – the racist National Party, and the African National Congress.[72] The former built on the experience of the great Boer trek, when the Boers identified themselves with the children of Israel on their journey to the Promised Land, and saw the Xhosa people as Amalekites to be exterminated.[73] Although the books of Ezra and Nehemiah appear outright racist,[74] the book of Psalms is inclusive in the same limited sense as the book of Ruth, in that the rule of Yahweh and the fellowship of Israel may be enjoyed by people of any and every nation, and that all nations will one day acknowledge that rule.[75]

6.3.3 The Use of Typology

In my Book 2 poetry, I am not only putting side by side David and Robert the Bruce, but the land of Israel and the land of Scotland. This has precedent. Adrian Hastings refers to both Bede and Barbour seeing 'an Old Testament style providential role' in how they understood their respective nations of England and Scotland.[76] Here are four other examples of Scotland being identified with Israel:

(a) The ambition of James VI and I was to reunite the offices of king and psalmist.[77] In Scotland James attempted to restore Song Schools on a civic basis in 1579.[78] James Doelman comments more generally:

> In what a contemporary described as 'his almost private and studious days in Scotland', James had shown his avid interest in theology by

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[72] Doug Gay, *Honey from the Lion*, SCM Press, London 2013, 77-8.

[73] Exodus 17:8-18, and the unpublished New College lectures of Andrew Ross in 1971. See also Erna Oliver, 'Afrikaner spirituality: A complex mixture', https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/viewFile/148525/138026 accessed 15/10/19, which cites G.H. Calpin, *There are no South Africans*, Thomas Nelson, London 1944, 17: 'The Old Testament stands Bible to the Afrikaner; this nation has been described as the modern counterpart of an Old Testament tribe'.

[74] For example, Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 13:23-30, though these actions would have been justified at the time by arguing that the foreign wives worshipped other gods.

[75] Goldingay 2007, 637 interprets Psalm 87:4 as a verse of 'consternation to the Israelite immigration officials!' While Psalms like 8, 15, 22, 65, 67, 107 allow that people of all nations will worship Yahweh, who rescues the poor and the needy, other OT passages like 2 Kings 5:17-19 are more generous to non-Israelites.

[76] Hastings 1997, 195-6.

[77] Prothero 1903, 142.

[78] Stephen Holmes in Anderson *et al*. 2015, 63. Song Schools existed before the Reformation – Patrick 1949, xx – and later focused on singing psalms in the vernacular.

> writing biblical commentaries or meditations. Both Scottish and English poets called attention to James's poetic vocation, claiming that James would be remembered as a poet rather than as a king.[79]

He is best known for the quality of the King James Version of the Bible, translated by the best scholars of the day (with a balance of Puritans and Churchmen) - a Bible whose Psalm versions were used in the 1637 Prayer Book which caused a riot in Edinburgh St Giles. James was also notorious for royal attempts to gain control of the Church in Scotland, and influence its worship, which culminated in the time of his son Charles I and his attempt to impose that particular prayer book.[80] But the Stuart interpretation of the OT model of king as worship leader (Psalm 144:1, 9, 15) failed in its 17th century Scottish context.

(b) Murray Pittock argues that groups like the Jacobites saw the OT as a model for a Scotland with the true king:

> Typological history does not evolve along timescales: it takes a mythic or remote historical era and glorifies it either to lament its passing or lament [*sic*] its return. The prophets of ancient Israel provide one of the clearest examples of typological history in action, with the nation's past covenant with God always being betrayed and always renewed . . .[81]

This is congruent with Book 3 Psalms like 78, and verses like 74:20, 77:8, 79:5 and 80:7.

William Hamilton, a Jacobite, was born in 1704 in Scotland and died in France in 1754. In 1747, when he was a captain in Prince Charles Edward Stuart's 'Lifeguards', he wrote 'an imitation of the 137th Psalm' which is in the National Library of Scotland and cited by Nelson Bushnell,[82]

> On Gallia's shore we sat and wept,
> when Scotland we thought on,
> Rob'd of her bravest Sons, and all

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[79] 'The Accession of King James I and English Religious Poetry', https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/stable/pdf/450784.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_SYC-4631%2Fcontrol&refreqid=search%3Afa7500ab8bcfb01a2f731aac5315855f, accessed 15/10/19.

[80] William D. Maxwell, *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland*, Oxford University Press, London 1955, 82-86. The King 'aspired to be head of the Church as Henry VIII had been' (Searle 2019, xix).

[81] Murray Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, 10.

[82] Nelson Bushnell, *William Hamilton of Bangour*, Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen 1957, 83.

her ancient Spirit gone.

Gallia is France, not Babylon. Later stanzas refer to the French attempt to enlist exiled Jacobites against the English force in the Netherlands, and use Psalm 137 to denounce the French failure to support the 1745 campaign effectively.

Referring to Scottish Jacobite song, Pittock speaks of 'its own underground continuance through biblical typology'. In doing so, the sacred song referred back to the Royalist ideal of a Davidic king and forward to a second Stuart coming: it was 'a millenarian voice for royalty': 'Have Israel's nor Judah's men no thought / that David should be over Jordan brought?'[83] In the '*Taorluath* Doubling' of '*The Iolaire*', 'kingship energy renewed' hints at Jacobitism.

(c) John Murdoch edited The Highlander, a weekly in Inverness. He pushed for land reform in the 1870s and 1880s, comparing land reform not only to the liberation of the Israelites from Pharaoh but to 'the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel to Palestine'.[84]

(d) In a late 20th century Gaelic poem, '*An Tuagh'* / 'The Axe', Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh uses 49 lines to set up a battle encounter on a national scale, linking the axe with which Bruce slew de Bohun to the slaying of Goliath, and then suddenly ends his poem:[85]

but your axe was broken, O King
and a replacement we have yet to find

thus linking the current crisis in Scotland's identity not only with medieval Scotland, but with the crisis in Israel's life, where books 4 and 5 of the Psalms reflect the change from trust in a Davidic king to trust in something bigger, yet still to come.

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[83] Pittock 1994, 143.

[84] MacColl 2006, 83, citing *The Highlander* of 13 Oct 1877, 6.

[85] Michael Davitt and Ian MacDonald (eds.), *Sruth na Maoile*, Canongate, Edinburgh 1993, 110-113.

6.4 Later Scotland - Tension

Before we apply that prophetic perspective to Scotland today, we look at a fourth and broader period in Scotland's past, to bring out some tensions that have shaped Scotland.

The identification with Israel waned after the Reformation era. And while OT tropes continued powerful for individuals, their wider use was not the same for different areas, or for different people. Some people blamed it all on John Knox:

> O Knox he was a bad man / he split the Scottish mind.
> The one half he made cruel / and the other half unkind.

But Alan Bold commented on Alan Jackson's lines, 'Knox did nothing of the kind, though the identification of one man with all the ills of the nation is symptomatic of national uncertainty.'[86] It would be truer to say that there are two Scotlands, which can be illustrated in many sectors of national life;[87] many of the contrasts are pointed,[88] but just five will be considered here.

6.4.1 Highland and Lowland

The first clear statement of distinction between Highlands and Lowlands is by John of Fordun in the late 14th century, contrasting the 'wild untamed Highlanders' with the 'civilised and trustworthy inhabitants of coasts and plains'.[89] There was a long tradition of anti-Highland satire in poetry and song.[90] This denigration of the Highlands reached its apogee with the Battle of Culloden, in spite of the fact that many Highlanders fought on the Government side against the Jacobites. In the aftermath, the wearing of tartan was proscribed in the Disarming Act of 1746, since tartan carried a meaning beyond its design.[91] This

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[86] Alan Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature*, Longman, London 1983, 8.

[87] Scotland could in some ways be said to be 'sectioned', with the restraint this pun implies, which affects the welfare of the nation today.

[88] For example the query, 'Would an Edinburgh God forgive Glaswegians?' (Tom Somerville, 'An Edinburgh God', *New Writing Scotland* 31, 2013).

[89] McLeod and Newton 2019, 23.

[90] Devine 2012, 232, referring to caricature in the works of William Dunbar and Sir Richard Holland.

[91] Brown 2010, 6.

fear of the Jacobites and their culture was not transformed until the royal visit of King George IV in 1822.[92]

The lack of status of Gaelic (and Scots) compared to English was a continuing part of this denigration. Literacy in English was prized much more highly. By the 1609 'Statutes of Iona' the key Highland chiefs had agreed to send their heirs to be educated in the Lowlands. Fionn MacColla writes of leadership failure in the clan, linking this to the pain of the (later) Scottish Clearances:[93] one of his characters, Mac 'Ic Eachainn, betrays his clansmen for the profits from sheep, *because he has learned to think in English*.[94] In parallel, David Daiches writes of the paradox of Scottish culture,

> The flourishing of intellectual life in the Scottish Enlightenment alongside the abandonment of the Scots language as the literary elite's preferred medium for thought – a 'disassociation of sensibility' in T.S. Eliot's apposite phrase.[95]

MacDiarmid was to use Scots, and to argue the case for restoring Gaelic,[96] but both languages are still at risk today. Bands like Capercaillie and Runrig, when they underline that 'Gaelic endures', do so by linking that language with Scottish history and Bible themes. One purpose of Capercaillie's album *Glenfinnan* is to 'retrace the steps of those who came down from these mountains to follow Prince Charles Edward Stuart', and the track 'Gaelic Psalm Tune' features part of Psalm 46, which contrasts the shaking mountains of earth with the home of God and its divine river.[97] In their Gaelic Song '*An Ubhal As Àirde*' ('The Highest Apple'), Runrig connects the listener with Gaelic Psalms through nature and 'a picture of the Garden of Eden that unfolds before his eyes'.[98]

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[92] Devine 2012, 235.

