THE PSALMS
A SHORT INTRODUCTION

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BY

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PREFACE

THIS little Introduction to The Psalms has been written primarily for the use of students who are remote from libraries and find it difficult to obtain access to the more expensive books on the psalms. It takes account of the most recent study of the Psalter, and every care has been taken to give a fair and unbiased account of modern theories.

The student is recommended to consult the commentaries and those books which give fuller treatment. The commentaries (in English) which are chiefly recommended are: Cheyne (1888, in one volume: the second edition in two volumes is not recommended); Delitzsch (1892, in three volumes: fifty years old, but containing a great deal of material not accessible elsewhere); Montefiore (1901); Kirkpatrick (1902, Cambridge Bible); Davison and Witton Davies (Century Bible); Barnes (1931, Westminster Commentaries, 2 vols.); and Oesterley (1939, 2 vols.). Other books are Cheyne, *The Origin of the Psalter* (1891); *The Psalmists* (ed. D. C. Simpson, 1926); Oesterley, *The Psalms in the Jewish Church* (1910), much of which is reproduced in his *A Fresh Approach to the Psalms* (1937). Other books of wider interest are Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life* (1903), and Thorn, *The Heart of Israel* (1925), whilst Snaith, *Have Faith in God* (1935), deals particularly with the problem of suffering in the psalms.

N. H. S.

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I

THE COMPILATION OF THE BOOK

From the point of view of its compilation, the Book of the Psalms must be considered in two sections, namely *Section A*, comprising psalms i–lxxxix, and *Section B*, which comprises psalms xc–cl. The method of compilation in each section is similar to the extent that in each case the compilation is in groups rather than by separate psalms added psalm by psalm. As in the case of the Book of Proverbs, we have a collection of collections. All this is reflected in the modern study of the Psalter, which recognizes the existence of groups of psalms, and tends to study the psalms in such groups rather than separately. Whilst, however, the two sections of the Psalter are both composed of groups of psalms, yet the type of group which has been included is different in the two sections.

Section A, Psalms i–lxxxix

This section was compiled, apart from (probably) two later insertions (i and xxxiii), from four earlier psalters. There were two Davidic Psalters, the Davidic Jehovist and the Davidic Elohist, and two Levitical Psalters, the Asaphite and that of 'the Sons of Qorach'. There was also another psalter in existence, known as 'The Music-master's' (*R.V.*, 'For the Chief Musician'), and wherever a psalm was also to be found in this psalter, a note to that effect was made at the head of the psalm.

(*a*) *The first psalter*

This was the Davidic Jehovist. It is called 'Davidic' because of the tendency to call every psalm 'of David' (Hebrew, *le-Dhawidh*), just as the whole of the Law was ascribed to Moses, and all the Proverbs to Solomon, this latter tendency extending to other Wisdom Literature such as Ecclesiastes, and even to such a composition as the Song of Songs. This tendency is to be seen in respect of the psalms to an even more marked extent in the Septuagint, where many psalms which in the Hebrew Bible have no title at all, are ascribed 'to David'. Such psalms are xxxiii (*LXX*, xxxii), xliii (xlii), xci (xc), xciv (xciii), and others, whilst Codex Alexandrinus and the Veronese Psalter on occasion add this superscription to whatever ascription they have already found. The name 'Jehovist' is due to the fact that the Sacred Name Itself is found throughout, wherever the Deity is named.

This first collection of psalms began originally with psalm ii, and extended to psalm xli. It is probable that psalm i was inserted at the last editing of the Psalter when it was arranged for reading according to a triennial cycle, side by side with the Palestinian triennial lectionary for the Reading of the Law. Probably psalm xxxiii is also a late insertion. Apart from psalms i and ii, it is the only psalm in the First Book (i–xli) which has not a title of its own. Psalm ii, it is generally agreed, lost its title when it came to be used as the title of the whole Psalter, having been completely severed from its original psalm by the insertion of psalm i.

(*b*) *The second psalter*

This was the Elohist Psalter. It extended from xlii to lxxxiii. It is called 'Elohist' because the word

'Elohim, a plural noun and the regular Hebrew word for 'gods', is used predominantly instead of the Divine Name Itself. Some psalms in this group are found also in the Davidic Jehovist Psalter, namely liii, which equals (with slight variations) xiv, and lxx which is part of xl. The apparently deliberate substitution of *'Elohim* for the Sacred Name is to be noted in these psalms, though the JHVH of xl. 11 has been retained in lxx. 1.

The Elohist Psalter is composed of Asaphite, Qorachite, and Davidic psalms. The Asaphite psalms are l (the 'lonely' Asaphite psalm) and lxxiii–lxxxiii. The Qorachite psalms are xlii–xlix, whilst the remainder, li–lxxi, are Davidic, and to them is appended lxxii, which is 'of Solomon'. Ewald suggested that this is not the original order, but that once li–lxxii came first. This suggestion has much to recommend it. (*i*) It makes all the Davidic psalms come first, i.e. i–xli are immediately followed by li-lxxii, so that the note at the end of lxxii, 'the psalms of David the son of Jesse are ended', receives additional point, and now means, as we would expect it to mean, that this is the end of all the Davidic psalms, and that all the psalms up to this are Davidic. (*ii*) The 'lonely' Asaphite psalm is now joined to its fellows, i.e. lxxiii–lxxxiii immediately follow l. The proposed original order is: first, all the Davidic psalms i–xli, li–lxxii; second, the Qorachite psalms, xlii–xlix; third, all the Asaphite psalms, l, lxxiii–lxxxiii.

(*c*) *The third psalter*

The third stage was the joining together of the two existing psalters, namely the Davidic Jehovist and the Elohist. At this stage of its growth, therefore, the Psalter consisted of all the psalms up to and including lxxxiii, with the probable exceptions of i and xxxiii.

(*d*) *The fourth psalter*

This was formed by the addition of a miscellaneous group consisting of lxxxiv–lxxxix. They comprise two Qorachite psalms, lxxxiv and lxxxv; one Davidic psalm, lxxxvi; a third Qorachite, lxxxvii; then a Qorachite which is also ascribed to Heman the Ezrahite, lxxxviii; and lastly, lxxxix, which is ascribed to Ethan the Ezrahite. It is possible that these six psalms were added to the Elohist Psalter before it was combined with the Jehovist Psalter, but this is less likely. These six psalms are all Jehovist, and it is probable that if they had been added to the Elohist Psalter, they would have been subjected to the same editorial process as xiv and that part of xl which appears as lxx. The addition of these six psalms to the combined Jehovist-Elohist Psalter concludes the story of the formation of *Section A*.

