



Paul and the Psalms: A Formal Study

ROY A. HARRISVILLE

Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

I. PAUL'S SELECTION FROM THE PSALTER

On the basis of references in Nestle-Aland (the 26th edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graecum*¹) the apostle Paul refers directly or alludes to the Psalter thirty-one times. These references are contained in five of the seven undisputed letters of Paul—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Philippians. None appear in 1 Thessalonians or Philemon.

With respect to the type or genre of psalm cited, Paul's references range over the entire spectrum as defined by contemporary Old Testament scholars. But these references are not equally distributed among the types. First position is given the individual lament psalms, to which the apostle refers or alludes eleven times, and include Psalms 5 (Rom 3:13a); 10 (Rom 3:14); 14 (Rom 3:10-12); 22 (Rom 5:5); 36 (Rom 3:18); 51 (Rom 3:4c); 69 (Rom 11:9 and 15:3); 140 (Rom 3:13b) and 143 (Rom 3:20). References or allusions to individual thanksgiving songs assume second position. To these the apostle makes six references, and they include Psalm 18 (Rom 15:9); 32 (Rom 4:7-8); 110 (1 Cor 15:25 and Rom 8:34); 116 (Rom 3:4a), and 117 (Rom 15:11). The apostle refers or alludes twice to community or national laments (Ps 44 in Rom 8:36, and Ps 106 in Rom 1:23); twice to "wisdom" or didactic Psalms (112 in 2 Cor 9:9, and 119 in 2 Cor 6:11), and twice to psalms of trust, whether of the individual (62 in Rom 2:6), or of the community (125 in Gal 6:16). Finally, Paul refers twice to a "mixed" psalm (94 in 1 Cor 3:20 and Rom 11:1-2).

With regard to the various components or divisions within each genre, in his citations of individual laments Paul refers directly or alludes to the psalmist's complaint and characterization of his enemies (Pss 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1 and 140:3 in Rom 3:10-18). He refers only once to the psalmist's complaint of his own, individual plight (Ps 69:9 in Rom 15:3). To that part of the individual lament designated "petition," Paul makes three references to the psalmist's ap-

¹Others consulted include H. B. Swete, *An Introduction To The Old Testament In Greek* (Cambridge, 1900); W. Dittmar, *Vetus Testamentum in Novo* (Göttingen, 1903); Otto Michel, *Paulus Und Seine Bibel* (Gütersloh, 1929); Joseph Bonsirven, *Exegese Rabbiniqne et Exegese Paulinienne* (Paris, 1939), and Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1961).

peal to God to act, two of which contain imprecations on the singer's enemies (69:22f in Rom 11:9, and 69:29 in Phil 4:3), and one—according to the medieval church, the last of the "penitential" psalms—a plea that God act mercifully toward the singer himself (143:2 in Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20). Within the same genre, Paul makes one reference to the psalmist's confession of sin (51:4 in Rom 3:4c—again, a "penitential" psalm), and one to the singer's

confidence of a hearing, gleaned from Yahweh's faithfulness toward Israel throughout its past (22:5 in Rom 5:5).

There are no quotations or allusions respecting complaints aimed directly at God (though cf. the discussion of Ps 49:22 below), or from complaints which describe the singer's distress as illness or disease, physical or mental (though cf. the discussion of Ps 10:7). Paul cites no complaints which refer to the psalmist's shame over his suffering, and makes no reference to those aspects of the complaint which inquire into the meaning or goal of suffering ("Why?" "How long?"). Further, Paul does not quote from petitions in the individual laments which appeal to God to hear, or which are designed to move him to pity. The motif of the singer's innocence or integrity in face of what he suffers is also absent from Paul's references to the individual laments. The "oracle" which contains an utterance of Yahweh directed to the petitioner, and stating that he has heard his cry, is likewise absent from Paul's references or allusions. Finally, that portion of the individual lament which is most cultic in nature, in which the petitioner vows to make sacrifice or a visit to the temple in thanks to Yahweh who has heard his petition, is absent from Paul's quotations of this type of lament.

