

Early Christological Interpretation of the Messianic Psalms

Larry W. Hurtado

University of Edinburgh

Resumen: El uso de los Salmos en el NT refleja los desarrollos en la tradición judía del segundo templo en la que surgió el movimiento de Jesús. En particular la consideración de los Salmos como escritura, la “Davidización” del “libro” de Salmos y la visión de David dotado de inspiración profética, que hace que los Salmos adquieran la condición de profecía de propósitos divinos. Sin embargo, comparar el uso de ciertos Salmos en el NT con el uso de Salmos en otros escritos judíos del segundo templo revela un patrón distintivo y una interpretación que refleja las experiencias y convicciones novedosas del naciente movimiento de Jesús.

Palabras clave: Salmos en el NT, literatura judía del segundo templo, cristianismo primitivo.

Abstract: The use of Psalms in the NT reflects developments in the second-temple Jewish tradition in which the early Jesus-movement arose, in particular the regard for Psalms as scripture, the “Davidization” of a “book” of Psalms, and the view of David as endowed with prophetic inspiration, making the Psalms predictive of divine purposes. But, comparing the use of particular Psalms in the NT with use of Psalms in other second-temple Jewish writings reveals a distinctive pattern and interpretation that must reflect the novel experiences and convictions of the early Jesus-movement.

Keywords: Psalms in the NT, second-temple Jewish writings, early Jesus-movement.

The Psalter is by far the most frequently used of “Old Testament” writings in the New Testament. To note one rough basis for this judgment, in the index of quotations and allusions to Old Testament writings in the Nestle-Aland Greek text (28th edition), Psalms occupies nine and one-half columns, comprising more uses of Psalms than of any other writing in the index.¹ By my count, this Nestle-Aland index lists 356 uses of Psalms, of which 111 are identified as quotations (often partial), and the remainder judged to be allusions.² These data make it appropriate to investigate in more detail how NT authors made use of Psalms, especially those most frequently used.³ There is now a considerable body of scholarly publications devoted to this task, however, making it difficult to offer any fresh contribution to the discussion.⁴ In this essay, my modest aim is to consider how the NT usage of Psalms both reflects the second-temple Jewish tradition in which the early Jesus-movement arose, and also exhibits some distinctive features.⁵ In the limited space of this essay, I can only probe

¹ Isaiah, the next most frequently listed occupies about eight and one-half columns. Note also the list of “Quotations, Allusions and Parallels to the New Testament” in Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* Peabody 2005, 342-409.

² C. A. Evans, “Praise and Prophecy in the Psalter and in the New Testament,” in P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller Jr. (eds.), *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, Leiden 2005, 551-79, who, citing the UBS *Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.), posited over 400 uses of Psalms in the NT, 130 of them quotations, 70 of which are introduced by formulas. Even with my somewhat smaller figures, the NT usage of Psalms is considerable and greater than the usage of any other OT writing.

³ Again, going by the index to Nestle-Aland 28, I cite the most frequently used Psalms, giving first the total number of uses listed and then the number of these identified as quotations. I list the individual Psalms in their traditional canonical order: Psalm 2(19/8), Psalm 22 (23/8), Psalm 69 (17/5), Psalm 78 (21/2), Psalm 89 (26/0), Psalm 110 (21/9, including Mark 16:19), Psalm 118 (19/10), and Psalm 119 (14/0).

⁴ To cite only a few relatively recent publications, e.g., S. Moyise and M. Menken (eds.), *The Psalms in the New Testament*, London 2004; C. A. Evans, “Praise and Prophecy in the Psalter ...,” 551-79; S. Koch, “Der Psalter im Neuen Testament,” in Erich Zenger (ed.), *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, Paris 2010, 551-66; J. L. Vesco, *Le Psautier de Jesus. Les citations du Psaumes dans le Nouveau Testament*, Paris 2012, 2 vols. Also worth noting is H. J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, Minneapolis 1986; German original 1979, which includes a discussion of the use of Psalms in the New Testament (177-203).

⁵ Among studies with a somewhat similar aim, see, e.g., J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in the Qumran Literature and in the New Testament,” in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New*

some specific matters. Moreover, with a view to the focus of the symposium for which this essay was prepared, I will give particular attention to Psalm 2 and Psalm 110.⁶

PSALMS DEVELOPMENTS IN SECOND-TEMPLE JEWISH TRADITION

We can begin our analysis by noting that the prominence of the usage of Psalms in the NT reflects a similar general popularity of Psalms in the second-temple Jewish tradition. To adopt a rough measure of the matter, the index of references to biblical texts by Lange and Weigold devotes fifteen and one-half pages to uses of Psalms, making them, along with Deuteronomy, the most used of OT texts.⁷ Likewise, in Washburn's catalogue of biblical passages referred to in the Dead Sea scrolls, the references to

Testament, Missoula 1974, 3-58; G. J. Brooke, "Shared Exegetical Traditions Between the Scrolls and the New Testament," in T. H. Lim and J. J. Collins (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Oxford 2010, 565-591.

⁶ On the NT usage of these Psalms in particular, note also David Wallace, "Texts in Tandem: The Coalescent Usage of Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 in Early Christianity" (PhD, Baylor University, 1995); S. Janse, *You Are My Son: The Reception History of Psalm 2 in Early Judaism and the Early Church*, Leuven 2009. In view of its obvious importance in the NT, Psalm 110 has received a good deal of attention: e.g., D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, Nashville 1973; M. Gourgues, *A la droite de Dieu. Résurrection de Jésus et actualisations du Psaume 110,1 dans le Nouveau Testament*, Paris 1978; W. R. Loader, "Christ At the Right Hand-Ps. CX.1 in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978) 199-217; M. Hengel, "Psalm 110 und die Erhöhung des Auferstandenen zur Rechten Gottes," in C. Breytenbach and H. Paulsen (eds.), *Anfänge der Christologie: Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum 65. Geburtstag*, Göttingen 1991, 43-73; Id., "'Sit at My Right Hand!' The Enthronement of Christ At the Right Hand of God and Psalm 110:1", in *Studies in Early Christology* Edinburgh 1995, 119-225; and more recently J. Compton, *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews* (LNTS 537), London 2015.

⁷ A. Lange and M. Weigold, *Biblical Quotations and Allusions in Second Temple Jewish Literature*, Göttingen 2011, 163-178. Deuteronomy likewise occupies fifteen and one-half pages, and Isaiah comes next with fourteen and three-quarters pages of references. There is a full Introduction (15-48), which includes the authors' approach to identifying allusions and "intertextual references" (25-35). The listing does not include data from the New Testament, Philo, Josephus, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and 2 Enoch. But it is still likely to give us a basically representative picture of second-temple usage of OT writings. Note the review of the work by Jeremy Corley in *Irish Theological Review* 79 (2014) 290-292. For Philo, see J. Allenbach et al., *Biblia*

Psalms occupy twenty pages, making Psalms the single most frequently-cited biblical writing.⁸

As another indication, among 900 or more manuscripts from the Judean desert, the thirty-nine Psalms scrolls make it the by far the best represented biblical writing. These same Psalms scrolls show, however, that there was a certain fluidity or diversity in the early collections of Psalms, with some variations in sequence and in contents.⁹ Basically, by the end of the first century BCE the first three “books” (Psalms 1-89) seem to have been formed and become relatively stabilized, whereas the psalms that make up what is now the final two books in the canonical collection (Psalms 90-150) achieved a fixed shape (or these psalms came to be more regularly included) likely sometime in the later part of the first century CE. But, despite variations in order and contents in extant Psalms manuscripts, unquestionably, in the second-temple Jewish tradition the Psalms were the focus of much study and active usage in corporate and private devotional practice, functioning as scripture for many (most?) Jews of the time.

One of the clear indications of this is in the close attention given to reading and interpreting the Psalms in the Qumran scrolls. As Timothy Lim noted, “The Psalms are some of the most beloved Scriptures of the Qumran community, as evidenced by the central role that they play in numerous sectarian texts (e.g.,

Patristica: Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique, Supplement, Philon d’Alexandrie, Paris 1982.

⁸ D. L. Washburn, *A Catalog of Biblical Passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Text-Critical Studies 2 Atlanta 2002. References to Deuteronomy occupy eighteen pages, references to Isaiah seventeen pages, and references to Exodus about sixteen and a half pages, making these the next most-frequently cited biblical writings. References to the Minor Prophets collectively occupy seventeen pages (and these writings were often treated as comprising one “book of the twelve”). As Washburn granted, his catalogue will require updating as further Qumran material has been published since he compiled it. Note also the criticism of some features of Washburn’s work by Ian Young in *Review of Biblical Literature*: http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/3115_3421.pdf, particularly Washburn’s judgements about the text-forms cited in the scrolls.

