

ABSTRACT

PERSONAL PIETY IN THE STUDY OF THE PSALMS: A REASSESSMENT

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The predominant view in psalmic studies holds that the appropriate context for the interpretation of the psalms is the Israelite cult. By contrast, this thesis demonstrates that insufficient attention has been paid to the personal insights and life-experiences of the psalmists themselves. If one view is cult-centred, this approach is life-centred.

The first chapter reviews psalmic studies over the last century in order to place the cult-functional approach in its own cultural setting. The second chapter examines the confessions of Jeremiah, and shows that these are best understood as genuine personal prayers which use psalmic language and forms. This opens up the possibility that the psalms themselves are expressions of personal piety, which have used and adapted the traditional liturgical conventions of the day.

The remaining six chapters assess the extent to which the psalms might be understood in this way. Six characteristics of personal piety are selected. These are trust in God, penitence before God, reflections on death and life with God, communion with God, suffering before God and pleasing God. They combine to show that the universal validity of the Psalter is due as much to the way the psalmists speak of common life-experiences, as to the way the psalms have been composed as repeatable cultic texts.

The thesis concludes that because the cult-centred approach has been so concerned with the cultic functions of the psalms, it has failed to appreciate the personal contributions of the psalmists, and in so doing has often misinterpreted the primary purpose of a psalm. A life-centred reading of the Psalter is therefore a vital component in correcting this imbalance in psalmic studies today.

ABSTRACT

PERSONAL PIETY IN THE STUDY OF THE PSALMS: A REASSESSMENT

The purpose of the thesis is to develop a life-centred interpretation of the Psalter, by assessing the personal insights and experiences which the composers brought to their psalms, whether or not they were originally intended to be compositions for cultic use. The first part of the thesis, in two chapters, assesses more general issues which concern personal piety in the study of the Psalter. The second part, in six chapters, examines the psalms themselves for examples of personal piety.

The introduction looks at two different ways of interpreting psalmody. The first, the cult-centred approach, believes that the psalms were composed as texts for repeated liturgical use, so that the 'I' in a psalm is intended to be anyone who wished to use the psalm. The second, a more life-centred approach, proposes that those psalms which have nourished personal piety actually arose out of some private communion with God.

Chapter One reviews psalmic studies over the last century. An assessment is made of the strengths and weaknesses in earlier literary-critical studies in the psalms; the form-critical method and the cult-functional method are also examined with respect to their own cultural contexts. Particular attention is paid to the way that the cult-centred approach has been excessively pre-occupied with the functions of the psalms within the cult. More recent studies in the Psalter are then assessed with reference to the adaptations which have been made to the earlier interpretations. The chapter concludes that psalmic studies this century have paid

insufficient attention to the more personal contributions of the psalmists themselves, and that this oversight should now be made good.

The second chapter examines the confessions of Jeremiah, and seeks to show that these are expressions of personal piety, which use the language and forms of the individual lament psalms. A survey of the scholarship on Jeremiah's confessions reveals that, as in psalmic studies, there is similar caution in interpreting the confessions as personal prayers. A study of the use of the 'I' form in the confessions nevertheless concludes that the most appropriate reading is that the 'I' concerns the prophet himself, in contrast to the 'I' form used elsewhere in the laments of the book, where it normally refers to the people. These prayers are seen to be important examples of the way that the personality of the poet can break through the traditional liturgical conventions of language and form. The confessions are then compared with other poetry and prose prayers which are found throughout the narrative parts of the Old Testament. This is to demonstrate that personal prayer is recorded as a common phenomenon even in the pre-exilic period. The chapter concludes that these observations have opened up the possibility that individual psalms could also be expressions of personal piety, using and adapting the cultic conventions of the day.

Chapter Three starts the study of the psalms themselves. A comparison is given of the four most common Hebrew words which express trust in God and which recur in the psalms. The different expressions of trust are identified as security in God, need for God, certitude in God and hope in God. These expressions of trust take on

several different emphases throughout the Psalter. It is seen that although little can be ascertained regarding the outward variables upon which the trust of the psalmists is founded (such as a prophetic oracle, or the mediation of the name of God, or the exhortations to trust God's presence in Zion), the inner content of that trust can plainly be understood from the contents of the psalms, and can be appropriated by anyone, whatever their religio-historical context. The chapter concludes that the cult-functional method is too concerned with the time-conditioned externals which might have inspired the psalmists, and fails to account for the way these expressions of trust have nevertheless been understood and appropriated by others in a variety of cultural settings. Whereas the cult-centred approach searches for the more opaque levels of meaning behind a psalm, the life-centred approach seeks to explain what is transparent and part of common human experience from within the psalm itself, and is thus a necessary complement to the cult-functional reading of the psalms.

Chapter Four assesses the psalmists' experiences of penitence before God. Six Hebrew words associated with penitence and forgiveness are assessed. Whereas the priestly material applies most of these terms in a more literal, physical way, explicitly connecting them with cultic rituals and purificatory rites, this usage is not at all evident in the Psalter, where a contingent relationship exists between the process of removing the sin and the experience of forgiveness. The cult-functional reading is apt to ignore this important distinction between the psalms and priestly codes, and assumes too readily that the language of the psalms implies also some ritual activity. The chapter then examines what

the relevant psalms do in fact say about the psalmists' experiences of penitence and forgiveness. Diverse emphases are again apparent. For example, some psalmists experience remorse and guilt whilst still being dependent upon the worshipping cultic community for their healing, whilst others suffer all the more because they are isolated from it. Or again, several psalmists associate forgiveness with physical restoration, whilst others are more concerned with spiritual restoration and inner healing. The chapter concludes with a critical assessment of the cult-functional interpretation of forgiveness in the psalms. First, it avoids the implications of the psalmists' witness to a wide variety of experiences of penitence and forgiveness; this is because its concern is more with the typical and representative features in the psalms. Second, it claims to know too much about the external means by which restoration is effected, even though the accompanying rituals and sacrifices are by no means explicit. The life-centred approach, by contrast, attends as much to the obvious human dilemma of remorse and guilt, as it does to the cultic context in which forgiveness might have taken place.

Chapter Five examines the psalmists' perceptions of life and death with God. Rather than assuming that such expressions use more typical cultic language which could be appropriated by anyone facing some threat of death, the chapter seeks to show that the relevant psalms are compositions which suggest genuine and particular fears of imminent death. Eight Hebrew words are assessed which describe death and life, and their application within and outside the Psalter is seen mostly to pertain to physical and final death, rather than alluding more generally to some figurative death-

like state which must be overcome in the midst of life. The chapter then explores the variety of attitudes and insights about life and death which the psalmists convey. Some reveal a great fear of death, whilst others accept and affirm it, and a small number even hope in the continuation of some form of life with God beyond it. Whether or not these psalms were designed for cultic use, each psalmist is genuinely and personally involved with his own finitude in the face of final death, and only this factor can account for why these psalms have been so widely appropriated by others in similar situations of need, regardless of any common religious context. The life-centred approach is again a necessary complement to the cult-centred approach, because its concern is as much about the features which echo the personal interests of the psalmists, as about the time-conditioned cultic functions of the psalms.

Chapter Six examines the psalmists' understanding of communion with God, and shows that the predominant experience is of a dialectical and dynamic relationship with God, similar to that which is often portrayed as the experiences of the prophets. Five Hebrew words associated with love and knowledge are assessed, and each of these is seen to offer correspondences with the prophetic experience of being known and loved by God. It is evident that many psalmists reflect a particular individual awareness of communion with God, rather than portraying a more comprehensive and typical experience with which anyone might identify. This is especially evident in those psalms which express a longing for the restoration of God's presence, and in other psalms which rejoice in some specific act of restoration. The chapter concludes by examining Mowinckel's positive assent to the prophets' individual

sense of a relationship with God, and contrasts this assent with his reluctance to pay attention to the same particular and individual relationship with God in the psalms. The cult-functional approach is thus again seen to be lacking in that it concentrates on the more general and representative aspects of piety, suitable for repeatable cultic settings. The life-centred reading is again seen to be important because it emphasizes the more personal aspects of the psalmists' communion with God, and in so doing, explains why these can be appropriated by anyone outside the original cultic settings who might identify with a similar life-experience.

Chapter Seven examines those psalms which reflect a situation of suffering before God. Again, the concern is to show that the psalmists are referring to particular, literal crises, rather than to general, representative situations. An assessment is given of three Hebrew words which describe the enemies in the psalms, and the results are contrasted with the cult-centred approach, which assumes too readily that the enemies concern mainly one class of people. Each word pertains not so much to one group of people, as to innumerable aspects of enemy oppression, reflecting the threats of malice and wickedness which were found at all levels of Israelite society. An appraisal is given of the two most recurrent ways in which the psalmists describe their sufferings, namely their appeals for God's help, and their descriptions of distress. Both these features display a large amount of creative freedom; this is comparable to the diverse use of traditional language in the confessions of Jeremiah, and again suggests that the composers are genuinely involved in a particular distress. A study is also given of the forms used to convey suffering. These also reveal a

surprising adaptation of conventional lament styles, a feature which is again comparable with the confessions of Jeremiah. A final section examines the possible life-settings for the composition of these psalms of suffering, and suggests that at least thirteen of the forty individual laments reflect a private setting of individual prayer, and that these might again be compared to the similar context proposed for the confessions of Jeremiah. The chapter concludes that the cult-centred approach is too concerned with interpreting the language, forms and contexts of suffering in a monochrome and stereotyped way, because of its assumptions about the cultic functions of the psalms. Little is made of the vibrancy in the psalms which leads to the unusual adaptation of the traditional styles, and thus little is made of the effects of genuine human need upon the psalmists' compositions. Again the life-centred approach is a significant corrective, because of its concern with these more personal features and with the universal validity of the psalms, regardless of any knowledge of the supposed cultic purpose for which each psalm was written.

Chapter Eight shows that similar diverse personal insights and life-experiences are found within the psalms with respect to the psalmists' perceptions of what is pleasing to God. An assessment is made of the different Hebrew words which describe those who uphold such moral qualities, namely the saints, the poor, the righteous and the upright. As with the terms which described the enemies in the psalms, these words are appropriated in innumerable ways, so that no one class of people is necessarily implied when they are used. This diversity is further illustrated in the examples of how the psalmists reflected upon the means of pleasing God, and upon the

rewards for such obedience. The chapter critically evaluates the cult-functional approach for the way it analyses and classifies these features into specific social and cultic settings. The life-centred reading is commended because it takes more seriously not only the diversity of experiences which have prompted the insights of the psalmists, but also the creative freedom they use to describe them. Their personal appeal, as much as their cultic function, has made them capable of being understood and used by others, regardless of the cultural setting.

The thesis concludes that personal piety in the Psalter does have particular characteristics which are clearly discernible within many of the psalms, particularly the psalms of the individual. The main criticism of the cult-centred approach is then summarised: it is too hasty in making hypotheses about the more opaque cultic functions behind the psalms, and in doing so, it pays insufficient attention to the more transparent features of psalmody, namely the personal contributions of the psalmist. This criticism is then illustrated in the three main areas which have recurred within the thesis. First, the cult-centred approach places too much emphasis on the uniform nature of the psalms, and seeks to classify them too rigidly, without paying enough attention to the diverse, individual elements in them. Second, although this method is critical of earlier studies because it claimed to know too much about the historical settings of the psalmists, it makes the same error by assuming that the psalms can best be understood within a particular historical period of Israel's cultic life. In doing this it undermines the ambiguity of the poetry and the anonymity of each psalmist's specific life-setting, both of which defy explicit

historicisation. Third, because this approach prefers to concentrate on the conventional and typically cultic features in the Psalter, it overlooks the individual contributions of the psalmists, and in doing so, it causes some polarisation between the personal insights of the psalmists and the traditional cultic settings of the psalms.

The life-centred interpretation is a vital corrective to these limitations, for it not only takes into account the diversity of personal experience found within the Psalter, but also avoids assuming too much about any historical cultic context which gave rise to it, and so holds together the personal piety in the psalms and the general cultic setting which prompted their composition.

The thesis ends by acknowledging its indebtedness to Hermann Gunkel's studies of the Psalter, particularly for the way that he combined an interest in the personal contributions of the psalmists with an sensitive awareness of the cultic history of the psalms. The thesis proposes that Gunkel's insights need to be reviewed with more seriousness in modern psalmic studies. This would result in a rediscovery of the importance of reading the Psalter with one eye to the cultic purpose of the psalms and the other to the personal contributions of the psalmists.

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In the end the cheerful and independent spirit of our two young daughters, Abigail and Esther, has made completion possible. I dedicate this thesis to them, in the hope that in time they too will come to value the Psalter as an inspiration to personal prayer.

A CLASSIFICATION OF THE PSALM-TYPES¹

PSALMS OF THE COMMUNITY

Communal Laments: Pss. 44; 60; 74; 77; 79; 80; 82; 83; 85; 90; 94; 106; 108; 123; 126; 137.

Communal Thanksgivings: Pss. 65; 66; 67; 68; 107; 118; 124.

Communal Psalms of Confidence: Pss. 115; 125; 129; 133.

General Hymns: Pss. 8; 29; 33; 100; 103; 104; 111; 113; 114; 117; 135; 136; 145; 146; 147; 148; 149; 150.

Zion Hymns: Pss. 46; 48; 76; 87; 122.

Enthronement Psalms (or Kingship Hymns): Pss. 47; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99.

Royal Psalms: Pss. 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144.

Historical Psalms: Pss. 78; 105.

Liturgies: Pss. 15; 24; 134.

Prophetic Exhortations: Pss. 14; 50; 52; 53; 58; 75; 81; 91; 95.

PSALMS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Individual Laments: Pss. 5; 6; 7; 12; 13; 17; 22; 25; 26; 28; 31; 35; 36; 38; 39; 42-3; 51; 54; 55; 56; 57; 59; 61; 63; 64; 69; 70; 71; 73; 86; 88; 102; 109; 120; 130; 140; 141; 142; 143.

Individual Thanksgivings: Pss. 9-10; 30; 32; 34; 40; 41; 92; 116; 138.

Individual Psalms of Confidence: Pss. 3; 4; 11; 16; 23; 27; 62; 84; 121; 131.

Wisdom Psalms: Pss. 1; 19; 37; 49; 112; 119; 127; 128; 139.

¹ This classification mainly follows that of Gunkel-Begrich, Einleitung in die Psalmen, GHAT, Göttingen, pp. lff.; some modifications have been included from Sabourin, The Psalms. Their Origin and Meaning, New York, 1974, pp. 175ff.

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OBSERVATIONS FROM INDEX OF PSALM REFERENCES

Proportion of individual psalms which are used as examples of personal piety : 59 / 69 .

Proportion of communal psalms which are used as examples of personal piety : 33 / 81 .

It is impossible to classify personal piety into clear individual and communal categories. Nevertheless, from the references listed above, it should be evident that this thesis is primarily concerned with the psalms of the individual.