The apostle's references or allusions to the individual hymns or thanksgiving songs include a report of deliverance (118:17-18 in 2 Cor 6:9); the singer's retrospection upon his previous depression (116:10 and 11 in 2 Cor 4:13 and Rom 3:4a), and a beatitude or blessing upon the recipient of Yahweh's mercy (32:1-2 in Rom 4:7-8). Finally, Paul alludes or makes reference to two royal psalms in this category, one celebrating the king's enthronement in an oracle (110:1 in 2 Cor 15:25 and Rom 8:34), and the other containing an oath to praise Yahweh following victory in battle (18:49 in Rom 15:9).

References or allusions to community hymns include the summons to the people to praise (117:1 in Rom 15:11); celebration of Yahweh's world-rule (24:1 in 1 Cor 10:26); a song in praise of nature (19:4 in Rom 10:18), and finally a hymn to the majesty of the human creature (8:7 in 1 Cor 15:27).

Paul's references or allusions to community laments are restricted to the complaints, in the one instance to the "we-complaint" or lament over the people's suffering (44:22 in Rom 8:36), and in the other to reflection upon Israel's sins throughout its history (106:20 in Rom 1:23). As with the individual laments, there is no reference to complaints which inquire into the meaning or goal of the distress. The late wisdom or didactic psalms to which Paul refers, both alphabetical acrostics in celebration of Torah-piety, are 112:9 (2 Cor 9:9) and 119:32 (2 Cor 6:11). Quotations from the "trust" psalms include a numerical proverb addressed by the individual to Yahweh (62:12 in Rom 2:6), and a beatitude uttered by the community (125:5 in Gal 6:16).

Finally, in Paul's quotation from the "mixed" psalm, he cites the sage's address to fools (94:11 in 1 Cor 3:20), and the sage's witness to answered prayer (94:14 in Rom 11:1-2).

Though Paul was obviously not confined to the genres or their divisions as described by contemporary scholarship, his references to the Psalter nonetheless include each one of them—provided, of course, we allow for a certain fluidity between the types (especially between individual and community laments and hymns), a fluidity reflected in modern scholarly debate. In addition, without researching Paul's quotations, the student of Scripture might easily calculate

which aspects within the various genres Paul would most likely omit: complaints aimed directly at God; complaints over the shame of suffering; inquiries into the meaning of the sufferer's distress, asseverations of innocence and the like.

II. DID PAUL USE "TESTIMONIA"?

We note here Paul's restriction of quotations to certain topics:

1. The universality of sin: Psalms 5, 10, 14, 36, 93, 106 and 140.
2. Righteousness before God apart from works of law: Psalm 14 (twice).
3. Righteousness by faith: Psalms 22, 32, 62, and 125.
4. In and from Christ no condemnation and separation: Psalms 43 and 110.
5. The Gentiles' coming to faith: Psalms 18 and 117.
6. Israel's destiny: Psalms 18, 51, 69, 94, and 116.
7. The Christian existence: Psalms 24, 69, and 118.
8. The last things: Psalms 8, 110, and 116.
9. The apostle and his congregation: Psalms 69, 112, and 119.

The Old Testament student will note at once Paul's preference for two of the five books comprising the Psalter. There are twelve references to Book V (Pss 107-150) and ten to Book I (Pss 1-41). Paul quotes five times from Book IV (Pss 90-106), and four times from Book II (Pss 42-72). There are no quotations from Book III of the Psalter (Pss 73-89). The reason for this concentration cannot be chronological, since at least some of the psalms in Book V, for example, are among the latest. And the reason does not appear to be material or theological, since the topics treated by Paul have their counterparts in Book III. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that Paul's omission of references to Book III was largely for formal reasons, since the majority belong to the genre characterized as community lament. In addition to the customary invocation and complaint, this lament frequently contains petitions uttered against the background of political or national distress; appeals to Yahweh's honor, at stake among the Gentiles who will believe he is powerless to act if he does not answer the people's prayer (cf. e.g., Ps 79:10: "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?')", or appeals to the honor of Yahweh in doubt among the godless in Israel (cf. e.g., Ps 73:11: "They say, 'How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?"). Since, in addition, such petitions frequently include the promise of sacrifice upon answer to prayer; references to priest and temple; oaths of incubation or prayers for oracle, this aspect of the community lament may also account for Paul's infrequent reference to this genre.