⁹ See, e.g., P. W. Flint, “Psalms and Psalters in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Hebrew Bible and Qumran*, N. Richland Hills 2000, 307-53; and Flint’s fuller study, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll and the Book of Psalms*, Leiden 1997; and more recently G. J. Brooke, “The Psalms in Early Jewish Literature in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in S. Moyise and M. J. J. Menken (eds.), *The Psalms in the New Testament*, London 2004, 5-24.

4Q174, 4Q177).”¹⁰ These texts include three Psalms “*pescharim*,” the remains of continuous-text commentaries on several Psalms (68, 37, 45, 60 and 129).¹¹ These particular *pescharim* texts surely reflect the treatment of Psalms as Scriptures, for all the other *pescharim* comment on various other writings that came to form part of the traditional Hebrew canon.¹² Flint has also pointed to the statement in the Qumran text, 4QMMT (4Q397), urging intended readers to “examine the book of Moses [and] the books of the Prophets and David!” (frgs. 14-21 C, lines 9-10). The “book of David” here certainly designates a collection of Psalms set alongside the Torah and the Prophets. Flint also cited a passage in the Qumran “War Scroll” (4Q491, 17.4) which refers specifically to “the book of Psalms” (ספר הַהַלִּים) in a context that suggests a regard for the book as scripture.¹³ In 2Maccabees 2:13, we have reference to “the writing of David” as included among the texts that Judas Maccabee collected after they had been “lost on account of the war” of rebellion against the Seleucid ruler. Likewise, in 4 Maccabees 18:15, among the biblical texts conveyed to the seven

¹⁰ T. H. Lim, *Pescharim*, London 2002, 38. See also Myra P. Horgan, *Pescharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books*, (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 8), Washington D.C 1979; J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Pescharim, Other Commentaries, and Related Documents*, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations, 6b, Louisville 2002.

¹¹ 1QpPs (1Q16) comprises fragments preserving bits of Psalm 68 (vv. 13, 26-27, 30-31) with commentary, but so little remains that it is difficult to make much of it. 4QpPsa (4Q171) is the most substantially preserved of the Psalms *pescharim*, comprising Psalm 37:25-26, 28-30, 32-40; 45:1-2; 60:8-9, with comments. 4QpPs^b (4Q173) comprises four fragments preserving a bit of Psalm 129:7-8, with remnants of comments. Fragment 5 of 4Q173 (4Q173^c) “probably belongs to another exegetical text” that cites Psalm 118:20 (Lim, *Pescharim*, 39). Horgan (in Charlesworth, *Pescharim*, 31) expressed uncertainty that fragment 5 belongs to a pesher text, and did not include it in her discussion.

¹² Lim (*Pescharim*, 16-18) lists all the Qumran *pescharim* and the biblical texts that they cite. The extant “continuous text” *pescharim* preserve comments on passages from Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Psalms. There are also “thematic” *pescharim* that string together comments on various biblical texts, such as 4QFlor (4Q174), which cites and comments on Psalm 1:1; 2:1; 89:2; 2 Samuel 7:10; Exodus 15:17-18; 2 Samuel 7:11, 12-14; Amos 9:11; Isaiah 8:11; Ezekiel 44:10; and Daniel 12:10; 11:32. In 4QCaten (4Q177), likewise, among the multiple biblical passages cited are (in the order they are cited) Psalms 13:2-3; 17:1; 11:1-2; 12:1, 7; 6:2-3, 4-5.

¹³ P. W. Flint, “Psalms and Psalters in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 324-325.

Jewish sons by their devout father were “the songs of the psalmist David” (τὸν ὕμνογράφον ἐμελῶδει ὕμν Δαυίδ).

Similarly, note the references to “the book of Psalms” in Luke 20:42 and Acts 1:20. We do not know with certainty what all was included in the psalm-collections referred to, but these references from various second-temple Jewish writings and Luke-Acts clearly show that such a book (or versions of it) circulated and was treated as scripture by the first century CE.¹⁴

This popularity of the Psalms was apparently not uniform, however. David Runia noted that there are only about twenty Psalms citations among the 1,161 biblical quotations in Philo of Alexandria’s writings, and that for Philo the Psalms, though scripture, were treated as secondary to the books of the Pentateuch.¹⁵ Nevertheless, overall in second-temple Jewish tradition, the Psalms seem to have been highly popular and highly regarded among biblical writings.¹⁶

“DAVIDIZATION”

The Qumran reference to “the book of David” noted above reflects another important development also presumed in NT use of the Psalms—a growing association of David with the Psalms by and in the second-temple period.¹⁷ This process included the

¹⁴ S. Koch, “Der Psalter im Neuen Testament”, 551-566, shows that Luke-Acts made use of Psalms from all five books of the familiar Psalter.

¹⁵ D. T. Runia, “Philo’s Reading of the Psalms,” in D. T. Runia and G. E. Sterling (ed.), *Studia Philonica Annual. In the Spirit of Faith: Studies in Philo and Early Christianity in Honor of David Hay*, Providence 2001, 102-121.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Brooke’s brief survey of examples of Psalms usage in various types of second-temple Jewish writings: “The Psalms in Early Jewish Literature,” 15-23.

¹⁷ I borrow the terms “Davidization” and “Mesianization” from Georg P. Braulik, “Psalter and Messiah. Towards a Christological Understanding of the Psalms in the Old Testament and the Church Fathers,” in D. J. Human and C. J. Vos (ed.), *Psalms and Liturgy*, London 2004, 15-40, esp. 21-30. See also M. Kleer, *Der liebliche Sänger der Psalmen Israel’s. Untersuchungen zu David als Dichter und Beter der Psalmen* (Bonner biblische Beiträge 108), Bodenheim 1996; and R. Rendtorff, “The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms,” in P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller Jr. (eds.), *The Book of Psalms...*, 53-64. See also K. Seybold, “Dimensionen und Intentionen der Davidisierung der Psalmen,” in Erich Zenger (ed.), *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*

linking of individual psalms with events in the biblical narratives about David, which George Brooke referred to as a “Historicization” of psalms.¹⁸ This was already well underway by the time of our earliest extant Psalms manuscripts, and is explicitly indicated in the addition of headings to Psalms connecting them with David, and often with specific events in the biblical accounts of his life. In the present Hebrew Bible Psalter, David is named in the headings of 73 of the 150 psalms (most of these in books 1-3 of Psalms).¹⁹ This process of ascribing further psalms to David apparently continued on through the second-temple period, as reflected in the LXX Psalter, in which David is named in another 14 psalms, these mainly in books 4-5.²⁰

We see this reflected in the numerous NT passages where David is credited as the speaker in various psalms cited. The most well-known instances are likely the Gospels passages where Jesus is portrayed as citing Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1), and asking what it means that in this psalm David refers to another figure as “my lord” (Matt. 22:43-45; Mark 12:36-37; Luke 20:42-44). Given the ascription of so many psalms to David in ancient Jewish tradition, including this one, it is not surprising to find NT writers citing various other psalms also as the words of David. So, there is a citation of David as speaker in Acts 1:16-20 (from Psalm 69:26), Acts 2:25-28 (Psalm 16 [LXX 15]:8-11), Acts 2:31 (Psalm 110 [LXX

(Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 238), Leuven 2010, 125-140.

¹⁸ G. Brooke, “The Psalms in Early Jewish Literature,” 15.

¹⁹ L. C. Jonker, “Revisiting the Psalm Headings: Second Temple Levitical Propaganda,” in D. J. Human and C. J. A. Vos (eds.), *Psalms and Liturgy*, London 2004, 102-122. Jonker gives a table of individual psalms and their headings in the Hebrew Bible, 114-117. Other psalms are ascribed to “sons of Korah” (Pss 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88), Asaph (Pss 50, 73-83), Solomon (72, 127), Moses (Ps 90), and Ethan the Ezrahite (Ps 89), and the headings of 50 other psalms have no one named.

²⁰ A. Pietersma, “David in the Greek Psalms,” *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980) 213-226. Cf. his critique of some approaches in which the Greek Psalter is seen as reflecting major religious developments: A. Pietersma, “Septuagintal Exegesis and the Superscriptions of the Greek Psalter,” in P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller Jr. (eds.), *The Book of Psalms...*, 443-475. Similarly, A. Salvesen, “Messianism in Ancient Bible Translations in Greek and Latin,” in M. Bockmuehl and J. Carleton Paget (ed.), *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, London 2007, 245-261, distinguishes between what the Greek translators behind the LXX may have intended and what was later made of the Greek OT writings by Jews and Christians.