NOTES

- The MT versification of the psalms has been used, except where otherwise stated. Outside the Psalter, the RSV versification is used, and any differences with the MT are indicated where necessary in parentheses.
- The RSV translation has been used for all biblical quotations, except where otherwise stated.
- Although the first reference to Gunkel/Begrich, Einleitung in die Psalmen, GHAT Göttingen, 1933 acknowledges joint authorship, Gunkel alone is referred to in the later references.
- C. Westermann's Lob und Klage in den Psalmen, Göttingen, 1977 was not available in the German edition. Pagination is therefore taken only from the English translation Praise and Lament in the Psalms, Edinburgh, 1981.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible, New York
Dahood, AB	M. Dahood, <u>Psalms 1-50</u> Vol I AB , New York, 1966; <u>Psalms 51-100</u> Vol II AB , New York, 1968; <u>Psalms 101-150</u> Vol III AB , New York, 1970
<u>ACB</u>	R. Young, <u>Analytical Concordance to the Bible</u> , Guildford and London, 1879, 1938 ²
<u>AJS</u>	<u>American Journal of Sociology</u> , Chicago
<u>AJSL</u>	<u>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</u> , Chicago
<u>ANET</u>	<u>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</u> (ed. J.B. Pritchard) Princeton, 1950, 1969 ³
<u>ANVAO</u>	<u>Avhandlinger utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo</u> , Oslo
Aslib	Index to Theses accepted for higher degrees by the Universities of Great Britain and Ireland and the Council of National Academic Awards, London, 1955-
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Zürich
<u>ATR</u>	<u>Anglican Theological Review</u> , Evanston
BBB	Bonner Biblischer Beiträge, Bonn
BDB	<u>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</u> (eds. F.Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs), Oxford, 1907, 1953 ²
<u>Bib</u>	<u>Biblica</u> , Rome
<u>Bi Trans</u>	<u>Bible Translator</u> , London
<u>BJRL</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</u> , Manchester
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Neukirchen
Kraus, BKAT	H.-J. Kraus, <u>Psalmen 1-79</u> , BKAT XV/I, Neukirchen, 1961; <u>Psalmen 80-150</u> , BKAT XV/II, Neukirchen, 1966
<u>BuK</u>	<u>Bibel und Kirche</u> , Stuttgart
<u>BuL</u>	<u>Bibel und Leben</u> , Stuttgart

<u>BQ</u>	<u>Baptist Quarterly</u> , London
<u>BR</u>	<u>Biblical Research</u> , Chicago
<u>BTB</u>	<u>Biblical Theology Bulletin</u> , Rome
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, (Giessen) Berlin
BWA(N)T	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament, (Leipzig) Stuttgart
<u>Can J Th</u>	<u>Canadian Journal of Theology</u> , Toronto
CB	Century Bible, Edinburgh
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary, Cambridge
<u>CBQ</u>	<u>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</u> , Washington
<u>ChQR</u>	<u>The Church Quarterly Review</u> , London
<u>Cl Rev</u>	<u>Clergy Review</u> , London
<u>CTA</u>	A. Herdner, <u>Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques recouvertes à Ras-Shamra-Ugarit de 1929-1939</u> , Paris, 1963
<u>DAI</u>	<u>Dissertation Abstracts International</u> , University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan
DATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Göttingen
Weiser, DATD	A. Weiser, <u>Die Psalmen</u> DATD 14/15, Göttingen, 1959
<u>DCW</u>	<u>Die Christliche Welt</u> , Berlin
<u>DLZ</u>	<u>Deutsche Literatur Zeitung</u> , Berlin
<u>EB</u>	<u>Encyclopaedia Biblica</u> (ed. T.K. Cheyne), London, 1899-1903
<u>EJ</u>	<u>Encyclopaedia Judaica</u> Vols 1-16, (eds. C. Roth and G. Wigoder), Jerusalem, 1972
<u>ET</u>	<u>The Expository Times</u> , Edinburgh
E Tr	English Translation
<u>ETL</u>	<u>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</u> , Löwen
EV	English Version
<u>Ev Q</u>	<u>Evangelical Quarterly</u> , London

<u>EvTh</u>	<u>Evangelische Theologie</u> , München
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Göttingen
<u>GAT</u>	<u>Grundrisse zum Alten Testament</u> , supplementary series to DATD, Göttingen
GHAT	Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, Göttingen
GKAT	Göttinger Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Göttingen
<u>GS</u>	C. Westermann, <u>Gesammelte Studien</u> Band I, München, 1966, Band II, München, 1974
<u>GSAT</u>	G. von Rad, <u>Gesammelte Studien des Alten Testament</u> , München, 1958
<u>GuL</u>	<u>Geist und Leben</u> , Würzburg
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Tübingen
<u>HDB</u>	<u>Hastings Dictionary of the Bible</u> (ed. J. Hastings), Edinburgh, 1898-1904
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs, Cambridge, Mass.
<u>HThR</u>	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u> , Cambridge, Mass.
<u>HUCA</u>	<u>Hebrew Union College Annual</u> , Cincinnati
<u>IBC</u>	<u>Interpreter's Bible Commentary</u> Vols I-VI, Abingdon, Nashville, 1951-57
ICC	International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh
McKane, ICC	<u>Jeremiah Volume I: I-XXV</u> , ICC Edinburgh, 1986
<u>IDB</u>	<u>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</u> (ed. G.A. Buttrick), Abingdon, Nashville, 1962 (SV 1976)
<u>Interp</u>	<u>Interpretation</u> , Richmond
<u>IKZ</u>	<u>Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift</u> , Bern
<u>JAOS</u>	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society</u> , (Boston) New Haven
<u>JBC</u>	<u>Jerome Bible Commentary</u> (eds. R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer and R.E. Murphy), New York and London, 1968
<u>JBL</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u> , (New York, New Haven) Philadelphia
<u>JQR</u>	<u>Jewish Quarterly Review</u> , Philadelphia

<u>JSOT</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</u> , Sheffield
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplementary Series, Sheffield
<u>JSS</u>	<u>Journal of Semitic Studies</u> , Manchester
<u>JTS</u>	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u> , Oxford
<u>KuD</u>	<u>Kerygma und Dogma</u> , Göttingen
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament, (Leipzig) Gütersloh
KHC	Kürzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, (Freiburg, Leipzig) Tübingen
<u>LD</u>	<u>Lectio Divina</u> , Paris
<u>LJ</u>	<u>Liturgisches Jahrbuch</u> , Münster
<u>L et V</u>	<u>Lumière et Vie</u> , Lyon
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Massoretic Text
NCB	New Century Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids and London
Anderson, NCB	<u>The Book of Psalms</u> (1-72), NCB, Grand Rapids and London, 1972; <u>The Book of Psalms</u> (73-150), NCB, Grand Rapids and London, 1972
NF	Neue Folge (New Series)
<u>NKZ</u>	<u>Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift</u> , (Erlangen) Leipzig
<u>Or</u>	<u>Orientalia</u> , Rome
<u>OTA</u>	<u>Old Testament Abstracts</u> , Washington
OTL	Old Testament Library, London
Weiser, OTL	A. Weiser, <u>The Psalms. A Commentary</u> , OTL, London, 1962 ; E Tr by H. Hartwell from <u>Die Psalmen</u> , DATD 14/15, Göttingen, 1959
<u>OTS</u>	<u>Oudtestamentische Studien</u> , Leiden
<u>PCB</u>	<u>Peake's Commentary on the Bible</u> (eds. H.H. Rowley and M. Black), revised edition, Edinburgh and London, 1962

<u>PIW</u> ¹ , <u>PIW</u> ²	S. Mowinckel, <u>Offersang og Sangoffer</u> , Vols. I and II, Copenhagen, 1951, E Tr D.R. Ap-Thomas, <u>The Psalms in Israel's Worship</u> , Vols I and II, Oxford, 1962
<u>PJ</u>	<u>Preussische Jahrbücher</u> , Berlin
<u>PsSt</u> I-VI	S. Mowinckel, <u>Psalmestudien</u> I-VI, Kristiania, 1922-24
<u>R Ex</u>	<u>Review and Expositor</u> , Louisville
<u>RGG</u> ¹	<u>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</u> (herausg. H. Gunkel, O. Scheel und F.M. Schiele), Tübingen, 1909-1913
<u>RGG</u> ²	<u>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</u> (herausg. H. Gunkel und L. Harnack), Tübingen, 1927-1932
<u>RGG</u> ³	<u>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</u> (herausg. K. Gallig), Tübingen, 1957-64
<u>RHPR</u>	<u>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</u> , Strasbourg, Paris
<u>RPTK</u>	<u>Realencyclopädie für protestantisch Theologie und Kirche</u> , Leipzig
<u>RSR</u>	<u>Recherches de Science Religieuse</u> , Paris
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SB	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, Stuttgart
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature, California
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology, London
<u>Scrip</u>	<u>Scripture</u> , Edinburgh and London
<u>SDB</u>	<u>Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible</u> (eds. H. Cazelles and A. Feuillet), Paris
<u>SEAJTh</u>	<u>South East Asian Journal of Theology</u> , Singapore
<u>SJTh</u>	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u> , Edinburgh
SOTS	Society for Old Testament Study
<u>StTh</u>	<u>Studia Theologica</u> , Lund
SV	Supplementary Volume
<u>SVT</u>	<u>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</u> , Leiden
<u>TA</u>	<u>Theologia Athena</u> , Athens

<u>TB</u>	<u>Tyndale Bulletin</u> , London
TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries, London
<u>TDNT</u>	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u> Vols I-IX (eds. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich), Translator and Editor G.W. Bromiley from <u>TWNT</u> , Michigan and London, 1961-74; Vol X Index by R. Pitkins, Michigan and London, 1976
<u>TDOT</u>	<u>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</u> (eds. G. Botterweck and H. Ringgren), Translators J.T. Willis and D.E. Green from <u>TWAT</u> , Michigan and London, 1974-
<u>THAT</u>	<u>Theologisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament</u> (eds. E. Jenni and C. Westermann), Band I, München-Zürich, 1971; Band II, München-Zürich, 1976
<u>Theol</u>	<u>Theology</u> , London
<u>ThJ</u>	<u>Theologisches Jahrbuch</u> , Leipzig
<u>ThLZ</u>	<u>Theologische Literaturzeitung</u> , (Leipzig) Berlin
<u>ThR</u>	<u>Theologische Rundschau</u> , Tübingen
<u>ThZ</u>	<u>Theologische Zeitschrift</u> , Basel
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Illinois and Leicester
<u>TP</u>	W.O.E. Oesterley, <u>The Psalms</u> , London, 1939
<u>TWAT</u>	<u>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</u> (herausg. G.J. Botterweck und H. Ringgren), Stuttgart, 1970-
<u>TWNT</u>	<u>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</u> Bände I-X/1-2 (herausg. G. Kittel und G. Friedrich), Stuttgart, 1932-79
<u>TWOT</u>	<u>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</u> Vols. I and II (ed. R.C. Harris), Chicago, 1980
<u>USQR</u>	<u>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</u> , New York
<u>VuF</u>	<u>Verkündigung und Forschung</u> , München
<u>VT</u>	<u>Vetus Testamentum</u> , Leiden
WBC	Word Bible Commentary, Waco, Texas
WC	Westminster Commentary, London
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, Neukirchen

<u>Wor</u>	<u>Worship</u> , Collegeville
<u>WuD</u>	<u>Wort und Dienst</u> Jahrbuch der Theologischen Schule Bethel, Bielefeld
<u>ZAW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u> , (Giessen) Berlin
<u>ZTK</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</u> , (Freiburg, Leipzig) Tübingen

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INTRODUCTION

TO A STUDY OF PERSONAL PIETY IN THE PSALTER

INTRODUCTION

"If, therefore, the psalms have in the main originated among the temple singers and are intended for use by a king, a national leader or a private person, who in connexion with public worship should present a psalm of prayer or praise, it is also evident that we have to distinguish between the poet and the 'I' who prays in the psalm. The psalm has been composed and put into the mouth of the one who has to use it. 'I' is in this respect not the composer himself, but the person for whose use he has made the psalm, and who was to present it in the Temple."¹

Sigmund Mowinckel's consistent cult-functional interpretation of the Psalter offers a dilemma to the reader who would also wish to account for genuine expressions of personal piety in the psalms. The fact that the psalmists apparently wrote with a typical, constantly recurring situation in mind means that in practice, the personality of the poet becomes submerged under the primary purpose for which he was writing. Mowinckel's cult-functional emphasis results in his seeing that the psalmists' personal insights are normally *obscured*, because of his concern with the cultic use of the psalm. This point is made clear in the following extracts:

"He has no wish to be 'original'; he wishes to realize Israel's ideal, Israel's human type... He never appears on his own behalf as a cooperator in that which 'happens' in the cult... He knows that what he feels and says is what everybody in an ideal or normal way thinks or ought to think and speak in the typical situation before the face of Yahweh... The psalm writer is most of all himself and most genuine when he hides wholly behind the worshipper, and enters completely into him and his situation."²

¹ Cf. S. Mowinckel, PIW², p. 133. The whole chapter is a revised edition of 'Traditionism and Personality in the Psalms' in HUCA 23 (1950-51), pp. 205-231; the quotation, reading slightly differently, is on p. 217.

² The phrase "typical, constantly recurring situation" is taken from PIW², p. 135. The ~~extracts quoted~~ are found on pp. 134, 136 and 140.

In fairness to Mowinckel's overall understanding of the psalms, it is evident that, in principle, he assents to the fact that "personality" and "traditionalism" are two complementary components in the composition of a psalm. Although rarely expressed, his interest in the more personal aspects of psalmody is evident in the following observations:

"...When the Israelite psalm composer speaks... there is room for his own individuality, for his own piety, his own faith, his own conviction of sin, his own gratitude... he could in any case express his own personal piety, his own view of God and God's relationship to the people and to the individual".³

The discussion continues with a comparison of the set formality and monotony of the Babylonian laments with the biblical psalms; Mowinckel concludes that this points to the greater personal involvement in the latter. Just as personal devotion within a formal liturgical context is found in modern-day prayer and hymn books, so too personal piety in cultic worship is evident in Israelite religion.⁴

However, this admission to the value of personal piety is seldom developed, and one is left with the overwhelming impression that Mowinckel has not taken the implications of the above observations to their proper conclusion. His repeated emphasis is that the personal interests of a psalmist are subservient to the cultic purpose of a psalm. Instead of achieving a balance between "personality" and "traditionalism", Mowinckel affirms that in almost all of the psalms, the traditional elements are the most significant.

³ Cf. PIW², pp. 134 and 135.

⁴ The reference to the comparative material is from PIW² p. 131; the illustration from contemporary liturgy is from p. 126, note 2.

This imbalance results in several difficulties in the interpretation of the psalms. G.W. Anderson has questioned Mowinckel's assumptions most pertinently:

"To look in the Psalter for evidence of private devotion in ancient Israel may seem like plunging into the ocean in search of water...Nevertheless, the reader of any modern scholarly exposition of the Psalms is likely to have a nagging doubt whether the Psalms, which have nourished devotional experience of such range and intensity, themselves arose out of a similar sense of personal and intimate communion with God. Certain well known elements in modern Psalms criticism and interpretation appear to have neutralized or cancelled the more personal features previously attributed to many of the Psalms. The question therefore arises whether the Psalter reflects in any measure not only the liturgical worship of ancient Israel but also the inner devotional experience of individual Israelites." ⁵

Later in his article, Anderson shows the logical conclusion of giving too much attention to the cult-functional interpretation:

"If the Psalms were, with few exceptions, (a) typical rather than individual and specific, and (b) closely linked with the cult and with its public ceremonies, then they could not easily be regarded as reflecting private and personal devotion, and what had seemed to be a substantial body of evidence appeared to have dwindled into nothing." ⁶

It is impossible to resolve the two different views expressed by Mowinckel and Anderson by polarising the piety associated with cultic religion and piety expressed as private devotion. Particular psalms simply cannot be classified with any degree of certainty one way or

⁵ Cf. G.W. Anderson, "'Sicut Cervus' : Evidence in the Psalter of Private Devotion in Ancient Israel', VT XXX (1980) pp. 388-97. The quotation is from p. 388.

⁶ Cf. Anderson, p. 389.

another. For example, the hymns and thanksgivings which are clearly written for public cultic occasions also record insights which could only be understood as personal testimony and devotion. So too, the laments and wisdom psalms which reflect a more individual reflective piety have other features within them which suggest most of them had close associations with some occasion of cultic worship.

This might suggest that the only alternative is to affirm with Mowinckel that the psalms should always be viewed with an eye to their cultic use. Yet in doing this, the "nagging doubt" referred to by Anderson still remains. A rich vein of personal piety runs throughout the psalms, and even if Mowinckel acquiesces to its value in the previous observations in PIW², his paramount concern elsewhere is with the particular function of the psalms in the pre-exilic Israelite cult rather than with the expressions of personal piety within them.⁷

The primary concern of this thesis is to clarify and expand what Mowinckel's cult-functional studies have overlooked, namely the personal insights which each composer brought to a psalm. On the one hand, because the specific cultic purpose of a psalm is not always clear, due to various assumptions on the dating of the psalms and the nature of the Israelite cult, the cultic setting has been treated as a secondary issue. On the other hand, because any specific individual setting is also usually unclear, no attempt has been made to identify the 'I' of the psalmist or to assume anything of a personal and autobiographical nature can be known. This approach is more general and cautious, and might be termed "life-centred"

⁷ Only the chapter on 'Traditionalism and Personality' in PIW discusses this issue. PIW¹ concentrates on the function of the communal psalms in the cult, and in PIW² the only two chapters on the individual psalms are preoccupied with their function in the cult.

rather than "cult-centred."⁸ The "life-centredness" of a psalmist is not to be seen as an antithesis to the "cult-centredness" of the psalm. It is rather a complementary way of understanding psalmody.