Section B, Psalms xc–cl

This section of the Psalter is composed largely of liturgical groups. Firstly, we have psalms xc–c. These psalms are traditionally the eleven psalms of Moses, according to the Rabbinic tradition that all 'orphan' (those which have no titles of their own) psalms are to be ascribed to the author last mentioned. It has been maintained (Snaith) that xc–xcix are the original Sabbath Psalms, as they still are, with the sole exception of xciv, the place of which is taken by xxix. Psalm c is the regular week-day psalm according to a very ancient synagogual tradition, and it still is. The next two psalms, ci and cii, are odd psalms, but ciii and civ are 'Blessing' psalms. Psalms cv and cvi begin with 'Hallelujah' (i.e. 'Praise ye Jah'), and continue immediately with 'O give thanks unto Jehovah'. In *R.V.*, as in the Hebrew Masoretic Text, the 'Hallelujah' is found at the end of the previous psalm, but its proper place is at the beginning, and it is found there in the Septuagint. Psalm cvii provides a series of variations on the theme 'O give thanks unto Jehovah'.

Psalms cviii–cx form a little trio of Davidic psalms, the first of which is composed of parts of lvii and lx. The next group is cxi–cxviii, a group of Hallelujah psalms. In the Septuagint, cv is joined to civ. This is probably because it has no title of its own, and perhaps the psalm has been inserted into the group. There then follows the great eight-line acrostic on the Law, cxix, and this is succeeded by cxx–cxxxiv, the fifteen psalms of 'goings-up' or of 'degrees', often called the Pilgrim Psalter. The next two psalms, cxxxv and cxxxvi, are a pair of Hallelujah psalms. They are followed by a group of Davidic psalms, cxxxvii–cxlv, of which cxxxvii has the title 'to David' in the Septuagint, though not in the Hebrew Text. The Psalter concludes with the five great Hallelujah psalms, cxlvi–cl, known as the Hallel. The Septuagint has divided cxlvii into two psalms. Having written ix and x as one psalm, and having also combined cxv with cxiv, the Septuagint has restored the correct number of cl, by dividing cxvi and cxlvii each into two psalms. The additional Septuagint psalm, cli, is definitely stated as being 'outside the number'.

II

CLASSIFICATION OF PSALMS

(a) *Gunkel's classification*

THE tendency to study the psalms by groups belongs mostly to the last thirty years. It is found in Staerk (*Lyrik*, 1911), and in Kittel (*Die Psalmen*, 5th ed., 1929), but it is fully developed by Gunkel. He reached the full development of this theory in his 1926 commentary on the Psalms and in the Introduction which was published by Begrich (1933) after Gunkel himself had died. For a summary in English of his position, see the paper which he read at Oxford at the Summer (1927) Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study, published under the title 'The Poetry of the Psalms', in the volume of published papers entitled *Old Testament Essays* (1927), pp. 118–42.

He found four main classes (*Gattungen*), and he placed them in the order in which he thought they had developed, namely, thanksgivings before laments, and national before individual. In this he was guided by the generally accepted theories of the development of Hebrew history in the one case, and of the development of Hebrew religion in the other. His four main classes are: (1) National Hymns of Praise, e.g., cxlv, cxlvii, cxlix, cl; (2) Private Hymns of Thanksgiving, e.g., xxx and lxvi from verse 13; (3) National Hymns of Sorrow, e.g., lxxix, lxxx, lxxiii; and (4) Private Hymns of Sorrow, e.g., iii, xiii, liv, lxxxviii. He held that even the latest of these groups was prior to the time of Jeremiah, though probably this dictum would allow for a certain amount of revision of the actual text of some of the psalms.

There are other smaller classes, such as psalms dealing with the Law, prophetic psalms, Wisdom psalms, psalms of blessing and of cursing, and so forth, and some psalms are mixed and belong to more than one type. But within the four main classes, Gunkel held that the simpler the structure, the earlier the psalm. Each class has its own set of formulae, and these are the criteria by which the class of a psalm is to be decided. For instance, the class which Gunkel calls 'Hymns of Praise' contains hymns sung either by sacred choirs or by trained soloists. The music was exhilarating, and was sung on special holy days. The introduction is 'Sing ye to Jehovah', or some such invitation in the case of the choruses, or 'I will sing . . .', in the case of the solos. Special objects for praise are mentioned, and particular statements are made about Jehovah being merciful, gracious, and so on. Laments begin with a prayer that God will listen and hear, or they describe the wonder of the psalmist that such untoward circumstances have come to pass. Generally there is a reference to the great deliverances of past time, and a prayer that such a 'righteous act' may be wrought once more. There may be veiled references to the actual trouble, and, almost without exception, there is the expression of a conviction that deliverance will come.

The general judgement upon this theory of Gunkel's is that he has performed a most useful service in pointing out the various types of psalms. On the other hand his theories are far too rigid, and he tends to regiment his material in the style which is characteristic of German scholarship generally. In so far as he is describing general tendencies his theories are sound, but his analysis can scarcely be pushed legitimately to the lengths which such accurate classification demands. When he attempts to date the various psalms according to his strict categories, he is on very debatable ground. Men do not advance in serried masses. There are men in every age who write laments and those who compose thanksgivings. There is no 'close time' in the history of a nation when one particular type of song is written. On the contrary there are the prophets, the men who speak out of their time, either pioneers who blaze the trail, or those who think the old ways are best.

(b) The Royal Psalms

These psalms were discussed as a group by G. B. Gray (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, vii, pp. 658–86), in 1895. They are psalms in which a king is mentioned, and this king is definitely an earthly king, and is not Jehovah Himself. Such psalms are ii, xxi, lxi, lxiii, and especially lxxii, xlv, and cx. Gray held that these Royal Psalms need not necessarily be pre-exilic or Maccabean, but that they refer to the king as an idealization of the people. There are occasions when Israel is called the Lord's Anointed, or at least it is impossible to be sure whether people or prince is intended, e.g., Habakkuk iii. 13; Psalms cv. 15; xxviii. 8; and lxxxix. 38, 51. At any rate, the king is most closely identified with the nation, so that the vigour and prosperity of the people is bound up with the vigour and health of the king. Such ideas receive support from the theory of corporate personality which has been put forward in recent years by Wheeler Robinson with steady persistence and with general acceptance. Along these lines, some of the royal psalms can undoubtedly be dated in the period which extends from the Exile to the Maccabean period, e.g., ii, lxxii, and perhaps lxi and lxiii, psalms looking forward to the restoration of the Davidic line. On the other hand xlv is almost certainly a song composed in honour of the bridals of an actual king—we would suggest of Ahab of the ivory palace and Jezebel the Tyrian princess. Similarly cx, with its acrostic on the name Simeon, may well be actually a Maccabean song. There has been a modern tendency to make all these king psalms pre-exilic, reading into them those ideas which are connected with modern theories of The Divine King. These go beyond identifying the health of the king with the life of the nation, and assume that the divinity which is alleged to belong to the king in primitive societies, was a feature of pre-exilic Hebrew religion. The soundness of these theories generally (in our opinion even in J. G. Frazer himself) leaves much to be desired, and especially is this the case in connection with the Hebrew attitude in these matters, where the humanity of the king is insisted upon again and again. The idea of a class of Royal Psalms has therefore tended to disintegrate before modern scholarship. There is more than one reason for the mention of the king in a psalm, and such a reference is in itself no guide as to either the date or the character of the psalm.

