

## Psalm 16 (LXX Ps 15) and Acts of the Apostles Part II<sup>1</sup>

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Psalm 16 is one of the most well-known texts of the Psalter. This can be attributed to, amongst other things, the fact that the NT, specifically Acts of the Apostles, applied this text to the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The quotations from Psalm 16 in the book of Acts thus got a messianic-Christological meaning. If we, however, take a look at the text of Psalm 16, it seems that this psalm does not contain any direct messianic conceptions. Neither does it refer to the resurrection of the flesh. There are, however, features in the Greek translation (LXX) of this psalm which offered material to the New Testament authors to apply the text to Jesus – specifically to his resurrection from death. In Part I of this article the focus was on the MT text of Psalm 16. Part II will focus on its application in Acts of the Apostles, as well as the hermeneutical background of the author(s) of Acts of the Apostles. It seems that the Septuagint paved the way for this interpretation of the MT text and that it can be regarded as 'praeparatio evangelica'.*

### **A INTRODUCTION**

The early Christian Church used the Greek Psalter as its prayer book. It was a source of consolation as well as a theological signpost. It is thus not astounding that ideas occurring in the Psalms should find their way into the New Testament and influence the theological self-reflection of the nascent Church (Schaper 1995:165). The Greek Psalter, more than any other biblical book, reflects the history of the Jewish community in a changing environment (Schaper 1995:3).<sup>2</sup> This community struggled to come to terms with the intellectual challenge of the emerging Hellenistic world civilization. Being the liturgical basis on which the Jews expressed themselves as a community, and at the same time serving as a source of personal consolation, the Greek Psalter formed one of the

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Aejmelaes 2001:9-10.

most important bodies of biblical literature for the congregation as well as for the individual.

This collection is thus an important source for the history of Judaism in its transition towards universalism, its abandonment of a single national centre and language for the liberty of a world culture. The exegetical techniques used in the Greek Psalter reflect an early stage in the development of the highly refined hermeneutical edifice of rabbinic Judaism.<sup>3</sup> In the Psalter the ‘raw material’ of the obscure Hebrew original was used to create a Greek interpretation which represented a perfect vehicle for contemporary Jewish messianic and eschatological speculation.

With regard to ‘messianism’ Schaper (1995:150-151) postulates that the Psalter in all probability was rendered into Greek during the last third of the second century BCE.<sup>4</sup> It seems to contain allusions to the Hasmonaean house and messianic expectations connected with its rulers – probably referring to John Hyrcanus or Judas Aristobulos I and, implicitly, to Judas Maccabaeus. Under the influence of the Maccabean Wars and of the establishment of a new dynasty from the Hasmonaean house, messianic hope centred on this ruler who seemed to fulfil the classic expectation of the imminence of the messianic kingdom. The Septuagint Psalter thus reflects a high point of messianic speculation, which was later crushed by the corruption and defeat of the Hasmonaean house which caused a resurgence of the belief in a Davidic Messiah (as propagated by the Psalms of Solomon). We thus get the impression of a set of messianic beliefs which established itself through a process of continual development, which responded to changes in the political and social climate, and at the same time was fostered by a religious atmosphere which in essence remained the same.

In terms of ‘eschatological expectations’ it seems that a fierce ideological debate was raging over the belief in an afterlife (Schaper 1995:158-160). The history of Jewish eschatological speculation seems to have unfolded on the basis of an intra-Jewish divide along the lines of political-religious groups struggling for power. This explains why we find prominent second century Jewish texts resisting any attempt to introduce the notion of a personal afterlife

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<sup>3</sup> In this regard Gzella (2001:31-32) infers as follows: ‘Unabhängig von der griechischen Bildung, die die Übersetzer vielleicht, ohne sie zu zeigen, besessen haben mögen, ist ihre Verwurzelung in der jüdischen Schriftauslegungstradition jedoch nicht zu leugnen. Gerade die kreative Ausdeutung einiger Vertrauenspsalmen auf das ewige Leben und die leibliche Auferstehung ... spiegeln z.T. Entwicklungen in der Theologie des nachexilischen Judentums, die den Wechsel des Verständnisses von Texten bezeugen’.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also Rösen-Weinhold (2001:82-83) with regard to the dating.