At the same time, we possess some clues to the possibility that neither chronology nor matters of content and form as such lay behind Paul's preferences. In Romans 3:10-18, we encounter a "chain" or florilegium—the

term "enfilade" used by Joseph Bonsirven to denote a series or combination of quotations is apropos here not only of form but of content as well!—which appears in Psalm 13:3, lines three to ten, in the Septuagint version of Codex A. But it is only an abridgement of Psalms 5, 140, 10 and 36, together with quotations from Isaiah 59:7-8 and Proverbs 1:16. There is no counterpart to

these lines in the Hebrew Psalter, yet they follow without interruption Paul's quotation of Psalm 14:1-4 (=Ps 53:2-4), concerning whose origins the majority disagrees. Whether or not this "chain" was interpolated into the Septuagint from the Romans epistle, or was already present in a Greek text known to Paul cannot be determined. Did the "enfilade" have its origin in rabbinic practice?² In Romans 15:9 and 11, we encounter another, smaller combination of Psalms 17:50 (=II Sam 22:50) and 117:1, together with Deuteronomy 32:43 and Isaiah 11:10. These "chains" are not a sufficient basis for concluding that the apostle was in possession of a collection of texts applicable to the various themes he intended to treat, but taken together with the numerous combinations of verses from the remainder of the Old Testament in Paul's letters, the inference that Paul's choice of genres and their divisions may have originated in a collection of "testimonia" available to him may not be altogether specious.

The notion of "testimonia" is a hypothesis which has been dear to the heart of the English for a hundred years. It began in an attempt to identify the sources of Matthew's Gospel, was utilized by friend and foe in the era of the "Quest" to identify Jesus' self-consciousness, and after considerable twisting and turning has wormed its way toward the remainder of the New Testament. The theory dies hard. Yet, its ethnic origins or misuse need not deter us from weighing it again. Did Paul have available to him a collection of quotations, taken and abridged from the Old Testament after the rabbinic style, that is, with interpolations and variations sufficient to lead modern scholars to disagree over their origin in the Hebrew, the Septuagint or in a parent text now lost to us; over intentional alterations or memory lapses on the part of the apostle? At the moment, a comparison of opinions over such matters in respect of a single Old Testament "quotation" in Paul leads only to despair. Despair, of course, is never good counsel, and the least complicated hypothesis is not always the best, though it does allow the scholar to sit loose in the saddle should his horse ever take it into his head to throw him. Still, our (Gentile) understanding of rabbinic interpretation is in its infancy, and the possibility that the English may have tumbled to something significant bears examining.

When we arrange Paul's quotations or allusions to the Psalms according to genre and division, the following picture emerges:

- Galatians: IL: Individual lament (petition to God to act).
- TC: Community trust psalm (beatitude).
- 1 Corinthians: M: Mixed psalm (complaint).
- HC: Community hymn of thanks (celebrating Yahweh's world-rule).
- HI: Individual hymn of thanks (oracle).
- HC: (celebrating the majesty of the human creature).

²Cf, Swete, *Introduction*, 251.

- 2 Corinthians: HI: (introspection).
- HI (report of deliverance).
- W (Torah-piety).
- W (Torah-piety-praise of Yahweh).

- 2 Corinthians: HI: (introspection).
- Romans: CL: Community lament (salvation-historical recitation of Israel's sins).
 TI: Individual song of trust (address to Yahweh).
 HI (introspection).
 IL (confession of sin).
 IL (characterization of enemies).
 IL (petition to God to act).
 HI (penitential-beatitude).
 IL (confidence petition will be heard).
 HI (oracle).
 CL (complaint over suffering).
 HI (praise of nature).
 M (witness to answered prayer).
 IL (introspection).
 IL ("we-complaint").
 HI (oath to praise).
 HC (summons to praise).
- Philippians: IL (petition to bless).

With the exception of Philippians, and allowing for variation or repetition as suited to Paul's argument, the oscillation in each epistle between lament and thanksgiving is easily recognizable. But from this we can hardly infer Paul's use of "testimonia." On the other hand, if we excerpt from Romans—the series in Galatians or Corinthians are too few to yield a basis for any hypothesis—those passages which Nestle or the majority regard merely as allusions, and if we keep to the components within the genres of the psalms directly quoted, expressions appear in tandem which might have served as devices to aid the memory.