[93] Affecting *communities* - the word is used in a personal sense by Seamus Heaney as he considers Psalm 42:1-4 ('Clearances' 6, Curzon 1994, 279).

[94] Fionn MacColla, *And the Cock Crew*, Souvenir Press, Glasgow 1962, 71.

[95] David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: the eighteenth century experience*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1964, 21-2.

[96] Bold 1988, 26.

[97] Schröder 2015, 12, citing Liner Notes from *Glenfinnan* (songs of the '45), 6. The thesis indicates that the music is part of a global flow of 'goods, technologies, political, economic and artistic principles' (Schröder 2015, 7), and thus part of a dynamic culture, not nostalgic.

[98] Schröder 2015, 13.

The prophet Ezekiel links the fall of the king of Tyre with tropes of both the Garden of Eden and the mountain of God.[99] Leadership failure is of course a theme of the OT prophets, and some of the Psalms.[100] *Poem 82 'Something Good'* speaks of 'clan chiefs bewitched by betterment', and raises the deeper question, in a culture ruled by the sovereignty of God: 'It seems God failed'; 'the black, black oil of underground theology . . . pumped predestined poison into venal veins'.[101]

The 'failure of leadership' by Highland chiefs and clergy alike during the Clearances is not straightforward, nor is the Highland-Lowland tension in the Free Church which delayed their union with the United Presbyterian Church by 30 years till 1900.[102] Allan MacColl nuances the 'passive obedience' view of calvinist orthodoxy with evidence that especially within the evangelicalism of the Free Church, a theory of social protest grew which bore fruit in the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act of 1886.[103]

The Psalms provided a structure of lament, especially Psalm 137. Donald Meek illustrates how Highlanders applied this to their relatives abroad.[104] And for those who rejected the quietism of orthodox religion, Psalms like 83 and 137 offered a model for their longing for revenge.

Clearances took place in the Lowlands as well as the Highlands[105] – but were less painful because migration to the cities was easier, and so did not become part of the folklore.[106] And while many books focus on the fault line between 'Highland'

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[99] Ezekiel 28:11-19.

[100] For example, the Psalms of Asaph (especially 81 and 82).

[101] But in the Lowlands Calvinism did not always have this effect – it could 'at least sometimes, nourish literature' – Jaidelska 2015, 88. See also the Introduction and chapter 1 of Kernohan 1999.

[102] MacColl 2006, 89.

[103] MacColl 2006, 3, 103-8.

[104] Wright 1988, 182; MacColl 2006, 111.

[105] Oliver 2009, 363.

[106] Devine 2018, 8-9.

and 'Lowland', Jhon the Comoun Weill in his 'Compleynt of the Comoun Weill of Scotland' says he is treated equally badly in both regions![107]

The Bible itself was not translated into Gaelic till the later 18th century, so the Psalms were received as items to be sung. They were first printed in English *with their tunes* in Edinburgh in 1564, but not in metre in Gaelic till 1659 (with all 150 in 1694), so there was oral transmission – however, the metre used for the Gaelic translation was Scottish ballad metre, which is alien to Gaelic, so the tunes were sung in a different way altogether.[108]

Psalm-singing in the Highlands and Lowland developed, and perhaps also declined, in different ways. In the Lowlands the Reformation era was followed by a century of stagnation, and then the growth of a choir movement with four-part psalm singing in the late 18th century, stimulated by the new appreciation of classical music from the European continent.[109] In Gaelic for the most part only six 'long tunes' were in use, according to Joseph Mainzer, a musicologist who came over from Germany 1842-47; they were basically an ornamented version of the original tunes given in the metrical Psalter, 'the melody twining around the notes of its Psalter original like a Celtic knot-pattern'.[110]

Since the peak membership of the 1960s, psalm-singing has dwindled along with the decline of churches, but in the Highlands there was a particular bone of contention, the insistence that only the voice could accompany the Psalms. Angus Campbell (1903-72) in his autobiography *Rounding Many Headlands* wrote:

> Today we see the extent of the legacy that was lost in the beauty, elegance and diversity of our music, and all that exchanged for a cold, heavy-hearted, depressing religion that closed off every kind of music and musical instinct – except for the Psalms of David. It was a source of amazement that David himself always wanted to praise God with every manner of musical instrument.[111]

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[107] Gifford and Riach 2004, 38.

[108] F. Collinson, *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1966, 261. This is presumably why Purser says that 'Gaelic psalm singing . . . developed partly as a result of a conflict between the Gaelic language and the metrical psalms in English' (Purser 2007, 18). Patrick 1949 gives only four lines to Gaelic psalm-singing.

[109] Patrick 1949, chapter 14.

[110] Collinson 1966, 262-3.

[111] McLeod and Newton 2019, 703.

The 'Ground' of *Psalm Poem 90* recognises that tragedy can also shut down creativity: 'while we had lost the wounded words / pulled our fingers from the chanter / placed our fiddles in the closet', with 'our fury burned up in the psalms', following the loss of the *Iolaire*.

In English, there are now several new versions of the Psalms, as well as John Bell's *Psalms of Patience, Protest and Praise*: for example *Psalms for All Seasons* (the American Baker Press); and *Sing Psalms* (the Free Church of Scotland) – but nothing comparable in Gaelic (which has of course a tiny market).[112]

6.4.2 Free Church and Established Church

These two bodies were in outright competition for space, for members, for influence, from the Disruption in 1843 (see 6.4.3.1).[113] It was a tension which undermined the claim of the Church of Scotland to be the national church, though the rivalry boosted the importance of religion in the short term, with provision of new buildings, manses and a new emphasis on overseas mission.[114]

The tensions have been described in various ways. Highland versus Lowland certainly; while about half the ministers left the Highland synods at the Disruption, the great majority of church members joined the Free Church.[115] 'Established' versus 'not the State Church', yes – but with the Acts of 1921 and 1925, the Church of Scotland became free in a way it was not in 1843. A tension of theologies, to a degree, but better stated as purist versus pluralist (see 6.2.2).

Otherwise it was straight competition. Both churches welcomed learning and culture. One might think that the former represented 'public space', the latter 'private space', but (a) both claimed that God was concerned with all life,[116] and

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[112] There are new resources on digital media, for example, the 'crossover' CD 'Salm and Soul' from the Celtic Connections festival - https://www.musicscotland.com › cd › salm-soul-live-at-celtic-connections, accessed 1/12/19.

[113] A rending of the temple, according to Smout 1986, 188.

[114] See Burleigh 1960, 352-8.

[115] MacColl 2006, 21.

[116] A.C. Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk*, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1983, 21.

(b) Thomas Chalmers insisted that 'they went out on the establishment principle'.[117] Both denominations thereafter were in competition for public influence and adherents, and the Free Church erected its own buildings – 'temples' competing in size with the older churches[118] – neither thinking of religion as restricted to a private sphere of life. That concept only becomes widespread from the secularisation of Scotland in the 1960s.[119]

A significant contrast is in the place, and the way of singing, of psalms. For members of the Free Church, the Psalms (along with the Bible) were a unique focus of spirituality – whereas this would be true of only a small minority in the Church of Scotland. Worship practice is a key to this (see 4.2.2), as in the Free Church normally only psalms are sung.[120]

6.4.3 Public and Private

In general, medieval Scotland was religious, modern Scotland is secular, but the terms are vague.[121] Outside the modern Scottish Parliament, Psalm 19:14 is carved into the building along with other famous words from the past; some in the chamber would see this merely as a tribute to the past, others might indeed pray their words be acceptable to God. Which is why the word 'pluralist' is preferable to secular.[122] But where that includes having no religion, religion is privatised.

Lesslie Newbigin used the expression 'public truth' in the context of his realist theological position,[123] and 'the public square' was popularised in a book written

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[117] Burleigh 1960, 354.

[118] The word was used occasionally, e.g. for City Temple in London, or when Patrick Geddes produced a design for a Baha'i temple in 1922.

[119] Steve Bruce, *Scottish Gods: Religion in Modern Scotland*, 1900-2012, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2014, 107-110. Of course, in any age there may be pietists who do so restrict it.

[120] Since 2010, it has been permissible to use instruments and hymns, provided at least one praise item in a service is a psalm, but most congregations to date have stuck to tradition.

[121] Rowan Williams considers them in detail in *Faith in the Public Square*, Bloomsbury, London 2012.

[122] Which has other uses, like 'secular clergy', or 'secular stagnation theory' in economics.