into the religion of the Jewish nation.<sup>5</sup> These ideological battles were fought on the one side, so it seems, between a priestly party (the national elite comprising of figures like Ben Sira) and non-priestly groups (apocalyptic groups, such as the Essene-party behind the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs; proto-Pharisaic groups, like those translating the Psalter), with the former representing the ‘conservatives’ and the latter the ‘progressives’. Therefore, in the development of eschatological hope, which was carried by the non-priestly circles of the second century Judaism, the Septuagint Psalter attains a place of honour. The Greek Psalter is thus one of the landmarks in the early history of Jewish belief in an afterlife. This collection therefore formed the religious, ideological and practical foundations for the rise of Christianity (Schaper 1998:180).

## **B PSALM 16 (LXX PS 15)**

Psalm 16 is an excellent example of ‘inner canonical dialogue’.<sup>6</sup> Via its Septuagint (LXX)<sup>7</sup> translation (Ps 15) this psalm text was taken up in Acts of the Apostles.<sup>8</sup> In Peter’s sermon in Jerusalem during Pentecost, verses 8-11b<sup>9</sup> of LXX Psalm 15 are quoted as a theological argument with regard to Christ’s resurrection. In Paul’s sermon in Antioch verse 10b is used in the same manner and for the same goal (Kissane 1953:61).<sup>10</sup> The author of Acts invokes David as the supposed author of the Psalter, as a scriptural witness prophesying the death and the resurrection of Christ. These passages, according to Von Rad (1969:418), thus became a *locus classicus* for the doctrine of the resurrection.

How should it be understood that this text could have become a witness to the hope of resurrection from death? This text, as we have come to see, pro-

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. also in this regard Schaper (1994:44): ‘Das zweite vorchristliche Jahrhundert nimmt überhaupt eine Schlüsselstellung in der Entwicklung jüdischer Jenseitsvorstellungen ein’.

<sup>6</sup> With regard to the term ‘inner canonical dialogue’ Zenger (1991:399) infers as follows: ‘Das keineswegs nebensächliche Problem, *welcher* Kanon bei kanonischer Schriftauslegung im Bereich des Christentums zugrundezulegen ist und welche konkrete alttestamentliche Textgestalt (MT oder LXX), wird z.B. nicht erörtert. Meine Position dazu wäre: »Kanonisch« sind MT *und* LXX. Theologisch relevant ist dann gegebenenfalls der innerkanonische »Dialog« zwischen beiden Textgestalten; dieser »Dialog« ließe sich paradigmatisch an Ps 16 und seiner Rezeption in Apg darstellen’.

<sup>7</sup> It falls outside the scope of the present article to focus on the complexities regarding the text of the LXX. See in this regard, for example, Fabry (2006:54-58); Stemberger (1996:55-59); Tilly (2005:56-80); Wevers (1996:84-107).

<sup>8</sup> Hengel & Deines 1994:266. In this regard Rösen-Weinhold (2004:279) infers as follows: ‘Apg 2,25-28 und 13,35 zitieren Ps 15(16) ohne bedeutsame Unterschied nach den griechischen Psalmen LXX (Hauptüb.), und auch die folgende Akzentuierung in Apg 2,31 hält sich an die in dem Psalm vorgegebene Wortwahl’.

<sup>9</sup> Luke omits the ending (colon 11c) of the final verse of Psalm 15:8-11. Cf. Doble 2004:91.