(*c*) *Psalms against sorcerers*

The Norwegian scholar Mowinckel held (*Psalmenstudien*, i, 1921) that the enemies of the Psalmist are sorcerers and devotees of the Black Art generally. The Psalmist prays to God for release from the spells which these 'workers of iniquity' (*po'aley 'awen*) have cast upon him. These are the evil men of primitive society who use the supernatural powers for their own benefit against individuals. Even in the earliest primitive societies we find the 'good' (white) magicians, who use supernatural powers for the benefit of the community, and the 'black' magicians who make use of them for their own private purposes. These latter must always be severely dealt with, for no settled life is possible if they are allowed to run free to exercise their malign influences. Mowinckel thinks of the imprecatory psalms against this general background of magical ideas. The Psalmist comes to the temple, and prays to God for release from these spells, which bring sickness, misfortune, and death. Mowinckel would say that even the national prayers for liberation are prayers against spells cast on the nation. He goes still farther, and identifies 'the wicked' of the Psalter with these sorcerers. And yet again, in such vague phrases as 'the mighty ones' (lix. 3) he sees references to the demons of disease and sickness.

The general judgement upon this theory is: (*i*) a man can work *'awen* (iniquity, mischief) without being a sorcerer; (*ii*) the phrase, 'the wicked', may include sorcerers, but a man need not be a sorcerer in order to be wicked (*rasha'*); (*iii*) other people (e.g., false witnesses) do the things which Mowinckel ascribes to sorcerers; and (*iv*) most importantly, Mowinckel is assuming that the ritual of the temple at the time when these psalms were used, was a series of magical ceremonies, i.e., ceremonies which, when properly performed with the precisely correct technique, have power to break the spells of sorcerers, for these psalms are alleged to be the spoken accompaniment of certain magical ceremonies. He assumes also that the worship was parallel to that of the pagan temples of Mesopotamia. Actually, he is reading into the psalms what has been found in Babylonia and Assyria. He makes no attempt to date either his Mesopotamian or his Palestinian sources, but seems to assume that the same thing happened everywhere and always. It is certainly possible that at some, if not all, of the local shrines, and perhaps at Jerusalem also, there were in pre-exilic times all sorts of primitive rites, magical and the rest. Indeed, the tirades in the Law and the Prophets against sorcery and suchlike abominations, make it certain that this was the case at some periods of Israelite history. But, as Oesterley says concerning the Enthronement Psalms (see below: the reference is *The Psalms*, 1939, vol. i, p. 2), if the psalms did once form parts of such a cultus, then they 'have been so altered as to fit them for a purer and simpler ritual', and 'it is only a knowledge of other religions which makes such a conjecture (i.e., this of Mowinckel here and that in the next paragraph also) possible'.

(*d*) *The Enthronement Psalms*

These are primarily xlvii, xciii, and xcv–xcix. Following earlier work by Volz and Gressmann, Mowinckel (*Psalmenstudien*, ii, 1922) proposed the theory that these psalms were the nucleus of a New Year liturgy in the cultus when annually the Coronation of Jehovah was celebrated. Every year in the cultus, says Mowinckel, Jehovah comes anew. He is re-enthroned, and the Kingdom of Jehovah is re-founded. In pre-exilic times the Ark was carried in procession through Jerusalem and established once more in its place in the Sanctuary. In post-exilic times an Ark-less variant was observed.

The theory marches parallel with the Mesopotamian liturgies. In the ancient cities of Mesopotamia there was always an Annual Festival of this type. 'The general pattern is (*a*) a dramatic representation of the death and resurrection of the god, with whom the king was identified; (*b*) a recitation or symbolic representation of the myth of creation; (*c*) a ritual combat, in which the triumph of the god over his enemies was depicted; (*d*) a sacred marriage; (*e*) a triumphal procession in which the king played the part of the god; and (*f*) the importance of the king for the well-being of the community.' These six essentials are quoted verbatim from the sixth essay (by Oesterley, who formerly was a strong adherent of this Myth-Ritual-Pattern School, but latterly, in his commentary, is much more critical of it) in *Myth and Ritual* (ed. S. H. Hooke, 1933). Other literature supporting Mowinckel's theory and the general theory of a common myth-ritual pattern over the whole area from Mesopotamia to Egypt, is *The Labyrinth* (ed. S. H. Hooke, 1935), and S. H. Hooke, *The Origins of Early Semitic Ritual* (1938). In sixth-century Babylon these ceremonies included a procession of the gods to the great Judgement Hall of Marduk, where Marduk decided the fate of the coming year. There was a ritual combat, a sacred marriage, and the great *Epic of Creation* was recited. The king 'took the hands' of the god and is said thereby to renew his sovereignty over the land as the representative of the god. (S. A. Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival* (1928), denies, and we think with justification, that this is the meaning of the rite.) Mowinckel maintains that there was a similar festival in Palestine, with some necessary variations and possible reinterpretations, and he cites the seven Enthronement Psalms as the proper psalms for the Annual Coronation Festival of Jehovah, adding some forty-one others as secondary.