[123] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life*, Oxford University Press, New York 2000, 72.

by Richard Newhaus,[124] which looked at culture, politics and religion in America in the 1980s. The Reformed 'Church of Scotland' which succeeded the medieval Church, saw religion as public as well as private.[125] As with the use of the Psalms by Second Temple Judaism, public prayer creates and confirms identity.[126]

6.4.3.1 Church Architecture

Alexander Thomson believed that theology and architecture were inseparable.[127] When in his Haldane Lectures Thomson said,

> The Creator has not clothed with beauty the world which he has given us for a habitation, or filled the Heavens over our heads with glory, without also imposing on us the duty of pondering over these things and laying them to heart,[128]

he was citing Psalm 111:2, and the sense of Psalms 8 and 104. Thomson saw his famous Glasgow church as public architecture, in a public space, as was the Jewish temple to which pilgrims went up.[129]

In Edinburgh, Patrick Geddes shared Thomson's desire to translate theology into the right kind of use of public space. He wanted 'nothing less than a fresh synthesis between culture and democracy'.[130] He acquired the Outlook Tower in 1892, and set it up to show Edinburgh's position alongside the 'vast scale of the universe' – with 'its concentric approach to geography, from local to regional to national to global'.[131]

Poem 18 'The Nature of God' picks up this move from one extreme to the other, like Geddes and Thomson with the universal and local, to synthesise the greatness and intimacy of God, 'You rode the dark / and bent the sky . . . You

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[124] Eerdmans, 1984.

[125] For example, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is still attended by a representative of the reigning monarch.

[126] Marc Zvi Brettler in Pajunen and Penner 2017, 281f.

[127] Gavin Stamp (ed.), *The Light of Truth and Beauty – Lectures of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson 1817-1872*, The Alexander Thomson Society, Glasgow 1999, 3.

[128] Stamp 1999, 116.

[129] As in the 'Songs of Ascents', Psalms 120-134.

[130] Walter Stephen (ed.), *Think Global, Act Local: the Life and Legacy of Patrick Geddes*, Luath, Edinburgh 2004, 54.

[131] Stephen 2004, 89, cf. Smout 1986, 56.

made a mark / upon my map'. The psalm itself covers Geddes' four circles in vv. 16, 19, 43, and 6.

6.4.3.2 The University

1.1 indicated an affinity with Newman's vision for a university. People today believe that universities are secular institutions; Newman held that too – but he meant simply an institution not controlled by the Church, one that taught a variety of subjects; rather, he argued that without theology,

> the curriculum will disintegrate into a fragmented multiplicity of disciplines, each . . . claiming autonomy in its own sphere. Some will of course draw on each other (as physics does on mathematics), but there will be no conception of a whole to which each discipline contributes a part.[132]

For Newman, knowledge of God is a part of our secular knowledge. Of course, he was well aware that belief in God is contestable, simply because of the nature of who God is – there are arguments for believing in God, but they are always open to debate. While the Psalms take a robust view of unbelief (e.g. 14:1), their thought is Hebrew and not Greek, that is, unbelief is not something intellectual so much as practical – behaving as if there was no God. There is therefore no such thing as a 'secular' sphere where God's writ does not run.

Psalm 108 is a psalm with its own robust view of sacred and secular: the psalmist will sing praises to God 'among the nations', that is, among the people who are not specially chosen as a people holy to the Lord; while in his sanctuary, God promises judgment on the outside nations. Psalm 139 likewise declares there is no 'private space' where God is not. The form of *139 'Convenient Fiction'* is therefore a sestina, where the same words recur in every verse, and an instrumentalist view of God is rejected in favour of critical realism:[133]

> Is it science, art, to class God's book
> convenient fiction, tepid temple stuff?

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[132] MacIntyre 2009, 348f. Cf. Glanzer, Alleman and Ream, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, IVP, Downer's Grove IL 2017, 225f.

[133] Truth is 'stranger', against a literalist view; truth is 'stronger', against an instrumentalist view (that words are just useful fiction, not actually referring to anything true); critical realism is the view that sits between these two, claiming that words may have a true reference which is not literal. See McGrath 2002, 195f.

God thinks truth stronger, definitely stranger.

6.4.4 Conservative and Radical

The anonymous writer of 'Jock the Peasant' (c. 1520) is typical of early radical voices. Calling for change to laws that hurt the poor, he begins by wishing the king 'Christ's support in age'.[134] The social vision of the *First Book of Discipline* (1560) then seeks remedy; as Doug Gay summarises,

> The children of the rich must be brought up to virtue and the children of the poor must be given opportunity to contribute to the commonwealth . . . In the new Scotland, this new ethical-spiritual discipline was to be extended to all persons and all estates within the realm, regardless of rank or wealth, including ministers, readers, elders, and deacons.[135]

'Estates' in those days did not mean 'land' as it does today. In earlier days, crofters might have banners featuring Psalm 24:1,[136] while those calling for land reform might cite Christian principle or scripture,[137] as does *Poem 37 'Don't Fret'* (which is based on the verses about land in Psalm 37), but modern writers are more likely to base their case on something like natural justice:[138] 'As long as the rich soils of Scotland remain a speculator's free-fire zone . . . the ghost of Patrick Sellars will never be laid.'[139] Andy Wightman founds his case essentially on theft by the powerful in past centuries, and hardship of the poor in the present day,[140] and is careful like most contemporary writers to keep his book a Bible-free zone.

Two poets of the 'Scottish Renaissance' shared a radical vision, but understood it in very different ways. Edwin Muir in 'Scotland's Winter' wrote of the miller's daughter 'knocking / upon a hundred leagues of floor / . . . and mocking / Percy and Douglas dead / and Bruce on his burial bed.' Muir is content to leave Bruce

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[134] Gifford and Riach 2004, 32-3.

[135] Referring to the third and seventh heads of the *First Book of Discipline*, in Fergusson and Elliot 2019, Vol. 3, 293.

[136] Smout 1986, 253.

[137] See Allan MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2006, 4, 83, 162.

[138] For example, Andy Wightman, *The Poor Had no Lawyers*, Birlinn, Edinburgh 2013, 7.

[139] Neal Ascherson, *Stone Voices*, Granta, London 2002, 212-3.

[140] Wightman 2013, 2-7.

asleep, and complain about 'King Calvin with his iron pen', whereas Hugh MacDiarmid rallied poets, philosophers and politicians towards a political movement. He left Muir with his 'critical realism'[141] to depict present evils and make the best of them, preferring 'Socialist realism'.[142]

MacDiarmid wanted to 'put Burns in his place', and railed against those like Lord Sands who said that 'Burns was the poet of Scotland as David was the Psalmist of Israel'.[143] At other times he accepted that Burns was the popular poet and he was 'the poet's poet'[144] – an antinomy which never applied to the reception of the Psalms in Scotland.

Psalm 27 offers the poet a choice. The passion of v. 4, 'to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple' can inspire a static vision of God. Or the poet may take his inquiry further, and press radical questions about what goes on in the wider 'temple of the Lord'. *Poem 27 'From Caskie to Cosmos'* refers to the French Resistance worker and minister Donald Caskie,[145] who hid people successfully in the gallery of a church during the 1939-45 War, and includes, 'Tent or temple, build it radical, / porous, see through . . .'

Likewise Psalm 8 can be understood simply as a breath-taking view of the cosmos, but *8 'Old and Young Newscasters'* chooses to take the infants in stanza 2 as the vanguard of the climate protesters of today. In general I have sided with the radical side of the psalms, as with *113 'Height and Depth'*.

6.4.5 Family and Individual

Leaders in church and nation travelled around Europe from medieval times. But the majority of people were more limited, until the age of greater mobility began in the 19th century, and possibilities of State support increased after the 1939-45 War. Before then, the family was the main means of support, the major

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[141] Here used in a political, not a philosophical sense as earlier.

[142] Alan Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1991, 197. 'Transformation is as central to MacDiarmid's work as contradiction' (Riach 1991, 12).

[143] Speaking at a 1928 anniversary dinner in Stirling (Bold 1988, 229).

[144] Alan Bold (ed.), *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, Hamish Hamilton, London 1984, 297-8, cited in Bold 1988, 236.

[145] As told in Caskie 1999.

focus for habit and belief. Family worship was common in 19th century Scotland, but rare by the end of the 20th century. Steve Bruce cites Jamieson and Toynbee, *Country Bairns: Growing up 1900-193*0 - describing her East Lothian childhood in the 1890s, one woman said,

> We had prayers night and morning . . . My mother had a harmonium. In the morning we sang a song, some verses of a psalm. Then we read the Old Testament and a sermon . . .[146]

Other factors were important in reducing the influence of the family, and increasing that of the peer group. Bruce identifies the Sixties as the decade when new influences began to change the life of families as well as the institutions of Scotland.[147] In the 21st century, the growth of social media has not only given younger (and older) people a focus different from their parents, but a wider choice of how to be different. At the same time the number of people growing up in 'mixed families' has increased.

While among immigrants family influence remains strong,[148] Scotland is now a plural country of diverse religious belief, and while 'believing without belonging' may still be common, religion is much less of a presence in the public square than it was a century ago. This must be a major reason why modern poetry has fewer references to the psalms.[149]

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[146] Bruce 2014, 103.

[147] Bruce 2014, 107f.

[148] Bruce 2014, 209.

[149] See 2.6.

Chapter 7 Tapestry – the Poet as Weaver

> 'You knit me together in my mother's womb . . . I was . . . intricately woven in the depths of the earth' (Psalm 139:13, 15).

Sākak and *rāqam* both refer to weaving some kind of tapestry.[1] The Scottish makar can thus be seen as doing divine work, weaving strands of inspiration and graft, creating a tapestry or tartan with the threads of her craft. But those verses follow the 'universe as temple' section of verses 7-12, which is why *Poem 139* begins, 'Starting somewhere in my psyche, temple / textures touch my mind.' The makar's tartan is woven in that universal temple.