The first part of the thesis examines the more general issues relating to the psalms as personal prayers. The first chapter surveys the history of the problem, and seeks to demonstrate that from the main emphases in psalmic studies over the last century, the time has come to attend again to the implications of reading the psalms primarily as personal prayers. The second chapter pays particular attention to the confessions of Jeremiah. In establishing that these are capable of being read as examples of genuine personal piety, the implication follows that such an adaptation of psalmic forms and language within a poetic prayer does not automatically mean that this should be understood as a cultic text for anyone to use.

The second part of the thesis is concerned with particular examples of personal piety from within the psalms themselves. Six chapters deal with six different aspects of such piety, namely trust in God, penitence before God, communion with God, death and life with God, suffering before God, and pleasing God. No attempt is made to use these features of personal piety to create detailed personal biographies of the psalmists; nor is too much attention given to the ways in which such piety might relate to cultic practices. Instead, the primary purpose is to illustrate the ways in which the language,

⁸ Cf. Gunkel-Begrich, Einleitung in die Psalmen, Göttingen, 1933, pp. 172ff.; C. Westermann, Praise and Lament in the Psalms, Edinburgh, 1981, pp. 21ff; and W. Brueggemann, The Message of the Psalms, Minneapolis, 1984.

forms and contents of particular psalms point to genuine experiences of particular individuals before God. Each chapter ends with a critical appraisal of the ways in which the cult-functional interpretation fails to account for all the levels of meaning in a psalm. The argument for the ambiguity and anonymity of the psalms cuts both ways: the universal validity of the piety of the psalms need not be explained only on the cult-functional basis, that the psalmists intended to compose typical and repeatable liturgical prayers; rather the reusable nature of the psalms is also explicable by taking seriously the commonly shared human experiences portrayed within them.

The conclusion seeks to address the fundamental issue of personal piety and cultic religion more positively. Suggestions are offered for the ways in which a life-centred and cult-centred reading of the psalms might better conjoin, in order to resolve some of the tensions expressed here regarding Mowinckel's and Anderson's discussions of the psalms as personal prayers and cultic texts.

PART A

ISSUES RELATING TO PERSONAL PIETY AND THE PSALMS

CHAPTER ONE

PERSONAL PIETY IN THE PSALTER: A HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

Since the period after the first world war, a number of surveys have been published accounting for the developments in psalmic studies. The diverse interests represented in these reviews may be seen in the selected examples listed in the first four notes to this chapter. One striking factor is their general consensus regarding the fundamental shifts of emphasis over this last century of research. This is evident particularly in a study of the surveys in British publications.¹ It is also discernible in reviews published in Germany², and similarly from elsewhere on the

¹ Examples include J.E. McFadyen, in The People and the Book (ed. A.S. Peake), Oxford, 1925, pp. 215ff.; J. Montgomery, 'Recent Developments in the Study of the Psalter', ATR 16 (1934), pp. 183ff.; J. Hempel, in Record and Revelation (ed. H.W. Robinson), Oxford, 1938, pp. 48ff.; A.R. Johnson, 'The Psalms', in The Old Testament and Modern Study (ed. H.H. Rowley), Oxford, 1951, pp. 161-209; H.H. Rowley, The Changing Pattern of Old Testament Studies, London, 1959, pp. 18ff.; D.J.A. Clines, 'Psalm Research since 1955: 1. The Psalms and the Cult', TB xviii (1967), pp. 103-116; also 'Psalm Research since 1955: 2. The Literary Genres', TB xx (1969), pp. 109-125; A.A. Anderson, 'Psalm Study between 1955 and 1969', BQ 23 (1969-70), pp. 155-64; R.E. Clements, A Century of Old Testament Study, Guildford and London, 1976, pp. 76ff.; and J.H. Eaton, 'The Psalms and Israelite Worship', in Tradition and Interpretation, Oxford, 1979, pp. 238-73.

² Cf. M. Haller, 'Ein Jahrzehnt Psalmforschung', ThR NF (1929), pp. 377ff.; J. Hempel, 'Neue Literatur zum Studium des Psalters', ZAW 57 (1938), pp. 171ff.; J.J. Stamm, 'Ein Vierteljahrhundert Psalmenforschung' ThR 23 (1955), pp. 1-68; H.-J. Kraus, Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments, Neukirchen, 1956, pp. 295ff.; O. Kaiser, Einleitung in das Alte Testament, Gütersloh, 1967, § 28; E. Gerstenberger, 'Literatur zu den Psalmen' VuF 17 (1972), pp. 82-99; also 'Zur Interpretation der Psalmen' VuF 19 (1974), pp. 22-45; J. Becker, Wege der Psalmenexegese, Stuttgart, 1975; F.J. Stenkebach, 'Die Psalmen in der neueren Forschung' BuK 35-6 (1980-81), pp. 60-70; B. Feininger, 'A Decade of German Psalm-Criticism', JSOT 20 (1981), pp. 91-103; and K. Seybold, 'Beiträge zur Psalmenforschung', TRV 46 (1981), pp. 1-18.

Continent.³ The same agreement is evident in more recent studies from America.⁴

This particular study is not intended to be another updated summary of scholarship. Its aim is rather to clarify from this history of research three most important changes of direction which have led to a renewed interest in the psalms not only as cultic compositions, but also as personal prayers. In the critical assessments in the reviews listed here, this point has only occasionally been given due recognition (for example, by Clines, Gerstenberger, and Tate).

The different ways of interpreting the psalms will be examined in the three following sections, and a fourth section will assess the recent studies which are more concerned with the personal piety of the psalmists. A final section will assess the implications of the history of research with respect to this particular thesis.

³ Examples include S. Mowinckel, 'Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1935', VT V (1955), pp. 13-33; J. Coppens, 'Les Études Récentes sur le Psautier' in Le Psautier. Ses Origines. Ses Problèmes Littéraires. Son Influence (ed. R. de Langhe), Louvain, 1962, pp. 1-71; A. Descamps, 'Les Genres Littéraires du Psautier. Un État de la Question', ibid., pp. 73-88; C. Hauret, 'Les Psaumes. Etudes récentes, état de la question', in Où sont les Études Bibliques? (ed. J.J. Weber) Paris, 1968, pp. 67-84; J. van der Ploeg, 'L'Étude du Psautier (1960-67)', Donum natal J. Coppens. I: De Mari à Qumran, ETL Paris, 1969, pp. 174-91; J.L. Vesco, 'Hymne et Supplication dans la Prière du Psautier', La Maison-Dieu 121 (1975), pp. 22-55; also A.S. Kapelrud, God and His Friends in the Old Testament, Lommedalen, Norway, 1979, pp. 28ff.

⁴ Cf. I. Hunt, 'Recent Psalm Study', Wor 41 (1967), pp. 85-98; Wor 47 (1973), pp. 80-93; Wor 49 (1975), pp. 202-14; Wor 51 (1977), pp. 127-44; Wor 52 (1978), pp. 245-58; Wor 53 (1979), pp. 221-41; E. Gerstenberger, 'Psalms: History of Research and Development of Method' in Old Testament Form Criticism (ed. J.H. Hayes), San Antonio, 1974, pp. 178ff.; B.S. Childs, 'Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms' in Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God (eds. F.M. Cross, W.E. Lanke and P.D. Miller), New York, 1976, pp. 377-88; J.H. Hayes, 'The Psalms' in An Introduction to Old Testament Study, Abingdon Nashville 1979, pp. 285ff.; also M. Tate, 'The Interpretation of the Psalms', R Ex 81 (1984), pp. 363-75.

(I) THE LITERARY-CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

De Wette's 1823 commentary was an early example of a literary-critical study on the psalms, for it assessed not only the date, place and authorship of each psalm but it also reconstructed the sources in order to place the text within a particular historical setting.⁵ However, the literary-critical approach was difficult to maintain consistently with the ambiguities of the poetic language. This is evident in the way that, by the end of the nineteenth century, psalmic studies using this method developed in two opposite directions.

On the one hand, some scholars emphasised the role of an individual poet, and attempted to reconstruct a type of "personal biography" from the experiences and life-settings apparent from the language and contents of a psalm. In Germany, the Romantic movement of the previous century had had a significant effect. For example, Schleiermacher, with a new understanding of the grounds for individual religious experience, and Herder, with an aesthetic appreciation of the spirit of the psalms in order to evoke a living religious experience, were undoubtedly important influences.⁶ Commentaries on the psalms for example by de Wette, Ewald and Graetz bore witness to this. De Wette's commentary made clear this emphasis in the first pages:

⁵ Cf. W.M.L. de Wette, Commentar über die Psalmen, Heidelberg, 1823.

⁶ For example, cf. J.G. Herder, Älteste Urkunde des Menschenschlechts, Göttingen, 1774-76; Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie Vols. 11-12 of Herders sämtliche Werke (ed. B. Suphan: 33 vols.) Berlin, 1877-1913. See also F. Schleiermacher, Reden über Religion, Halle, 1799.

"Die meisten sind der lebendige Erguss des gefühlvoll
erregten Herzens, das lyrische Erzeugnis der Begeisterung
und Gedankenerhebung."⁷

Later studies by German scholars such as Duhm, Kittel, Balla and Löhr
may also be seen within this same tradition.⁸

In Britain, the aesthetic and literary approach to the Bible
used for example by Matthew Arnold was a similar influence found in
earlier commentaries.⁹ The underlying assumptions were that the
individual piety of the psalmists was the product of the individual
self-consciousness in the prophetic movement, and the psalms were
thus dated from the late exilic period until the Maccabean times.
These include works by Kirkpatrick, Davison and Davies and S.R.
Driver. Kirkpatrick, for example, illustrated the spirit of these
commentators well:

'In the Psalms the soul turns inward on itself, and their
great feature is that they are the expression of a large
spiritual experience. They come straight from 'the heart to
the heart', and the several depths of the spirit."¹⁰

Prothero's study of the psalms also reflected the same
interests in his study of the appropriation of psalms by individuals
from the time of the early fathers until the nineteenth century.¹¹

⁷ Cf. de Wette, op. cit., p. 2. See also H.G.A. Ewald, Die Dichter
des Alten Bundes, Göttingen, 1866, and H. Graetz, Kritischer
Kommentar zu den Psalmen I, Breslau, 1882.

⁸ Cf. B. Duhm, Die Psalmen, Tübingen, 1899; R. Kittel, 'Psalmen' in
RPTK 16, Leipzig, 1905, pp. 187-214; E. Balla, Das 'Ich' der
Psalmen, FRLANT 16, 1912; M. Löhr, Psalmenstudien, BWAT NF3, Berlin,
1922.

⁹ Cf. M. Arnold, Literature and Dogma, New York, 1883; God and the
Bible, New York, 1901.

¹⁰ Cf. A.F. Kirkpatrick, The Psalms, Cambridge, 1902, p.v; also W.T.
Davison and T.W. Davies, The Psalms (Century Bible), 1904-6; S.R.
Driver, Studies in the Psalms, London, 1915.

¹¹ Cf. R.E. Prothero, The Psalms in Human Life London, 1904.

In America, the same concerns were evident in later studies by Battenweiser, Pfeiffer and Fleming-James.¹² In France, conservative Catholic scholars of this century also used the literary-critical method to emphasise the composition of the psalms as early personal prayers. Examples include commentaries by Podechard, Drijvers and Jacquet.¹³

On the other hand, a number of significant studies in Germany on Israelite religion questioned whether the individualistic assumptions behind this particular application of the literary critical method were guided more by the hermeneutical concerns of the interpreters than by what was more likely to be the case from the sociological contexts of the psalmists themselves. The interest turned to the national consciousness evident in Israel's poetry. The literary-critical method was still considered to be an appropriate tool to analyse the communal life-setting of the psalmists, and the superscriptions, contents and language of each psalm were examined to fit particular historical events. The concern however was more with the setting of the psalms within the history of the nation rather

¹² Cf. M. Battenweiser, The Psalms, Chronologically Treated with a New Translation, Chicago, 1938; F. James, Thirty Psalmists. A Study of the Personalities of the Psalter, New York, 1938; R. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, New York, 1941, pp. 619ff. On the different approach to historicism and the literary-critical method in America and Germany, cf. R.A. Oden Jr., 'Hermeneutics and Historiography: Germany and America', Seminar Papers for SBL, Chicago, 1980, pp. 135-57.

¹³ Cf. E. Podechard, Le Psautier. Traduction littérale et explication historique. Psaumes 1-75, Lyon, 1949; Le Psautier. Psaumes 76-100 et 110, Lyon, 1954; D. Drijvers, Les Psaumes. Genres Littéraires et Thèmes Doctrinaux, Paris, 1958; L. Jacquet, Les Psaumes et le coeur de l'homme. Étude textuelle, littéraire et doctrinale, Vols. 1-3, Gembloux, 1975, 1977 and 1979.

than within the history of the individual.

Various influences were behind such a change of emphasis. The new interest in anthropological studies of "primitive peoples" was one factor.¹⁴ Another was the growing awareness of the "folk literature" in the ancient Near East and the evidence of the communal consciousness of a people within such collections.¹⁵ Another was the renewed interest in the "psyche" of nations, and in the common mythopoeic awareness which was part of a concern with a corporate self-understanding and an impulse towards national survival.¹⁶ Archaeological discoveries and comparative studies of ritual texts in Akkadia, Egypt and later Canaan further confirmed the corporate consciousness which pervaded the poetry of peoples from the same overall cultural milieu.¹⁷ Such factors affected the

¹⁴ For example, cf. V. Grønbech, Vor Folkeet i Oldtiden I-IV, Copenhagen, 1909-1912, E Tr W. Worster, The Culture of the Teutons, London, 1931; J. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture I-II, Danish Edition 1920, E Tr 1926. In England, cf. W.R. Smith, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, London, 1889; also H.W. Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man, Edinburgh, 1911, referring to Israel as a "corporate personality" (p. 28) taking up H. Maine's earlier legal use of the term in Ancient Law, London, 1888².

¹⁵ For example, cf. E.B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, New York, 1871; also J. Frazer, Folk-Lore in the Old Testament, London, 1918, updated by T.H. Gaster, Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament, London, 1969.

¹⁶ For example, cf. W. Wundt, Völkerpsychologie, Mythos und Religion, Leipzig, 1909; L. Lévy-Bruhl, Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures, Paris, 1910; and E. Durkheim, Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse, Paris, 1912; E. Cassirer, Die Philosophie der symbolischen Formen II. Das Mythische Denken, Berlin, 1925; B. Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology, London, 1926.

¹⁷ Examples include H. Zimmern and H. Winkler, Die Kleinschriften und das Alte Testament (re-edited from E. Schröder), Berlin, 1903; H. Gunkel, Israel und Babylonien. Der Einfluss Babyloniens auf die israelitischen Religion, Göttingen, 1903; J. Jeremias, Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients, Berlin, 1904; H. Gressmann, Altorientalische Texte und Bilder zum Alten Testament 1-2, Berlin und Leipzig, 1909.

interpretation of the psalms in earlier scholars such as Olshausen, Wellhausen, Baethgen, and Smend.¹⁸ In England, commentaries by Cheyne and Briggs also appropriated this corporate interpretation.¹⁹

Thus it was possible to use the same literary-critical method to create two entirely different interpretations of the setting of the psalms. Such a confusion suggested that the application of this method to the ambiguities of their poetry yielded results which were equally open to personal preference as to objective study. This observation was made frequently in the articles in the two review volumes of 1925 and 1938 which examined the psalmic studies of this earlier period. For example, T.H. Robinson concluded that

"for the most part internal evidence- the tone, language and theological outlook of the individual poems- is practically the only criterion on which critical judgements can be based, and it leaves the door wide open for subjectivity."²⁰

Similarly, J.E. McFadyen, writing on the state of Old Testament criticism, affirmed that a more penetrating and sympathetic criticism was needed for the psalms than that afforded by the literary-critical method alone.²¹ O. Eissfeldt, writing some thirteen years later,

¹⁸ Cf. J. Olshausen, Die Psalmen, Göttingen, 1853; J. Wellhausen, Polychrome Bible on the Book of Psalms in a new English Translation, London, 1898; also 'Bemerkungen zu den Psalmen', in Skizzen und Vorarbeiten, Berlin, 1899, pp.163-87; D.F. Baethgen, Die Psalmen, HAT Göttingen, 1897; and R. Smend, 'Über das Ich der Psalmen', ZAW 8 (1888), pp. 49-147.