Key terms or expressions from the Septuagint translation of the psalms quoted in Romans 3-8 yield the following result:

Psalm 50:6 (Rom 3:4c): *soi monō hēmarton kai to ponēron enōpion sou epoiēsa, hopōs an dikaiōthēs*, etc. (A)

Psalm 13:1-3 (Rom 3:10-12) *ouch estin theos...ouch estin poiōn chrēstotēta, ouch estin heōs henos...ouch estin poiōn chrēstotēta, ouch estin heōs henos* (B).

Psalm 5:10 (Rom 3:13a): *hoti ouch estin en tō stomati autōn alētheia...*(B).

Psalm 139:4 (Rom 3:13b): *ēkonēsan glōssan autōn hōsei opseōs...*(C).
Psalm 9:28 (Rom 3:14): *hou aras to stoma autou gemei kai pikrias kai dolou...* (C).
Psalm 35:2 (Rom 3:18): *ouch estin phobos theou apenanti tōn ophthalmōn autou...*(B).

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Psalm 31:1f. (Rom 4:7-8): *oude estin en tō stomati autou dolos...*(B).
Psalm 43:23 (Rom 8:36): *hoti heneka sou thanatoumetha holēn tēn hēmeran...(A¹).†*

The reader will recognize at once the chiasmic structure (the counterparts in the Hebrew texts reflect the same structure). The mere presence of chiasma, however, cannot be used in support of an argument for memory aids. Paul's literary style is replete with such devices, no doubt reflecting his earlier training. But if, as the majority of scholars consulted supposes, these psalms (almost all of which are addressed to Yahweh) ultimately derive from Israel's cultus, the possibility is at least worth entertaining that the rhythm we have noted roots in mnemonic aids for oral worship, finally committed to writing. On the other hand, since Nestle and the majority assign the quotations to the Hebrew as well as to the Septuagint, there appears to be little consistency in Paul's use. In fact, where all his quotations from the Old Testament are concerned, it is still impossible categorically to state which text of the Hebrew or Greek he used. Nevertheless, the illustration above suggests that the apostle may have employed quotations which cohere by virtue of key terms or expressions. When these quotations, at least in Romans, are set within the total context of Paul's use of the Old Testament, which reflects conscious arrangement according to its three main sections,³ the possibility of a conscious pursuit of rhythm in quotation is heightened. Without comparing such pursuit of rhythm in extra-biblical, Jewish literature, however, we cannot decide whether Paul is originator or inheritor.

III. PAUL'S USE OF THE PSALMS

We turn now to Paul's use of the Psalms in his own contexts, again restricting ourselves to those sections in which Nestle and the majority locate direct quotations.

*1 Corinthians 3:20=Psalm 94:11 (LXX: 93:11).*⁴ Paul's use of this "mixed" Psalm may be characterized as an *inversion*. The quotation follows another from

†Psalm 50:6: "Against you only I have sinned and done the evil in your sight, that you may be justified, etc." (A)

Psalm 13:1-3: "There is not (any) God...there is not one who does good, there is not even one...there is not one who does good, there is not even one, etc." (B)

Psalm 5:10: "For there is not truth in their mouth" (B)

Psalm 139:4: "They sharpened their tongues like a serpent" (C)

Psalm 9:28: "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness and deceit" (C)

Psalm 35:2: "There is not fear of God before their eyes" (B)

Psalm 31:1f.: "There is not deceit in his mouth" (B)

Psalm 43:23: "For your sake we are killed the whole day" (A¹)

The practiced eye will detect a more complex chiasmic structure than the underlinings indicate.

³Cf. Roy A. Harrisville, *Romans, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980) 260, note 51.

⁴Setting the Septuagint passages in parentheses does not reflect prejudice against Paul's use of that version. The opinion of this author is that in the overwhelming majority of instances, Paul is dependent upon the Septuagint or a related Greek text. But let the reader decide.

Job prefaced by a *gegraptai gar*, the verse itself preceded, by a *kai palin*. In the midst of his lament, the psalmist engages in indignant debate with the haughty, godless ones: “Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise?” Three verses later, and in the portion cited by Paul, the sage announces: “He who teaches men knowledge, the Lord, knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.” In its original context, the Psalm—after the style of wisdom literature—contrasts the behavior and destiny of wise and fools, the sage then characterized as instructed or chastened by God. Paul, exploiting the terms “wise” and “fool,” reverses their roles—whichever would be wise must now become a fool, since by the cross of Christ God has made foolish the wisdom of the world.