109l:1), Acts 4:25-26 (Psalm 2:1), Romans 4:6 (Psalm 32 [LXX 31]:1), Romans 11:9 (Psalm 69 [LXX]:23), and Hebrews 4:7 (Psalm 95 [LXX 94]:7-8). In this last instance, the LXX Psalm 94 has a heading attributing the psalm to David, but the MT does not. Still more illustrative of the tendency to make David the author of the Psalms is the citation of Psalm 2 in Acts 4:25 as the words of David spoken “through the holy Spirit.” For neither the MT nor the LXX has a heading explicitly ascribing this psalm to David.

PROPHETIC DAVID

This linkage of David and the divine Spirit is also attested in the citation of Psalm 110 (LXX 109) in Matthew (22:43) and Mark (12:36) already noted, both authors portraying David as having spoken the psalm “through the (Holy) Spirit.”²¹ Acts 1:16-20 actually ascribes Psalm 69 to the Spirit, the words of the psalm said here to have been uttered “through the mouth of David” (v. 16). And in Acts 2:30-31, the text explicitly says that David, “being a prophet,” foresaw and referred to the resurrection of the Messiah in the words of the Psalm 16 (LXX 15) that are quoted. Similarly, in Hebrews 4:7, the author apparently has *God* speaking the words of Psalm 95 “through David” (ἐν Δαυίδ).²²

A similar view is attested in the Qumran Psalms scroll, *11Q Psalms*^a (11Q5), which lauds David as “wise, and a light like the light of the sun,” to whom God gave “a discerning and enlightened spirit.” The passage goes on to ascribe to David 3,600 psalms, plus another 450 songs for various liturgical occasions, and “all these he spoke through (the spirit of) prophecy [בְּנְבוּאָה] which had been given to him from before the Most High” (11Q5, 27.1-11).²³ However puzzling to us the astronomical number of psalms and songs, it is clear that this text ascribes a prophetic power to David.

²¹ Mark 12:36 has ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ, and Matt. 22:43 has ἐν πνεύματι.

²² I accept here the judgment that ἐν Δαυίδ should be taken as “through David” as defended by H. W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Philadelphia 1989, 130, against some other commentators, e.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Grand Rapids 1964, 75, who proposed that the expression “may mean simply ‘in the Psalter’.” The LXX heading for the psalm ascribes it to David (although the MT does not).

²³ I cite the translation in F. García Martínez and E. J. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, Leiden 1997, 2 vols., 1179.

“MESSIANIZATION”

As well as other historical factors, this view of David as enabled by God to exercise a prophetic role surely encouraged the further notion that the Psalms were not simply scripture, but were oracular, somehow predictive of eschatological events, including the Messiah.²⁴ Of course this view of the Psalms reflects the emergence and development of varied eschatological and messianic hopes in the second-temple period, among which royal messianism seems to have been salient.²⁵

But, as the Qumran texts show, the Psalms were seen as predictive more broadly of eschatological developments, among which messianic expectations were a sub-category. Moreover, although modern scholarship identified certain “royal psalms” in which a royal figure is foregrounded, these then posited also as “messianic” psalms in ancient Jewish tradition, there is no indication that ancient readers distinguished such a group of psalms.²⁶ Instead, it appears that in principle the entirety of the

²⁴ C. Rösel, *Die messianische Redaktion des Psalters. Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie der Sammlung Psalm 2-89*, Stuttgart 1999, argued that Psalms 2-89 comprised an early Davidic collection that was edited to serve messianic hopes, Psalm 1 added later. G. H. Wilson, “King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and the Shape of the Psalter,” in P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller Jr. (eds.), *The Book of Psalms...*, 391-406, contends that David as a historical/ideal king gets downplayed in books 4-5 of the Hebrew Psalter, but becomes foregrounded as a symbol of Messiah and God’s kingdom is foregrounded. My own focus here, however, is not on what may have been intended by those who edited the Psalter, whether in Hebrew or Greek, but on how Psalms were read as predictive of eschatological hopes/events.

²⁵ G. S. Oegema, *The Anointed and His People: Messianic Expectations From the Maccabees to Bar Kochba* (JSPSup 2127), Sheffield 1998; K. E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism*, Atlanta 1995; J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, New York 1995.

²⁶ See, e.g., S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas, Nashville 1962, 42-80. “Common to them is the circumstance that the king is in the foreground,” those psalms so designated including Psalms 2; 18; 20; 21; 28; 45; 61; 63; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132 “and quite a number of number of others” (Mowinckel, 47). The influential positing of various Psalms *Gattungen* is generally credited to Hermann Gunkel: *Die Psalmen*, Göttingen 1926; and H. Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels*, Göttingen 1933. E. Zenger, “Psalmen

Psalter was regarded in various second-temple Jewish circles as having a prophetic/oracular character. So, those groups who saw themselves as experiencing eschatological developments felt free to range throughout the Psalms, as well as other scriptural writings, to find predictions and confirmations of their convictions.²⁷

For the purposes of this essay, it is noteworthy that we have evidence that Psalm 2 in particular was read as predictive of various eschatological developments. For example, among the various texts cited as prophetic in the Qumran text *4QFlorilegium* (4Q174), there is Psalm 2:1. But it is noteworthy that the antipathy of “the kings of the earth” against God “and against his anointed one” is interpreted, not with reference to a Messiah, but as predictive of the plotting of pagan nations against “the elect ones of Israel in the last days” (frag. 1, col. 1, 21, 2, 18-19). By contrast, in *Psalms of Solomon* 17:23-24, after imploring God to raise up as Israel’s king “the son of David,” clearly a royal-messianic figure, the text urges that “he will smash the sinner’s arrogance like a potter’s vessel,” and “with a rod of iron may he break in pieces” all the substance of the lawless, the phrasing obviously drawn from Psalm 2:9.

Likewise, in Acts 4:25-30, the raging and threats of Psalm 2:1 are applied, not directly to the believers, but primarily to the actions taken by Herod and Pilate and “the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel” against Jesus “your holy servant . . . whom you anointed.” But these threats have been defeated through God’s raising Jesus from death, and so now the gathered believers invoke with confidence God’s protection and empowerment for their proclamation (vv. 29-30).²⁸

But along with Psalm 2:1, in *4Q174* a number of other texts as well are treated as prophetic of the situations and the events that

forschung nach H. Gunkel und Sigmund Mowinckel,” in A. Lemaire Lemaire and M. Saebo (eds.), *Congress Volume. Oslo 1998*, Leiden 2000, 399-435.

²⁷ D. T. Runia, “Philo’s Reading of the Psalms,” who notes that Philo’s use of the Psalms essentially served his musings about the relationship of the devout individual with God, with no indication of an eschatological or messianic emphasis (115). Runia also notes that Philo did not use the terms “*psalmoi*” or “*psalterion*” from the LXX, but instead “*hymnos*” and derivatives to refer to the Psalms, avoiding terms that are “peculiarly biblical” in favour of terms more commonly used in Greek literary settings (111).

²⁸ The reference to Jesus as God’s holy “servant” (*pais*) does not come from Psalm 2, but likely from other texts such as Isaiah 52:13.

are deemed their fulfilment, including Psalm 89:23; Exodus 15:17-18; 2 Samuel 7:11-14; Amos 9:11; Psalm 1:1; Isaiah 8:11; Ezekiel 44:10; and Daniel 11:32 and 12:10. Granted, several of these texts refer to a royal figure (e.g., Psalm 89; 2 Samuel 7:11-14; Amos 9), but others do not, e.g., Psalm 1. In still other eschatological texts from Qumran likewise, we see a *mélange* of biblical texts treated as prophetic, as in *4Q177 (4QCatena A)*, where we find quotations from Isaiah 37:30; 32:7; Psalm 11:1; Micah 2:10-11; Psalm 12:7; Isaiah 22:13; Zechariah 3:9; Psalm 13:2-3; Ezekiel 25:8; Deuteronomy 7:15; Psalm 17:1; Hosea 5:8; and Psalm 6:2-3, 4-5. If we focus on the Psalms referenced, it is clear that they were selected for their relevance to the specific eschatological convictions of those whose views are reflected in these Qumran texts.