¹⁹ Cf. T.K. Cheyne, The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter, London, 1891; also The Psalms, London, 1904. See also C.A. and E.G. Briggs, The Psalms I-II, ICC, London, 1906-7.

²⁰ Cf. 'The Methods of Higher Criticism', in The People and the Book, (ed. A.S. Peake), Oxford, 1925, p. 175.

²¹ Cf. 'The Present Position of Old Testament Criticism', in ibid., p. 184.

drew the same conclusions, seeing there was little more scope in the use of this method in the psalms, because of the anonymous nature of the poetry.²²

Personal piety in the psalms was thus identified either with some specific individual life-setting of the poet, or with a political and national event within the community. In both interpretations, such piety was assumed to pertain to a specific historical context, be it that of the individual or the community. Such a method was clearly open to hypothetical conclusions.

A new type of criticism arose out of this dissatisfaction in psalmic studies, and was initially acceptable because it suggested a more objective method for appraising the context of the psalms. Although this had been partially anticipated in the literary-critical studies by scholars such as de Wette and Graetz, Hermann Gunkel was the scholar most associated with the development of form-critical studies.

(II) THE FORM-CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

Gunkel's form-critical work grew out of the "History of Religions Movement". Inspired by the enigmatic influence of Albert Eichhorn, this was initially a reaction to the limitations of the literary-critical method in the New Testament.²³ As far as the psalms

²² Cf. 'Modern Criticism', in Record and Revelation (ed. H.W. Robinson), Oxford, 1938, pp. 103-4.

²³ Cf. H. Gressmann, Albert Eichhorn und die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule, Göttingen, 1914.

were concerned, the interest accorded with the more corporate understanding of Israelite religion. The emphases, for example on the universality of all history, on the order and pattern of representative types, on the value of the unwritten text and on the ultimate significance of the worshipping community were all relevant factors which led to a renewed study of Israelite religion in general and the psalms in particular.

Gunkel's own studies led him from the New Testament back to the Apocrypha and to a study of the primitive poetry and early myths of the Old Testament, with particular reference to Genesis and Psalms.²⁴ By the time he wrote his first study of the psalms (1904) and his studies of Israelite literature (1906), the seeds for the better publicised psalmic studies some twenty years later had already been sown.²⁵ These included an interest in the spirituality of Israel as expressed through the power of the cult, the influence of comparative myths and rituals within the developing monotheism in Israelite religion, the climax of the prophetic movement in accounting for the distinctiveness and for the growth of individualism, and the organisation of the traditions of this period into representative literary types.

²⁴ For a summary of Gunkel's books and articles from 1888-1922, cf. EUKHARISTERION. Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Hermann Gunkel zum 60. Geburtstage (herausg. H. Schmidt), Göttingen, 1923, pp. 214ff. ; see also K. von Rabenu, 'Hermann Gunkel auf rauhen Pfaden nach Halle', EvTh 30 (1970), pp. 433-44; also W. Baumgartner, 'Zum 100. Geburtstag von Hermann Gunkel' VTS IX, Leiden, 1963, pp. 1-18.

²⁵ Cf. Ausgewählte Psalmen, Göttingen, 1904; 'Die Grundprobleme der israelitischen Literaturgeschichte', DLZ xxvii (1906), pp. 1797ff. and 1861ff; also 'Die israelitische Literatur' in Die Kultur der Gegenwart (herausg. P. Hinneberg), Berlin, 1906, Part I, Section VII, pp. 51-102.

Gunkel's classification of the psalms into representative genres was fully developed between 1926 and 1932 in several articles, an introduction and a commentary.²⁶ One often misunderstood aspect of Gunkel's studies was the way he was able to hold the two earlier individualistic and corporate interpretations of the psalms in tension. On the one hand, his interest in the cultic religion and its influence on the creation of representative types of psalms enabled him to see the earlier more corporate aspects of the piety of the psalmists; but on the other hand, his interest in the prophetic spirit and the detachment of some of the present psalmic forms from their cultic setting enabled him to perceive the later more individual elements of piety also.²⁷ Behind the interest in the evolutionary nature of Israelite religion from its oral to its written stages was Gunkel's growing disenchantment with the more static methods of literary criticism and the overall limitations of historical positivism. His literary concern was still evident, but not so much with the questions of philology and contextualisation as with the religious feeling within the poetry, and with an aesthetic description of the linguistic patterns, structure and genre of the

²⁶ Cf. Die Psalmen übersetzt und erklärt, GKAT Göttingen, 1926; 'The Poetry of the Psalms: Its Literary History and its Application to the Dating of the Psalms' in Old Testament Essays, (ed. D.C. Simpson: Papers for the 18th. SOTS meeting at Keble College, Oxford, Sep. 27-30, 1927), London, 1927, pp. 118-142; 'Die Frömmigkeit der Psalmen', DCW 36 (1922), pp. 2-7, 18-22, 79-83, 94-98, 105-109, E Tr A.K. Dallas, 'The Religion of the Psalms', in What Remains of the Old Testament and Other Essays, London, 1928, pp. 69-114; 'Die Psalmen' in RGG² IV, Tübingen, 1930, cols. 1609-30, an updated version of Gunkel's earlier article in RGG¹ IV, 1913; also Einleitung in die Psalmen, GHAT, Göttingen, 1933.

²⁷ Cf. 'Die israelitische Literatur', pp. 78, 88-9 on the rise of individualism through the prophetic spirit; 'Die Psalmen' in RGG² IV, cols. 1615-6, on the communal interpretation of the 'I' in the psalms being no more than a stubborn adherence to the earlier allegorical interpretation of scripture; also cols. 1621-22, on the prophetic spirit and individualism; also Einleitung, pp. 152 and 284, on the individual's composition of laments out of his own personal pain.

text.

Psalmic scholars who acknowledged an indebtedness to Gunkel included Gressmann²⁸, Hempel²⁹ and Baumgartner³⁰. In addition, Gunkel also influenced the studies of Begrich³¹ and Schmidt³², who were also students of Mowinckel. Like Gunkel, their intention was to understand both the corporate and individual concerns of the psalmists against their developing cultic background. Also like Gunkel, they appropriated the generally accepted classification of five basic psalmic forms with some flexibility, accounting for the development of a number of mixed types.

The interest in the cultic life of Israel was renewed during the early part of this century by the publication of other comparative ritual material, which continued to suggest that a corporate and

²⁸ Cf. Gressmann, op. cit. (1914); also 'The Development of Hebrew Psalmody' in The Psalmists (ed. D.C. Simpson), London, 1926, pp. 1-21.

²⁹ Cf. J. Hempel, Gebet und Frömmigkeit im Alten Testament, Stuttgart, 1922; 'Der Frömmigkeitstypus der Alttestamentlichen Religion' in Old Testament Essays (ed. D.C. Simpson), pp. 46-54; Gott und Mensch im Alten Testament. Studien zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit, BWANT 38, Stuttgart, 1936; 'The Literature of Israel' in Record and Revelation (ed. H.W. Robinson), Oxford, 1938, pp. 45-73; also 'Book of Psalms' in IDB III, Abingdon Nashville, 1962, pp. 942-958.

³⁰ Cf. Baumgartner, art. cit. (1963); also Die Klagedichter des Jeremia, BZAW 32, Giessen, 1917; pp. 86ff.; Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Frömmigkeit, Schwei, 1932.

³¹ Cf. Gunkel/Begrich, Einleitung (1933); also J. Begrich, 'Die Vertrauensäusserungen im israelitischen Klageliede des Einzelnen und in seinem babylonischen Gegenstück', ZAW 46 (1928), pp. 221-59; also 'Das priesterliche Heilsorakel', ZAW 52 (1934), pp. 81-92.

³² Cf. H. Schmidt, Gott und das Leid im Alten Testament, Göttingen, 1926; also 'Die Gebete der Angeklagten im Alten Testament' in Old Testament Essays, pp. 143-55; also Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament, BZAW 49, Giessen, 1928.

cult-centred understanding of the piety expressed in the psalms was well-substantiated. ³³ Confidence increased in the hypothesis that a cultic setting was the probable context for most of the psalms, and the interest centred upon a type of piety represented by professional cultic officials gifted in the art of psalmody. A growing consensus emerged out of all these studies regarding the earlier dating of the psalms and the sacral role of the king, on account of the Babylonian parallels.

The king was in fact seen to be an important figure in psalmody in some of the earlier literary-critical studies which considered a pre-exilic dating. Form-critical studies also assumed the influence of the royal cult in psalmody, and the interest was founded upon the classification of the ten so-called "royal psalms". In many early commentaries, where a psalm caused difficulties in ascertaining a particular individual or national setting, the king was often proposed as the suppliant, for he was supremely capable of representing not only authority within the community but also of expressing personal intimacy with God.

Initially, the king was understood simply to be the suppliant in several psalms. This gradually developed into the theory that the king played a sacral role and that this ritual influence pervaded most of the Psalter. This interpretation of the psalms became

³³ For example, cf. P. Volz, Das Neujahrfest Jahwes, Göttingen, 1912; H. Zimmern, Zum babylonischen Neujahrfest, Leipzig, 1918; F. Stummer, Sumerisch-akkadische Parallelen zum Aufbau alttestamentlicher Psalmen, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums XI, Paderborn, 1922; G.R. Driver, 'The Psalms in the Light of Babylonian Research' in The Psalmists (ed. D.C. Simpson), London, 1926, pp. 109-75; A.M. Blackmann, 'The Psalms in the Light of Egyptian Research' in The Psalmists, pp. 177-97; G. Widengren, The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation as Religious Documents, Stockholm, 1928.

known as the cult-functional method, and was most associated with one of Gunkel's Norwegian students, Sigmund Mowinckel. If the form-critical method grew out of a sense of frustration that the literary-critical method could offer little more insights into the nature of the psalms, then the cult-functional method grew out of a different dissatisfaction that studies in form-criticism had not gone far enough.

(III) THE CULT-FUNCTIONAL INTERPRETATION

One of Mowinckel's three earliest studies was a monograph on the royal psalms (1916), and by the time of the Psalmenstudien (1921-24) his interest in their generic classification had developed more explicitly into seeing the sacral role of the king in many more psalms, associated particularly with one comprehensive festival at the autumn new year.³⁴ Between the first and second publication of the Psalmenstudien (1924 and 1961) Mowinckel had in fact moved to see that most of the individual laments were for use by the whole community through the representative role of the king, against the threat of foreign nations. This is evident in the preface to the photomechanical reprint of the 1961 edition:

"...I do maintain the same opinions that I put forth and proved in the Psalmenstudien, with one exception...being that individual laments did not only pertain to illness and demons and sorcerers, but that they could be interpreted collectively as the king or representative speaking against national political enemies."³⁵

³⁴ Cf. S. Mowinckel, Kongesalmerne i det Gamle Testament, Kristiania, 1916; also Psalmenstudien, Vol II: Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie, Kristiania, 1922, especially pp. 19-22 and pp. 302ff.

³⁵ Cf. Psalmenstudien, Vol I: 'Awān und die individuellen Klagepsalmen, Kristiania, 1921, reprint, 1961.

This royal corporate interpretation of the psalms, along with the assumption that they were therefore part of pre-exilic Israelite religion, was given increasing attention by Mowinckel during the fifty years of his studies. The most systematic statement of this in English is found in The Psalms in Israel's Worship (1951; E Tr 1962).³⁶ The organisation of chapters reflects his priorities, for chapters one and two are concerned with 'The Psalms and the Cult' and 'The Method of Cultic Interpretation', whilst chapters three to six examine the royal psalms, hymns, enthronement psalms and national laments. Not until the second volume, and only in chapters seven and ten, are any so-called individual psalms assessed. Similar maximal treatment of the function of the king and minimal assessment of the role of the individual is also found in other monographs and articles from this later period.³⁷

Throughout his development, Mowinckel's use of the form-critical method became less cautious and rigorous than that of Gunkel, as gradually the majority of psalmic forms were absorbed into one primary cultic setting at the autumnal new year festival. One consequence relevant to the concerns of this study was that personal piety and cultic religion were understood as being totally interdependent: pre-exilic personal prayers such as the psalms were

³⁶ Cf. Offersang og Sangoffer, Vols I and II, Copenhagen, 1951; E Tr D.R. Ap-Thomas, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, Vols I and II, Oxford, 1962.

³⁷ Cf. Han som kommer, Copenhagen, 1951; E Tr G.W. Anderson, He That Cometh, Oxford, 1956; Zum israelitischen Neujahr und zur Deutung des Thronbesteigungsfest, ANVAO II, Oslo, 1952; 'General Oriental and Specific Israelite Elements in the Israelite Conception of the Sacral Kingdom' in La Regalità Sacra. The Sacral Kingship, Studies in the History of Religions IV, 1959, pp. 283-93.

in the main composed as ritual texts for use within a particular cultic context. Frequently in Psalmenstudien Gunkel is indicted for his Protestant individualism, his neo-Romanticism, and his naïve assumptions that personal piety (both in the prophets and the psalms) was not only fed by cultic religion but also gave new life to it. For example, of Gunkel, Mowinckel observes

"Er einschätzt die Kultreligion viel zu niedrig, nach der Weise der alten Propheten und der liberalen protestantischen Theologen."³⁸

Gunkel replied to these criticisms particularly in his Einleitung.³⁹ The influence of Grønbech's anthropological studies on Mowinckel was one most significant reason for his believing that cultic religion and personal piety were inseparable in pre-exilic Israel, as was the case with all primitive peoples. Because cult and piety were two sides of the same coin, personal piety for its own sake was not a phenomenon normally appropriated by the composers of the psalms:

"Der Kultus ist nicht in erster Linie eine Privatangelegenheit des Einzelmenschen, sondern eine Gemeinschaftsangelegenheit."⁴⁰

The consequence of such a view was that the psalms, which were seen both as personal prayers and as ritual texts, were necessarily kept in the hands of cultic professionals:

³⁸ Cf. Psalmenstudien, Vol VI: Die Psalmendichter, Kristiania, 1924, p. 24. See also Ps St I, p. 158; PsSt II, pp. 15-25; Religion und Kultus, Göttingen, 1953, pp. 7ff. and 115ff. More general criticisms of Gunkel are found in Religion und Kultus, pp. 5ff. and 13ff.; 'Traditionalism and Personality in the Psalms' HUCA 23 (1950-51), pp. 227-8; also PIW¹, pp. 12-14 and 29-30.

³⁹ Cf. Einleitung, pp. 152, 278, 284.

⁴⁰ Cf. Religion und Kultus, p. 49; see also ibid., pp. 8-11 and 119-21; Ps St II, pp. 19, 20-22; 'Traditionalism and Personality' (1950-51), pp. 205-7, 210, 217-21, 230-31.

"Denn diese Leute wussten, was der Laie nicht verstand, wie das Göttliche, wie die Gottheit zu behandeln sei...und wie die Handlungen, so auch die dazu gehörigen Worte, die Kultformeln und die Kultlieder."⁴¹

This developed into theories concerning the sacral function of the king. From the evidence of the same in Babylonian ritual texts, and from the comparable psalmic forms in Israel, Mowinckel surmised that the cultic professionals' particular task was to compose this sort of psalmody for use by the king.⁴²

Mowinckel's influence was as far-reaching as that of Gunkel. In Germany, von Rad, Müller and Zirker took up the cult-functional interpretation of the psalms.⁴³ In America, Peters' book was an earlier response to the cult-functional hypothesis.⁴⁴ In Scandinavia, Mowinckel's pupil Birkeland developed the national and political role of the king in the psalms, by identifying the references to the

⁴¹ Cf. Psalmenstudien, Vol IV: Die technischen Termini in den Psalmüberschriften, Kristiania, 1923, pp. 6ff.; also Psalmenstudien, Vol III: Kultusprophetie und prophetische Psalmen, Kristiania, 1923, pp. 25-27; also Psalms VI, pp. 5-6, 13ff.; also PIW², Chapter VIII, pp. 8ff. and 18ff.