In this final chapter I look at Scotland through the lens of five words, and use a number of my poems to weave a vision for the country. I then come to a concept, transcendence, which has made its way back into contemporary poetry,[2] before summing up what this Thesis has presented.

This chapter will apply the insights of my poetry to the present and future of Scotland.

7.1 Scotland Today – Vision

At Qumran, the psalms were read as prophetic text, predicting the future as well as challenging the present.[3] Mika Pajunen argues that 'psalms in the late Second Temple Period could be interpreted as prophecies, and fresh prophecies were written in the form of psalms.'[4] If for psalms you read poems, this was also known in Scottish literature.[5] Bearing in mind that prophecy gives insight as well

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[1] Gesenius and Robinson 1962, 697, 955.

[2] Jeremy Begbie writes of 'the pervasiveness of talk of transcendence' in the 'current conversation between theology and the arts' (Begbie 2018, 1). See also Hart 2017, 210.

[3] A traditional function of prophecy – see 'Foretelling and Forthtelling' in the article on 'Prophecy' in J.D. Douglas (ed.), *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, IVP, Leicester 1980 – though often 'insight' is stressed rather than 'foresight', see John Bowker (ed.), *Complete Bible Handbook*, Dorling Kindersley, London 1988, 197.

[4] Pajunen and Penner 2017, 229.

[5] For example, with Thomas the Rhymer, https://deriv.nls.uk/dcn23/1084/8731/108487319.23.pdf, accessed 20/12/19.

as foresight, I have described the Presentation as a 'poetry of enquiry, of exposition and documentation' – 'prophetic' rather than 'lyric' poetry (1.2.2).

Modern poetry has generally agreed with Hugh MacDiarmid: 'The transcendental is inherent in us without reference to any religious belief – it comes out of the seed of things . . . it's part of the materialism'.[6] The response of one who reads the Psalms is equally forthright: the heavens ('material' in MacDiarmid's sense) are telling the glory of God,[7] and the psalmist expresses that in poetry. The transcendent may be a secular term for God, but the Psalms earth the transcendent in the wisdom of Israel,[8] which as a Scot MacDiarmid himself was not above referring to.[9]

What follows weaves together a vision for Scotland, as promised in 1.1.

7.1.1 Lines

William Storrar observes that Scotland is a linear nation,[10] with lines connecting various outlooks to Continental Europe and to America:

> As a linear nation, our identity crisis has always been a question of where to draw the line; not just in the sense of the physical borderline from the Solway to the Tweed, but far more in the sense of the imaginative line and the coordinate points in human history and society that set the moving boundaries of who and what we are as Scots.[11]

The 'lines' of the Psalms extend from God to the earth, from Israel to all nations, and from the beginning of human history till the end.[12] Life in Scotland has been affected by these lines (Chapters 5 and 6), and the question is posed to

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[6] Alan Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid, Selected Prose*, Carcanet, Manchester 1992, 285.

[7] Psalm 19:1f.

[8] Psalm 19:7f.

[9] As in 2.2, or 'We've never seen the captain, / But the first mate is a Jew' ('A Drunk Man' lines 553-4).

[10] Storrar 1990, 227-8, having described the Medieval vision of a free nation, the Reformed vision of a godly nation, and the Secular vision of a moral nation.

[11] Storrar 1990, 235.

[12] For example, within the single Psalm 100.

political and business leaders, to artists and writers, 'On what lines will Scotland develop now, after corona virus?'

Psalm 141 is about the righteous and the wicked, it commends prayer 'against wickedness', and the words of the righteous as weapons for correction.[13] I offer three such words from the Presentation to the ideal of Scottish independence:

(a) *Poem 141 'Fire'* considers the lines marked by the stitches in a tapestry. The three stanzas begin:

> Every day I pray this trail of tapestry a little further on . . .
> Every day cross stitches lose their place and purpose . . .
> Every day I stretch my stitch to continental . . .

Stanza 1 considers flame stitches, and the vagaries of prayer. Stanza 2 considers cross stitches and the clash of good and evil. Stanza 3 considers continental stitches, with the prophetic edge of Europe in mind, and the open question as to what 'a tent with room for more than one' implies. Some visions of independence glorify continental Europe and denigrate England. This betrays historical ignorance and economic folly. Whatever the consequences of Brexit, Scotland must find a way to build relationships with both, and avoid being pushed into romantic cul-de-sacs by preserving 'a steely grasp of our own gaucheness'. The poem also qualifies idealism with the reality of wrong stitches.

(b) In 1990, Storrar offered the 'crucified vision of a humble nation'.[14] My poem which celebrates humility is *111 'Lord of All Being'*. For epigraph it cites the words of Psalm 111:2 which James Clerk Maxwell had inscribed outside the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, this humble Scot 'unsuspecting that he might become / the greatest scientist since Isaac Newton'. Maxwell brought together different 'lines' of research (electricity, magnetism, and light),[15] and the third stanza puns this with the lines in the tartan ribbon used for the first

[13] 'May no man minister in this place [the High Kirk of Edinburgh] who does not have the courage to admonish in the name of God' (Robert Bruce, in Searle 2019, 513).

[14] Storrar 1990, 251.

[15] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Clerk_Maxwell.

colour photograph in 1861.[16] The sixth stanza celebrates the meaning of *rʾōš* (as in Psalm 119:160), a word which is to the OT rather as *logos* is to the NT.[17]

Scotland may be wealthy enough to stand on its own, like other nations of its size, but independence will mean initial suffering, and maybe relative poverty in the longer run. This can be borne with redistribution of income, but the middle and wealthy classes will have to share a vision for independence. In the short term, any significant referendum should have a threshold of say 60%, since the winners in a free society will have to rely on the losers coming behind any change, and not sabotaging it (even if some still cut and run). For such cohesion, a cohesive 'wisdom' will be paramount – such as is indicated by stanza five and Psalm 119:160.

(c) The lines between present and future generations have been frayed by at least two factors: the wealth accumulated by the older generation compared with the poverty of housing and job opportunities available to the young; and the failure of the older generation to tackle the challenge of climate change. Psalm 8 valorises infants, and *Poem 8 'Old and Young Newscasters'* wishes that young people might fire arrows which 'pierce the hide of backward leaders', and thus 'cast the majesty of God'.

Lines by themselves are fragile, like the line carried by a brave and thoughtful man off the stricken *Iolaire*. Attached to it, however, was the rope now memoriali sed in bronze as a symbol of hope.[18]

7.1.2 Tribes

This word has outgrown its Victorian primitive connotations, to resume its place as a neutral word for a human social group, typically sharing a common language.[19] In the Psalms, Judah emerges as the chosen of the twelve tribes of Israel (Psalm 78:67-68), and this chosen tribe has become God's temple dwelling

[16] Faiers 2008, 229.

[17] This is my own observation, I have not seen it referenced, but the poem shows the width and depth of meaning in the word.

[18] McIntosh 2020, 191. See stanzas 1 and 2 of *Crunluath a Mach* in *The Iolaire*.

[19] As in Revelation 5:9 (though of course the 'twelve tribes' all shared one language), or Edwin Muir's poem 'Scotland 1941' (Bateman *et al* 2000, 223).

(Psalm 114:2); in Psalms 147 and 149 'Israel' is once again the name for the whole people of God, not just the northern kingdom. By the time the books of Psalms were put together, Israel has learned to worship in a synagogue as well as a temple, and after the Roman destruction of the second temple in 70 CE, worship was only in the synagogue.

Poem 41 'The Cosmic Synagogue' is a sestina which keeps on raising the difficulty of a tribe retaining its unity, morality, and common vision, not least when there is a gap between rich and poor. This relates to the differences between political parties in Scotland and England, to whether a system of social security is for the poor or only 'the deserving poor', to emigration and immigration, and whether a future Scotland will retain a sense of 'providence' at all.

Tom Nairn was brought up in Cellardyke, in a house with a gate straight onto the beach. In a long review of a book by Neal Ascherson (*Tom Nairn: Painting Nationalism Red?*), Rory Scothorne examines the tensions between socialism and nationalism in Scotland, and ends by writing, 'When confronted with a gate onto the ocean, [Tom Nairn] imagines it open. The British left has yet to learn to do the same.'[20] What will now happen in Scotland, as the 'tribes' of Labour and SNP continue to change position after years of jostling for power? And what will happen in the national Church, as (like the Psalms) they work through the implications of the 'line of David' belonging to the world?[21] The Church of England has had years of accommodation with smaller religious tribes in England, the Church of Scotland is now having to come to terms with the growth of independent churches and the loss of shared hegemony with the R.C. Church.

Tom Nairn shares with Carol Ann Duffy[22] the view that 'the pen is mightier than the sword'; in very different ways they have battled for the mind of their generation. *Poem 29 'Mind Map'* recognises an earlier 'battle for the mind' in

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[20] 'From the Outer Edge', review of Neal Ascherson, *Tom Nairn, Painting Nationalism Red?*, Democratic Left Scotland, Feb. 2018, in the London Review of Books, 6th December 2018, 38.

[21] The Presentation *Poem on Psalm 132* (the psalm has the exclusive claim for David in v. 18) touches on this, as the 15 men who died within Ben Cruachan were not all members of the Church of Scotland.