My point is that various second-temple Jewish texts show that the Psalms had come to be seen by various Jews of the time as having a prophetic character. In some cases, this could produce a “messianic” reading/use of psalms, to be sure. But this messianic use of psalms should be seen within the wider view of them as predictive of, and instructive for, eschatological developments more broadly and of various kinds.

NT USE OF PSALMS

Before we turn to the use of Psalms in the NT, I want to emphasize that I posit this as a particular, and in some ways distinctive, development that emerged initially *within* the second-temple Jewish matrix of the earliest Jesus-movement. That is, the distinctiveness of earliest “Christian” usage of Psalms is real, but it exhibits to us in the first instance the varied and creative Psalms-usage of second-temple Jewish tradition.²⁹ We should avoid a simplistic and anachronistic contrast of developments in the NT and the Jewish context of these developments.

More specifically, I wish to underscore the point that the developments in Jewish treatment of the Psalms that we have briefly noted in the foregoing pages are all presupposed and reflected

²⁹ I wish to avoid the anachronism and simplistic notion involved in positing a distinctive “Christian” usage of the Psalms over against a monolithic “Jewish” usage. The distinctiveness of NT usage of Psalms does not make it any less a case-study in ancient Jewish usage of biblical texts.

in the NT: the process of gathering and ordering psalms into a collection, the association of the Psalms generally with David, and the view of David as prophetically endowed, the Psalms, thus, viewed as scriptures instructive for, and predictive of, eschatological developments. I emphasize that in the approach to and view of the Psalms that I have described we see how the NT writings share a basic standpoint with other circles of second-temple Jewish tradition.³⁰

A DISTINCTIVE SELECTION

I mentioned earlier that in the second-temple period the view of the Psalms collectively as inspired scripture meant that readers felt free to search among them to find texts meaningful for their particular situations and convictions. One of the interesting comparisons to make between the usage of Psalms in the NT and the wider Jewish context is to note the particular psalms most frequently used. Resorting again to the index of biblical citations compiled by Lange and Weigold, the most frequently used psalms in second-temple Jewish tradition overall (excluding the NT, Philo, and Josephus) are these, listed in descending frequency of usage: Psalm 18 (23x); Psalm 107 (20x); Psalm 106 (17x); Psalm 78 (14x); Psalm 89 (13x); Psalm 31 (12x); Psalm 103 (12x); Psalm 119 (12x); Psalm 22 (11x); Psalm 69 (10x); and Psalm 105 (10x).³¹ Compare this list with the most frequently used Psalms in the NT, similarly shown in a descending order of frequency: Psalm 89 (26x); Psalm 22 (23x); Psalm 78 (21x); Psalm 110 (21x); Psalm 2 (19x); Psalm 118 (19x); Psalm 69 (17x); Psalm 106 (14x); Psalm 119 (14x); Psalm 107 (13x); and Psalm 34 (10x). If we confine our count to the usages of Psalms in the NT that are listed as quotations (often only a phrase quoted), however, we get the following pattern: Psalm 118 (10x); Psalm 2 (8x); Psalm 22 (8x); Psalm 110 (8x); Psalm 69 (5x); Psalm 34 (3x); Psalm 78 (2x); Psalm 89 (0x); Psalms 105-107 (0x); and Psalm 119 (0x).

³⁰ As noted also, e.g., by G. Brooke, "Shared Exegetical Traditions..."

³¹ The numbers in both of the lists include both quotations and identified allusions. I confine the list to Psalms with a double-digit number of uses.

It is interesting to note that there are both some correspondences and some differences in the Psalms listed as most frequently used. Psalms 69; 78; 89; 106; 107; and 119 appear in both lists, especially when we include allusions to them. But some Psalms with a frequent usage in the Lange/Weigold listing do not show up among frequently used Psalms in the NT: Psalms 18; 31; 103; and 105.³² Likewise, some of the most frequently used Psalms in the NT are not frequently attested in the Lange/Weigold list: Psalms 2; 34; 110; and 118.³³ Granted, some of the most frequently used psalms in one index appear also in the other index, but as less frequently used. In a few cases, the contrasting usage is quite striking.

PSALM 2

This contrast is particularly evident when we compare the usage of Psalm 2 and Psalm 110. In the Nestle-Aland index we have nineteen uses of Psalm 2, including eight classed as quotations (in Acts 4:25; 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).³⁴ Compare this with only three uses (quotations and allusions) cited in the Lange/Weigold listing of second-temple Jewish literature (*4Q174*; *Pss.Sol.* 17:23-24; *1 Enoch* 48:10).³⁵ As Sam Janse

³² For these Psalms the NT usage in the Nestle-Aland index is as follows: Psalm 18 (8x); Psalm 31 (6x); Psalm 103 (6x); and Psalm 105 (7x). So, they are used in the NT, but not with an equivalent frequency.

³³ In the Lange/Weigold list, the usages of these psalms is as follows: Psalm 2 (3x); Psalm 34 (7x); Psalm 110 (0x); and Psalm 118 (6x).

³⁴ S. Janse, *You are My Son...*, 80, who gives a table listing thirty-two "quotations, allusions and reminiscences" of Psalm 2 in the NT.

³⁵ Washburn (*Catalog*, 86) also lists bits of Psalm 2 in two Qumran Psalms scrolls: *11QPs^c* (*11Q7*) and *3QPs* (*3Q2*), but, of course, these appear to be remnants of copies of the psalm, not usages of it. Also, in *1 Enoch* 48:10, we have at most a weak allusion or "echo" of Psalm 2:2 in the reference to those who "have denied the Lord of Spirits and his Anointed One." Cf. the reference in Psalm 2:2 to kings and rulers who "take counsel together against the LORD [YHWH] and his anointed . . ." Janse (*You are My Son*, 51-75) weighs various possible instances of the influence of Psalm 2 in Jewish literature, and suggests also that Psa 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14 "must have served as background material" for the reference to a figure as "son of God" in *4Q246*, and for the reference to God begetting the Messiah in *1Q28^a*(53-54). He admits, however, that "A clear messianic exegesis of Ps 2 cannot be found" in Qumran texts (54). He also proposes (66) "a strong influence" of

observed in his search for usage of Psalm 2 in Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature, “we must conclude that the harvest is meagre.”³⁶

Moreover, the frequent use of Psalm 2 in the NT specifically in connection with references to Jesus’ divine sonship (e.g., quotations in Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; and allusions the baptism narratives in Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) has no analogous frequency in other second-temple Jewish texts.³⁷ In these cases, we have some NT texts that apply Psalm 2 to God’s resurrection and exaltation of Jesus as the point when he is declared to be God’s unique Son (e.g., Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5), and other NT texts that apply words of Psalm 2 to Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:11 and parallels).

In Hebrews we certainly see the overt use of Psalm 2 in support of the author’s emphasis on Jesus’ divine sonship, which is the opening theme of this treatise.³⁸ There is a direct quotation of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5, and possibly an allusion to the Psalm earlier in v. 2 (in the use of the words υἱός and κληρονόμος).³⁹ The direct quotation in Hebrews 1:5 serves to contrast Jesus’ status with that of angels, the emphasis that runs through the catena of

Psalm 2 in *Pss.Sol.* 18, which refers to a “rod of discipline” (ῥάβδον παιδείας χριστοῦ κυριοῦ), which Janse takes as influenced by the “rod of iron” in Psa 2:9. This is possible but not compelling.

³⁶ S. Janse, *You are My Son...*, 71.

³⁷ Although the Gospel transfiguration scenes are not included in the Nestle-Aland list of allusions to Psalm 2, commentators often propose its influence in these narratives: e.g., Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, 2007), 150, who refers to the first part of the saying in Mark 1:11, “You are my Son,” as “an actualization or fulfilment of Ps 2:7.” Note also Janse, *You are My Son*, 116, who refers to the Markan scene as positing Jesus as God’s Son *de jure*, the subsequent Markan narrative portraying his consequent path as Son. Cf., e.g., *Pss.Sol.* 17:27, which declares that Messiah’s appearance will produce in Israel the realization “that they are all sons of God.” Among relevant NT references we might also include Acts 4:25-28, where a quotation from Psa 2 is applied to God’s “holy child/servant Jesus whom you anointed.”

³⁸ See esp. H. W. Attridge, “The Psalms in Hebrews,” in S. Moyise Maarten J. J. Menken (eds.), *The Psalms in the New Testament*, London 2004, 197-212. S. Janse, *You are My Son...*, 119-126.