<sup>10</sup> For the aim of this article, it will suffice to focus only on Acts 2.

claims enduring protection against the threat of untimely death and on an intellectual level still has not gone beyond the idea of the biological borders of death. It, however, seems that the LXX-version of this text, which differs from the MT text in some decisive aspects, paved the way for this interpretation.<sup>11</sup> It was thus made possible by the significant interpretative changes undertaken by the Greek translators.<sup>12</sup>

Acts chapter 2 deals with Pentecost and the advent of the mission by the first Christians (2:1-47).<sup>13</sup> The verses 25-28 is part of Peter's sermon (2:14-41) during Pentecost, which followed directly after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:1-13).<sup>14</sup> In Peter's sermon Psalm 16(15):8-11b is quoted word by word from the LXX (Lindijer 1975:65). In the context of Acts it is introduced by the introductory formula: 'For David says concerning him (Jesus)', followed by the quotation from the psalm text. In Peter's sermon it is stated that David did not write the text with himself, but with Jesus in view. In this regard Acts 2:30 reads as follows: 'Since he (that is, David) was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne'. Schneider (1980:272) therefore formulates the conviction of the author

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<sup>11</sup> In this regard Fabry (2006:55) postulates as follows: 'Doch selbst die Wort-zu-Wort Übersetzungen sind von ihrer hellenistischen Umwelt beeinflusst (sei es mit der Absicht deutlicher Abgrenzung, sei es in Aufnahme spezifisch griechischer/ägyptischer Vorstellungen'. Cf. also Hübner (1996:338): 'But during the process of translation a certain shift occurred toward Hellenistic thinking. Based on this translation, a considerable *Hellenizing of the Old Testament* cannot be denied, even if the extent may be debatable. In the Septuagint the spiritual attitude of Hellenistic Judaism in the diaspora is expressed'. According to Dafni (2006:433) one should speak about exegesis *of* or rather *in* the books of the LXX based on the ideological background and the religious trends of the translators.

<sup>12</sup> Olofsson (2001:291) refers to this process as theological exegesis, which implies that the translator made conscious choices in order to reflect his religious convictions. The translation is more influenced by the translator's religious outlook than by the philological, or semantic interpretation of the Hebrew word in question.

<sup>13</sup> According to Scholl (2007:8) 'enthält [das Werk] eine anschauliche gestaltete Theologie des Weges der Kirche von den bescheidenen Anfängen in Jerusalem bis zur Tätigkeit des Paulus in der Hauptstadt des römischen Weltreiches. Es schildert die Entwicklung der Kirche von einer jüdischen Sekte zur weltweit missionierenden Gemeinde'.

<sup>14</sup> With regard to this event Scholl (2007:16-19) infers as follows: 'Wer in dieser Erzählung eine Bericht über ein historisches Geschehen zieht, gerät in einige Erklärungs-schwierigkeiten ... Nein, Lukas wollte keinen simplen Tatsachenbericht schreiben. Er wollte einen Theologie des Anfangs der Kirche verfassen. Wir müssen versuchen, "hinter den Zeilen" zu lesen, um auf die Spur zu kommen, was er eigentlich sagen wollte ... Lukas hat in der Erzählung von der Geistausgießung mit einprägsamen, schlichten Motiven und aufbauend auf bereits bekannten Bildern eine großartige Ouvertüre komponiert, in der die wichtigen Themen seines Werkes anklingen'.

of Acts as follows: ‘David gilt als Verfasser der Psalmen: aus deren Worten spricht er prophetisch “vorausschauend” über den kommenden Christus’. The author therefore attributed the words of the psalm directly to Jesus, as if the poet had written them for the person of the Messiah, which, of course, in Christian terms meant: to Jesus. This caused the church to interpret this psalm text from its earliest history text as if Christ’s resurrection was its prophetic fulfilment (Bruce 1989:64).

In the subsequent section a short overview will be given of Psalm 16(15):9-11 (these verses contain the most relevant theological differences between the MT and the LXX), as well as the way it functions in Acts 2:26-28.