In criticism of Mowinckel's theory, it has to be said that there is no evidence that such a festival was ever extant in Palestine. It is generally agreed that many primitive and pagan elements were swept away at the restoration of temple-worship after the exile. Whilst some traces are still to be found, it is certain that the reformers managed completely to wipe out others without leaving the vestige of a trace. But this is very far from proving that there was anything in Palestine comparable to the Mesopotamian New Year rituals. In any case, even if there were such a festival in pre-exilic times, psalms xciii and xcv–xcix could never have belonged to it, for they are demonstrably dependent upon Second-Isaiah. The whole case for the existence of such a Coronation Festival is set forth in the three books by S. H. Hooke, which we have already mentioned. In the last of the three, that which is his work entirely, Professor Hooke has made full use of the new material from Ras Shamra (found from 1929 onwards, on a site due east of Cyprus). That there is an underlying pattern common to the Syrian Ras Shamra liturgy and the Canaanite-Israelite pre-exilic cultus is certain, but further study is showing more and more that the Syrian-Canaanite rites are mainly agricultural, and that there are marked differences between them and the Mesopotamian rites which have a long urban civilization behind them. The new material makes more likely the existence of all sorts of agricultural fertility rites, and less likely the particular elements which are to be found in the developed urban liturgies of Mesopotamia with their own particular myths. Most of all, the strong Hebrew emphasis on the humanity of the king, and his equality before God with all his subjects, makes it in the highest degree unlikely that the Hebrew king could in any way be regarded as divine.

III

THE 'I' OF THE PSALMS

DOES the 'I' of the psalms represent the individual Psalmist, or must it be interpreted nationally?

The discussion began with Smend ('Uber das Ich der Psalmen' in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (1888), viii, pp. 39–147). He held that the 'I' must be interpreted nationally, unless obviously otherwise. In fact, even in some cases where the individual interpretation seems clear, the collective sense is to be maintained. He instances the 'I' of the Greek chorus. This point of view developed out of the idea that the Psalter was the hymn-book of the Second Temple. In his article Smend examined some eighty psalms, and held that, though they seemed to be personal utterances, they were really spoken in the name of the nation. Eight of these psalms are worth particular examination, namely v, xxii, xxiii, xl, li, cxix, cxxx, and cxxxix. It is difficult to allow that v, xxiii, or xl can be interpreted in this way, and xxii, li, and cxxxix must surely be based on personal religious experience, and concerned directly with it. cxix is doubtful, though most of it may well be for each individual of a congregation. This latter variation would not, however, fit in with Smend's theory.

Actually Smend was in the main reviving an old, forgotten theory of Rudinger (1580–1). Duhm (1899) and Noeldeke (1900) disagreed with Smend, for Duhm was always a strong adherent of the idea that the psalms were for the most part primarily written for and used by individuals. A modification of Smend's point of view was generally accepted for some years, but since Balla (*Das Ich der Psalmen*, 1915), opinion has veered strongly against Smend, and modern scholars generally are in favour of an individualist interpretation. So Gunkel (1926), Barnes (1931), Schmidt (1934), and Herkenne (1936).

Some of this discussion need never have taken place, especially when we remember our own hymns. In some cases the more personal a hymn, the better it suits congregational worship. Psalms such as xxii and li are all the more suitable for congregational use because of their close dependence upon personal experience. Compare 'Jesu, Lover of my Soul', 'Rock of Ages', and revivalist hymns generally.

Wheeler Robinson's theory of 'corporate personality' (cf. in *The Psalmists*, ed. D. C. Simpson, 1926, pp. 82–6, or 'The Hebrew Conception of Personality' in *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments*, 1936, pp. 49–62) reconciles the two different points of view. The claim is that the Hebrew did not make the sharp distinction between the individual and the community, which is a characteristic of our modern times. It was, therefore, much more easy for him to pass from one idea to the other. The two categories were not nearly so sharply defined.

A variation of Smend's point of view is to be found in Cheyne (*Commentary on the Psalms*, 1888, in one volume: the second edition in two volumes is not recommended). Whilst, for instance, the reference in vi, 2f means personal sickness, yet sickness can be used as a figure for Israel's persecutions. In his note on xxx. 3 he refers to Exodus xv. 26; Isaiah vi. 10, xxx. 26, lvii. 18f; Hosea vii. 1; etc. It may very well be that the Psalmist took his own sickness to be a type of the moral and religious sickness of the people. We would take Isaiah liii with its sickness and death of the

Servant to be a figure of the ills of the exile and of the exile itself (cf. Ezekiel xxxvii). Alternatively, a Psalmist may have meant sickness and actual death, but after Ezekiel xxxvii it may all have come to be interpreted as a figure for the Exile and its distresses.

IV

THE DATING OF THE PSALMS

THE attempt to date the separate psalms begins, as we have shown elsewhere ('The Background of the Psalms', *Expository Times*, vol. l, 6: March 1939, pp. 246–50), with the references in the titles themselves to events in the life of King David. This attitude lasted, with rare exceptions, to the time of Hengstenberg (1842, Eng. tr. 1846). During the last hundred years, scholars have sought historical occasions for separate psalms over the whole range of Hebrew history from Moses to Alexander Jannaeus (died 76 B.C.).

Ewald (Eng. tr. 1880) regarded thirteen psalms only as belonging to David and his times, and thought that most of the remainder were post-exilic, belonging largely to the times of restoration. Cheyne (*The Book of the Psalms*, 1888, and *The Origin of the Psalter*, 1891) considered psalm xviii to be pre-exilic from the time of King Josiah, but held that all the rest were post-exilic, chiefly from the later Persian and the Greek periods, with about thirty as late as the times of the Maccabees. Kautszch finds some Maccabean psalms in what we have called *Section A*, but many in *Section B*. Duhm held that the great majority of the psalms were Maccabean, and some were later still. Kennett would make nearly all Maccabean, and Hitzig rivalled Duhm in allocating some to the reign of Alexander Jannaeus. Forty years ago the general tendency was to adopt a mediating position, and fix most of the psalms in the middle period, i.e., during the Persian period. Latterly, however, the tendency has been to regard the psalms as containing a much larger pre-exilic element than was formerly allowed. Scholars are very cautious in proposing late dates for the psalms, and the ascription of a psalm to the time of the Maccabees is a last resort rather than a first thought.

The present-day attitude is, as we have said, to think of the Psalter as a collection of collections, and indeed a post-exilic collection of collections. Some of these earlier collections may well have been in process of compilation in pre-exilic days. Our knowledge of Gentile (particularly Mesopotamian psalmody) has shown an early development of skill in psalmody, so that pre-exilic psalmists may well have been much greater in number than was formerly realized. At the same time it is in the highest degree probable that continual revisions were made in the psalms, there being continual adaptation to the changing needs of the time. More and more it is being realized that the psalms belong to every age of Hebrew history, and that each psalm may have original elements from long-forgotten days, these elements still surviving in the midst of whole verses interpolated or transformed.