⁴² Cf. Psalms II, p. 302; Psalms III, pp. 25-7; PIW¹, Chapter III; also 'Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1955', pp. 30-33.

⁴³ Cf. G. von Rad, 'Die Anfechtungen Israels und der Trost des Einzelnen', in Theologie des Alten Testaments I, München, 1957, pp. 381-415, E Tr D.M.G. Stalker, 'Israel's Trials and the Consolation of the Individual' in Old Testament Theology Vol I, London, 1962, 1975³, pp. 383-418; also ' "Gerechtigkeit" und "Leben" in der Kultsprache der Psalmen', in Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament, München, 1958, pp. 225-47, E Tr E.W.T. Dicken, ' "Righteousness" and "Life" in the Cultic Language of the Psalms', in The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays, Edinburgh and London, 1966, pp. 243-66. See also N. Müller, Die liturgische Vergegenwärtigung der Psalmen, Stuttgart, 1961; also H. Zirker, Die kultische Vergegenwärtigung der Vergangenheit in den Psalmen, Bonn, 1964.

⁴⁴ J.P. Peters, The Psalms as Liturgies, New York, 1922.

enemies as foreign nations.⁴⁵ It was Birkeland who in fact changed Mowinckel's own views in reading a collective cultic interpretation even into the individual psalms, as referred to earlier. Another pupil, Bentzen, adapted Mowinckel's cult-functional approach to include even the more enigmatic wisdom psalms.⁴⁶ Ringgren, though concerned with the need to place sufficient emphasis on the personal piety of the psalmists, was nevertheless greatly influenced by Mowinckel's cultic reading of the psalms.⁴⁷ Engnell took up Mowinckel's views on the sacral role of the king, summarising his position as follows:

"The origin of the psalm literature, on the whole, is to be sought in the royal cult."⁴⁸

Other scholars similarly influenced by Mowinckel's cult-functional studies included Jensen, Widengren, Ahlström and Holm-Nielsen.⁴⁹

Engnell's contributions in Hooke's publications of the "Myth and Ritual" debate demonstrated Mowinckel's indirect influence upon British scholars. With respect to the psalms, this debate concerned

⁴⁵ Cf. H. Birkeland, Die Feinde des Individuums in den israelitischen Psalmen, Oslo, 1933; also The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms, Oslo, 1955.

⁴⁶ A. Bentzen, Introduction to the Old Testament, Danish edition 1941, English edition Copenhagen, 1948.

⁴⁷ Cf. H. Ringgren, Psaltarens Fromhet, Uppsala, 1937; E Tr The Faith of the Psalmists, Philadelphia, 1963, particularly the introduction; also 'Quelques traits essentiels de la piété des Psaumes' in Mélanges Bibliques rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert, Paris Institut Catholique, Paris, 1951, pp. 205-213.

⁴⁸ Cf. I. Engnell, in 'Psaltaren', in Svenskt Bibliskt Uppslagsverk II, Stockholm, 1948, 1962², cols. 618-56, E Tr J.T. Willis, 'The Book of Psalms' in A Rigid Scrutiny, Vanderbildt, 1969, British edition Critical Essays on the Old Testament, London, 1970, pp. 68-122, here, p. 104. See also Studies in Divine Kingship, Uppsala, 1943.

⁴⁹ On Mowinckel's influence on these and other Scandinavian scholars, cf. A.S.Kapelrud, God and His Friends in the Old Testament, pp. 79-95.

the relation of myth to the use of ritual enacted by the king in pre-exilic Israelite religion in general.⁵⁰ A number of divergent opinions were represented, as revealed in a comparison of the views on the value of the comparative method and of anthropological studies, and on the deification of the king in Israel, and on the enactment of myths in early Hebrew ritual. Hooke himself renounced some of his earlier excesses in a later book on the subject some thirty years later.⁵¹ Nevertheless, these methods were utilised in psalmic studies by scholars involved in this debate, such as H.W. Robinson, who likened the psalms to compositions designed for an orchestra, rather than written with solo performers in mind.⁵² A similar priority given to the corporate interpretation of the piety

⁵⁰ Cf. Myth and Ritual (ed. S.H. Hooke), London, 1933, with its anthropological interests (pp. xvi and 44-45); The Labyrinth (ed. S.H. Hooke), London, 1935, which outlined the theory known as "patternism"; The Origins of Early Semitic Ritual, Schweich Lectures 1935, London, 1938; The Siege Perilous, London, 1956; also Myth, Ritual and Kingship (ed. S.H. Hooke), Oxford, 1958.

⁵¹ Cf. The Siege Perilous, 1956, p. 7. For a critical evaluation of this debate, cf. C. Hauret, 'L'Interprétation des Psaumes selon L'Ecole "Myth and Ritual"', RSR 33 (1959) pp. 321-42 and RSR 34 (1960), pp. 1-34.

⁵² Cf. H.W. Robinson, 'The Inner life of the Psalmists' and 'The Social Life of the Psalmists' in The Psalmists (ed. D.C. Simpson), London, 1926, pp. 45-65 and 67-86, here, p. 84. See also The Christian Doctrine of Man, Edinburgh, 1911; 'Hebrew Psychology' in The People and the Book, Oxford, 1925, pp. 353-82; also 'The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality' in BZAW 66 (1936), pp. 49-62.

of the psalmists was given by Oesterley⁵³ and by Johnson⁵⁴. Each study emphasised in different degrees the central role of the king and the purpose of the psalms as cultic texts for particular annual festivals. Johnson's own review in 1951 depended heavily on the works of both Gunkel and Mowinckel, and showed his belief that this way of reading the psalms opened up new possibilities never even anticipated by the literary-critical method:

"While on the older critical view which is rapidly passing away the Psalter was more like a reservoir where resources were deep but well-fathomed, the tendency now is to regard this reservoir as fed by a river, equally deep but far more mysterious, whose course still remains to be chartered but the exploring of which promises to open up far wider and richer territories in the realm of Israel's faith and worship than had hitherto been suspected."⁵⁵

Other British scholars refuted the extremes of patternism and of a sacral kingship, but nevertheless developed Mowinckel's reading of the psalms as ritual texts to be used by the king both at public and private cultic occasions. These included Welch, Snaith and Anders-Richards.⁵⁶ Eaton also accepted this position, as seen

⁵³ Cf. W.O.E. Oesterley, The Psalms, London, 1929; also 'Early Hebrew Festival Rituals' in Myth and Ritual (ed. S.H.Hooke), London, 1933, pp. 111-46.

⁵⁴ Cf. A.R. Johnson, 'The Role of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus', in The Labyrinth (ed. S.H. Hooke), London, 1935, pp. 71-111; The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God, Cardiff, 1942, 1961²; The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel, Cardiff, 1949, 1964²; Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, Cardiff, 1955; 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', in Myth, Ritual and Kingship (ed. S.H. Hooke), Oxford, 1958, pp. 204-35; The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel, Cardiff, 1944, 1962²; also The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody, Cardiff, 1979.

⁵⁵ Cf. 'The Psalms', in The Old Testament and Modern Study, pp. 206-7.

⁵⁶ Cf. A.C. Welch, The Psalter in Life, Worship and History, Oxford, 1926; N.H. Snaith, Studies in the Psalter, London, 1934; also The Jewish New Year Festival. Its Origins and Development, London, 1947; D. Anders-Richards, The Drama of the Psalms, London, 1968.

particularly in his 1979 review of the directions in psalmic study, which concluded that the cult-functional interpretation was still paramount. Five pages only were given to developments in addition to the cult-functional position; Eaton, like Johnson, was mainly interested in Gunkel's and Mowinckel's contributions.⁵⁷ Clements also fully affirmed the cult-functional hypothesis. The chapter on a century of psalmic studies (1976) observed that the history of scholarship had demonstrated that a cultic setting for the majority of psalms was proven, with the main task to discover more precisely the function of the psalms within this cultic context. To see the psalms as cultic texts meant for Clements that

"They can therefore be seen to stand in a remarkably central position in the Old Testament, and to provide an essential backcloth against which other religious developments can be viewed."⁵⁸

Two German scholars offered the most notable alternative examples of studies in psalmody and in the history of the cult; both have offered contrasting studies of the nature of the cult in pre-exilic Israel and the function of the psalms within it. Weiser emphasised the more particular Israelite features which absorbed the great historical credos through the celebration of a lengthy covenant renewal festival at Jerusalem.⁵⁹ Kraus meanwhile emphasised more

⁵⁷ Cf. J.H. Eaton, 'The Psalms and Israelite Worship', in Tradition and Interpretation, pp. 238-73. Eaton's position has many similarities with that of Mowinckel, seen also for example in Kingship and the Psalms, London, 1976; Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah, London, 1979; and Vision in Worship, London, 1981.

⁵⁸ Cf. A Century of Old Testament Study, p. 95.

⁵⁹ Cf. A. Weiser, 'Zur Frage nach den Beziehungen der Psalmen zum Kult: Die Darstellung der Theophanie in den Psalmen und im Festkult', Festschrift A. Bertholet zum 80 Geburtstag, (herausg. W. Baumgartner, O. Eissfeldt, K. Elliger and L. Rost), Tübingen, 1950, pp. 513-31; also Die Psalmen, OTD 14/15, Göttingen, 1959.

Canaanite mythological motifs from the Jebusites which had been taken over by the royal cult through an annual festival celebrating God's choice of Zion and the temple.⁶⁰ Both scholars assumed different cultic roles of the king in the Jerusalem temple, and both referred to the same psalms as being used in their own different festivals.

The diffuse emphases in cult-functional studies may be seen as similar to the diverse appropriations within both the form-critical and the literary-critical methods. It should be apparent that there is simply no one fixed method of interpretation in a study of the psalms. As soon as one method is made absolute, the results are invariably speculations which attempt to historicise the psalms into some particular life-setting, be it that of the individual, the community, or particular cultic festivals. The application of any method is always dependent upon each scholar's assumptions concerning for example the nature of the cult, the appropriate use of the comparative literature, the dating of the psalms and the role of the king.

Reviews covering the period from after the rise of cult-functional studies confirm this note of caution. H.H. Rowley, assessing the state of Old Testament scholarship in 1959 offered only four pages on the psalms, and observed with characteristic reserve:

"None of this can rightly be proved, in the very nature of the case."⁶¹

D.J.A. Clines' two articles in TB (1967 and 1969) offered similar observations on the state of scholarship between the reviews

⁶⁰ Cf. H.-J. Kraus, Psalmen BKAT XV/I and II, Neukirchen, 1961; also Gottesdienst in Israel, München, 1962.

⁶¹ Cf. The Changing Pattern, p. 20.

in 1951 and 1979 by Johnson and Eaton. The diverse and often conflicting views concerning an annual festival, Yahweh's kingship and the role of the king were seen to be examples of the way that inadequate definitions had often been given concerning the nature of the cultic activity in the Psalter:

"It becomes apparent that a closer definition of 'a cultic origin of the Psalms' will be indispensable for further progress in the question of the relation of the Psalms to the cult...Is the common assumption valid, that to demonstrate a cultic origin for the Psalms necessitates an understanding of the Psalms as cultic formulae, from which the nature and details of the cult may be reconstructed?"⁶²

Clines also noted the limitations of the form-critical method when it was used only as a means to an end. Form-criticism of course still should be an essential factor in contributing to the interpretation of the psalms, but it needs to be complemented by a study of the language, structure, redaction, and the developing moods within the piety of each psalmist, for these are also pointers to the psalms' life-setting:

"It may turn out that we find we know less about the Israelite cult than we thought we did, and that the life-settings of the psalm types cannot in fact be pin-pointed with the degree of certainty most scholars today believe they have attained. If that happens we shall be reduced to classifying the Psalms by their content alone; but unless and until that happens the study of the Gattungen will remain an indispensable factor in the interpretation of the Psalms."⁶³

Other reviewers have expressed similar reservations concerning the extent to which the cult-functional and form-critical methods have been appropriated as the most significant way of interpreting the

⁶² Cf. 'Psalm Research since 1955' , p. 109.

⁶³ Cf. 'Psalm Research since 1955', p. 125.

psalms.⁶⁴ It has become apparent to several scholars that the cult-functional mode of interpretation has reached an impasse in the same way as did the two other methods before it. The last twenty-five years have seen several responses in interpreting the psalms beyond this position. Not all of these are directly relevant with respect to this study examining the contributions of scholars on reading the psalms as personal prayers, and thus cannot be given attention within the scope of this chapter.⁶⁵ New responses which are relevant, insofar as they relate to the subject of personal piety in the psalms, will be examined below.

(IV) DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE CULT-FUNCTIONAL INTERPRETATION

The extreme positions in the cult-functional interpretation received a good deal of criticism in the post-war years. In Germany, two studies by Noth and by Bernhardt questioned the extent to which kingship was seen to be a divine ordinance with a sacral role in Israelite religion.⁶⁶ They understood the historical traditions

⁶⁴ Cf. M.J. Buss, 'The Study of Forms', in Old Testament Form Criticism (ed. J.H. Hayes), San Antonio, 1974, pp. 1-56; R. Knierim, 'Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered' Interp 27 (1973), pp. 435-68; Coppens, art. cit. (1962) pp. 48-53; Descamps, art. cit. (1962) pp. 81ff.; also Childs, art. cit. (1976) pp. 377ff.

⁶⁵ For example, no reference is made to approaches associated with "relecture" (e.g. Gelin, Robert), or with philology (e.g. Dahood, on the comparisons with Ugaritic) or with canon criticism (e.g. Childs, on the superscriptions) or with structuralism (e.g. Collins) nor with stylistics and rhetorical criticism.

⁶⁶ Cf. M. Noth, 'Gott, König, Volk im Alten Testament' ZTK 47, 1950, pp. 157-91, E Tr D.R. Ap-Thomas, 'God, King, and Nation in the Old Testament' in The Laws in the Pentateuch and other Studies, Edinburgh and London, 1966, pp. 145-78; also K. Bernhardt, Das Problem der altorientalischen Königsideologie im Alten Testament, SVT VIII, Leiden, 1961.

rather than the psalms were the starting point for an analysis of kingship in Israel, where by contrast to other ancient Near Eastern cultures it was attested as a late and relatively brief phenomenon. Other studies published in Britain, America and Scandinavia questioned the way that myth and ritual had been understood as integrally related, and proposed that the Israelite cult reflected a distinctive attitude to both; the most significant studies are by Frankfort, Childs, Kirk, Rogerson, and Otzen, Gottlieb and Jepsen.⁶⁷

A few scholars redefined the way the cult in the psalms had been understood in relation to personal piety. Hermisson and Schiwey perceived that the individual psalms termed by Gunkel non-cultic "spiritual songs", because of their response to the value of ritual activity, were nevertheless compositions of cultic officials.⁶⁸ Hermisson showed that the cult is always central in understanding the piety of the psalmists, but that this need not pertain to a pre-exilic royal cult alone. Even in the exilic age, when cultic activity was more under threat, the cult was still an influence on the piety in the psalms. On the one hand, this supported Mowinckel's claims that there was an essential unity between personal piety and cultic religion, whilst on the other hand

⁶⁷ Cf. H. Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods, Chicago, 1948; B.S. Childs, Myth and Reality in the Old Testament, SBT London, 1960; G.S. Kirk, Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures, Cambridge, 1970; J.W. Rogerson, Myth in Old Testament Interpretation, BZAW 13, Berlin and New York, 1974; B. Otzen, H. Gottlieb and K. Jepsen, Myter i Det Gamle Testamente, Copenhagen, 1973, ETr F. Cryer Myths in the Old Testament, London, 1980.

⁶⁸ Cf. H.-J. Hermisson, Sprache und Ritus im altisraelitischen Kult, WMANT 19, Neukirchen, 1965; E. Schiwey, Individualisierung, Spiritualisierung und Demokratisierung in den Psalmen, Freiburg, 1971.

it did not restrict such unity to the pre-exilic period alone.