### 1 Psalm 16(15):9

According to Acts 2:25, Jesus always has the Lord before him, for he is at his right hand and therefore he will not be shaken (Ps 15:8 LXX) (Lindijer 1975:66). The close relationship which exists between Jesus and God (25) causes his heart to overflow with joy (26). For the author of Acts the last part of verse 26 is very important: ‘moreover, my flesh will live in hope’ (cf. Ps 15:9c LXX). It seems that the Greek text is better suited than the Hebrew text for it to be used as an argument in favour of the resurrection of Christ. In this regard Boers (1969:105)<sup>15</sup> postulates as follows: ‘it has been widely recognised that the present function of the Psalm as an interpretation of the already experienced resurrection was possible only in the form of the Greek translation as found in the LXX and quoted here in Acts’. This becomes clear from the LXX’s translation of the Hebrew  $\text{לְבַטֵּחַ}$  with  $\epsilon\pi'$   $\epsilon\lambda\pi\acute{\iota}\delta\iota$  (‘in hope’) (Conzelmann 1987:20). It has already been indicated that the writer of Psalm 16 (MT) makes it clear that his ‘body’ ( $\text{בְּשָׂרִי}$ ) will live secure ( $\text{לְבַטֵּחַ בְּשָׁכָן}$ ). This is a central motif which occurs in the context of the promise of the land and is associated with safety, security and a blessed life; that is to say, a good and secure life here and now.

The Greek choice of translation  $\epsilon\lambda\pi\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  (‘hope, what is hoped for, basis for hope’), however, belongs to a different traditio-historical background than the Hebrew  $\epsilon\lambda\pi\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ . It, among others, can become an eschatological keyword which describes the hope of being immortal (Wisdom 3:4, 14ff)<sup>16</sup> or even the hope of

<sup>15</sup> Cf. also Veltri (2001:89): ‘Antike und moderne Linguistik sind sich darin einig, daß jede Übersetzung eine Interpretation des Textes ist’.

<sup>16</sup> Wisdom 3:4 reads as follows: ‘For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality’ (NRSV). According to Elledge (2006:27-28) the Wisdom of Solomon (first century BCE), a Greek sapiential word of Diaspora provenance, attests Jewish belief in immortality as a direct response to the problem of theodicy. The author’s answer to theodicy thus rests upon belief in immortality. Beyond present suffering, there stands another reality. The author stresses that the righteous are not truly dead, but are at peace in the hands of God, since the reward of the righteous is immortal life.

the resurrection (II Macc 7:14).<sup>17</sup> Liess (2004:432), therefore, infers as follows: ‘Wenn auch diese traditionsgeschichtlichen Beobachtungen noch keinen eindeutigen Beleg für die eschatologische Bedeutung von *élpis* in Ps 16(15) liefern (dafür bedarf es weiterer Hinweise aus dem Gesamtpsalme), so bringt die griechische Übersetzung “aufgrund von Hoffnung auf/auf Hoffnung hin wohnen” doch deutlicher als die hebräische Formulierung “in Sicherheit wohnen” eine Zukunftsperspektive zum Ausdruck’.

In order to conclude: The Greek version thus puts forward the promise of personal, physical resurrection (Schaper 1995:50).<sup>18</sup> The process of the LXX’s reception by the author of Acts was a genuinely theological process. It is important to keep in mind that he was theologically dealing with the Scripture of Israel, which was regarded as Holy Scripture and, thus, the literal word of God announcing Christ by divine authority. In chapter 2 he thus uses the LXX as an essential element in his presentation of the gospel message that is the *raison d’être* of Acts: his Christology is focused on the resurrection, which had been foretold by David (Barrett 1988:243; cf. also Hübner 1996:339).

## 2 Psalm 16(15):10

Acts 2:26 thus expresses the certainty that Jesus will live; the main justification being the fact that God will not allow his Messiah to be given into the hands of Hades (27) (cf. Ps 15:10a). Acts 2:27 witnesses to the resurrection of the Messiah, which, of course, in Christian terms meant: Jesus. He will not be given