³⁹ In Psalm 2:7, the king is addressed as God’s Son with the promise, “δώσω σοι ἔθνη τὴν κληρονομίαν σου.” The author of Hebrews, thus, extended the inheritance from the nations to “all things.”

biblical quotations in Hebrews 1.⁴⁰ In Hebrews 5:5, the author emphasizes that, just as Jesus' unique divine sonship rests on God's explicit affirmation of him in the words of Psalm 2:7, so Jesus' unique high priesthood rests upon God's affirmation of it in Psalm 110:4 ("a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek").

Commentators also often posit an influence of Psalm 2:7 on the christological statement in Romans 1:3-4, which refers to Jesus as "appointed [or decreed/declared] the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead."⁴¹ In this proposal, the Greek word ὀρισθέντος is posited as referring to the divine decree of Psalm 2:7.⁴² The reference to Jesus as also "the seed of David" (Rom 1:3) may reflect an early appropriation of 2 Samuel 7:12-14, along with Psalm 2 as messianic texts, both texts taken as designating the Messiah as God's Son. To judge from the Qumran text, *4QFlorilegium*, Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:12-14 appear to have been associated in Jewish eschatological expectation prior to and beyond early Christian circles.⁴³ The christological statement itself in Romans 1:3-4 is often thought to derive from a very early confessional statement, which Paul then cites in the opening lines of Romans to signal immediately that he knows and affirms traditional claims of the young Jesus-movement, particularly the claims as framed in circles of other Jewish believers.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ S. J. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Amsterdam 1961.

⁴¹ S. Janse, *You are My Son...*, 80, who labels an allusion to Psalm 2:7 in Romans 1:3-4 "a questionable decision."

⁴² L. C. Allen, "The Old Testament Background of (προ)ὀρίζειν in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970-1971) 104-108.

⁴³ See, e.g., D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, Philadelphia 1988, 59-77, and his discussion of NT usage of 2 Samuel 7 (77-88).

⁴⁴ R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Minneapolis 2007, 103-108. And see his earlier essay for a history of scholarly work on the text: Robert Jewett, "The Redaction and Use of an Early Christian Confession in Romans 1:3-4," in D. E. Groh and R. Jewett (eds.), *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders*, Lanham 1985, 99-122. C. G. Whitsett, "Son of God, Seed of David: Paul's Messianic Exegesis in Romans 2*sic*:3-4," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000) 661-681, who argues that Romans 1:3-4 is not necessarily "pre-Pauline" but may well have been composed by Paul, and in any case that these verses play a key role in the larger structure of Romans, noting the relationship to 15:9-12, the other place in Romans where Paul refers to Jesus' Davidic descent.

Some scholars see an early Jewish-Christian “adoptionist” christology reflected in Romans 1:3-4, and they point to Acts 2:36 and 13:33 as further indications of the early belief that in his resurrection Jesus was constituted as God’s Son.⁴⁵ It is a good bit anachronistic, however, to use the term “adoptionist” to label any such early belief. For the “adoptionists” that we hear about later were engaged in issues that arose only in the second century and later about how to reconcile Jesus’ divine and human qualities.⁴⁶ To be sure, for Paul and other early believers, Jesus’ resurrection was foundational for all else that they claimed about him, and “the key event in Jesus’ relationship to God.”⁴⁷ But the early claim that Jesus’ resurrection involved his installation as divine Son, Christ, and ruling Lord, as reflected in Romans 1:3-4 and other texts (e.g., Acts 2:36; Philippians 2:9-11) was simply the immediate conviction about what that event meant, and the claim emphasized in particular God’s direct action and authority in validating Jesus’ status. This emphasis, however, was neither a reaction against some other “higher” view of Jesus’ divine sonship, nor ever intended to prevent any complementary convictions about the matter. Indeed, to judge from various NT texts, early believers seem to have been entirely comfortable with combining such statements about Jesus’ resurrection with claims that he was also the pre-existent Son.⁴⁸ Paul, for example, obviously saw Christ as pre-existent (e.g., Romans 8:3; Philippians 2:6-11). Likewise, the author of Hebrews both posits Jesus as the agent of creation (1:2), and also declares Jesus as having been seated in glory after his redemptive death (1:3), and (citing Psalm 2:7) as designated divine Son (1:5). So, there was a variety of ways in which earliest

⁴⁵ R. Jewett, *Romans...*, 104.

⁴⁶ Indeed, L. R. Wickham, “Adoptionism,” *EEC*, 20, questions whether there were actually any true “adoptionists” in the early centuries, referring to the idea as “a historian’s abstraction” (Theodotus and Paul of Samosata “come closest”).

⁴⁷ M. Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World*, New York 2011, 138. But I think that he falls into the pattern of playing off one christological claim—Jesus constituted “Son of God in power” in his resurrection—against other claims.

⁴⁸ Contra, R. Jewett, *Romans...*, 107, I see no reason to take Paul’s statements in Rom 1:1-4 as a “correction” of “the original confession” directed against Jewish-Christian theology. I think he posits a christological conflict without due basis. See also M. Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, Philadelphia 1976, 57-66.

believers declared Jesus' divine sonship, but they seem to have regarded these various *theologoumena* more as complementary than as conflictual.⁴⁹

But we face a genuine puzzle when we consider more closely the absence of any *explicit* reference to Psalm 2 in Paul's letters.⁵⁰ There are identifiable quotations of the psalm in Acts, Hebrews and Revelation, and texts from several other early Christian authors. Indeed, it is interesting that one of the direct citations of Psalm 2:7 in Acts is in 13:33 in a speech ascribed to Paul (Acts 13:16-41). Moreover, although Paul's letters refer to Jesus' divine sonship far less often than to Jesus as Christ (Messiah) and Lord (*Kyrios*), it is clear that it was a central conviction for Paul.⁵¹ Indicative of this, he described the experience that turned him from persecutor into an advocate of Christ as a revelation of "God's Son" (Galatians 1:15-16); and references to Jesus as God's Son are Paul's favoured way of portraying Jesus' unique relationship to God (e.g., Romans 8:3, 29, 32; Galatians 4:4). Furthermore, Paul's references to Jesus' divine sonship are clustered precisely in Romans and Galatians (eleven of the seventeen references in the traditional Pauline corpus), where he addressed believers about issues connected with Jewish tradition; so we might expect Paul to offer biblical texts such as Psalm 2 in explicit support of Jesus' filial status.⁵² For Paul otherwise cites biblical texts frequently,

⁴⁹ I cite a similar view of the matter by the great master of Roman-era religion, A. D. Nock, "Son of God" in Pauline and Hellenistic Thought, in (Z. Stewart ed.), *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, Cambridge 1972, 2 vols., 931: "It was a general belief that Jesus was the Anointed One and the Lord of Faith, and that was what mattered to the early Christians; how he came to be that could be formulated in various ways, and some of them were in a sense lyrical; hymnology can precede theology and outrun it, and in fact for early Christianity we had better not speak of a theology or use such terms as adoptionism."

⁵⁰ S. Janse, *You are My Son...*, 86, observed that reference to Psalm 2 is "almost totally absent in John and Paul," but he offered no reason for this absence.

⁵¹ Paul refers to Jesus as *Kyrios* over 200 times in his seven undisputed letters alone. See, my discussion in "Lord," *DPL*, 560-569. Likewise, Paul refers to *Christos* over 200 times. Compare this with the total of seventeen references to Jesus' divine sonship in the whole of the traditional Pauline corpus.

⁵² See L. W. Hurtado, "Son of God," *DPL* 900-906; Id., "Jesus' Divine Sonship in Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (eds.), *Romans and the People of God*, Grand Rapids 1999, 217-233. By contrast, in letters where Paul engaged the pagan religious scene (e.g., 1

including the Psalms, in articulating his teachings.⁵³ So, why is there no overt reference to Psalm 2 in any of his letters?

It is not possible to offer more than modest speculation for an answer. Perhaps, given his belief in Jesus' pre-existence, Paul viewed the statement in Psalm 2:7, "today I have begotten you," as potentially misleading.⁵⁴ So, to pursue this supposition further, in Romans 1:3-4, instead of a direct citation of Psalm 2, perhaps he preferred simply to affirm God's designation of Jesus as divine Son in his resurrection. If, however, Paul was actually citing a "pre-Pauline" confession, he may not have been alone in, or the originator of, the preference for referring to a divine designation of Jesus as Son at his resurrection (instead of, or as interpretation of) a divine begetting of him.