1 Corinthians 10:26=Psalm 24:1 (LXX: 23:1). Here Paul’s use of the Psalm may be described as *inferential*. The apostle cites the community hymn in celebration of Yahweh’s world-rule—“the earth is the Lord’s”—and then proceeds to draw from it an inference respecting an ethical question put to him by the Corinthians regarding the eating of meat offered to idols. Paul states that whatever is sold in the market may be eaten without raising questions of conscience, “for (*gar*), the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”

1 Corinthians 15:25= Psalm 110:1 (LXX: 109:1). Here Paul *transcendentalizes* a royal psalm or individual hymn of thanksgiving, specifically, a summons or oracle uttered in the hearing of the king, perhaps on the occasion of the festival of his enthronement. In the Psalm, the oracle (a court prophet?) authorizes the monarch’s kingship as given by Yahweh, and guarantees its security: “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.” In Paul, Yahweh is no longer merely supreme commander, but himself the king before whom his enemies will bow, and on whose necks he will place his foot as symbol of his power.

1 Corinthians 15:27=Psalm 8:6 (LXX: 8:7). Paul’s use of this psalm-verse alters subject and object. Beginning with the paean, “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!” the psalmist proceeds to a reflection on the majesty of the human creature whom God has crowned with glory and honor: “Thou hast given him dominion...thou hast put all things under his feet.” In conjunction with 1 Corinthians 15:25, Paul does not identify “all things” with animate creation—“all sheep and oxen...beasts of the field...birds of the air...fish of the sea”—but with “rule,” “authority,” “power,” and finally with death, the last enemy of all. As in 1 Corinthians 15:25, the subject of the activity is no longer the human creature, but Christ or God. The Psalm text has been *transcendentalized*.

2 Corinthians 4:13=Psalm 116:10 (LXX: 115:1). Paul’s use of this individual hymn of thanks clearly abstracts it from its original context. In the Psalm, the word “I believed, therefore I spoke,” precedes the singer’s retrospection upon an earlier distress and mood of depression—“I was exceedingly humbled; I said in my consternation, ‘Every man is a liar’” (in the Hebrew: “I am greatly afflicted; I said in my consternation, ‘Men are all a vain hope’”). In Paul, however, the original sense is absorbed in an *absolute interpretation*, and the retrospection is consequently altered to prospect. Introducing his quotation with a *kata to gegrammenon*, Paul writes: “‘I believed, and so I spoke,’ we too believe,

and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also....” Interestingly

enough, Paul makes explicit reference to his right to such an interpretation by claiming the same inspiration as moved the original composer of the Psalm—“since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote....”

2 Corinthians 6:11=Psalm 119:32 (LXX: 118:32). Paul *historicizes* this artificial, alphabetical acrostic by altering the petition of lament (“I will run in the way of thy commandments when thou enlargest my understanding”) to an accomplished fact (“our heart *has* been made wide”). In addition, the object of enlargement is not the pursuit of Torah-piety, but rather the reconciliation between Paul and his congregation. But this is less an alteration than an inference, in light of Paul’s identification of love as the fulfillment of the law (cf. e.g., Rom 13:8). What the psalmist wished for, what for him lay in the future was for Paul a present reality.

2 Corinthians 9:9=Psalm 112:9 (LXX: 111:9). Paul’s second use of an alphabetical psalm may also be described as an *historicizing*, a move from the generic or universal to the specific. In this acrostic, the singer praises the godly person’s righteousness and compassion toward the poor as the meaning of a life blessed by God, honored among humans and lived in full strength (the idea conveyed by the metaphor of the horn): “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever; his horn is exalted....” Like the psalmist construing righteousness in terms of the giving of alms, Paul presses the encomium into the service of his appeal to the Corinthians to contribute to the Jerusalem collection: “God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written (*kathōs gegraptai*), ‘He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever.’”