[22] Writers may be thought to share this view by choice of occupation – or read 'The Literature Act', Carol Ann Duffy, *Collected Poems*, Pan MacMillan, London 2015, 174.

the formation of Israel, that human thought must be open ('never watertight'), and that humour and non-violence are key weapons for the future of any part of the world, be it Britain or the Middle East.[23]

Tribes are a fact of life:[24] will they bring the blessing of strength and inspiration, or the curse of 'tribalism'? An immediate question for SNP, Labour and Conservative, both within each tribe and between them - but a wider question for society. The replacement of rational thought by celebrity culture, the populism of European and American leaders, the distancing of the academy from the street, leave a vacuum which is filled by 'intellectual performers' who gather followers on the internet, but such bubbles of attention may not translate into movements that will change society. Until the second half of the 20th century, Scotland had, for example, a strong and thoughtful socialist movement,[25] but Margaret Thatcher's remark to the Church of Scotland General Assembly in 1988 that 'there is no such thing as society' showed a contrary approach which neither Labour nor SNP has yet been able to do much about.[26]

There are wider tribal issues which challenge Islam, Judaism and Christianity, as signaled in the *poem on Psalm 122*, which suggests that their thrones 'now lie buried with the bones / of ancient history.' The thrones, whether the Caliphate, Jerusalem, Rome or Geneva can become an idol. So 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem', and 'every step to build shalom / that lives the meaning of this psalm'.

7.1.3 Land

While the morality of the Israelite occupation of Canaan, like all occupations, is contested, for the Israelites it was a gift of divine providence, and certainly not

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[23] In *Poem 29 'Mind Map'*, the stepped format with the poetic conceit of 'five steps' reflects the step parallelism of this psalm, which is found also in Canaanite poetry (Goldingay 2006, 413). As the psalm was probably composed to counter the claims of Baal, the Canaanite god of sex and chance, the poem has God 'cut foes down to size' (as Carol Ann Duffy does in her poem about the mythic monster King Kong in 'Queen Kong', Duffy 2015, 257).

[24] As recognised in Acts 17:26 as well as Psalm 122:4.

[25] T.C. Smout wrote that Scotland had lost the 'vibrant popular political culture it enjoyed from the 1830s to the 1920s' (Smout 1986, 275).

[26] It remains to be seen how significant is Boris Johnston's contradiction of her ('there is such a thing as society', BBC 1 TV News, 29/03/20) due to the corona virus pandemic.

due to their own power or virtue or skill.[27] Land for the twelve tribes (and for the whole tribe of Israel in later years) was a matter of providence.[28]

'The ordinary context within which providence happens is land. This gives it an importance which is both economic and spiritual.'[29] This is expressed, continues Alastair McIntosh, in Psalm 104:30, 'When you send forth your spirit, they [creatures] are created; / and you renew the face of the ground.' A sense of equal divine providence was the vision which inspired Henry George,[30] whose idea of land value taxation is on the agenda for Scotland.[31] Both George and McIntosh argue that land ownership is provisional, McIntosh from Scripture (Leviticus 25:23) and George from equal rights to what the Creator has provided.[32] Landlords are simply stewards responsible to God.[33] This concept is actually enshrined in Scots law.[34]

In *1 'Temple Garden',* 'garden' - with its 'subway roots' - is both metaphor and land itself. The underground railway with its roots and fungi makes a metaphor for word and spirit as well as genes, and both land and human skin are 'enlightened by the psalms'. The garden is a temple garden, because it is sacred, and a world garden, because it is universal. Developing the ideas of 6.3, if the land of Israel is a model for other nations, then land is sacred, and land is universal. Hence the need for land reform.[35] The Psalms simply assert the ownership of God (24:1), who entrusts land to a people rather than to individuals (66:12, 80:9, 105:44).[36]

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[27] Deuteronomy 7:7, 8:17, 9:4, 26:5-9, Psalm 44:3.

[28] Brueggemann calls land the 'central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith' (Walter Brueggemann, *The Land*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1977, 3).

[29] McIntosh 2000, 52.

[30] Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, Pantianos 1905, first published 1879.

[31] https://landcommission.gov.scot/2017/12/land-commission-to-look-at-potential-for-land-value-taxes-in-scotland. Cf. McIntosh 2000, 98.

[32] George 1905, 124.

[33] McIntosh 2000, 47. A similar theology is expressed in Psalm 50:9-11.

[34] McIntosh 2000, 73 cites George Gretton's entry on 'Feudalism' in *The Laws of Scotland*, Vol. 18, Butterworth, Edinburgh: 'The Crown cannot dispone but only fue [sic] . . . the Crown has no feudal superior, except God alone.'

[35] Wightman argues from natural justice, McIntosh argues from Christian principle.

[36] The basic allocation was first of all to the twelve tribes (Joshua 14 – 18).

Poem 37 'Don't Fret' ends with the line 'the meek shall farm the land', not 'the meek shall inherit the land', to show that land use is as important as land ownership. The Scottish Government has been right to try to work with landowners rather than simply against them.

7.1.4 Capital

The mission of the Knights Templar was to defend the pilgrims going to Jerusalem, to what had been Solomon's temple. Jerusalem was important, not simply because it was in Israel, but because it was the centre of the world.[37] In *28 'Pinnacle or Pit'*,

> My hands feel their way to the centre:
> sanctuary, the holy hexagon,
> the space with six edges,
> the heart beating something
> old and fierce . . .

This states the importance of the capital, which appears as Zion in many psalms,[38] not least the Psalms of Ascent, or Jerusalem – 'to it the tribes go up' (Psalm 122:4). *Poem 122* refers to the 'three monotheist modern tribes' that all acknowledge Jerusalem as a mother city. Collective identity is typically created round a country with a central capital,[39] though Israel has an issue with having Tel Aviv as its commercial capital today, not unlike Glasgow in Scotland up to the 20th century.[40] Britain shares this problem, with the difference between London and the North of England in the Brexit vote,[41] and in Scotland the traditional disconnect of the Highlands and Lowlands (6.4.1) continues.[42] Unlike the Royal Society in London, the RSE covers both the sciences and the

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[37] 'The land of Israel is the centre of the world; Jerusalem is the centre of the land; the Holy Temple is the centre of Jerusalem . . .' (Midrash Tanhuma. *Kedoshim* 10, cited at the start of Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 2011).

[38] In Psalm 128:5 it is clearly the capital, the place from which people are blessed.

[39] Pajunen and Penner 2017, 288.

[40] The decanting of population from Glasgow, and the rapid growth of Edinburgh in the 21st century, has made Edinburgh more obviously the Scottish capital, although Glasgow fought back with being the European City of Culture in 1990.

[41] In 1963 a suggestion was floated in *The Economist* that Britain needed a new capital built in, say, Yorkshire, perhaps to be called Elizabetha.

[42] Andy Wightman cites a story from James Hunter anent the 1979 devolution referendum, about a Sutherland man who would be voting to keep the status quo: 'In London they don't give a damn about Highlanders, but in Edinburgh they hate us' (Wightman 2013, 57).

humanities, but it is the Royal Society of *Edinburgh*, not Glasgow or Aberdeen or Inverness.

Poem 147 'Jerusalem' presents the city as a place of wonder, although 'the thunder / of its past rolls past the present, / makes the future nervous'. Scotland has the thunder of its own past to cope with, but might have the opportunity to 'reinvent *shalom*, / so wounded outcasts name it home'.

The book of Deuteronomy insists that there is only one place for corporate worship,[43] its attempt to make the capital real and not nominal. This remains an acute issue for Scotland, given the Highland/Lowland divide, as the Highlands ('Gaeldom') are more closely linked to Glasgow. This will require Edinburgh and Glasgow to bury their traditional rivalries, and to find ways of affirming other regions, whether by a travelling Parliament or other means. Reinventing *shalom* is the work of Government as well as poets and artists, but it needs a framework which makes space for art and religion (as a second Chamber might do).

The poem also speaks of the capital being a 'city of metaphor and meaning'. It was a place of pilgrimage, as celebrated in *120-134 'Song of the Fifteen Steps'*. Edinburgh cannot claim the same meaning as Jerusalem, but Scots could take pilgrimage more seriously in three regards: treat every journey as a privilege restored after corona virus; treat every journey from country to conurbation and back as bearing (if not laden with) metaphor; and make more of traditional places of pilgrimage. May these fifteen psalms 'line the route, / buffeting politics, toughening faith.'

7.1.5 Leaders

Shadowing all the sections of 7.1 is the question of leadership, both its nature (what will democracy look like in a future Scotland?) and its character (what kind of people will emerge as leaders?). In Book 1, Psalm 15 (linked with David) sets a high standard for leaders. *Poem 15* chooses to focus on hypocrisy, but the

[43] Deuteronomy 12:13-14.

psalm itself makes it clear that integrity (which preserves leaders, Psalm 25:21) means at least not feathering your own nest.

The Psalms deal with both the nature and character of leadership, through their dual focus on the earthly king, and God as king.[44] The most poignant example is Psalm 51, which is linked with Nathan's condemnation of David's adultery and murder. Book 2 poems on *Psalms 49-51* note how the charge of murder stained the lives of both Bruce and David, and the final poem on *Psalm 72* insists: 'Without some thread of hope, / the tales of David, Bruce / and everyone expire.'