It is interesting that the uses of Psalm 2 in the Synoptic baptism accounts likewise omit those words from Psalm 2:7, the divine voice instead declaring, "You are/this is my beloved/chosen son in whom I am pleased" (Mark 1:11; Matt 3:17; Luke 3:22).⁵⁵ It is difficult

Corinthians 8-10), references to Jesus as God's Son are rare. Moreover, the title "Son of God," appears only four times, and with variations in word-order (Rom 1:4; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13), indicating that the affirmation of Jesus' filial status was what mattered, not so much the christological title or any fixed verbal formula. So, we should probably be cautious about ascribing very much influence to pagan notions of divine sons, such as Roman emperors, *contra* Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World...*, 16-19.

⁵³ See, e.g., S. Moyise and M. J. Menken (eds.), *The Psalms in the New Testament*, London 2004, esp. these contributions: S. C. Keesmaat, "The Psalms in Romans and Galatians", 139-161; H. H. Drake Williams, "The Psalms in 1 and 2 Corinthians", III, 163-180; T. Moritz, "The Psalms in Ephesians and Colossians", 181-195; and M. Silva, "The Greek Psalter in Paul's Letters: A Textual Study," in R. J. V. Hiebert, C. E. Cox, and P. J. Gentry (eds.), *The Old Greek Psalter: Studies in Honour of Albert Pietersma* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 332), Sheffield 2001, 277-288. More recently, M. A. Scott, *The Hermeneutics of Christological Psalmody in Paul* (Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 158), Cambridge 2014. Earlier and influential studies include D. Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, Tübingen 1986.

⁵⁴ As Peppard granted (*The Son of God*, 230 n. 34), reference to Jesus as God's "own/dear Son" (ἰδιότ υἱός) in texts such as Romans 8:3, 32 "undoubtedly emphasizes Jesus' close relationship to God before his death and resurrection."

⁵⁵ The "Western" variant in Luke 3:22, "You are my son, today I have begotten you," is rather obviously secondary, as judged, e.g., in B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart 1994², 112-113. But it was likely intended to make the reference to Psalm 2 more explicit, not

to discern the intentions in such editorial choices, but the effect is similarly to make Jesus' baptism the occasion for God's declaration of Jesus' divine sonship, rather than an adoption or "begetting" of him as son.⁵⁶ Likewise, in the Synoptic transfiguration accounts, notwithstanding their variations, the divine voice affirms Jesus' unique filial status in words that may well echo Psalm 2:7, but without the statement of the Son being begotten.⁵⁷

I have no further wisdom to offer as to why, among the numerous biblical texts cited by Paul, there is no direct reference to Psalm 2.⁵⁸ But it is clear that it was otherwise an important text in early Christian circles, especially in emphasizing Jesus' divine sonship as grounded in God.

PSALM 110

It is well known that Psalm 110 (esp. v. 1) was a particularly important biblical text for earliest Christians. As there are now several major studies on the use and influence of the text in the NT and other early Christian writings, I shall confine my discussion to a few points.⁵⁹ First, considering Psalm 110:1 alone, the six

to assert some "adoptionist" theology. Cf., however, C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, London 1952, 32, who agreed that the "Western" variant was "probably secondary," but allowed that it was "conceivable" that it was original (noting the full form of Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33), and that the Lukan baptism account was "assimilated" to the accounts in Mark and Matthew.

⁵⁶ Note Collins' comment (*Mark*, 150) that in Mark 1:11 divine appointment rather than divine adoption is the point. Also, of course, as she notes, the reference to Jesus as the son "in whom I am pleased" alludes to (and draws upon) Isaiah 42:1, and so "interprets Jesus both as the messiah and as the Servant of the Lord," and the royal motif is balanced off with a prophetic motif.

⁵⁷ The distinctive Lukan wording of the divine voice (Luke 9:35), "This is my chosen Son" (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος) may reflect a gloss on the idea of the begetting of the Son. The alternative variants in the phrasing are surely secondary. E.g., the variant ἀγαπητός, supported by numerous later witnesses is obviously a harmonization of Luke to the other Synoptic accounts.

⁵⁸ It is of course also possible, but I think highly unlikely, that the explicitly christological use of Psalm 2 post-dated Paul, and that is why he does not cite it.

⁵⁹ Esp. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*; Loader, "Christ at the Right Hand"; Gourgues, *A la droite de Dieu*; Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 135-150; Hengel, "Sit at My Right Hand!". I also draw upon my earlier discussion: "Two

quotations and nine identifiable allusions are found in NT writings that range in date from Paul's letters (ca. 50-60 CE) to the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, Hebrews, and "deutero-Pauline" writings, and there are also citations and allusions in extra-canonical early Christian writings.⁶⁰ Additionally, there are another three NT citations of Psalm 110:4 and four allusions to it.⁶¹ These data all obviously show that the Christian use of Psalm 110 began early and was widespread.

But we should also note that the prominent place of Psalm 110 in the NT and other early Christian writings gives us a rather stark contrast with its apparent lack of usage in Jewish tradition outside the NT. In the Lange/Weigold index, for example, there is no reference to this psalm listed at all and Washburn's catalogue of biblical references in the Dead Sea scrolls likewise has no reference.⁶² The earliest clear references to Psalm 110:1 in Jewish texts are in rabbinic writings, which are dated a few centuries later than the NT.⁶³ So, despite the assertions of some earlier scholars, there is scant basis for thinking that Psalm 110 figured in "pre-Christian" Jewish messianic hopes.⁶⁴ Certainly, Psalm 110

Case Studies in Earliest Christological Readings of Biblical Texts," in M. R. Malcolm (ed.), *All That the Prophets Have Declared*, Milton Keynes 2015, 3-23, esp. 4-14.

⁶⁰ NT citations of Psalm 110:1 listed in the Nestle-Aland index: Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Heb 1:13. Allusions: Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; (16:19); Luke 22:69; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12. Early extra-canonical citations: *1 Clem* 36:5; *Barn* 12:10; and allusions in *Pol. Phil.* 2:1-2; *Herm. Vis.* 3.2.1-4; *Apoc.Pet.* 6; *Sib.Or.* 2:243; *Apoc.Jas.* 14:30.

⁶¹ NT citations: Heb 5:6; 7:17, 21. Allusions: Rom 11:29; Heb 6:20; 7:3, 11.

⁶² Bradley H. McLean, *Citations and Allusions to Jewish Scripture in Early Christian and Jewish Writings through 180 CE*, Lewiston 1992, 77, who posits allusions to Psa 110:1 in *1QS* 3:17 and *T.Reu.* 6:8; but neither seems to me a cogent proposal. He also lists an allusion to Psa 110:4 in *T.Mos.* 6:1, which refers to "priests of the Most High God" (commonly thought to refer to the Hasmonean rulers). I deal with a few other unconvincing proposals of Jewish uses of Psalm 110 in "Two Case Studies," 6-7.

⁶³ Rabbinic references are gathered in H. L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, Munich 1922-28, 4/1: 452-465.

⁶⁴ Hay, *Glory*, 30, echoing Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 458-459, in assuming that Mark 12:35-37 presupposes use of Psalm 110:1 in Jewish messianic expectations. But Collins, *Mark*, 579-580, who judged rightly that the Markan text more likely presupposes early Christian christological use of Psalm 110. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 139 likewise recognized that there is scant evidence of a Jewish messianic interpretation of the Psalm.

had no prominence in the larger Jewish tradition comparable to what it has in the writings from the early Jesus-movement.

There are two main emphases in the early Christian usage of Psalm 110. The more pervasive use is with reference to the resurrection and heavenly exaltation of Jesus to a universal lordship. We see this from the earliest extant evidence onward, and with a view to space-limitations I shall focus on our earliest instances. In terms of the dating of early Christian texts, our earliest use of Psalm 110:1 is in 1 Corinthians 15:25-27, where Paul combines (and adapts) wording from Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 8:7 to proclaim Jesus' enthronement and its intended outcome, which is the submission of all things to him. The linkage of the two psalms consists in similar wording used in depictions of a triumph or supremacy given by God. In Psalm 110:1, God invites another figure ("my lord") to sit at God's right "until I put all your enemies under your feet" (ὕποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου). Psalm 8:5-9 celebrates God's placement of a human figure over all of creation, declaring that "you put all things under his feet" (ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ). Paul's use of wording from these two psalms indicates that he read both of them as prefiguring Jesus' messianic exaltation. Indeed, the rather allusive use of these psalms suggests that Paul expected his readers to be acquainted with a christological interpretation of them.⁶⁵ This means that this use of these psalms likely goes back far earlier than the date of 1 Corinthians.