Romans 2:6=Psalm 62:12 (LXX: 61:13). Here in Romans, the singer’s confidence addressed to Yahweh in an individual psalm of trust is *recontextualized*. The verse is torn from its ancient setting, according to which recompense occurs this side of the grave, and is set within the context of a final judgment. For this reason, the psalmist’s hope—“to thee, O Lord, belongs steadfast love”—is altered to a declarative statement of requital on both good and evil. These alterations are due to their use in Paul’s “brief” for the universal culpability of humankind. On the other hand, the original sense of the verse is not altered by Paul, provided God’s “impartiality” as Paul states it, is not his recompense for human effort, but rather his “steadfast love.” In that case, in Paul as well as in the Psalm, the requital is ultimately for deeds in which God himself is present.

Romans 3:4 =Psalm 51:4 (LXX: 50:6). In this passage, Paul *recontextualizes* an individual lament from the most important of the penitential psalms, specifically from the psalmist’s confession of sin. Prefacing his quotation with a *kathōs gegraptai*, the apostle abstracts the confession from its context in which the singer’s shock over the recognition of his sin does not depress him, but arouses him to consciousness of God and the absolute seriousness of his will: “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned...so that thou art justified in thy sentence, etc.” Paul thus omits the first half of the confession and appropriates the remainder in a rejoinder to an imaginary opponent who infers from the apostle’s

argument regarding Israel’s unbelief that it annuls the faithfulness of God: “What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every man be false (an allusion to the introspective comment contained in an

individual hymn of thanks, Ps 115:2 = LXX 116:11), as it is written, ‘That thou mayest be justified in thy words, etc.’” In this alteration of context occurs a radical alteration of mood from that of joy in the God whose grace is revealed in his judgment on sin to that of accusation or indictment. Later, in Romans 11:32-36, Paul will echo the original context and mood of this Psalm, but not in a quotation from it.

Romans 3:10-18=Psalm 14:1-3 (LXX: 13:1-3); 5:9 (LXX: 5:10); 140:3 (LXX: 139:4); 10:7 (LXX: 9:28), and 36:1 (LXX: 35:2). Here Paul *universalizes* quotations from five individual laments, in particular from the psalmist’s characterization of his enemies as contained in the complaints. The subject in all these laments is the one faithful to Yahweh, whose enemies in their practical atheism ignore the demands which the reality of God makes upon human life (Ps 14:1-3); who wish him everything ill (5:9); wage war against him (140:3); utter (magically effective?) curses against him (10:7), and give to the “whispering” of sin the same authority which the prophet gives to the voice of God (36:11). Paul, however, collapses the distinction between the complainant and his enemies by inserting the psalms into an argument for the universality of sin and thus of universal guilt. “There is none that does good”—no, not even the psalmist. The assumption is that Israel’s history as reflected in the singer’s complaint has exemplary significance for the world, and that it is archetypal.

Romans 4:7-8=Psalm 32:1f. (LXX: 31:1f). In this instance Paul has shaped a beatitude from an individual hymn of thanks into a *thesis*: “blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity.” As the remainder of the phrase in his preface makes clear, Paul interprets the beatitude of one who has received forgiveness “apart from works.” But if the phrase in verse 2b of the Psalm—“in whose spirit there is no deceit”—can be identified with the singer’s resolution to confess his sin (“I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’” v. 5) and trust in Yahweh, then the apostle’s inference remains true to the original context and sense of this penitential, “Pauline” psalm.

Romans 8:36=Psalm 44:22 (LXX: 43:23). Again the apostle *recontextualizes*. Prefacing his use of this “we-complaint” over political oppression in a community lament with a *kathōs gegraptai*, the apostle uses the psalm-verse to characterize the existence of the believer in Christ. The psalmist’s political enemy has been extended to include “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, etc.” The “we-complaint,” intimately related to and yet distinct from the complaint against God (“Rouse thyself! Why sleep est thou, O Lord? Awake! Do not cast us off for ever!” v. 23), and which is calculated to move God to reverse the sufferers’ fate, is now altered to a descriptive statement of the shape of the Christian life, within (not despite) which the believer is “more than conqueror,” and which cannot separate from God’s love because it is precisely in that shape that Christ makes his appearance in those who are his. In other words, what the singer and his community pray to avert, Paul has rendered constitutive of the life of faith. If this Psalm does not reflect a

“Pharisaical consciousness of superiority,” but rather the awareness that persecution and distress are an essential characteristic of the community’s life because it belongs to Yahweh, then the psalmist and Paul are at one in linking the peculiarity of election with the mystery of the suffering of the righteous.