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<sup>17</sup> This text reads as follows: ‘When he was near death, he said, “One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life”’ (NRSV). According to Elledge (2006:18-19) the resurrection in 2 Maccabees is perhaps the most graphically physical account of the resurrection which is available to us in the ancient literature. The author(s) emphatically maintain(s) that the very members of the physical body that have been mutilated and tortured will be reconstituted by divine power into whole human bodies again. This is true, apparently, even of those bodies that have been vaporized (7:1-2, 7). The author(s) seem(s) aware of the radical nature of these claims, and defend(s) these presentations of the resurrection by anchoring it in creation theology. Since God is the one who has created the world ‘not out of existing things’ (7:28), this God is able to reconstitute the physical bodies of the martyrs. It is thus not inappropriate to describe this resurrection as a new creation. They will be raised unto everlasting life; it is possible that a physical resurrection of the dead into an everlasting bodily life is envisaged.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also Schaper (1994:46): ‘Gegenüber der bescheidenen Hoffnung des hebräischen Textes findet sich also in der griechischen Version eines der ersten Zeugnisse eines Glaubens an eine persönliche, körperliche Auferstehung. Es handelt sich also um eine frühe Form des rabbinischen Auferstehungsglaubens und stammt wahrscheinlich aus (proto-)pharisäischen Kreisen. In den Midraschim zu den Psalmen finden wir eine sehr ähnliche Interpretation des Psalms, die den Auferstehungsgedanken mit dem Messiasglauben verbindet’.

over to the realm of death. God will not allow him to perish. The trust expressed by the psalmist that he will not experience an untimely death, became an expression of hope in Acts that Jesus would be resurrected from death (Boers 1969:106).

It once again seems that the Greek translation suited the argument of verse 27 better (Schmitt 1973:247). The LXX translated the noun תַּחַשׁ ('the Pit') with διαφθορά ('corruption, destruction, decay'). A closer equivalent of the Hebrew noun תַּחַשׁ would have been βόθρος ('pit, hole'), which occurs only six times in the LXX (Liess 2004:432). The LXX's choice of διαφθορά causes a significant change in the meaning of the Hebrew text, as well as a different interpretation.<sup>19</sup> The original meaning of the Hebrew noun תַּחַשׁ ('pit, hole, underworld') was thrust into the background, and replaced by a Greek noun (διαφθορά) which is actually much more related to the Hebrew verb תָּחַשׁ ('spoiled, ruined, bring decay'). This Greek choice results in a different understanding of the Hebrew psalm: contrary to the expression 'do not see the Pit', which is an indication of 'not to die', the Greek expression 'do not see corruption/decay' emphasises that 'man is immortal'.<sup>20</sup>

The interpretation of Psalm 16(15):10 is furthermore influenced by the choice of translation of the Hebrew לֵיִשׁ (10a) with the Greek ἄδης. The Hebrew Bible still shares the classical portrayal of the 'netherworld' with its ancient Near Eastern neighbours, according to which Sheol indicates the land of 'gloom and deep darkness'; 'silence'; 'no return'; 'forgetfulness'; etc. (Barstad 1995:1452-1457 and Berlejung 2004:465-502. Cf. also Berlejung 2006:400ff; Gaster 1962:787). This concept, however, changed during the later post-exilic

<sup>19</sup> With regard to the LXX's technique of translation Dafni (2002:325) infers as follows: 'Wichtig ist nun, dass wir annehmen können, dass die Wortwahl an theologisch bedeutsamen Stellen nicht zufällig ist. Die Übersetzer benutzen Begriffe, aus dem griechischen Umfeld oder schaffen neue auf Grund von geprägter griechischer Begrifflichkeit ... Mehrere Beispiele weisen darauf hin, dass die Übersetzungssprache der prophetischen und poetischen Bücher keine mechanische Aufnahme von Übersetzungsäquivalenten aus dem Pentateuch ist, sondern sie stellt einen schöpferischen Umgang des jeweiligen Übersetzers mit seiner Vorlage sowie mit der Vorlage und den Übersetzungen anderer alttestamentlicher Bücher dar. D.h. der jeweilige Übersetzer, der eine theologisch wichtige Stelle ins Griechische überträgt, ist sich dessen bewusst, dass das Äquivalent, das er wählt, eine ausserbiblische Begriffsgeschichte sowie eine theologische Anwendung im Pentateuch voraussetzt, seine Wortwahl selbst ist eine theologische Interpretation und kann zu einer neuen Interpretation führen'.

<sup>20</sup> According to Schaper (1995:155) the LXX version is influenced by the conception of a bodily resurrection of the righteous while stating that the wicked will be left to *diaphthora* (physical decay). The psalm clearly stresses the idea of a bodily resurrection. The flesh of the righteous will 'rest in hope': they look forward to their corporeal resurrection.

period, according to which Sheol and Hades became terms indicating the temporary abode of the dead. This notion thus went through a sequence of incisive changes after the exile.