Other scholars attempted to modify Mowinckel's view of a predominantly corporate cultic use of the psalms by re-examining the possibility of a greater number psalms being used by individuals, still seeing them as ritual texts, but for more private cultic occasions before a cultic official. Although Mowinckel espoused this view, he never developed it with the same detail he gave to the place of the public cult of the enthronement festival or to the value of the national laments. Scholars such as H. Schmidt, Beyerlin, Barth, Delekat, Keel and Seybold have all examined the psalms as ritual texts for various individual settings prompting personal laments.⁶⁹ Gerstenberger noted the reasons for this change of direction as follows:

"...by way of careful comparison with other cultures one could perhaps establish that worship services catering to the needs of individuals (even though they are considered members of a religious group) need not be tied to a communal cult pertaining to the affairs of a tribe, nation, or community at large the way our "ceremonialists" or "covenantalists" would like to make us believe."⁷⁰

One scholar who dealt most radically with the cult-functional

⁶⁹ Cf. H. Schmidt, art. cit. (1927) and op. cit. (1928) on the context as one falsely accused brought to a mock trial; similarly W. Beyerlin, Die Rettung der Angeklagten im Alten Testament, Göttingen, 1970; C.F. Barth, Einführung in die Psalmen, Neukirchen, 1961, on the psalms as ritual texts to be used in an experience of near-death; L. Delekat, Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum, Leiden, 1968, on the context as asylum from fierce persecutors by taking refuge in the sanctuary; O. Keel, Feinde und Gottesleugner, Biblischer Monographien 7, Stuttgart, 1969 on the laments as ritual texts depicting psychological projections from the suppliants' sufferings; K. Seybold, 'Krankheit und Heilung' BuK 26 (1971), pp. 107-11 and Das Gebet der Kranken im Alten Testament, SWANT 19, Stuttgart, 1973 on the psalms as ritual texts to be used in a more informal cultic setting against illness or sorcerers.

⁷⁰ Cf. E. Gerstenberger, 'Psalms' in Old Testament Form Criticism, pp. 197-8.

method, whilst still being dependent on form-critical studies, was Claus Westermann. His first book on the psalms (1953; ETr 1966) was written in reaction to the confused understanding of the nature of the pre-exilic cult, which he saw had been wrongly interpreted as some absolute, timeless entity.⁷¹ Reducing Gunkel's form-critical categories to two types, namely petition and prayer, Westermann's psalmic studies aimed to concentrate not so much on cultic observances behind the psalms as on the polarities of human experience, formulated as lament and praise, which were evidenced within them.

Westermann's studies offered little interest either in the role of the king, or in the enactment of myth and ritual, and although he connected the psalms with some "worship-event", he had little concern with the historicisation of the cult through theories of its supposed annual festivals, being more concerned with the "life-event" in the psalms.⁷² Even the assumed cultic language in the psalms was tested against the proposition that the psalmists probably used formulae from more profane origins.⁷³ Westermann's primary concern was to demonstrate the ways in which the personal elements in the psalms had been overlooked because of too dominant a concern with that which was corporate and royal. This was not simply a reinstatement of the

⁷¹ Cf. C. Westermann, Das Lob Gottes in den Psalmen, Stuttgart, 1953; E Tr K.R.Crim, The Praise of God in the Psalms, London, 1966. The criticism of the cult-functional method is in Part One.

⁷² Cf. Westermann, Abriss der Bibelkunde, Stuttgart, 1962, Chapter XVIII, on the psalms. Also The Psalms, Minneapolis, 1980, (an updated version of Der Psalter, Stuttgart, 1967) pp. 53ff.

⁷³ Cf. Westermann, Der Segen in der Bibel und im Handeln der Kirche, München, 1968; also 'Anthropologische und theologische Aspekte des Gebets in den Psalmen' LJ 23 (1973), pp. 83-96; also 'Die Begriffe für Fragen und Suchen im Alten Testament' in Forschung am Alten Testament, Band II, München, 1974.

"personal biographies" of the literary-critical method; just as Westermann deplored the over-emphasis on the historicisation of the cult, so too he rejected the same in the historicisation of the individual.

Alongside Westermann's re-assessment of the nature of the pre-exilic cult, other scholars have raised further questions about whether the official Jerusalem temple cult was the only locus for the psalms of the individual. Such a question was discussed in part by scholars such as Delekat, Beyerlin and Seybold, referred to earlier. In addition, Fohrer, Rose, Vorländer, Schenker and Conrad all developed further the possibility of a "popular cult" which was associated more with the theology and practices of folk-religion and with the rites de passage used in familial circles, for which some of the more personal psalms might have been composed.⁷⁴ This was applied directly to the psalms by Westermann's students,

⁷⁴ Cf. G. Fohrer, 'The Personal Structure of Biblical Faith' Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Vol I, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 161-66; M. Rose, 'Schultheologie und Volksfrömmigkeit', WuD 13 (1975), pp. 85-104; H. Vorländer, Mein Gott. Die Vorstellung vom persönlichen Gott im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament, Neukirchen, 1975; A. Schenker, 'Elemente volkstümlicher Religion im Alten Testament' in Wiederentdeckung der Volksreligiosität (ed. J. Baumgartner), Regensburg, 1979, pp. 11-23; J. Conrad, 'Welche Bedeutung hatte die Familie für die Religion Altisraels?' ThLZ 105 (1980), pp. 481-88.

Gerstenberger ⁷⁵ and Albertz.⁷⁶ Both examine the possibility that in contrast to the communal hymns and laments which would be used at the public official cult, the individual laments and thanksgivings would be more appropriately expressed in a smaller, more informal familial cult, rather like the patriarchal cult portrayed in Genesis. In this way personal piety had a very different locus from that of communal piety, yet still operated within the confines of cultic religion rather than being seen as private individual piety outside it.

Very few scholars have challenged the view that the psalms are invariably attached to a particular cultic setting, being instead private, non-cultic prayers. Quell and Szörenyi were exceptions in this respect. ⁷⁷ There are obvious difficulties in ascertaining with any clear objectivity whether any group of psalms may be assessed in this way; this is apparent in that the lists of psalms proposed by both scholars are by no means identical.

Other recent studies have followed an interpretation of the psalms akin to that of Westermann, concentrating on aspects of the

⁷⁵ Cf. Gerstenberger, art. cit. (1974), particularly pp. 197-199; also 'Der klagende Mensch', Probleme biblischer Theologie. G. von Rad zum 70 Geburtstag (herausg. von H.W. Wolff), München, 1971, pp. 64-72; also Der bittende Mensch. Bittritual und Klagelied des Einzelnen im Alten Testament, Neukirchen, 1980, on lament as a private rite by a cultic expert in a familial cult.

⁷⁶ Cf. R. Albertz, Weltschöpfung und Menschenschöpfung, Neukirchen, 1974, on communal and individual piety in the creation traditions; also Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion, Stuttgart, 1978, which illustrates the familial cult through personal theophoric names, the traditions of the patriarchal religion, and the individual laments.

⁷⁷ Cf. G. Quell, Das Kultische Problem der Psalmen, Leipzig, 1926, pp. 104ff.; A. Szörenyi, Psalmen und Kult im Alten Testament. Budapest, 1961, pp. 506ff.

personal piety whilst being agnostic about a particular cultic setting behind the psalmist. Several examples are found in the "theologies" of the psalms. For example, H-J. Kraus's Theologie applies a method called frömmigkeitgeschichtlich, which is intended as a corrective to the cult-historical interpretation in the earlier commentary on the psalms.⁷⁸ Kraus's work is limited insofar as it is theocentric rather than anthropocentric, studying more the great theological traditions of creation, exodus, Sinai, the Davidic monarchy, and Zion, so that the emphasis is more on God's activity as perceived by the psalmists, than on man's personal experience of God. Only one section of this work actually discusses 'Der Mensch vor Gott'.⁷⁹ Other theologies with this same basic approach include those by Rowley, Eichrodt, Gunn and Guthrie.⁸⁰ Ringgren's short book on the faith of the psalmists, which was intended to supplement the over-preoccupation with the cultic background of the psalms, also fits into this category.⁸¹ The limitations are that Ringgren does not allow more than a brief discussion of the most general themes of personal piety, such as 'fellowship', 'history', 'lament' and 'praise'. Similarly Brueggemann has written a number of articles which discuss the psalms as personal prayers by the use of Ricoeur's theory of "orientation" "disorientation" and

⁷⁸ Cf. H.-J. Kraus, Theologie der Psalmen BKAT XV/III, Neukirchen, 1979, 'Prolegomena', p. 11.

⁷⁹ Cf. Kraus, ibid., pp. 171ff.

⁸⁰ Cf. W. Eichrodt, 'Gott und Mensch' in Theologie des Alten Testaments III, Leipzig, 1939, E Tr J. Baker, 'God and Man' in Theology of the Old Testament Vol. Two, London, 1967; H.H. Rowley, 'Individual and Community' in The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought, London, 1956, Chapter IV; G.S. Gunn, 'The Stresses of Personal Religion' in God in the Psalms, Edinburgh, 1956, Chapter Six; also H.H. Guthrie, Israel's Sacred Songs, New York, 1966, pp. 118ff. and pp. 171ff.

⁸¹ Cf. H. Ringgren, op. cit., E Tr 1963, especially the Preface.

"reorientation"; for Brueggemann, the hermeneutical concerns are paramount.⁸² Two articles by Goldingay discuss the psalms as moods of lament and praise in prayer forms which often complement each other, rather than being separate form-critical categories.⁸³ A recent article by Butler which discusses the significance of studies in the piety of the psalms is also significant.⁸⁴

A number of other scholars may be cited for their similar concerns with the psalms as personal prayers, although they offer a less systematic treatment of the psalms as a whole. For example, Franken looks at the mystical experiences of the psalmists, but only assesses in detail seven selected psalms.⁸⁵ Goeke offers two short articles on the anthropology of some of the individual laments, although this is more of a theological assessment similar to that of Kraus.⁸⁶ Haddix, in a doctoral thesis, looks at lament as personal experience, but again this is applied only to five selected psalms.⁸⁷ Albertz's book takes the psalms as one of three examples

⁸² Cf. W. Brueggemann, 'From Hurt to Joy, from Death to Life', Interp 28 (1974), pp. 3-19; 'The Formfulness of Grief' Interp 31 (1977), pp. 273-75; 'Psalms and the Life of Faith. A Suggested Typology of Function', JSOT 17 (1980) pp. 3-32; The Message of the Psalms, Minneapolis, 1984; 'The Costly Loss of Lament' JSOT 36 (1986), pp. 57-71.

⁸³ Cf. J. Goldingay, 'Repetition and Variation in the Psalms', JQR 68 (1978), pp. 146-51; 'The Dynamic Cycle of Praise and Prayer in the Psalms', JSOT 20 (1981), pp. 85-90.

⁸⁴ Cf. T.C. Butler, 'Piety in the Psalms' R Ex 81 (1984), pp. 385-94.

⁸⁵ Cf. H.J. Franken, The Mystical Communion with Jhwh in the Book of Psalms, Leiden, 1954.

⁸⁶ Cf. H. Goeke, 'Die Anthropologie der individuelle Klagelieder', BuL 14 (1973), pp. 13-27 and pp. 112-37.

⁸⁷ Cf. J.L. Haddix, Lamentation as Personal Experience in Selected Psalms, PhD Thesis, Boston University, DAI 40 (1980) 6316A No. 8013281.

of personal piety within the context of religious pluralism, but this is confined to the individual laments.⁸⁸ G.W. Anderson has a short article, quoted in the Introduction to this thesis, which suggests different ways of examining the psalms in search of "private devotion", although an application of his suggestions is left to others.⁸⁹ Two important studies as yet not published also deal with this issue; C.C. Broyles' study of the conflict between faith and experience examines the category of lament, and S.J.L. Croft's monograph discusses afresh the identity of the 'I' in the individual psalms.⁹⁰

(V) CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

These new emphases in psalmic studies are summarised most succinctly by Brueggemann, that

"It would appear that Psalm scholarship is now tending to move forward toward a recovery of personal piety in the Psalms, a matter largely screened out by the dominant hypothesis of Mowinckel."⁹¹

The history of psalmic research has focussed upon three particularly influential figures who, in different ways, have helped

⁸⁸ Cf. Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, pp. 23ff.

⁸⁹ Cf. G.W. Anderson, ' "Sicut Cervus" ', pp. 389ff.; also 'Israel's Creed: Sung, not Signed', SJTh 16 (1963), pp. 277-85.

⁹⁰ Both these studies were due to be published in 1986. Cf. C.C. Broyles, The Conflict of faith and experience: a form-critical and theological study of selected lament psalms, Sheffield PhD 1984, Aslib XXXIV/ 1, No. 16, to be published as JSOTS 52. Cf. S.J.L. Croft, The identity of the individual in the Book of Psalms, Durham Ph D 1984, Aslib XXXIII/ 2, No. 1935, to be published as JSOTS 44.

⁹¹ Cf. Brueggemann, 'Psalms and the Life of Faith' (1980), p. 26, Note 39.

to formulate our present understanding of the psalms as personal prayers. First, Gunkel's form-critical studies were paramount in re-directing attention from an over-confidence in literary-critical studies about what could be known of the history of the individual or the nation in the psalms. In its place, Gunkel gave a new approach to understanding the piety of the psalmists through the forms and language of their poetry, without having recourse to the limits of historicisation. Second, Mowinckel's use of form-criticism as an interpretative tool for the cult-functional method resulted in the piety of the psalms being seen as the contribution of "professionals" who composed ritual texts for particular cultic occasions. Third, Westermann's interest in the more general life-experiences of the psalmists, in preference to postulating either some biographical setting or some specific cultic context, has offered a new breath of life to the study of the psalms as personal prayers. This has resulted in a renewed interest in the freedom and creativity of the psalmists alongside an affirmation of their dependence on traditional styles and forms, thus clarifying both the scope and the limits of any assessment of the psalms as personal prayers.

The present study will therefore attempt to avoid the extreme emphases which were prominent in the earlier methods. For example, minimal consideration will be given to a particular date, origin and author of a psalm, except where a more general religio-historical setting is essential for its interpretation. Or again, although psalms will be assessed according to their predominant form, this will not be seen as determining either their function or their context; other features, such as the language, the changes of mood, the repetitions and the variations will be taken into account in

order to assess the various levels of meaning in a given psalm. In addition, caution will be exercised in ascertaining what can really be known in detail about the cultic background to the psalms. This does not mean a denial of any implicit integral relationship between personal piety and cultic religion, but it does mean that the main consideration is the personal experiences of the psalmists rather than the ritual functions of the psalms.

These modifications reflect that the primary concern is with an aesthetic appreciation of the psalms. It should be evident that a sensitive awareness of the expressions of piety in the poetry is a necessary complement to the previous analytical approaches. This is in fact akin to Gunkel's concerns, in combining form-critical interests with a more intuitive reading of the Old Testament as literature. For example,

"Exegese im höheren Sinne ist mehr eine Kunst als eine Wissenschaft. Der Exeget soll etwas von einem Künstler an sich haben; und darum braucht er mehr als nur Wissen und Verstand...Der Exeget aber soll schaffen können." ⁹²

This observation is particularly appropriate when assessing the themes of piety in their extreme experiences of sorrow and joy, guilt and innocence, terror and trust. It is difficult to assess a quality as instinctive and internal as that of personal faith at the margins of life by means of an analytical method alone. The test is whether a more aesthetic approach, as it is applied in the following chapters, offers any new insights into the nature and purpose of the psalms as personal prayers.

⁹² Cf. Gunkel, Reden und Aufsätze, Göttingen, 1913, p.14. See also P.D. Miller, Interpreting the Psalms, Philadelphia, 1986, pp. 29-30, on the aesthetic and semantic ways of reading the psalms.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONFESSIONS OF JEREMIAH AS PERSONAL PRAYERS

(Jer. 11:18-23; 12:1-6; 15:10-12,15-21;
17:12-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18)

To call these chapters "Confessions" is strictly a misnomer. They are not so much confessions of sin as protestations of innocence; nor are they confessions of faith, but questions of doubt at the justice of God.¹ This type of intimate dialogue with God in psalmic forms and language is unique in the prophetic literature, and is directly relevant for understanding the nature of personal piety in the psalms.

(I) A HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The previous chapter demonstrated how studies on the psalms from the last century have been progressively occupied with literary-critical, form-critical and cult-functional questions, which after the second world war diversified into a number of modifications of the older concerns. A history of scholarship on Jeremiah's Confessions reveals remarkably similar issues.