Romans 10:18=Psalm 19:4 (LXX: 18:5). Introducing his excerpt from this descriptive

song with a *menoungē*, the apostle *recontextualizes* by abstracting the hymn-verse from its setting in praise of Yahweh and inserting it into his inventory of Israel's unbelief. To the suggestion that Israel cannot be held accountable for its unbelief, since it has not heard the gospel, Paul replies, "indeed they have; for 'their voice has gone out to all the earth....'" Paul's reply clearly alters the subject of the verse. In the original setting, the inanimate things of nature—heaven, the firmament—are given speech, and witness to the divine majesty and work of creation. In Paul, heavens and firmament are not the subject of praise, but rather the apostolic company. And with the alteration of subject, the mysterious and transcendent has been rendered immanent, historical. In the Psalm, the areas of creation are so distant that their sound cannot be heard by the human ear ("their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth"). In Paul's reference, "their voice" is heard because the voice is his and that of his fellow proclaimers. The cause of Israel's unbelief must lie elsewhere.

Romans 11:1-2=Psalm 94:14 (LXX: 93:14). In his discussion of Israel's future, Paul *recontextualizes* an expression of confidence in God's aid from the "mixed" psalm (cf. the remarks on 1 Cor 3:20=Ps 94:11). The singer's confidence that he will not be surrendered to the caprice of the godless, roots in his certainty of Yahweh's faithfulness to his covenant. Paul's use of this psalm abstracts it from its original setting of contrast between godly and wicked, and alters the "prophetic imperfect" (LXX: future tense) of the verse—"the Lord will not forsake his people"—to the aorist or past tense: "God has not rejected his people." But insofar as Paul shares with the psalmist the certitude of God's faithfulness which gives rise to confidence, the alteration is superficial. Ultimately, not even Paul's appendix to the quotation—"his people whom he foreknew"—spells a qualification of his assertion, since the discussion of the "elect" in Israel which immediately follows is finally absorbed in the revelation of the "mystery" in 11:25-32. Paul's total identification with the psalmist's certainty is so intense that he assigns independent existence to unbelieving Israel when all reason or logic would argue for its ruin, and sets its unbelief within the divine economy of salvation: "So they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy."

Romans 11:9=Psalm 69:22-23 (LXX: 68:23-24). Paul here introduces his quotation from the petition of an individual lament with a *kai David legei*. The psalmist, broken in hope and disillusioned, gives vent to blind fury by hurling imprecations on his enemies. Paul *recontextualizes* the psalmist's curse and alters its object. The enemy is now no longer those who attack Yahweh in the person of his zealot, but that portion of the synagogue which rejects Jesus as Messiah: "What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened....David says, 'Let their table become a snare....'"

Romans 15:3=Psalm 69:9 (LXX: 68:10). Quoting from the same individual lament, this time from its complaint ("the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me"), and prefacing his quotation with a *kathōs gegraptai*, Paul *ethicizes* the context of the lament and gives it a new subject. The context is now no longer that of temple construction, an endeavor by which the psalmist identified himself with Yahweh's cause ("zeal for thy house has consumed me"), and as a result of which he suffered in Yahweh's stead. The context has been altered to the relation between factions within the Christian community. Further, the zealot's identification with Yahweh and his cause (the temple) has been altered to that of the "strong" with the "weak."

Lastly, the Psalmist's complaint is made to serve a portrait of Christ as prototype of Christians of all persuasions: "For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me.'" With Paul, Christ, not the psalmist, is the subject of the lament.

Romans 15:9=Psalm 18:49 (LXX: 17:50). Introducing his quotation with a *kathōs gegraptai*, Paul *Christologizes* an oath to praise from another royal or individual thanksgiving psalm. In the original setting, the king, following Yahweh's intervention on his behalf, and as though surrounded by all the nations of the earth, vows to sing his praise. In Romans 15, the oath and content of the song of praise is retained, but its reason is altered from victory over political enemies to Christ's incarnation within Judaism as proof of the faithfulness of God.