Buttenwieser (*The Psalms Chronologically Treated*, 1938) still follows the old custom of dating individual psalms. He fixes psalms as belonging to various dates from the time of Joshua (latter half of lxxxi) to the Greek period, though he denies that there are any later than the beginning of the Seleucid Era (312 B.C.). It may, however, be possible to date groups of psalms.

Our own view (*Studies in the Psalter*, 1934) is that the compilation of the Elohist Psalter can be fixed in the fifth century B.C., and that it represents a temporary healing of the breach between the Jews and the Samaritans prior to the final disruption in the fourth century. We regard the Qorachites as belonging to the Samaritan party, and the Asaphites as belonging to the Nehemiah party who favoured the expulsion policy. Such a theory does not mean that all the psalms in the Elohist Psalter belonged to that period, nor would it preclude later elements and occasional insertions of psalms in later times. It fixes the general body of psalms. We would hold, for instance, that xlvi and xlvii belong to the period of the Sennacherib invasion.

Possibly all such attempts are too subjective to be regarded as sound without the most careful consideration. Peters (*The Psalms as Liturgies*, 1922), for instance, ascribes all the Elohist psalms to the Northern shrines, particularly the Asaph psalms to Bethel, and the Qorach psalms to Dan. Keet (*Liturgical Study of the Psalter*, 1928) regards the Egyptian Hallel (cxiii–cxviii) as belonging to the time of the Maccabees, written particularly for the original Festival of Dedication (Hanukkah).

V

THE USE OF THE PSALMS IN THE TEMPLE

WE know definitely that at least some psalms were so used. The Chronicler, who assumed that the worship of his day existed from the beginning, says that when David first instituted the Temple-choirs, the Levitical (Asaphite) choirs sang a psalm, 1 Chronicles

xvi. 7–36. This psalm is composed of Psalms cv. 1–15 and xcvi. The psalm in 1 Chronicles concludes with a call to give thanks (cf. Psalm cvi. 1) and concludes with two rubrics, both of which are to be found at the end of Psalm cvi, in verses 47 and 48. The rubrics are 'And say ye', followed by Psalm cvi. 47 and 48, and 'And let all the people say, Amen, Praise ye the Lord' (so Psalm cvi. 48 to end), which appears in the Chronicles as a statement of fact that all the people did say 'Amen' and that they did praise the Lord. It seems probable that this is the way in which they concluded the singing of psalms in the Chronicler's own time, the custom being similar to, and perhaps indeed the origin of, the modern custom of concluding with the Gloria.

According to the Mishnah (*Tamid* vii), the Talmud (*b. Rosh hashShanah* 30b, 31a) and the tract *Sopherim* xviii, there were special daily psalms for the days of the week. These psalms were sung after the daily Sacrifice had been offered, when the drink-offering was being poured out, according to the Rabbinic saying: 'There is no song except over wine.' These daily psalms were: for the first day, xxiv, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof'; for the second day, xlviii, 'Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised'; for the third day, lxxxii, 'God standeth in the congregation of the mighty'; for the fourth day, xciv, 'O Lord God to whom vengeance belongeth'; for the fifth day, lxxxi, 'Sing aloud unto God, our strength'; for the sixth day, xciii, 'The Lord reigneth, He is clothed in majesty'; and for the Sabbath, xcii, 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord'. These traditions are corroborated in the Hebrew Bible for the Sabbath psalm, and in the Septuagint also for the third and fifth days.

The tradition is that the daily psalms were sung in three sections, after each of which there was an interval, when two of the priests blew their trumpets, and at this signal the congregation prostrated themselves in prayer.

Certain psalms were sung at the Feasts. At the Feast of Passover, whilst the bowls containing the blood of the Passover lambs were being passed up and down the rows of priests for the officiating priest to pour out the blood at the foot of the altar, the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms cxiii–cxviii) was sung. This ceremony lasted for two hours, from the ninth hour, and the Levites sang the six psalms. The people repeated the first clause of each psalm, and shouted 'Hallelujah' after every other line. For the last psalm (cxviii) they also repeated the three lines of verses 25 and 26. At the Feast of Pentecost (Weeks) this Hallel was sung to the accompaniment of one flute, and similarly at the Feast of Tabernacles and at the Feast of Dedication, but with variations in the accompaniment and in the ceremonies. The special Passover psalm was cxxxv, that for Dedication was xxx, those for New Moons were lxxxi and (for the evening sacrifice) xxix. According to the Septuagint and the Vulgate, psalm xxix was sung on the last day (eighth) of Tabernacles. The great Tabernacles psalm was cxviii, which Keet connected with Dedication. It may have been sung at both, because Dedication was in many ways a copy of Tabernacles.

The so-called Pilgrim Psalter (Songs of Ascents, Degrees) are supposed originally to have been sung by pilgrims on their way up to the Feasts. This may have been so, but in the time of our Lord they were sung by the choirs of Levites during the famous all-night feast (House of Water-pouring) which took place on the first night of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the night when the whole Court of the Women was illuminated by giant candelabra, and the Levites sang these fifteen psalms as they stood on the fifteen steps which led up through the Gate of Nicanor from the Court of the Women to the Court of Israel.

VI

THE USE OF THE PSALMS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

ONE of the curious features of Jewish tradition is the paucity of information which has come down to us concerning the precise way in which the psalms were used in ancient time either in the Temple or in the synagogue. It seems to be certain that they were used to a far greater extent than is actually stated in the traditions.

Most of the early traditions are to be found in the tract *Sopherim* (*c.* A.D. 600–1000), which contains many ancient traditions of this type. According to this authority Psalm vii was connected with the Festival of Purim, xxx with Dedication, xlvii and lxxxi with New Year's Day (Tishri 1), xcviii and civ with New Moons, lxxvi with Tabernacles, and cxxx with the Day of Atonement. It is probable that there were considerable changes made in the synagogue liturgy after the destruction of the Temple. The daily prayers of the synagogue are said in the Talmud (b. *Berakhoth* 24b, 26b) to have taken the place of the daily sacrifices of the Temple. This may not wholly have been the case, but it is clear that many adaptations were made in the synagogue service in order to compensate for the loss of the Temple ritual. To what extent the use of the psalms was affected by these changes we do not know.

The use of psalms in modern synagogues varies according to the particular rite which is followed. The two main rites are those of the Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jews and those of the Sephardi (Spanish-Portuguese) Jews, but there are also other rites, e.g., Yemenite and Italian. Details of the use of psalms in the modern synagogues can be found in Oesterley (*The Psalms in the Jewish Church* (1910), pp. 152–72). Similarly, details concerning the use of the psalms in the Offices of the Christian Church are to be found in Neale and Littledale (*Commentary on the Psalms* (1884), vol. I, pp. 1–74). Special details are given concerning the use of the Psalter in Christian private devotions. Just as amongst some modern Jews there are societies known as *Chevrah Tehillim* ('Psalms Society'), of which the members read through the psalms once a week, so many psalms each day before the daily Morning Service, so the reading and recital of the whole Psalter (often daily, and sometimes more than once) has taken an important place in Christian history.