In any case, whether original with him or echoing traditional early Christian interpretation of these two psalm texts, Paul reflects here a remarkable and innovative usage of them.⁶⁶ The most striking thing is the expanded scope of the supremacy that

⁶⁵ See, e.g., A. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Grand Rapids 2000, 1234. See C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture; Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 74), Cambridge 1992, for discussion of how Roman-era authors chose to cite texts exactly or allusively, the latter when they expected readers to recognize and approve of the allusion.

⁶⁶ I do not have space here to discuss Paul's adaptation of the verb-forms, and whether this adaptation makes the exalted Jesus the one who carries out the submission of "all things," whereas in the original wording in both Psalms it is God who does so. See, e.g., my brief discussion in "Two Case Studies," 8-9, and the fuller arguments by Jan Lambrecht, "Paul's Christological Use of Scripture in 1 Cor. 15.20-28," *New Testament Studies* 28 (1982) 502-527, esp. 508-511.

Paul depicts. Taking Psalm 110:1 as our focus, the invitation there is to a Judean king, whose earthly enthronement at God's "right hand" is thereby depicted as a participation in God's sovereignty; and this king is also promised the submission of all his earthly enemies.⁶⁷ But Paul uses the wording of the psalm to express Jesus' *heavenly* enthronement and his dominion over all things on a *cosmic* scale, including death itself (15:26)!⁶⁸

Among the other identified citations of Psalm 110:1 there are the Synoptic passages mentioned earlier where Jesus is portrayed as challenging Jewish interlocutors about David (the traditional author of the psalm) referring to his (messianic) son as "my lord" (Matt 22:44-45; Mark 12:35-36; Luke 20:41-44), and there is also Acts 2:33-36, where the psalm is cited as affirming Jesus' heavenly enthronement. These more explicit citations are all in contexts where those pictured as addressed are not adherents of the Jesus-movement, and so the Psalm is proffered as a kind of proof-text to challenge and persuade them.

But the most programmatic use of Psalm 110 in the NT is in the epistle to the Hebrews. Indeed, several scholars have judged that Psalm 110 functions to give biblical warrants for all the major christological emphases of Hebrews, and that the structure of Hebrews is built around key references to the psalm.⁶⁹ Certainly, the explicit citation of Psalm 110:1 in Hebrews 1:13 functions as the final and climactic scriptural text in the catena of citations and claims that comprise the vigorous christological emphasis in the opening of Hebrews (1:1-14). It is as if the author throws down Psalm 110:1 as his final card played that completes his winning hand.

The other explicit Hebrews quotations of Psalm 110 are from v. 4. In Hebrews 5:5-6, making the point that Christ's high status rests on God's appointment of him, the author first cites Psalm 2:7 and then Psalm 110:4, treating both statements quoted as statements by God. The one statement from Psalm 2:7 confirms Jesus' filial status, and Psalm 110:4 affirms Jesus' divine appointment

⁶⁷ M. Hengel, "Sit at My Right Hand!'", 185-212, surveyed various traditions about heavenly thrones.

⁶⁸ Similarly, in 15:27 Paul adapts wording from Psalm 8:7, which originally depicts a human sovereignty over all earthly creatures, to portray a cosmic dominion of the exalted Jesus.

⁶⁹ See now esp. J. Compton, *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews...*, who surveys previous studies and offers his own full analysis.

as the eternal priest “after the order of Melchizedek.” Then, in Hebrews 7:17 and also in v. 21, the author again cites Psalm 110:4 similarly to affirm Jesus’ eternal priesthood (v. 17), and (v. 21) to emphasize the divine oath of appointment that makes Jesus rightful and true priest.⁷⁰

Aside from the explicit citations of Psalm 110 in various NT writings, there are a larger number of other NT statements that are commonly thought to reflect the influence of this psalm, particularly v. 1 with its invitation to “sit at my right hand.” There is, for example, Paul’s reference to Jesus interceding for believers “at the right hand of God” in Romans 8:34. But the expression used here raises a question relating to the influence of Psalm 110:1. In an earlier study, I discussed the curious variation in Greek phrasing that characterizes this and a number of other NT statements about Jesus’ status next to God, and so I shall simply note the matter briefly here.

The figure addressed in Psalm 110:1 is invited to sit “ἐκ δεξιῶν μου,” and every time an early Christian writer quotes the Psalm this phrasing is preserved.⁷¹ But in a number of other cases in which we simply have what may be called confessional statements about Jesus’ exalted status, for some reason NT writers typically prefer to describe Jesus as “ἐν δεξιᾷ” in relation to God. In addition to Paul’s statement in Romans 8:34 already noted, the same phrasing appears also in references to Jesus’ heavenly status in Colossians 3:1; Ephesians 1:20; 1 Peter 3:22; and several times in Hebrews (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). In a few other cases there is a similar construction: τῆ δεξιᾷ (Acts 2:33; 5:31). So, given that NT writers knew very well that the Greek phrase in Psalm 110:1 was ἐκ δεξιῶν, why did they so frequently use (prefer?) ἐν δεξιᾷ (or τῆ δεξιᾷ) when they referred to Jesus’ exalted status next to God?⁷² As a striking example, note in particular that Hebrews uses ἐκ δεξιῶν

⁷⁰ In “Two Case Studies,” 10-11, I noted that, although Hebrews is distinctive in its emphasis on Psalm 110:4, the notion that the exalted Christ intercedes for believers is found in Romans 8:34, likely a decade or two earlier.

⁷¹ Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; Heb 1:13; and also in 1 Clem. 36:5-6; Barn. 12:10.

⁷² In a few other texts there are references to “the son of man” ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ (Acts 7:55-56), or ἐκ δεξιῶν . . . τῆς δυνάμεως (Mark 14:62; Matt. 26:64), ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ θεοῦ (Luke 22:69). In Pol., *Phil.* 2.1-2, also we have ἐκ δεξιῶν in a statement rather transparently shaped by Psalm 110:1 and the early Christian interpretation of it.

in citing Psalm 110:1 (Heb 1:13), but in all the places where the author simply makes a confessional statement about Jesus' status next to God he uses ἐν δεξιᾷ (Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2)⁷³. Similarly, note again that Acts 2:34 cites the phrasing of Psalm 110:1 but uses τῆ δεξιᾷ in other statements about Jesus' exalted status (2:33; 5:31).

From a quick survey of several Greek writers roughly contemporary with the NT, it seems that both ἐν δεξιᾷ and ἐκ δεξιῶν remained in use in good Koine Greek of the time, although some authors individually preferred the one or the other construction.⁷⁴ Consequently, the use of ἐν δεξιᾷ cannot be explained as a changing fashion in Koine Greek. So I find it curious that the apparent preference for ἐν δεξιᾷ in statements about Jesus' exalted status is shared by various NT authors. In the LXX, which was probably a major influence on NT Greek, ἐκ δεξιῶν is much more frequent overall, and overwhelmingly in statements describing one person or thing positioned in relation to another.⁷⁵ This is usually the case even in statements portraying a close personal relationship of two people.⁷⁶ By contrast, the dominant LXX use of ἐν δεξιᾷ is in statements describing something or someone *in the right hand* of someone.⁷⁷ Note, for example, the differentiated use of these phrases in Genesis 48:13, where Joseph presents his son Ephraim "in his [Joseph's] right hand but on Israel's left" (ἐν τῆ δεξιᾷ ἐξ ἀριστερῶν δὲ Ἰσραηλ), and Manasseh "in his [Joseph's] left hand but on Israel's right" (ἐν τῆ ἀριστερᾷ ἐκ δεξιῶν δὲ Ἰσραηλ).

⁷³ Cf. U. Rösen-Weinhold, *Der Septuagintapsalter*, Neukirchen 2004, pp. 187, who notes the phenomenon in Hebrews, but does not seem to recognize that the preference for ἐν δεξιᾷ is more widely shared. His explanation for the usage in Hebrews is that the author depended on an "oral tradition", but I find this less than an adequate proposal.

⁷⁴ Using the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, I checked usage in writings of Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Plutarch, Flavius Arrianus, Appianus, Adianus, and Galen. Some used one expression more frequently than the other, but collectively both expressions are abundantly attested.

⁷⁵ I count at least 36 uses of ἐκ δεξιῶν, at least 20 of these in statements placing someone/something in relation to someone/something else, compared with two such uses of ἐν δεξιᾷ (1 Chron 6:24; 1 Esdras 4:29).