The later Psalm 118:9 advises trusting the Lord rather than princes, and Psalm 113:7-8 contains the radical idea that God raises the poor from the dust 'to make them sit with princes'. The *Psalm 72* poem ends by identifying a leader for whom 'the common weal / is all his care, a temple / built of living stones . . .'

Most of the Book 3 poems, concerning migrants, touch on leadership, though largely in Africa, Asia or the Middle East rather than Scotland. Immigrant slavery in England features in *81 'Freed from the Basket'*. *Poem 82 'Something Good'* is about the Scottish Clearances, about social change, about the failure of leadership - yet like some of the Psalms, its sharpest note is the failure of God. The psalm itself simply calls on God to judge (82:8).

Poem 146 'Boundaries', while written with the October 2018 assassination of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in mind, looks at the boundaries between religious and political leaders, and the character of politicians. In the past it was preachers who held the feet of politicians to the fire;[45] today it is social media and elections. 2020 celebrated the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath; in that letter addressed to Pope John XXII in Avignon, there are seeds of democracy, but in the context of a shared faith. With that shared faith, an idea becomes more important than any individual leader.

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[44] For the significance of the cry *Yhwh mālak* to Israel, see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, 32f.

[45] As in the sermons of Robert Bruce in Edinburgh St Giles concerning the behaviour of James VI, not least at the time of the murder of the Earl of Moray in 1592 (see Searle 2019, xvi). The Iraq War is a more recent occasion.

Psalm 11 asks, 'If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?' So *11 'Exam Time'* asks:

> What is 'wicked', since relativity
> shocked us, rocked amoral waves
> through brains as well as time and space?

Relativity in science is of course different from relativity in morals, though poetry can play on the apparent similarity. The modern ambiguity about the word 'wicked' underlines the difficulty in expecting public opinion to judge leaders well in the absence of an agreed basis of morality. Two current issues illustrate this:

(a) The debate about whether people should simply be able to choose their gender, or whether this is an issue determined by nature (with dysphoria possible), while not framed in God language, shows the difficulty of privileging liberty of choice, since it pits transgendered against feminist,[46] (as abortion pits the rights of the woman against the rights of the unborn child).

(b) The tragi-comedy of the trial of Alex Salmond, the hints of conspiracy, the remarks of the defence counsel overheard in a train. In open democracies, judgment is shared by judge and jury, and professionals and citizens are involved in this process. Politicians and their allies do not come out of this well.

While the Psalms do not offer solutions to modern dilemmas, they frame human life with the justice of God. It is not simply that God demands justice, *he is just* (righteousness and justice are a single word in Hebrew); and justice is about relationships as well as actions:

> For the Lord is righteous;
> he loves righteous deeds;
> the upright shall behold his face. [47]

That is why *Poem 11 'Exam Time'* includes 'Gear up the programme / for the gaze of God' – justice is more than a court or exam room procedure, it is

[46] As Nietzsche pointed out, when you remove God, everything is a power struggle.

[47] Psalm 11:7

relational, and for the economy as well as education.[48] It requires wisdom as well as law.[49]

The 'Prayers of David' in Books 1 – 3 are framed by Psalms 1 and 72, each of which proclaim a judgment which is more than human opinion, but which also relies on leaders to exercise it properly. While Psalms like 72 glorify a monarch like Solomon, other parts of the OT criticise him sharply.[50] Later Psalms like 146 qualify a ruler's authority. The Psalms are unequivocal that rulers are answerable to God (Psalm 2), but also that they cannot be trusted with absolute power (Psalm 146:3). With Britain in the grip of what Rowan Williams calls not simply 'procedural' but 'programmatic secularism',[51] this will be a note sounded by individual prophets unless we have second chambers which properly represent minorities such as BAME and religious interests.

Meanwhile, the task of the poet as prophet (or perhaps the prophet as poet) is to bring to the table 'an alternative perception of reality' (6.1.c). But that requires, if not God, something which today is labelled 'transcendence' – although a reader of the Psalms might think it a poor substitute.

7.2 Transcendence

This section will relate transcendence (the 'above' or 'beyond') to the moral imagination with its bringing about of new possibilities, and to the images of temple and tartan in this Thesis. All these relate the old with the new, which gives meaning to the human being, and moves the Scottish journey from mere progress (or regress) into pilgrimage.

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[48] In the modern world, there are limits to what a single nation can do, so this is one motive for Scotland to seek control over its own economy, not for prosperity but for economic justice – but justice is indivisible, a matter of attitude and behaviour; it can be enabled, but not imposed, by good leadership. See also Andrew Hartropp, *God's Good Economy*, IVP, London 2019.

[49] The purpose of Torah (and wisdom in the Psalms) is not to prescribe law but to describe wisdom (see Walton and Walton 2019).

[50] Deuteronomy 17:16-17; 1 Kings 11.

[51] Williams 2012, 40.

If the poet can no longer take God as an agreed point of national reference,[52] she can still invoke transcendence:

> When faith disappears . . . the language of transcendence can have a special power because it evokes something that was once familiar, once possible, and is now lost.[53]

John Challis expresses '. . . this lost-for-words I feel with you that I would call the Lord's work if I were a man of faith . . .'[54] Believers like Begbie will claim, in the spirit of Psalm 99:1, that 'divine transcendence is not simply a metaphysical arrangement':[55]

> The Lord is king: let the peoples tremble!
> He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

while Kevin Hart speaks of 'transcendence in immanence' . . . 'any poem of value is a record of someone having allowed the impossible to engage the possible'.[56]

The current zest for the transcendent must also be qualified: it is usually limited to individual insight and inspiration, whereas a Scottish poet like MacDiarmid - influenced by the religion he rebelled against,[57] and friendly with Keir Hardie and his tradition[58] - expected it to transform the social and have a political relevance. The Psalms offer a tradition of lament and hope when justice fails.[59] The loss of lament is one of the reasons for the irrelevance of Christians in the West.[60]

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[52] As in Psalms 77-80, and 149. See Bruce, 2014, 1. Cf. David Rosenberg in 2.5.1.

[53] Colm Toibin, *On Elisabeth Bishop*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 2015, 62, cited in Alison Jack, *The Prodigal Son in English and American Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2019. MacDiarmid held an even stronger view (see 7.1).

[54] John Challis, 'Naming the Light' in *Stand* 16(2), 31.

[55] Begbie 2018, 130. Cf. T.F. Torrance, 'Science, faith in transcendent reality, and the free society are inseparably interlocked together.' (*Reality and Scientific Theology*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1985, 117)

[56] Hart 2017, 195.

[57] 'Like Hopkins, Grieve saturates his sonnets in biblical symbolism' (Bold 1988, 110).

[58] Bold 1988, 66.

[59] Psalms 6, 13, 22, 55, 102, 142 express both lament and hope. Psalm 88 expresses lament alone. Psalms 28, 35, 59, 94, 10, 137 express the anger of those treated unjustly.

[60] Smith 2020, 28.

7.2.1 The Moral Imagination

The Psalms invite us to exercise a *moral* imagination,[61] as they were written in dialogue with the Law and the Prophets of Israel. John Paul Lederach examines the use of the phrase 'the moral imagination', and concludes that all the authors he examined [in 2001] agreed, 'the moral imagination has a quality of transcendence'.[62] As expressed by Susan Babbit, the role of the moral imagination is to set in motion 'the bringing about of possibilities that are not imaginable in current terms'.[63] *Poem 35 'Enemies'* lets the apparent metaphysical impossibility of God 'stepping into the line of fire' subvert the moral difficulty of loving enemies.

For the Psalms, transcendence is expressed in images like 'God's holy temple', but (like the classic experience of Isaiah 6), the experience of God is expected to make a person cleaner, and act better (Psalm 139:24). The Psalms expect practical outcomes, as did MacDiarmid (his insistence on 'transformation', 4.3); but the words of the Psalms do their work not so much by arguing for obedience, as through their transcendent impact (cf. Psalm 119:11, or Psalm 139). MacDiarmid had his own way of making a similar point:

> Yet whiles through words can brak'
> A music that can gliff
> Body and brain as if
> Their benmaist secrets spak'[64]

Transcendence is balanced by immanence. Outcomes which are the work and gift of God do not require us to privilege either.[65] *Poem 25 'A New Lexicon'* is actually speaking not so much of new words, but learning to see the old words in

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[61] 'The imagination becomes a key instrument of finding that which is able to draw us forward from our given state . . .', Ben Quash, *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit*, Bloomsbury, London 2013, 285 (discussing D.H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville KY 2009).

[62] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, 27.

[63] Lederach 2005, 27, citing Susan Babbit, *Impossible Dreams*, Westview, Boulder CO 1996, 174 (for Lederach, seeing fresh images that open the way to peace-building).

[64] 'The Secret Voice', in Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Revolutionary Art of the Future: Rediscovered Poems*, ed. John Manson *et al.*, Carcanet and the Scottish Poetry Library, Manchester and Edinburgh 2003, 1.