According to Bietenhard (1992:207; cf. also Gaster 1962:788 and Jeremias 1978:146-148) this change took place within rabbinic Judaism under the influence of Persian and Hellenistic ideas. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul emerged which altered the concept of Hades radically. The earliest attestation of this doctrine appears in Ethiopian Enoch 22: reward and punishment begin, after death, in Hades.<sup>21</sup> A later view states that the souls of the righteous, after death, enter heavenly blessedness, while the souls of the ungodly are punished in Hades. The concept of Hades (as the Greek translation of Sheol) thus lost its role as the resting place of all souls and became a place of punishment for the souls of the ungodly. Under the influence of the doctrine of the resurrection, Hades lost its role as the eternal resting place of souls and became a preparatory, temporary resting place for souls until the resurrection. 2 Esdras 7:78-100 attempts to establish a compromise between the doctrines of immortality and of the resurrection. According to this, the souls of the righteous enjoy for a time a foretaste of the blessedness which will be theirs in the afterlife, after the resurrection has taken place. The ungodly, on the other hand, receive a foretaste of the punishment that awaits them after the last judgment.

This change in the conceptual world of *Hades* is also detected in the Greek translation of Psalm 16. The context of verses 9-10 in the Greek version, in contrast to the Hebrew version, indicates hope of the hereafter: ‘to live in hope / to live based on hope’ (9c) is interpreted as persistent hope of an only temporary existence in the sphere of death. The LXX psalm thus witnesses to a passing journey through the ‘world of the dead’.<sup>22</sup>

### 3 Psalm 16(15):11

The author of Acts’ argument that Psalm 16(15) prophesied Jesus’ resurrection reaches its culmination in chapter 2:28 (only Psalm 15:11ab is quoted here). The hope of a personal afterlife, as encountered in Psalm 15:9-10 (LXX), places verse 11 also within the context of an expected future life/afterlife. Whereas colon 11a in the Greek translation still focuses on the past (aorist), the

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. also Elledge (2006:8): ‘If this is, indeed, a reference to resurrection from the dead, the dating of *I Enoch* 20-36 in the late third / early second century B.C.E. would make this the earliest allusion to resurrection in extant literature’.

<sup>22</sup> Liess (2004:433): ‘Der Psalm spricht folglich von einem zeitlich begrenzten Aufenthalt in der Totenwelt’. In this regard Schneider (1980:273) infers as follows: ‘V9b des Psalmes (= Apg 2,26b) läßt sogar die Deutung von V10b (= 2,27b) auf die Auferstehung zu, während nach dem MT mit letzterem Vers eine solche Hoffnung nicht verbunden war; der Beter des “individuellen Vertrauensliedes” hoffte vielmehr auf Jahwes Hilfe in akuter Todesgefahr’.



emphasis in cola 11bc is on the afterlife. Contrastingly, the Hebrew text's focus is on life here and now. Fullness of life is sketched with temple theological terms, indicating the supplicant's experience of the presence of God within the temple (Liess 2004:434).

The expression 'ways of life' (MT = 'path of life') is the final argument the author of Acts used – especially if it is to be understood as the 'the ways/pathways to the resurrection'. The statement 'you will make me full of gladness with your presence' expresses the joy experienced by the resurrected Christ being with God.

The eschatologization of Psalm 16:11 (15:11) in the Septuagint becomes clear from the translation of  $\text{לְעוֹלָם}$  ('for evermore' – 11c) with  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  ('until the end'). Within the context of the Hebrew text  $\text{לְעוֹלָם}$  indicates the lasting closeness of God and this Hebrew expression relates to the future; but not to 'eternity' – as the Greek does (Anderson 1986:567). Colon 11c was, however, not quoted in Acts 2:28.