(a) The literary-critical interpretation

The literary-critical method of the last century was primarily concerned with establishing a historical and literary context for the confessions. The interest in the man and his personality has

¹ W. Erbt was probably the first to use this term: cf. Jeremia und seine Zeit, Göttingen, 1902, § 13, p.167.

correspondences with the interest in "personal biography" in literary-critical psalmic studies.² At least four factors were behind this concern: the neo-Romantic movement, which was a reaction to the rationalistic interpretation of the prophet as a passive instrument of revelation; studies in psychology of religion, bringing about a new emphasis on the religious experiences of all the prophets; the rise of comparative studies giving new insights into the prophets' lives from ancient Near Eastern parallels; and the theory of the evolutionary development of Israelite religion, with Jeremiah representing the higher level in prophecy and personal faith in God. Because of the supposed later dating of the psalms, the popular theory was that the confessions influenced some of the individual psalms.

The earlier commentators had no difficulty in assuming that the traditions of Jeremiah led one into the heart of the prophet himself. S.R. Driver epitomized the features of this earlier position:

"By his life of personal communion with God he becomes the spiritual father of the Psalmists, whose names are indeed unknown to us, but to whom we owe all the deeper outpourings of the heart to God..."³

Other scholars reflecting this same position were Ewald, Wellhausen, Campe, Cheyne, Erbt, Giesebrecht, Davidson and

² Cf. Chapter One, 'A History of the Problem', pp.11ff.

³ Cf. S.R. Driver, The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, London, 1906, p. xxxviii; also pp. xxi-xxiv.

Cornhill.⁴ Others were more cautious on the authenticity of some confessions, not so much from any lack of confidence in the ability to know anything about Jeremiah the man, but rather from the literary questions such as how the psalmic correspondences could be integrated into Jeremiah's theology and preaching. There was very little agreement as to which confession should be omitted from an original collection. For example, Stade, Duhm, and Hölscher held very different positions on this issue.⁵ There was equally no consensus on which historical and political context in the life of Jeremiah formed the setting for the confessions. Dates as variable as the time of Jehoiakim, the conflict with Uriah, and the end of Zedekiah's reign have been proposed.⁶

The literary-critical influence is still evident in other

⁴ Cf. H.G.A. Ewald, Die Propheten des Alten Bundes, Vol. II, Göttingen, 1868, p. 65; J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels, Göttingen, 1878, p. 399; also Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte, Berlin, 1895, pp. 140ff.; W. Campe, Das Verhältnis Jeremias zu den Psalmen. Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach dem Alter der Psalmen, Halle, 1891; T.K. Cheyne, Jeremiah. His Life and Times, London, 1888; Erbt, op. cit.; D.F. Giesebrecht, Das Buch Jeremia, übersetzt und erklärt, HAT Göttingen, 1894, 1907². A.B. Davidson, 'Jeremiah' in HDB Vol II, Edinburgh, 1899, p. 576; D.C.H. Cornhill, Das Buch Jeremia, Leipzig, 1905, § 4, pp. xlvii ff.

⁵ Cf. B. Stade, 'Bemerkungen zum Buche Jeremia', ZAW 6 (1886), pp. 153ff.; B. Duhm, Das Buch Jeremia, KHAT/XI, Tübingen-Leipzig, 1901, pp. xiii ff.; G. Hölscher, Die Profeten, Leipzig, 1914, pp. 396ff.

⁶ Cf. B. Stade, Geschichte des Volkes Israel IX, Berlin, 1887, Chapter 2, § 4, 'Jeremia und der Untergang des Reiches Juda', pp. 676 (on the time of Uriah); A.S. Peake, Jeremiah I-XXIV, CB Edinburgh, 1910, pp. 60-1 (from Jehoiakim until the end of Zedekiah's reign); P. Volz, Der Prophet Jeremia, KAT Band X, Leipzig-Erlangen, 1922, p.xxv (between 608 and 604 B.C.); E.A. Leslie, Jeremiah. Chronologically Arranged, Translated and Interpreted, New York, 1954, pp. 135-54 (all in the early years of Jehoiakim, around 608 B.C.); also H.H. Rowley, 'The Early Prophecies of Jeremiah in their Setting', in Men of God. Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy, London, 1963, pp. 133-48, (all early in Jehoiakim's reign, before any prophecy was fulfilled, as seen on p.134).

scholars working on Jeremiah's Confessions later in this century. These include Skinner, Smith, Welch, Volz, Calkins, Gordon, Krocke, James, Rudolph, Gelin, Leclercq, H.W. Robinson, Hyatt, Behler, Cunliffe-Jones, Mihelic, Rowley, Bright and Couturier.⁷ Even scholars who more explicitly prefer form-critical and tradition-critical methods also agree that the confessions were essentially an early collection of genuine Jeremianic prayers. Examples include Gunkel, Mowinckel, Eissfeldt, von Rad, Nicholson, Blank and

⁷ Cf. J. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion. Studies in the Life of Jeremiah, Cambridge, 1922, Chapter XI; G.A. Smith, Jeremiah, London, 1923, pp. 313-35; A.C. Welch, Jeremiah: His Time and Work, London, 1928, pp. 30-36; P. Volz, 'Jeremia and Jeremiabuch', RGK² III, Tübingen, 1929, pp. 72-5; R. Calkins, Jeremiah the Prophet. A Study in Personal Religion, New York, 1930; T.C. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet. Studies in the Personality of Jeremiah, London, 1931, pp. 57ff.; J. Krocke, Jeremia der Prophet tiefster Innerlichkeit und schwerster Seelenkonflikts, Giessen, 1937; F. James, Personalities of the Old Testament, The Hale Lectures, New York, 1939, pp. 300-30; W. Rudolph, Jeremia, HAT Tübingen, 1947; A. Gelin, 'Jérémie' Dictionnaire de la Bible sous la direction de C. Pirot, A. Robert et H. Cazelles, Suppl. 4 (1949), pp. 862ff. and 880ff.; J. Leclercq, 'Les "Confessions" de Jérémie', in Études sur les Prophètes d'Israel, Lectio Divina 14, Paris, 1954, pp. 111-18; Leslie, op. cit. (1954); H.W. Robinson, 'The Cross of Jeremiah' in The Cross in the Old Testament, London, 1955, pp. 142ff.; J.P. Hyatt, 'The Book of Jeremiah' IDB V, Abingdon Nashville, 1956; G.M. Behler, Les Confessions de Jérémie, Tournai, Belgium, 1959, pp. 7ff.; J.L. Mihelic, 'Dialogue with God. A Study of some of Jeremiah's Confessions', Interp 14 (1960), pp. 43-50; H.H. Rowley, art. cit. (1963), pp. 153-6; J. Bright, Jeremiah, AB, New York, 1965, pp. xxvii ff. and lv ff.; and G.P. Couturier, 'Jeremiah' in JBC, New York, 1968, pp. 301ff.

(b) The form-critical interpretation

The application of form-criticism to the confessions took longer in creating the same change of emphasis which occurred in psalmic studies. Although the interest in representative types and the influence of the worshipping cultic community questioned the confessions as entirely personal effusions, the independent and creative use of conventional forms caused difficulties for the form critics. For example, Gunkel observed that it was Jeremiah's own inner spiritual struggle which caused him to adapt these conventional forms so freely.⁹

Gunkel's influence was continued through his student Baumgartner, who proposed that although there were clear associations between the confessions and individual psalmic laments, the main inspiration was Jeremiah and this influenced the individual

⁸ Cf. H. Gunkel, 'Einleitung' in H. Schmidt, Die grossen Propheten, Band II, Göttingen, 1915; also Die Propheten, Göttingen, 1917, pp. 1-31, 68-103; S. Mowinckel, Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia, Kristiania, 1914, pp. 19-20; also 'La connaissance de Dieu chez les prophètes de l'Ancien Testament' RHPR XXII (1942-3), p. 84; also Prophecy and Tradition, Oslo, 1946, pp. 44ff.; O. Eissfeldt, Einleitung in das Alte Testament, Göttingen, 1934, 1964³, pp. 481-2, E Tr. P.R. Ackroyd, The Old Testament. An Introduction, Oxford, 1964, p. 357; G. von Rad, 'Die Konfessionen Jeremias', Ev Th 3 (1936), pp. 271-3, E Tr A.J. Ehlin, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', Theodicy in the Old Testament (ed. J.L. Crenshaw), Issues in Religion and Theology 4, Philadelphia 1983, pp 88-99; E.W. Nicholson, Jeremiah 1-25, CBC Cambridge, 1973, pp. 111-12; S.H. Blank, Jeremiah, Man and Prophet, Cincinnati 1961, pp. 105ff.; W.L. Holladay, Jeremiah I. Chapters 1-25, Philadelphia, 1986, pp. 357-61.

⁹ Cf. 'Einleitung', op. cit., pp. xxxv and xlvi; also Reden und Aufsätze, Göttingen, 1913, p. 36.

spirituality of later psalmists.¹⁰ Wildberger and Berridge have broadly followed Baumgartner's approach in their own form-critical studies on the confessions.¹¹ Even the more recent work of Ahuis is in some continuity with these assumptions, although the use of form-criticism as a tool for determining specific life-settings and even a chronological sequence is somewhat less flexible.¹²

(c) The cult-functional interpretation

As in psalmic studies, the interest in generic types resulted in a cult-functional reading of the confessions, seeing them as compositions for use within the cultic community. In the psalms, this implied that the speaker was the king or cultic leader, using the 'I' form on behalf of others; in the confessions, the speaker was still seen to be Jeremiah, but as one who held prophetic office.

If Mowinckel dominated this cult-functional approach in psalmody, Reventlow has done the same with the confessions. His work was anticipated by scholars such as Weiser, Stoebe, and Stamm, and developed by Gunneweg, who also advocated the public orientation

¹⁰ Cf. W. Baumgartner, Die Klagedichte des Jeremia, BZAW 32, Giessen, 1917, p.70-92.

¹¹ Cf. H. Wildberger, Jahwewort und prophetische Rede bei Jeremia, Zürich, 1942, pp. 6-9; J.M. Berridge, Prophet, People and the Word of Yahweh, Diss. Basel, Zürich, 1970, pp. 18ff. and pp. 114ff.

¹² Cf. F. Ahuis, Der klagende Gerichtsprophet: Studien zur Klage in der Überlieferung von den alttestamentlichen Gerichtspropheten, Calwer Theologische Monographien 12, Stuttgart, 1982, quoted in W. McKane, Jeremiah Vol.1:I-XXV, ICC Edinburgh 1986, pp. xcvi-vii.

of the confessions.¹³ Nevertheless, Reventlow took these observations to their logical conclusion, being most critical of the supposed subjectivity of the biographical and psychological approaches to the 'I' of the confessions. Believing his own work to be a more objective and scientific analysis, he used form-criticism with the same tenacity as Mowinckel did with the psalms.¹⁴ The complaints in the confessions have the same setting and purpose as other lament forms in the book, where Jeremiah is more clearly holding a prophetic office of intercession and oracular activity. Because there is no distinction between a public and private role in the holder of prophetic office, a "prophetic personality" is not to be sought in the confessions, for Jeremiah never speaks for himself, but always on behalf of his community:

"Jeremia als Persönlichkeit spielt auch hier (d.h. Jer.15:10-21) keinerlei Rolle; seine Gestalt tritt durchaus hinter seinem Amt zurück."¹⁵

The confessions are no longer seen as private personal prayers but as public liturgical texts. This is reminiscent of psalmic scholars influenced by the "Myth and Ritual" debate who understood the 'I' in the psalms to be the cultic prophet speaking on behalf of the king or

¹³ Cf. A. Weiser, Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia, Vol I, DATD 20, Göttingen, 1952, pp. xxiii-xxxvi ; H.J. Stoebe, 'Seelsorge und Mitleiden bei Jeremia', WuD 4 (1955), pp. 116ff.; also 'Jeremia, Prophet und Seelsorger', TLZ 20 (1964), p. 385-409, especially pp. 392-3; J.J. Stamm, 'Die Bekenntnisse des Jeremia', Kirchenblatt für die reformierte Schweiz 23 (1955), pp 354-57 and 370-75; also A.H.J. Gunneweg, 'Konfession oder Interpretation im Jeremiabuch', ZTK 67 (1970), pp. 395-416, especially pp. 399 and 415.

¹⁴ Cf. H.G. Reventlow, Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia, Gütersloh, 1963, p. 10-22 and pp. 208-9.

¹⁵ Cf. Reventlow, op. cit., p. 225.

people.¹⁶ The criticisms of Reventlow's position have been manifold, indicating that even today the more acceptable view is to take seriously the view that the confessions are more probably the personal prayers of the prophet.¹⁷

(d) Developments after the cult-functional interpretation

As with psalmic studies, the interest in the confessions turned more to theological issues. The question was not so much how these prayers functioned, but why they were preserved at all. With respect to Jeremiah, much of this was a result of the traditio-critical interpretation of the book. Some scholars opted more for the principle of discontinuity, proposing that the exilic community's interests were different from the prophet himself, and that little remained of the original prayers of Jeremiah.

Gerstenberger and Welten have argued that the confessions are mainly the work of the deuteronomists who sought to encourage the

¹⁶ Cf. Chapter One of this thesis, pp. 26-7, notes 53, 54; also W.H. Bellinger Jr., Psalmody and Prophecy JSOTS 27, Sheffield, 1984, pp. 9-21.

¹⁷ Cf. H.W. Hertzberg, 'Sind die Propheten Fürbitter?' in Tradition und Situation. A. Weiser Festschrift (eds. E. Würthwein und O. Kaiser), Göttingen, 1963, pp. 63-74; J. Muilenburg, 'The "Office" of the Prophet in Ancient Israel', The Bible in Modern Scholarship (ed. J.P. Hyatt), Abingdon, 1965, pp. 74-97; J. Bright, 'Jeremiah's Complaints- Liturgy or Expressions of Personal Distress?' in Proclamation and Presence (eds. J.I. Durham and J.R. Porter), London, 1970, pp. 189-214, especially p. 196; also 'A Prophet's Lament and Its Answer: Jer. 15:10-21', Interp 28 (1974), pp. 59-74; J.M. Berridge, op. cit. (1970), pp. 17ff.; also P.R. Ackroyd, 'John Skinner: Prophecy and Religion' ET LXXXIV (1978) pp. 356-58; also W. McKane, op.cit. (1986) pp. xcii-iv.

flagging faith of the exilic community.¹⁸ Carroll takes this to its logical conclusion. Assuming the oracles are the earliest genuine Jeremianic traditions, and assuming the picture of the prophet presented in the confessions is entirely different from that in the oracles, Carroll holds that the confessions belong to the later redaction of the book.¹⁹ As the psalms have been mistakenly associated with Davidic authorship, so too the confessions have been wrongly attributed to Jeremiah:

"The figure of Jeremiah may only be an editorial link between different elements in the tradition, with the emphasis on the teaching addressed to the community rather than on the bearer of that proclamation."²⁰

According to Carroll, writing biographies or autobiographies was apparently not part of ancient Semitic culture, and so to adopt this approach to the confessions is anachronistic.²¹ Just as later tradition embellished the character of Jeremiah (for example in the Paraleipomena, and in the Epistle of Jeremiah), so too the confessions may be seen in this light.²² Carroll's commentary on the confessions reflects an extreme mistrust of any tendency to read these events as pertaining to the prophet's own life: the references

¹⁸ Cf. E. Gerstenberger, 'Jeremiah's Complaints. Observations on Jer. 15:10-21', JBL 82 (1963), pp. 393-408: the influence of Mowinckel is apparent (pp. 394ff.); also P. Welten, 'Leiden und Leidenserfahrung im Buch Jeremia', ZTK 74 (1977), pp. 123-50; the confessions are a later separate collection (pp.143-44) with the prophet as a model of exilic piety (pp.147-150).

¹⁹ Cf. R.P. Carroll, From Chaos to Covenant. Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah, London, 1981, pp. 9ff., 117ff., and 261ff., on the confessions as spoken by Israel, the people and possession of Yahweh.

²⁰ Cf. Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary OTL, London, 1986, pp. 58 and 278.

²¹ Cf. Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, pp. 60, 189 and 277-9.