[65] Tillich is one of many theologians who have addressed this issue: 'To call God transcendent in this sense does not mean that one must establish a 'superworld' of divine objects. It does mean that, within itself, the finite world points beyond itself. In other words, it is self-transcendent (Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, SCM Press, London 1957, 8).

new ways by connecting life with God, however long it takes (the transition from youth to age is slowed down by using the form of a pantoum). 'Break and make are man and wife / they share a house in every street', and the poem asks God to 'play the heartstrings of success and defeat' and (eventually) 'make music in my empty soul' as I 'wear the hurt' and 'bear the wrong'. Transcribed for Scotland, that means accepting that any mindful 'drive through' (to independence, or any other social and political change) will mean accepting and dealing with pain, and forgiveness.

The Psalms challenge us to recover moral categories like sin and penance. Penance - not as the work done to ensure forgiveness (which was struck down at the Scottish Reformation), but as a sign and recognition of error and injustice. Another word might need to be invented, like 'kinfast' (which combines the idea of 'going without' and 'solidarity'). Intelligent practice of such penance, 'kinfasting', as a recognition of the pain of injustice and the need to put things right, is for leaders to model voluntarily, not impose on others.[66] This would give a new and positive meaning to Psalm 71:7, 'I have been a portent to many', but it would also be a sign of the cost of putting things right, as recognised by the cost of ransom in Psalm 49:8. And since *God* is the one who ransoms us (49:15), God shows this kind of costly leadership. It includes restorative justice (72:1-4).

7.2.2 Tartan and Temple

Concepts like 'tartan' and 'temple' help us hold together immanence and transcendence through metaphor, 'temple' through both universalising and localising the presence of God,[67] tartan in a simpler way through setting these concepts at right angles as they are woven together.

[66] An example is the decision by Kenneth Kaunda – who made pilgrimage to the Church of Scotland offices in Edinburgh to thank them for the part they played in Zambian independence – not to eat meat until his people could all do the same.

[67] Tom Wright speaks of the 'prayer of unknowing' by the genuine human being at the heart of the cosmic temple (Wright 2019, 263). Ian Barbour discusses how God can transcend space and time at the same time as being immanent, in *Myths, Models and Paradigms*, SCM Press, London 1974, 138-9.

Clerk Maxwell, celebrated in *Poem 111 'Lord of all Being'*, chose a tartan ribbon to demonstrate colour photography,[68] probably for the obvious reason – but tartan is also a symbol of Scotland, and used here as a metaphor for the axes of immanence and transcendence, for the human and the divine. The other metaphor, temple, tells us more: human and divine are not simply lines of thought that cross at right angles, for 'temple' in the first century Jewish world of thought speaks of the overlap of heaven and earth.

Psalm 110 is accepted by Jews and Christians as a 'messianic psalm' (though their understanding of 'Messiah' differs). *Poem 110 'Priest and King'* thinks that 'God might find some human way / to live this messianic psalm / to work from altar and from throne / explain them both in harmony'. And this harmony carries the metaphor of temple, since 'God's temple feet are on the march'. This is why the poet Stewart Henderson in a deceptively simple poem, 'Birthday Card', writes:

> I wish you Temple true,
> and all of deep content,
> I wish you royal rare,
> a lasting covenant.[69]

Explanation must be practical as well as intellectual, hence the importance of metaphors in literature and models in science.[70] Psalm 19 'explains' the book of nature and the book of scripture in dynamic metaphor. For Christians later, the person of Christ would be a heuristic metaphor for holding together the life of earth and the experience of God, but this harmony is present already in many of the psalms, whether it is in prayer for the king (Psalm 20), the ups and downs of life (Psalm 23 and the snakes and ladders of *Poem 23*), or the integration of life and faith (Psalm 26, though my *Poem 26* questions whether David himself achieved this).

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[68] In 1861 he produced the earliest colour photograph, an image of a tartan ribbon, by having it photographed three times through red, blue, and yellow filters, then recombining the images into one colour composite (http://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=3666, accessed 27/1/20).

[69] *Especially, now . . .*, Plover Books, London 2020.

[70] Barbour 1974, 42.

When 'God gives Moses temple time' in *114 'Exodus'*, this allows Dante to find his feet, and blur the line 'between the polysemous squares / of old interpretation, adding rhyme / to link the Exodus to all of us'. The old becomes new. In the *'Space Temple'* of *118*, 'this tartan Lord' allows us to travel space and time, and while this works well enough with an instrumentalist view, the critical realist can 'sing praise with multi-coloured joy'.[71]

7.2.3 Lament

Before Exodus, lament. And centuries after, the Book of Lamentations, for a very different exodus, into exile. For the leaders of Israel it would never happen: 'the temple of the Lord' had become a mantra.[72] Jeremiah had to warn the people that the unthinkable was going to happen – just as *Poem 74 'Identity Theft'* warns:

> the last dread part
> is still to come:
> when we are all
> turned refugee
> from history
> and who we are

Psalm 9:6 mentions cities whose memory has perished. *Poem 9 'Forgetting'* raises this possibility for the human race (before scurrying back to familiar territory in the third stanza). In face of climate disaster, world leaders need to listen to the Jeremiahs warning them that the unthinkable could happen; yet we know from the response to Covid 19 that change *is* possible.

Lament afterwards is the sad correlate of prophecy ignored beforehand.

7.2.4 Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a mindful journey, typically undertaken between points of historical or sacred significance, to help the pilgrim see and feel 'something more', whether that be a clearer vision of heaven or a clearer sense of the self,

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[71] See 6.4.3.

[72] Jeremiah 7:4.

a deeper understanding of God or of this life.[73] In literature, the pilgrim's destiny can vary: in the voyages of *The Odyssey* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* it is 'home';[74] in *The Divine Comedy* and in *Pilgrim's Progress* it is clearly heaven; in *The Birlinn of Clanranald* it is Carrickfergus, but maybe also a voyage towards a home in the past as well as a home in the future.[75] Like Psalms 105 and 107, it is a memory of deliverance by a God who is Lord of the ocean.

In the Psalms, destiny is typically an earthly future, whether seen in simple material terms as in Psalm 1, or the more exalted purpose of Psalm 8:5-6. The closest it comes to 'heaven' is perhaps Psalm 17:15, 'I shall behold your face in righteousness'. The traditional end of Psalm 23:6, 'I shall dwell in the house of the Lord *for ever*' is better translated (as in the NRSV) as 'my whole life long', in parallel with 'all the days of my life' earlier in the verse. Only with the messianic figure of Psalm 110 does 'for ever' (*lᵉôlām)* clearly transcend one earthly life. Usually it is the steadfast love of God (Psalm 138:8), the kingdom of God (145:13), the word of God (119:160), and Israel as the unique locus of these gifts (Psalm 147) which will last for ever (Psalm 48).

The Thesis and the Presentation poems link the immanent and transcendent aspects of pilgrimage in three ways:

- through the underlying theme of temple and tartan, temple with its dual overlapping location on earth and in heaven, and tartan with its internal anatomy of horizontal and vertical, and its external reference to the particular country and culture of Scotland, with its own national struggle for meaning and destiny.

- through the sequence of titles: the carpet which may travel anywhere in the cosmos; the journey of David and Bruce, Israel and Scotland; migrants

[73] The words are my own – but out of many books describing pilgrimage, David Adam in *The Road of Life*, SPCK, London 2004 well describes the blend of earth and heaven.

[74] Coleridge's tale reflects Homer's at points, but they are also very different stories of how fate and destiny relate (Malcolm Guite, *Mariner*, Hodder & Stoughton, London 2017, 334, 344).

[75] A voyage to celebrate the kinship of the Celtic peoples, Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir 2015, 11. At the start of the poem, Alasdair asks a blessing from the God who is lord of storm and sea – the God celebrated in Psalm 107.

seeking 'a better country';[76] the story of '*The Iolaire'* and how an Island people accustomed to psalms and heaven bound pilgrimage might weave even that tragedy into a bigger story; the tapestry which like a carpet has a weave in two directions, but, more than the average carpet has stories of past and present in the weave. These stories were sometimes allegorical, with biblical themes.[77]

- through writing *'Song of the Fifteen Steps'* for the Pilgrimage Psalms 120 – 134.[78] Each of the poems in this section has immanence layered with transcendence, like those psalms themselves.[79]

To see life as pilgrimage rather than merely travel requires a sense of transcendence which in turn invites both respect and perseverance: 'What do you think's to be gained by getting / close, Pilgrim? Keep going: keep your distance.'[80]

7.3 Conclusions

The aim of the Thesis has been to demonstrate how the creative practice of writing poetry on the five books of the Old Testament Psalms has enabled a fresh research encounter with the Psalms, showing some connections with Scotland past and present never made before, bearing in mind the distinction in 1.2.3 between 'new knowledge' (from academic research) and 'substantial new insights' (from research through creative practice).

[76] The phrase is from Hebrews 11:16, which links the journey of the Patriarchs to a heavenward pilgrimage.

[77] See 'Tapestry and the Scottish Court', in *The Stirling Palace Tapestries*, published by Historic Scotland 2016.

[78] Each poem has fifteen lines to mark the continuity of pilgrimage (as *Drysalter*, by Michael Symmons Roberts, in a larger context).

[79] At first sight Psalms 120 and 129 are exceptions, but the deliverance which those two psalms seek or celebrate still comes from 'the Lord' who is transcendent.

[80] Andrew Philip in 'Eschatology for Dummies', *The Ambulance Box*, Salt Publishing, Cambridge 2009, 27.