## C CONCLUDING REMARKS

According to the psalmist (MT) the source of joy is God's presence in his life. This joy is in contrast to death, because in the realm of death one is separated from God. With respect to the initial meaning of the text it has become clear that the concluding verses should not be interpreted either messianically or in terms of individual eschatology (Craigie 1983:158). The psalmist was faced with imminent death; he rose in confidence above that danger to know the fullness of life in God's presence. The psalmist wrote from a particular experience, and yet his words touch upon the experience of all mortal beings, namely the fear of death. It is a fear which must be controlled confidently if life is to be lived fully.

The text of Psalm 16 touches upon important matters regarding the anthropological viewpoint of the people of Judah. According to them, they received life as a gift of benevolence from Yahweh. Human beings have the choice, opportunity and task to fill and fulfil their lives. Yahweh provides them with instruction and gives them strength to live accordingly. Life thus implies to live according to Yahweh's laws. Life furthermore implies the fulfilment of hope. It provides every human being with trust in God and courage which is necessary in order to face the challenges of life (e.g. death threats). This triad 'life as a divine gift', 'life according to the law' and 'life as hope' is based on the fundamental chord of the introductory statement (vv. 1-2) and the final statement (v. 11abc): Yahweh is the source of happiness and is the 'path of life'.

It seems that the author of the book of Acts applied Psalm 16(15):8-11b to Jesus' life – but especially to his hour of death. Because Jesus had lived his

whole life in close relationship with God, he therefore was not shaken. Because of his resurrection, his body could live in hope. His body was thus not given to Hades, and therefore his body/flesh will live in hope. God made known the 'ways of life' to him (Pesch 1986:122). It seems that the quotation of Psalm 16(15) in Acts of the Apostles had a comforting function: 'In the situation of overwhelming grief the disciples apparently sought consolation in appropriate Psalms such as 1, 18 and 22. These Psalms, particularly 16 and 18, brought the desired relief, as it now appeared that Scripture not only assumed that the messiah would in fact die, but also prophesied that he would not be abandoned to Sheol' (Boers 1969:107).

The language of a Hebrew Bible Psalm (in this instance Psalm 16) is thus used to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus. Through the quotation of Psalm 16(15):8-11b, the author of Acts brought some consolation to his readers and listeners: although Jesus had died, he was also resurrected as had been prophesied in the Old Testament. The quotations from Psalm 16(15) in the book of Acts thus got a messianic-Christological meaning. If we, however, take a look at the text of Psalm 16, it seems that this psalm does not contain any direct Christological conceptions. Neither does it refer to the resurrection of the flesh (eschatology). There are, however, features in the Greek translation (LXX) of this psalm, which offered material to the New Testament authors to apply the text to Jesus, and specifically to his resurrection from death.

The psalm has a very important function within the composition of Peter's Pentecostal sermon (Schaper 1995:167). Indeed, it serves as its rhetorical and theological centrepiece. A psalm, which had already received an eschatological interpretation in ancient Judaism, was then employed by early Christianity as a proof-text for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was possible on the basis of an understanding of Psalm 15 (LXX) not only as a statement about the concept of an individual afterlife, but also as a messianic text. However, it should be noted that the Jewish interpretation (LXX) of the psalm remained firmly within the context of individual eschatological hope, whereas the early Church stressed the fact that this text was perceived to be Davidic, announcing the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The important point is that the Lukan understanding and implementation of Psalm 15 (LXX), while being based on its earlier Jewish interpretation, further explores the text's meaning (Schaper 1995:168). There was a development from the Hebrew original of Psalm 16 via its Greek translation towards the Christian appropriation of that translation, which invested the psalm with a more and more refined and enriched array of meanings. In terms of the history of the two religions we may speak of a continuous history of scriptural interpretation leading up to the appropriation of messianically and eschatologically interpreted psalms to the person of Jesus.

In order to conclude: the tradition of Jewish exegesis thus provided the means and the material needed by the early Christians to fulfil their task of giving meaning to the person, the death and the resurrection of him whom they conceived as their Lord, namely Jesus Christ. The Septuagint paved the way for this interpretation and can indeed be regarded as ‘*praeparatio evangelica*’ – at least regarding the translation of Psalm 16(15) and its appropriation in Acts of the Apostles.

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