⁷⁶ In LXX 3 Kingdms 2:19, Solomon seats his royal mother on a throne "ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ," and Psalm 44:10 pictures a resplendent queen standing on the right of the king (ἐκ δεξιῶν σου). Also, in LXX Psalm 109:5 assures the Judean king that God fights "at your right" (ἐκ δεξιῶν σου) against his enemies. Cf. the two instances of ἐν δεξιᾷ cited in n. 74.

⁷⁷ E.g., LXX Judges 16:29(A); Psalm 15(16):11; Proverbs 3:16; Sirach 47:5; Isaiah 44:20.

Moreover, the two Greek expressions translate different Hebrew constructions, and so are not used interchangeably.⁷⁸

So, to repeat a tentative suggestion that I made in an earlier publication, I wonder if the use of ἐν δεξιᾷ in the NT in statements about Jesus' relationship to God reflects perhaps some connotation of a greater closeness or intimacy (at least among some Koine Greek writers), Jesus not simply on God's right side, but closer, "in" God's "right hand."⁷⁹ In any case, if all the NT statements about Jesus being at/in God's right hand reflect the influence of Psalm 110:1, they also reflect this curious preference for a different phrasing. I repeat that it is a preference shared by various NT writers who knew very well what the wording of Greek Psalm 110:1 is. So, there is some other factor at work here generating the use of ἐν δεξιᾷ in references to Jesus' heavenly status.

I now offer a further tentative proposal intended as an amplification of my earlier one. In addition to Psalm 110:1, did other biblical texts contribute to the references to Jesus at/in God's right hand? Note, in particular, Psalm 16, another text that seems to have been appropriated as a biblical prophecy of Jesus' resurrection (as reflected in the quotations in Acts 2:25-28; 13:35).⁸⁰ The human speaker in the psalm declares that God is ἐκ δεξιῶν μου (v. 8), and this gives assurance that he will not be abandoned (vv. 9-10). I find it interesting, however, that the psalm concludes with the speaker saying to God "in your right hand [ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ σου] are unending delights" (v. 11).⁸¹ Is it possible

⁷⁸ The expression ἐκ δεξιῶν usually renders forms of ימין, and occasionally ימין אל ימין, על ימין, and ל ימין (as in Psalm 110:1), whereas ἐν δεξιᾷ almost entirely renders forms of בימין.

⁷⁹ L. W. Hurtado, "Two Case Studies...", 11-14.

⁸⁰ J. L. Johns, "The Early Jewish Transmission of Psalm 16: From Psalm to Messianic Proof Text in Luke-Acts" (PhD, University of Edinburgh 2004); K. Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens: Psalm 16 und das Lebens- und Todesverständnis der Individual psalmen*, Tübingen 2004. H. Boers, "Psalm 16 and the Historical Origins of the Christian Faith," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 60 (1969) 105-110, proposed that Psalm 16 was actually the basis of resurrection-faith, which I consider too improbable to require refutation here. But I do agree that Psalm 16 was one of the biblical texts likely appropriated from the earliest days of the post-Easter Jesus-movement.

⁸¹ In "unending delights" I respectfully differ from the translation of εἰς τέλος in LXX Psalm 15:11 in A. Pietersma and B. G. Wright (ed.), *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS), New York 2007, "in your right hand are delights completely." Also M. Rösel, "Die Psalmüberschriften des

that this statement contributed to the preference for ἐν δεξιᾷ in NT statements about Jesus' status next to God? If, as seems clear, early believers read the speaker in Psalm 16 (LXX 15) as Jesus, and the psalm as celebrating God's resurrection of him, then perhaps they saw the final verse as declaring Jesus' exaltation to a heavenly status with God (μετά τοῦ προσώπου σου) and so as enjoying the accompanying "delights" that are in God's right hand, precisely by Jesus himself being there "ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ"⁸². This may seem sheer speculation, but it is an attempt to account for what is to my knowledge otherwise an unsolved curiosity in NT discourse about the exalted Jesus⁸³.

But, to return to our focus on Psalm 110, both in its prominence and how it was interpreted in earliest Christian circles, we see distinctive developments in comparison with the wider Jewish tradition of the time. Congruent with the broad developments in Jewish reception of the Psalms, Psalm 110 was clearly read as Davidic, and so could be read as prophetic of eschatological events. But it was the specific event of God's resurrection and exaltation of Jesus that clearly drove and shaped the reading of Psalm 110 in early circles of the Jesus-movement. The eruption of the strong conviction that God had raised Jesus preceded and led early believers to this psalm.

Septuaginta-Psalter," in E. Zenger, *Der Septuaginta-Psalter: Sprachliche und theologische Aspekte*, Freiburg 2001, 125-148. Other examples in the Psalms where the Greek phrase clearly has a temporal connotation include LXX Psalms 9:19; 12:2; 43:24; 51:7; 67:17; 73:10 *et al.* The use of a distinguishable phrase in Psalm headings, εἰς τὸ τέλος, is another matter in my view. NETS translates this phrase as "Regarding completion" (but what this means escapes me).

⁸² For a somewhat similar supporting view on the possible influence of LXX Psalm 15:11 see now M. Cover, *Lifting the Veil: 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 in Light of Jewish Homiletic and Commentary Traditions* (BZAN 210), Berlín 2015, 170-174, whose discussion of ἐν δεξιᾷ is confined to its use in Peter's speech in Acts 2. On early Christian reading of the Psalms as the voice of Jesus, see R. B. Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul's Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention," in A. J. Malherbe and W. A. Meeks (eds.), *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck*, Minneapolis 1993, 122-136, re-published as "Christ Prays the Psalms: Israel's Psalter as Matrix of Early Christology," in R. B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*, Grand Rapids 2005, 101-118.

⁸³ A. Gourges, *A la droite de Dieu*, Paris 1978, p. 65 (n. 52). Who appears to treat the two Greek expressions as an unimportant variation in the influence of Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1) upon the confessional discourse reflected in the NT.

Moreover, I think it is clear also that the specific nature of that conviction shaped the unusual way that early believers read Psalm 110:1 in particular. As noted earlier, prior to the early Christian appropriation of the text here is no indication that anyone ever took it as referring to anything more than the earthly enthronement of the Judean ruler. But in early Christian usage, Psalm 110:1 depicts the exaltation of the resurrected Jesus to a *heavenly* status, and a rule of *cosmic* dimensions. Such a conviction did not likely emerge from reading Psalm 110, but from powerful experiences that conveyed the risen and exalted Jesus.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this discussion, I will simply reiterate the points that I have sought to make in it. On the one hand, the usage of the Psalms in the NT broadly reflects developments in how the Psalms were seen and used in the wider second-temple Jewish context. In particular, these developments included the collecting of Psalms into a “book,” the growing ascription of Psalms to David, the notion that David was prophetically inspired, and the accompanying notion that the Psalms could be read as prophetic of eschatological developments and events. On the other hand, both in the pattern of Psalms favoured in the NT, and in the specific ways that they were read, we see some distinctive features in the usage of Psalms. In particular, early Jesus-believers read Psalm 2 as scriptural testimony to Jesus’ unique divine sonship that was declared and validated by God. They read Psalm 110:1 as declaring God’s enthronement of Jesus to a heavenly and cosmic supremacy, a status that seems to excel what was ascribed to any other messianic figure in ancient Jewish tradition.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ I repeat here a judgement offered in “Two Case Studies,” 9, 212 n. 36. This includes even the august position ascribed to the messianic figure of the Similitudes of *1 Enoch*, whose glorious throne is apparently set on the earth, where he receives obeisance from earthly rulers (*1 Enoch* 62:1-9). The unidentified speaker in the Qumran text, 4Q491^c (*4QSelf-Glorification Hymn*) claims “a mighty throne in the congregation of the gods,” and an exaltation above all others (similar language in 4Q427/4QHodayot). But we do not know what to make of this figure, as to whether he was a messiah or the “Teacher of Righteousness” or some other. On these texts, see M. G. Abegg, Jr., “Who Ascended to Heaven? 4Q491, 4Q427, and the Teacher of Righteousness,” in

These innovative interpretations of these Psalms and other OT texts are the products of powerful experiences of revelatory force, which drove early believers to their scriptures to try to understand what they took to be dramatic eschatological events. These eschatological events focused on Jesus, and particularly his vindication and heavenly exaltation by God. In the light of these events and the convictions that they generated, the Psalms including especially Psalm 2 and 110 virtually leapt off the page as biblical expressions and confirmations of their novel beliefs about God and Jesus.

Craig A. Evans and P. W. Flint (eds.), *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids 1997, 61-73.