The idea that the psalms took a larger place in ancient times than the traditions say has led to attempts to establish the theory that the Psalter was recited psalm by psalm in the synagogues of Palestine over a three-year period. We know that the Pentateuch was arranged to be read in Palestine according to a triennial lectionary, the modern annual lectionary being the Babylonian tradition. A. Buechler (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. V, pp. 420ff; vol. VI, pp. 1ff) has established many details of this ancient lectionary, together with the readings from the Prophets (*Haphtaroth*), with which the Reading from the Law was concluded. It is probable that the Psalter was arranged for a similar purpose, and various attempts have been made to allocate the psalms parallel to the lectionary. For these studies, see E. G. King (*Journal of Theological Studies*, v, pp. 203ff), St. John Thackeray (*J.T.S.*, xvi, pp. 177ff), J. Jacobs (*Jewish Encyclopædia*, XII, pp. 254–7), Snaith (*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, x, pp. 302ff), L. Rabinowitz (*J.Q.R.*, xxvi, pp. 349ff). The Midrash on the Psalms says in its comment on Psalm i. 1 that 'Moses gave the Israelites the five books of the Law, and to correspond to these David gave them the Book of the Psalms in five books'. We hold that this tradition means actually book for book and psalm for *seder* (portion of the Law), since according to the scheme we have proposed, each book of the Psalms (except the last) was commenced upon the very day on which the corresponding Book of the Law was commenced.

VII

THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS

(*a*) *Titles which indicate the collection from which the psalm was taken*

Concerning some of these there is no need for further comment, namely those which refer a psalm to a Davidic collection and to the Levitical collections of Asaph and the Sons of Qorach. Two psalms, xxxix and lxxvii, have the title 'to Jeduthun', who is expressly named as the head of a guild of temple-singers in 1 Chronicles xvi. 41. He was a 'chief-musician', and the name is thus parallel to Asaph and Qorach.

We have previously mentioned the title *lamenatstseach*

(*R.V.*, 'For the Chief Musician'). This, as we have said, is a note to the effect that the psalm was also to be found in this other collection. The title is found fifty-five times in the psalms and also in Habakkuk iii. 19, at the end of 'the prayer of Habakkuk the prophet'. The Hebrew root *n-ts-ch* means 'shine, be brilliant', and the form *menatstseach* is the *piel* (intensive) participle, being used as a noun to mean 'one who is pre-eminent', i.e., superintendent, overseer, director. The word is in general use by the Chronicler, as leader, not only of bass (or tenor?) voices (1 Chronicles xxiii. 4), but also of overseers in building and restoring the Temple (2 Chronicles ii. 1, 17, xxxiv. 12f; Ezra iii. 8f). The Septuagint equivalent is *eis to telos* (for the end), following the meaning of the Hebrew noun from the same root *netsach* (everlastingness), the intention probably being to explain the word in an eschatological sense, though Delitzsch interpreted it as meaning 'full rendering'. The Greek Versions of the second century A.D., Jerome, and the Septuagint of Habakkuk iii. 19, all interpret the word in the sense of the Aramaic root *n-ts-ch*, which is 'victorious'. This is what has happened also in 1 Corinthians xv. 54, where the Hebrew of Isaiah xxv. 8 ('He hath swallowed up death *for ever*') has become 'Death is swallowed up *in victory*'.

(*b*) *Titles which refer to type of psalm. Of these there are seven*

(*i*) *Mizmor*. This occurs in the titles of fifty-seven psalms. Its Septuagint equivalent is *psalmos*, of which Jerome's latinized form is *psalmus*, whence our word 'psalm'. The Greek rendering was sound, since both the Hebrew root *z-m-r* and the Greek verb *psallein* have an original meaning 'pluck'. Hence both words have come to be used of the plucking of stringed instruments. A *mizmor* is therefore a song, sung to a stringed accompaniment. According to E. G. Hirsch (*J.E.*, X, p. 248) the meaning is 'paragraph', hence a new beginning, but this explanation is not generally accepted.

(*ii*) *Shir* is found in the titles of thirty psalms, and is the ordinary word for 'song'. Psalm xlv is 'a song of loves', evidently connected with a royal marriage, and having associations with the Song of Songs (i.e., the best song of all). The feminine form *shirah* is found in Psalm xviii.

(*iii*) *Mikhtam.* This title is found in xvi and in the whole group lvi–lx. The Septuagint and Theodotion have 'inscription' (*stelographia*), as if reading *mikhtabh*, the two Hebrew letters *beth* and *mem* being often confused in the transmission. The Targum tradition connects the word with the late word *kethem* (gold), and hence the 'golden' of *A.V.* The Semitic root *k-t-m* means 'cover, conceal', this meaning being found in Arabic and Assyrian. Arising out of this, various suggestions have been made, e.g., 'unpublished', 'mysterious', 'epigrammatical', but probably the best of all is the suggestion of Mowinckel, who connects the word with the special Assyrian use of *katamu*, of covering sins. In this case the psalm is an atonement psalm. The connection with 'sin' is found in Hebrew in Jeremiah ii. 22, 'stained (*nikhtam*, the passive participle) is thine iniquity', the only case where the verb is found in the Old Testament. In the Targum the word refers particularly to blood-stains.

(*iv*) *Maskil.* This is found in the titles of thirteen psalms, all but two of them (xxxii and cxlii) in Books II and III. The root *s-k-l* means 'be prudent', whence the suggestions are 'meditation', 'a skilful song' (Ewald, cf. xlvii. 7), and, probably best of all, 'an instructive poem'.

(*v*) *Tephillah* (prayer). It is found five times, xvii, lxxxvi, xc, cii, cxlii, and also in the title of Habakkuk iii. Jerome's rendering is *oratio*, with an original sense of the verb *orare* (pray).

(*vi*) *Tehillah* (praise). The only occurrence in a title is cxlv, though the plural *tehillim* has become, amongst the Jews, the regular title of the whole Psalter.