Romans 15:11 =Psalm 117:1 (LXX: 116:10). In this last direct quotation from the Psalter, Paul again *Christologizes* a summons to praise in a community hymn (note the reflection of a "chain" reference to the *kai palin*; cf. also 1 Cor 3:20 above). Since the origin (the cultus?) and use (a liturgical formula used by the priest to introduce a festival hymn?) are not known, it is impossible to determine to what extent Paul has altered its context, if at all. But he does share the psalmist's assumption that Yahweh is "highest God," to whom all the world is subject, for which reason the sphere of his reign should be summoned to praise. Or again, since Yahweh's lordship is evident through his faithfulness to Israel, and since the Gentiles may now enter the brilliance of salvation which has dawned on Israel, he is worthy of praise; "Praise the Lord, all Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him!"

IV. CONCLUSIONS

From our observation of Paul's direct use of the Psalms, we may draw the following conclusions:

1. Scarcely a single exegetical technique employed by the apostle is without precedent in what we know of rabbinical interpretation. Such techniques include:

- a. Inversion resulting from the exploitation of the strict sense of a term (cf. 1 Cor 3:20).
- b. "Implicit" exegesis through deduction or inference (1 Cor 10:26).
- c. "Transcendentalizing," i.e. deliberate alteration or suppression of the anthropological or anthropomorphic (1 Cor 15:25 and 27; Rom 5:9 and 11).

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d. The expression of personal sentiment (2 Cor 4:13 and 6:11. Cf. also Paul's appeal to the Corinthians on behalf of the Jerusalem collection in 2 Cor 9:9).

e. "Recontextualizing" and "universalizing" (typological exegesis) the appropriation of passages which reflect decisive events in Israel's history, or in that of its chief representatives (e.g. of "David," putative author of the Psalms), and employment of them as figures of the definitive, Messianic age (Rom 2:6; 3:4c; 3:10-18; 8:36; 10:18; 11:1-2, 9).

f. The construction of "chains," composites or series of texts (Rom 3: 10-18).

g. The formulation of a theological thesis, introduced by the Hebrew or Aramaic counterpart to Paul's *kathōs kathaper gegraptai* (cf. Rom 4:7-8).

h. "Ethicizing," the use of passages giving formulation to propositions of an ethical or moral nature (Rom 15:3).

i. Modifications without apparent reason (as, e.g., Paul's positioning of the object before

the vocative in his quotation of Psalm 117:1=Rom 15:11).

j. Textual corrections or emendations (cf. Paul's quotations in Nestle-Aland with the Hebrew or Septuagint texts!).

2. The uniqueness in Paul's use of the Psalms is to be located in his Christological interpretation. This statement does not merely hold true in those instances in which the apostle undertakes a conscious alteration of subject (e.g., in 1 Cor 15:25, 27; Rom 15:9, 11). Such alteration would in itself be free of suspicion, at least in theory. Certain rabbis had early conceded a multiplicity of senses in the Old Testament. In a given instance, Paul's "christologizing" could be assigned to a penchant for typology or allegory, in itself allowable, though perhaps wrong-headed. In the last analysis, it is the apostle's total orientation of the Psalter (together with the remainder of the Old Testament) to the event of Jesus Christ and to faith and existence in him as Messiah and Lord which furnishes the radical, material discontinuity between his interpretation and that of the synagogue (or philosophical school). Paul's oft-celebrated "sovereignty" in his use of Scripture, therefore, is not reflected in the form or shape of his use. It derives from his conviction concerning Christ as the incorporation of all the promises of God.

It would be incorrect to assume, however, that the stimulus for this radical discontinuity was exclusively external, that it lay entirely in Paul's encounter with Christ which then threw his understanding of Scripture in a new light. Paul was a student of the Old Testament prior to his coming to faith (cf. Gal 1:14 and Phil 3:4-6), and the temple and synagogue had already arrived at a "transcendentalizing," had already noted the Elohim-shape of the human in the subordination to it of everything created ("thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet"). And at its festivals even Israel's kings appear to have assumed the role of deity. At some great autumn festival of enthronement, the ruler may have ascended his throne near the ark of the covenant, while the oracle whispered in his ear: "Sit at my right hand...." But to what extent such interpretation or celebration served Paul as preparation for the gospel is the object of another study.