7.3.1 Frame

One frame has been **'temple and tartan'**, both metaphors, but the former more concerned with mystery and meaning, the latter more with culture and symbolism.

Another frame has been **seven poetic roles**, with the Psalms as a lens to look through each at how a poet functions, and the different roles she can occupy in a land which is no longer familiar with Bible or Psalms, apart from occasionally meeting them in a funeral service for older people.

Seven roles were identified (with a bracketed note of Psalm groups to which they easily refer):

(1) Enquirer (Book 1, 1 - 18)

(2) Interpreter (Book 3, 73 - 89)

(3) Wonder-struck (Book 1, 19 - 41)

(4) Dresser (and Rebel) (Book 4, 90 - 106)

(5) Curator (Book 2, 42 - 72)

(6) Prophet (Book 5, 135 - 150)

(7) Weaver (Book 5, 107 - 119, with 120 - 134 on pilgrimage)

All of these roles are picked up in the Psalms, and in the Presentation, with a delicate destiny indicated in *Poem 136 'End Game'*:

> We hole up in the psalmist's end game,
> lowly, hanging on the praise chain,
> late arrivals in creation,
> dwarfed by skies of light and darkness,
> yet a twinkle in God's eye.

The book of Psalms itself is framed by Psalms 1 and 150. *Poem 1 'Temple Garden* introduces the idea of the earth as a place where God is neither absent nor confined; the Thesis and some of the subsequent poems riff on the idea of tartan as a material with two axes and a relationship to Scotland; the last *Poem 150 'Breathing or Breathless'* celebrates the fact of life, animate and inanimate, and the cosmic praise of God – which is what the final Book 5 of the Psalms is most about.

7.3.2 Connections

Sermons and poems and banners in Scotland's past did relate the Psalms to the affairs of the time, but the connection was stronger in singing and choice of psalms for worship. Whereas generally people may have followed Augustine in seeing the Psalms rehearsing the life of the individual – note their use in the Cambuslang revival (2.2) - Augustine also spoke of a psalm being part of 'the whole age of the sons of men, whereof all the lives of men are parts',[81] and some leaders did see them relate to the nation and its affairs.[82]

As did some outside the Church. Hugh MacDiarmid has been a serious dialogue partner; while he may have espoused atheism in the 1920s, his counterpointing of 'the coorse and the cosmic' (see 4.3) is congruent with the Psalms, and his desire for 'transformation' shows a biblical influence. This Project may not have fulfilled his dream synthesis:

> To take the whole field of knowledge, and to assemble all the diverse components into a general view – establish a synthesis in fact . . . is a task of paramount importance . . . on which the whole future of poetry depends.[83]

Nevertheless the following connections[84] have been made explicitly:

> With Book 1 of the Psalms: **Linking specific moral or theological enquiry with the scientific, poetic and human enquiry into the cosmos,** with 'carpet' as the metaphor which combines the freedom of flight with the sense of standing before God, and Clerk Maxwell as a Scottish scientist for whom the Psalms were a vital influence.

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[81] *Confessions* 9.4.8 and 11.28.38, in Pusey's translation, 1907.

[82] *Individual* lament was also used for *social and political* situations, as in the book of Lamentations. In Jewish worship, Psalm 38 was taken to refer to the suffering of the entire people, following Rashi (Gillingham 2018, 232, 234).
The Free Church of Scotland has a practice of 'Days of Humiliation and Prayer'; on such days public worship would involve the use of Psalms 80 and 85 (conversation with Prof. Donald MacLeod). The Church of Scotland traditionally advocated such psalms for Days of Prayer, but has of late been reluctant to call such Days. See also Philip Williamson, 'State Prayers, Fasts and Thanksgivings: Public Worship in Britain 1830-1897' in *Past and Present*, Vol. 200/1, Aug 2008, 121-174.
One leader today (Scott Morrison, prime minister of Australia) cited the Psalms publicly in the context of delivering the righteous from corona virus (https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/apr/01/scott-morrison-prays-for-australia-and-commits-nation-to-god-amid-coronavirus-crisis). Internet files accessed 7/4/20.

[83] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'The Esemplastic Power', *Agenda* 8 (3-4), 1970, 28, cited in Riach 1991, 40.

[84] While for clarity the references to Books 1-4 of the Psalms are distinguished, they also overlap.

> With Book 2 of the Psalms: **Linking the life of OT King David and his setting in Israel with the life of King Robert the Bruce and his setting in early and medieval Scotland.** The Declaration of Arbroath and the slow development of democratic ideas were linked with the influence of the Psalms in Chapters 5 and 6.
>
> With Book 3 of the Psalms (and Psalm 137): **Linking the experience of disturbance and exile narrated in the Psalms with the experience of emigration, from the Clearances to the Disruption,** as well as contemporary migrants today. While there are many poems on migration,[85] few make the obvious connections to the Psalms.
>
> With Book 4 of the Psalms: **Linking the themes of dust, past history, hope and doubt with the story of the *Iolaire*, its impact on the Isle of Lewis in particular, and on calvinist theology,** while invoking synaesthesia by setting it as a 'pibroch poem'.

And a fifth connection implicitly:

> With Book 5 of the Psalms: **Creating a tapestry, linking the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' threads of tartan to demonstrate a 'critical realist' way of talking about God and the world.**

Because it is implicit, this link now requires to be explained in a postscript which relates it to the aim of the Project in 1.1, enabling readers to experience the 'reach' of the Psalms, in line with the three beliefs which underlie Judaism and Christianity.

7.3.3 Postscript

The literary turn in biblical studies gave permission to appreciate the different images of God found in the Psalms (and the rest of the OT). But it left these images high and dry within the literary imagination of the modern reader, only related by accident to anything which might be true about the world, whereas to the Psalmist all these images were integrated in one understanding of reality. David Daiches expressed this modern tension in his chapter on 'Poetry and Belief':

> Assuming that older writers had their thought and imagination rooted in beliefs that we cannot share, how do we appreciate the literature they produce?[86]

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[85] For example, *Refuge*, by Marjorie Lofti-Gill, Tapsalteerie, Tarland 2018.

[86] Daiches 1984, 225.

The recently recovered understanding of how 'temple' functions both as metaphor and truth claim within the OT (and the Psalms) – see 3.2.1 - helps us to bridge the gulf which began to emerge at the Enlightenment between public truth and private experience, and question the assumption that Daiches made.

Put another way, the OT view of how God related to the cosmos was never simply with a 'three-decker universe', and certainly not the ancient Epicurean (and contemporary!) view of the world as 'the movement of chance atoms'.[87] It was a 'providential' view (as in Psalm 104).[88]

Proverbs 16:33 gives an OT view of chance: 'The lot is cast into the lap, / but the decision is the Lord's alone.' Panentheism[89] is one modern interpretation of this, which allows for the role of chance in the evolution of cosmos and life. It locates God firmly in space and time, but usually otherwise than by incarnation or relation to a particular people.[90] More traditional is the mystical expression that God is 'immanent' or 'present' in all things, without tying that to a particular mode of presence.[91]

Traditionally, Scottish preachers would have regarded something like the corona virus as a visitation from God.[92] In the light of Jesus' teaching in Luke 13:1-5 and modern knowledge, it is common today to see it simply as 'a natural event', but without labelling the virus as literally 'sent by God' it is still possible to ask 'what is God saying through this?'[93] In so doing one is holding together the

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[87] See 3.3.

[88] David Fergusson discusses how the Church Fathers used Stoic ideas to inform their idea of providence, although modern theologians find this leans towards an impersonal rather than a personal view of God (*Creation*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2014, 51-4).

[89] Panentheism – God is *in* all (pantheism – God *is* all).

[90] See https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/panentheism/ for an overview. A critical account is given by John Cooper in *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers*, IVP, Nottingham 2007; a supportive account by Christopher Knight in *The God of Nature: Incarnation and Contemporary Science*, Fortress, Minneapolis 2007 – Knight is also an Orthodox priest. Tom Wright prefers a garden metaphor - the divine spirit will in the *eschaton* is 'irrigating the cosmos' (Wright 2019, 266).

[91] This is teased out in Begbie 2018, 119-126.

[92] As these events were seen in 2 Samuel 24:15 – or Psalm 107:17-20, cited by George Wishart when he preached to the citizens of Dundee in a time of plague.

[93] Jay Oord questions whether Tom Wright is correct in seeing the virus as *simply* a natural event (http://thomasjayoord.com/index.php/blog/archives/we-can-lament-and-explain, accessed 14/4/20).

personal view of the divine (as found in the Psalms) with the less personal or panentheist approach, which sees God in nature and evolution, and which would be comfortable with loose expressions like 'the virus is nature's fightback on behalf of the planet'. Such a 'middle way' is parallel to a 'critical realist' interpretation of scripture.[94]

Western religions privilege the personal aspects of the divine, most Eastern religions the impersonal.[95] All of them find their own ways of understanding ancient texts as more than simply 'what the ancients believed'. While a poet is not as constrained as the exegete by the hermeneutical issues of Chapter 2, it is proposed that the Presentation poetry and the Thesis will help the academy and the public to pursue the prayer at the start:

> 'One thing I asked of the Lord . . .
> . . . to inquire in his temple.' (Psalm 27:4)

[94] See 6.4.3.2.

[95] See Knight 2007, 128-9 for a discussion of how both aspects are required.

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