(*vii*) *Shiggayon*. This occurs only in vii and, in the plural, in Habakkuk iii. 1. In the first case the Septuagint translates it as if it were *mizmor*, and in the second as if it were *neginoth* (for meaning, see p. 34). The presumption is that the Greek translators had no tradition of its proper meaning. The Hebrew root *sh-g-h* means 'go astray, err', and is used in the Priestly Code and in Ezekiel xlv. 20 of 'sinning *in ignorance*', whence probably Jerome's rendering in Psalm vii (but not in the Vulgate, which follows Septuagint so far as the Psalter is concerned), and in Habakkuk iii. 1, 'for the ignorant'. This use is parallel to that of the root *sh-g-g* in the phrase *bishegagah*, which is still used by the orthodox Jew for an involuntary transgression of the Law. Others have taken the Hebrew root in its sense of a drunkard going astray, and so have taken it to mean 'reel, stagger', interpreting the word to refer to a wild ecstatic song with frequent changes of rhythm. The meaning is wholly uncertain. We agree with Oesterley that we have here a corruption of *higgayon*, found as a rubric in the midst of Psalm ix (after verse 17). The root *h-g-h* means 'make a low inarticulate sound', so that the noun means 'meditation', and perhaps is an instruction that the psalm is to be recited in a low, meditative fashion.

(*c*) *Titles which denote special melodies to which the psalm is to be sung*

(*i*) *'Al-muth labben.* Psalm ix. If this is the name of a melody, it means 'Die for the son', or perhaps 'Death (*maweth*) to the son'. Some hold that we have a corruption of the title *'Al-'alamoth*, a suggestion which has the support of the Versions. This title is discussed below (see p. 35).

(*ii*) *'Al-shoshannim* (xlv and lxix), *Shushan 'Eduth* (lx), *'El-shoshannim 'Eduth* (lxxx). These three may all be variants of the one melody, 'the lily (lilies) of witness'. The flower is probably actually some kind of anemone, and there are very many references to it in the Song of Songs. It was used frequently as a model for decoration in the Temple, both as capitals of pillars, and as the brim of the molten sea.

(*iii*) *'Al-'ayyeleth hashshachar, R.V.*, 'to The Hind of the Morning', or more properly, 'of the Dawn'. The only occurrence is in the title of xxii. The Targum and the Midrash refer to the lamb of the morning sacrifice, but Jerome supports the rendering found in *R.V.*

(*iv*) *'Al-yonath 'elem rechoqim* (lvi), 'to The silent dove of them that are far off' (according to the tradition followed by Jerome), but a better rendering is 'to The Dove of the distant Terebinths (*'elim*)'. The Septuagint translates 'concerning the people that were removed from the sanctuary', which seems to be partly guess-work and partly due to the use of the dove as the type of exiled Israel (cf. the Book of Jonah).

(*v*) *'Al-tashchith* (lvii–lix, lxxv). The suggestion that all the titles of this type are references to well-known popular melodies receives most support from this title. This is plainly the opening of a vintage song which is preserved partly in Isaiah lxv. 8, 'destroy not'.

(*d*) *Titles which apparently refer to the accompaniment*

(*i*) *Bineginoth, R.V.*, 'on stringed instruments'. It is found in the titles of six psalms, iv, vi, liv, lv, lxvii, lxxvi; and also in Habakkuk iii. 19 (on my stringed instruments, cf. Isaiah xxxviii. 20), and in the singular in lxi, though this may be an error for the plural. The meaning is as in *R.V.*, though the Versions give general interpretations, e.g., the Septuagint 'in hymns' (iv, 'in psalms'), Vulgate *in carminibus* (in songs), Jerome 'in psalms', and Symmachus 'by means of (*dia* with the genitive) psalteries'.

(*ii*) *'El-hannechiloth*, once only, psalm v. Perhaps 'to flutes', cf. *R.V.* This interpretation depends on reading *nechilloth*, from the Hebrew root *ch-l-l*, the word *chalil* meaning 'flute'. The Versions all connect the word with the root *n-ch-l*, understanding the title to be the name of a melody.

(*iii*) *'Al-hashsheminoth, R.V.*, 'set to the eighth'. The phrase occurs in the titles of vi and xii, and in 1 Chronicles xv. 21. It has evidently to do with 'the eighth', but can scarcely mean the octave, since Hebrew music appears to have known nothing of the octave of eight tones and thirteen semi-tones. Possibly the reference is to the *nebel* (harp), which Josephus says (*Ant. Iud.* VII, xii, 3) had eight strings; cf. psalms xxxiii. 2, xcii. 3, and clix. 9: which in this case refer to a special kind of *nebel*.

(*iv*) *'Al-haggittith.* This title is found thrice, viii, lxxxi, and lxxxiv. The explanation of the Targum is that it refers to a harp which David brought 'from Gath', i.e., *gittith* means 'Gathite'. In viii, the Greek Versions of Aquila and Theodotion transliterate, but otherwise the general tradition connects the word with the Hebrew *gath* (winepress). This involves reading *haggittoth* (the winepresses), so the title may refer to a vintage melody. This is the most likely explanation.

(*v*) *'Al-'alamoth* (xlvi). The meaning is uncertain, but it has something to do with harps (cf. 1 Chronicles xv. 17–21). Aquila and Jerome interpret the word to mean maidens (root *'-l-m* II), but women took no part in the Temple service in any period of which we have information. Symmachus connects the word with the root *'-l-m* III, to mean 'age, antiquity' (cf. the word *'olam*), whilst the Septuagint and Vulgate connect it with the root *'-l-m* I (hide). Judging from 1 Chronicles xv. 17–21, the word refers to the setting of harps which follow the lead of the lyres (*kinnor*), themselves set to *sheminith* (see note *iii*).

(*vi*) *'Al-machalath* (liii). The meaning is wholly uncertain. Some would read *mecholoth* (dances). Other suggestions are to *Machalath*, one of the wives of Esau (Genesis xxviii. 9), and to the city of Abel-Mecholah, the home of Elisha. On the other hand the reference may be to 'sickness' (cf. lxxxviii where 'to humble' (?) is added, though this latter may be due to corruption).

(*e*) *Titles which indicate special uses*

Some of these have already been mentioned, e.g., xcii, 'for the day of the Sabbath'; xxx, 'the dedication of the House'.

(*i*) *Lehazkir*, *R.V.*, 'to make memorial'. It occurs in xxxviii and lxx. It is probably a corruption of *le'azkarah* (for the memorial offering) (cf. Leviticus xxiv. 7), and if so, it is an instruction that the psalm is to be sung during the burning of that particular offering.

(*ii*) *Lethodhah*, 'for thanksgiving', c. To be sung during the *Todah* (Thanksgiving), a type of sacrifice, Leviticus vii. 11–15.

VIII

SELAH

THIS rubric occurs 71 times in the Psalter, 17 times in Book I, 30 in Book II, 20 in Book III, 4 in Book V. It is found in thirty-nine psalms, of which twenty-eight were also to be found in the Music-Master's Collection. This applies also to Habakkuk iii, in which the word is also found. It seems to have come into use about the period when the Psalter consisted of *Section A*, i.e., psalms ii–lxxxix since the two psalms where it is found in Book V (cxl and cxliii, four times altogether) belong to the little Davidic group which seem to be largely a survival from an earlier day. The word was revived in the first century B.C., being found twice (xvii. 31 and xviii. 10) in the Psalms of Solomon, and in early Jewish synagogue prayers.

The equivalent in the Septuagint, in Symmachus and Theodotion is *diapsalma*. This has been said to mean 'a pause' (Gregory of Nyssa), and so the Syr-Hexapla and Aquila in five psalms; but, on the analogy of the Greek *diaulion* (an interlude of flutes between choruses, so Hesychius), it may mean an interlude played by stringed instruments (Delitzsch). It is evident that the word refers to some kind of a break in the rendering of the psalm. Suidas, Theodoret, and Hippolytus explain it as a change of melody. There is also a strong tradition that the word has to do with the idea of 'always, for ever', and this is found in Aquila (with Theodotion once), the fifth and sixth columns of the Hexapla, Jerome, and the Targum. Jerome classes the word with *amen* and *shalom* (peace), whilst Jacob of Edessa compared it with the Christian *amen* of the people after the Gloria. This strong tradition is satisfied by supposing that a Benediction was recited, the closing words of which were 'from everlasting to everlasting'.

The actual meaning of the Hebrew word is still a matter of doubt. It has been suggested that it is composed of the first letters of three words, e.g., 'turn to the front, O singer', i.e., repeat from the beginning, or some such instruction. Another explanation connects it with the root *sh-l-h* (be silent), whilst another with the root *s-l-l* (lift up), whence we have the words *mesillah* (a highway) and *sullam* (a ladder). None of these explanations is really satisfactory.

IX

HEBREW POETRY

THE first essential of Hebrew Poetry is that the verse shall consist of two parallel lines, parallel in sense, and approximately equal in the number of accented syllables. To these couplets there is sometimes added a third line, but this line stands outside the normal parallelism. Sometimes it is supplemental, xlii. 8; on occasion it may come first and introduce the couplet, xxxvii. 25; whilst there are cases where all three lines contribute equally to the whole verse, xlv. 4; or where the second and third lines together make a parallel to the first line, xlv. 14.

The discovery of this parallelism, which is a normal feature of Hebrew poetry, was made by Lowth (1753), who found three types of parallelism, which he names as synonymous (xxvi. 10), antithetic (xc. 6), and synthetic, where the sense runs on through the two lines, and really forms no parallelism at all (ii. 6). The study of Hebrew poetry has been considerably forwarded in modern times by G. B. Gray (*Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, 1915), who distinguished between two types of parallelism, complete and incomplete. In complete parallelism, each member of the first line is balanced by a corresponding member of the second line, sometimes in the same order, and sometimes not. In incomplete parallelism, one (or more) member is missing in the other line. Some modern scholars, especially German and those who in this country have been greatly influenced by the Germans, have sought to emend the text in order to secure truer parallelisms. This is on the assumption that the rules of Hebrew parallelism were of a rigid type, but all the evidence is that the whole system was very free, and no fixed and rigorous rules can be laid down.

The second essential of Hebrew poetry is the metre. It was said many centuries ago by Philo, Josephus, Origen, and Jerome that the Hebrews had metres comparable to those of Greece, but it has not been until the renewed modern study of Hebrew poetry that the principles of Hebrew poetry have been made clear. Each word has its accent, and the number of accents in the two parts of a line are generally the same. We have 2 : 2 rhythms, 3 : 3 rhythms, and 3 : 2 rhythms. Psalm cxix, for instance, varies between all three. Perhaps the most common is 3 : 3, varied with 3 : 2, e.g., psalm ciii, though in all cases there are extra variations from the normal. Here again some scholars would emend in order to obtain a strict and regular form, but once again it is to be remembered that the whole scheme was fluid and free. We would deprecate any emendation solely on the grounds of metre. Gunkel in particular makes extensive emendations in order to secure more regular metre, and his example has been freely followed by other scholars.

Some scholars, notably Briggs (*I.C.C.*), hold that Hebrew poetry consists of stanzas as well as couplets (and triplets). The extensive omissions which he makes, and the number of glosses which he presupposes, are themselves sufficient comments on the soundness of his theory. There are undoubtedly traces of a three-stanza system in some psalms, e.g., xlii and xliii, which were originally one psalm; xcix; and perhaps others; but there is no indication that this was by any means a normal feature of Hebrew poetry. Some psalms are acrostics, each verse beginning with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The most outstanding example is cxix, a great eight-line acrostic. Other instances are xxv, xxxiv, xxxvii, cxi, cxii, and cxlv, whilst in ix and x the remnants of an acrostic are to be found. This is an occasional device of a poet, cases outside the Psalter being the first four poems of Lamentations, Proverbs xxxi. 10–31, the original of Ecclesiasticus li. 13–30, and Nahum i. 2–10 where the remnants of an acrostic are to be found.

X

BABYLONIAN RELIGIOUS POETRY

Some considerable attention has been devoted in recent years to the similarity between Babylonian religious poetry and the Hebrew psalms. The fullest study of this is to be found in *The Psalmists* (Essay VI, by G. R. Driver, pp. 109–75). Some scholars, led by Winckler, have seen Babylonian influence in everything Hebrew, and have never hesitated to ascribe a Babylonian origin on almost every occasion. There are undoubted similarities, and there can be no doubt that the parallelism and the rhythmical structure of Hebrew poetry are characteristics which it shares with Babylonian poetry. The similarity is enhanced by the myths which are common to both peoples, particularly the great Creation Myth in which the Hero-God overcomes the powers of the alien Under-world. Such considerations are the foundations of the two theories of Mowinckel's, to which we have already referred.

It is possible, especially since the two languages have so largely a common root, to multiply verbal similarities between the two literatures, but all this is far from establishing direct dependence and borrowing. There is a unique element in Hebrew psalmody, and this 'is something that Israel learned, not from her neighbours, but from her own experience of God, and it is something vastly greater and more significant than all there is in common' (Rowley, 'Twentieth-century Trends in Psalm Criticism', in *The Bible and Modern Religious Thought*, January 1940).