²² Cf. Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, pp. 58-9.

to Anathoth (11:21-23) and to the prophet's family and friends (12:6 and 20:10) are examples of accrediting what is really a communal lament to an individual figure, following the same stylistic tendencies as in the psalms.²³ A distaste for anything particularly biographical, both in the confessions and in the psalms, thus leads Carroll to understand that the confessions were composed as protests from the exilic or post-exilic community.²⁴ They are no longer primarily personal prayers, but rather theological paradigms for the community to use.²⁵

Other scholars have seen that there need be no obvious contradiction between accepting the confessions both as personal complaints of the prophet and also as adapted prayers to be used by the exilic community. Those who suppose that a line of continuity exists between the prophet and the later cultic community include von Rad, Mowinckel, Blank, Stamm, Bratsiotis, Stoebe, Holladay,

²³ Cf. Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, pp. 280-1 (on 11:21-23), p.288 (on 12:6) and pp.398ff. (on 20:7-13).

²⁴ Cf. Carroll, From Chaos to Covenant, pp. 257-8; Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, p.332.

²⁵ Cf. Carroll, From Chaos to Covenant, pp.107-35.

Gunneweg, Nicholson, Weinfeld, Jobling and Eichler.²⁶ This has correspondences with psalmic studies which seek to hold together both the origin of the psalms as personal prayers by an individual, and also their later adaptation by the whole cultic community.²⁷

Whereas earlier studies saw the confessions only as prayers of the individual prophet, contemporary opinion has rightly paid more attention to the way they have been used and adapted for the exilic community. Only the more extreme negative attitude to the historical Jeremiah is open to question, because it deals inadequately with the beginning as well as the end of tradition-history. On the one hand, the preservation of the confessions as unique models of prayer within the Jeremianic tradition indicates some link with the suffering prophet himself; on the other hand, their inclusion in Jer. 11-20 amidst the deuteronomistic prose sermons and symbolic actions and

²⁶ Cf. von Rad, art.cit. (1936), p.273; also Die Botschaft der Propheten, München und Hamburg, 1967 (revised from Theologie des Alten Testaments, München, 1957), pp. 166-71, E Tr D.M.G. Stalker, The Message of the Prophets, London, 1968, pp.170-75; Mowinckel, Prophecy and Tradition, pp. 44ff., assigning the confessions to source A, the authentic record of Jeremiah; S.H. Blank, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah and the Meaning of Prayer' HUCA 21 (1948), pp. 331-54; also Jeremiah, Man and Prophet, pp. 108ff.; Stamm, art.cit. (1955), pp. 373-4; Stoebe, art. cit., (1955), p.124; N.P. Bratsiotis, 'Einführung in die Monologe des Jeremias', Theol 30 (1959), pp. 279-312, 390-439; Theol 31 (1960), pp. 35-53; W.L. Holladay, 'The Background of Jeremiah's Self-Understanding: Moses, Samuel and Psalm 22', JBL 83 (1964), pp. 153-64; also Jeremiah. Spokesman out of Time, Philadelphia, 1974, using rhetorical criticism to illustrate the authenticity of Jeremiah; Gunneweg, art. cit. (1970), pp. 412-3; E.W. Nicholson, Preaching to the Exiles, Oxford, 1970, pp. 52-5; also Jeremiah 1-25, CBC pp. 18-19, pp. 111 ff.; M. Weinfeld, 'Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel', ZAW 88 (1976), pp. 17-56; D.K. Jobling, 'The Quest of the Historical Jeremiah: Hermeneutical Implications of Recent Literature' USQR 34 (1978), pp. 3-12; U. Eichler, 'Der klagende Jeremia. Eine Untersuchung zu den Klagen Jeremias und ihrer Bedeutung zum Verstehen seines Leidens', TLZ 103 (1978), pp. 918ff.

²⁷ Cf. Chapter One, 'A History of the Problem', pp. 37-8, notes 78-84.

narratives of the suffering prophet indicates that they were seen to have a paradigmatic relevance beyond the concerns of the prophet alone. ²⁸ One can be too assertive about the value of the confessions only as personal prayers; but one can equally be so sceptical that insufficient attention is directed to explaining why such unusual prayer forms should be appropriated by the cultic community at all. This is precisely the same issue as that of taking seriously the personal piety in individual psalms in order to account for their later adaptation by those in the community who identified with a similar life-experience.

(II) THE 'I' FORM AS AN EXPRESSION OF PERSONAL PRAYER

Scholars interested primarily in the personality and historical context of Jeremiah normally propose that the confessions are an independent, private collection from the prophet. As recently as Ittmann's monograph, the confessions have been distinguished from the more communally orientated laments in Jeremiah, because they alone include the element of confrontation with Yahweh, particularly in Jer. 15, 17, and 20, which are less conventional in their use of

²⁸ Cf. Stamm, art. cit. (1955), pp. 355ff.; Stoebe, art. cit. (1964), pp. 393ff.; Gunneweg, art. cit. (1970), pp. 412-15; S.H. Blank, 'The Prophet as Paradigm', in Essays in Old Testament Ethics, J.P. Hyatt, in Memoriam (eds. J.L. Crenshaw and J.T. Willis), New York, 1974, pp. 111-30; M. Cheng-Chang-Wang, 'A Theology of Frustration. An Interpretation of Jeremiah's Confessions' SEAJTh 15 (1974), pp. 36-42; W. Zimmerli, 'Jeremia, der leidtragende Verkünder', IKZ 4 (1975), pp. 97-111; also F.D. Hubmann, Untersuchungen zu den Konfessionen Jer. 11:18-12:6 und Jer. 15:10-21, Forschung zur Bibel 30, Würzburg, 1978, pp. 305-7 and 316-7.

psalmic forms.²⁹

Skinner is an earlier example of this position, observing that the "moods" in the confessions are a deliberate, chronological arrangement leading to the prophet's "final Gethsemane" in Jer. 20.³⁰ Blank also assumes the same unity of the confessions, proposing that the first confession (Jer. 11:21-23) has a positive answer given by God himself, whilst the following two confessions have the answer given by God by way of a rebuke (Jer. 12:5-6; 15:19-21), and the next two have no real answers at all (Jer. 17:14ff.; 18:19ff.), and the final one returns to an answer, this time given not by God, but in despair by the prophet himself (Jer. 20:14ff.).³¹ Holladay notes that the confessions together serve to illustrate the other less familiar form in Jer. 11-20, namely the accounts of symbolic actions.³² Wimmer observes a progression whereby each confession reflects upon the failure in the previous prayer to find a satisfactory answer to the prophet's suffering.³³

Evidence other than that based upon psychological theories would also support the view that the confessions were once a unified collection. First, the confessions reflect an intimacy and freedom of prayer in the adaptation of forms and language and theological

²⁹ Cf. N. Ittmann, Die Konfessionen Jeremias: Ihre Bedeutung für die Verkündigung des Propheten, WMANT 54, Neukirchen, 1981.

³⁰ Cf. Skinner, op. cit., p. 208.

³¹ Cf. Blank, art.cit. (1948), pp. 350ff.

³² Cf. W.L. Holladay, The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20, Lewisburg and London, 1976, pp. 127ff.

³³ Cf. D.H. Wimmer, Prophetic Experience in the Confessions of Jeremiah, Diss. University of Notre Dame, 1973 DAI 34 (1973), 2762s-A, 73-24339, pp. 357ff.

content not found anywhere else in the prophetic literature.³⁴ Second, there are very few parallels and doublets between the confessions and the rest of the book, including the other lament forms; the only exception is the call narrative.³⁵ Third, by far the greatest number of psalmic parallels are found in the confessions, so that some particular psalms (e.g. Pss. 6; 7; 17; 22; 26; 31; 35; 38; 40; 41; 69; 71; 109 and 139) have as many as seven or eight correspondences with three or four different confessions.³⁶

This section will also assume that the confessions are distinctive, and will seek to discover if this is also borne out in the way the 'I' form is used in these prayers. If it can be demonstrated that the 'I' form here pertains to the prophet himself, in contrast to the 'I' form which is used to represent either the people or God elsewhere in the book, then the case is open that these confessions are in fact models of genuine personal prayer, such as one might hope to find in the psalms.³⁷

³⁴ For example, Baumgartner, op. cit., pp. 70ff; also P. Bonnard, Le Psautier selon Jérémie, Paris, 1960, pp. 16ff. (on form) and pp. 19ff. (on content).

³⁵ Cf. S.R. Driver, op. cit., pp. xliv-vi; also A. Condamin, le Livre de Jérémie. Traduction et Commentaire, Paris, 1920, pp. xxx-xxxí; also A. Gelin's table of doublets and repetitions, in art. cit. (1949), pp. 869ff.

³⁶ Cf. Bonnard, op. cit., pp. 27ff., also 'Glanes', pp. 263-4; see also M. Tsevat, A Study of the Language of the Biblical Psalms, JBL Monograph Series Vol IX, Pennsylvania, 1955, pp. 36-7, which lists expressions which occur only in Jeremiah and the psalms.

³⁷ On this threefold division of the use of the 'I' form, cf. Volz, op. cit. (1922), pp. xl ff.; Wildberger, op. cit. pp. 17ff. and 108ff.; also C. Westermann, 'Struktur und Geschichte der Klage im Alten Testament' ZAW 66 (1954), pp. 44-80, E Tr R.N. Soulen 'The Role of Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament' Interp 28 (1974), pp. 20-38.

(a) The use of the 'I' form with respect to the people

Reventlow rightly observes that the 'I' is used in the communal laments to indicate the prophet's complete identification with his people. The traditional ascription of Jeremiah as author of the communal complaints using the 'I' form in Lamentations (cf. Lam.1:12ff.; 2:11ff.; 3:1ff.) shows that such a style was both common and associated with the prophet Jeremiah. Five examples from the book of Jeremiah may be noted. In each case they are set within the context of a lament on the devastation of the land. First, 4:19-21 uses the 'I' form in a vivid description of suffering, which is due to "the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war" (v.19.):

"My anguish, my anguish!
I writhe in pain!...
Suddenly my tents (אֶזְבָּח) are destroyed,
my curtains in a moment." (vv.19-20) ³⁸

Second, 8:18-9:1 (MT8:18-23) uses weeping imagery in a similar context, which could pertain either to warfare or to famine:

"O that my head were waters,
and my eyes a fountain of tears,
that I might weep day and night
for the slain of the daughter of my people
(בִּתְּיָהּ)!" (9:1; MT 8:23) ³⁹

Third, like 4:19-21, 10:19-21 begins with a vivid description of personal suffering which personifies even the city itself (vv.20-21):

³⁸ אֶזְבָּח, as a plural noun with singular pronoun, illustrates well the paradox of the I/We interchange of this lament. Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL p. 167, following Reventlow, discounts this as the prophet at all, but rather the personified community in exile. McKane, Jeremiah Vol I, ICC, pp.102-5, by contrast observes that the personal feelings of the prophet have entered into the community's grief.

³⁹ The phrase בִּתְּיָהּ in vv. 19, 21, 22 and 9:1 (MT v. 23) shows the prophet's sufferings are the same as the suffering of the people; cf. McKane, Jeremiah Vol I, ICC, p. 196.

"Woe is me because of my hurt!
My wound is grievous.
But I said, 'Truly this is an affliction
and I must bear it.' " (v.19)

Fourth, 14:17-22, 15:2 takes up imagery like 8:18-9:1:

"...Let my eyes run down with tears night and day,
and let them not cease,
for the virgin daughter of my people
is smitten with a great wound..."

The deuteronomic interpolation in 15:1 concerning the prophet as an intercessor like Moses and Samuel indicates the prophet is speaking not for himself, but for his people.

Fifth, 23:9-12 begins with a description of physical pain followed again by a lament on the famine in the land, in spite of its adulterous fertility practices (v.10).

"My heart is broken within me,
all my bones shake (**יִפְּנִי**);
I am like a drunken man,
like a man overcome by wine..." (v.9)⁴⁰

Because of the context of the devastation of the land, the subject of these laments is always the people or the city of Zion, personified through the prophet. Nevertheless, an unusual feature is the use of the judgement oracle in at least three of these laments (4:22; 10:22; 23:11-12). These also use the 'I' form, but with God as the speaker through the prophet. This offering of judgement is a sure indication that the lament before God has failed. In offering punishment rather than salvation, the prophet detaches himself from the people, in moving beyond them in a recognition of sin and need

⁴⁰ By maintaining the meaning of **יִפְּנִי** as "be soft", "relax", McKane, Jeremiah Vol I, ICC pp. 567-9 translates the first two lines "My nerve is broken/ all my bones are jelly" and observes the drunken-like anguish is far more exaggerated than in the first of these laments (4:19ff.).

for punishment.⁴¹ If the people themselves had recognised their sin, and confessed it, the oracle of judgement offered would make little sense.

Occasionally, some confession of sin does occur (e.g. 8:14-16; 14:20-21). The predominant judgement theme would again suggest that the prophet is speaking not so much for the people as on behalf of what they should (but do not) confess. Consequently, Reventlow's claim that the prophet's unity with his people was inseparable is not entirely accurate, and this opens the possibility for some detachment between the prophet and his people in the 'I' of the confessions.⁴²

(b) The use of the 'I' form with respect to God

Normally when the prophet speaks on behalf of God, the form is that of an oracle. However, in one significant passage, the voice of God is heard not so much in judgement as in complaint. 12:7-13 could be termed a "lament of God", interspersed with threats of vengeance. For example, in v.8:

"My heritage (חֵלְתִּי) has become to me
like a lion in the forest,
she has lifted up her voice against me;
therefore I hate her."

The lion imagery is suggestive of Jerusalem, which through her people acts in aggressive defiance against God. They are the object

⁴¹ On this paradox, cf. Peake, op. cit., pp. 36ff.; Leclercq, art. cit., pp. 111ff.; also Mckane, Jeremiah Vol I, ICC p. xciii.

⁴² Cf. Reventlow, op. cit., p. 159, on the prophet's unity with God as capable of being broken, whereas his unity with his people is inseparable.

of this lament; God is the subject. This is best seen in the possessive pronoun, for example **בִּיתִי** (v.7); **נַחֲלָתִי** (vv.7,8,9); **כְּרָסִי** (v.10) and **חֲלִיקָתִי** (v.10). Following the second confession, which questions the justice of God, the purpose of vv. 7-13 is to indicate that just as the prophet suffered at such exploitation of freedom, so also does God, who is the giver of the land which is now ravaged (v.7; vv.10-11) and who is the creator of the people who have now been destroyed (vv.8,9). This shows the prophet's oneness with the purposes of God rather than the concerns of the people, and again causes difficulties for Reventlow's dictum that the prophet was unable to separate himself from the people's destiny; this also creates the possibility for a different use of the 'I' in the confessions themselves.

(c) The use of the 'I' form with respect to the prophet himself

There is one example in the lament forms outside the confessions where the 'I' applies neither to the people nor to God, but more probably to the prophet himself, who in the extremes of suffering wishes to escape his people's inevitable destiny. This is 9:2 (MT 9:1), an additional verse to the lament in 8:18-9:1 (MT 8:18-23), where the complaint is of one who wishes to be separate from the people:

"O that I had in the desert
a wayfarers' lodging place,
that I might leave my people
and go away from them!"

This indicates that a similar 'I' form could be used in the confessions. It is necessary first to assess whether the prophet in the confessions uses the 'I' form in the other two ways, either with respect to God, or to the people. If neither of these are likely,

then the prophet can only be speaking for himself.

It is immediately apparent that the 'I' in the confessions has nothing to do with speaking on behalf of God. Three examples illustrate this. The first is in the cries of dereliction, found for example in 15:17, 17:14 and 20:8-10. These are all concerned with the prophet's response to the word of God within him and its effects on those around him.⁴³ This word was seen in the call narrative to have separated the prophet from his contemporaries (1:9-11). In another reference outside the confessions, it is this word which gives the prophet exceptional access to God's council (23:18,22), again unlike his prophetic contemporaries. In the confessions, 15:10,17 shows the prophet suffering curses and ostracism from those who refuse to hear the word; 17:15 shows him suffering taunts and mockery on account of the word unfulfilled; and 20:8-10 show him facing plans of revenge on account of the word of judgement which cannot be contained. The word has caused the prophet conflict both with God and the people.

It is no coincidence that 15:16-17 and 20:8-10 contain several motifs from the call narrative, as if to demonstrate the prophet's unwillingness to cooperate fully with the word given to him at that time. The struggle with God is most intense in 20:8-9:

⁴³ Cf. Wildberger, op. cit., pp. 78-102; Wimmer, op. cit., pp. 358-82; A.P. Kelso, 'The Religious Consciousness of Jeremiah' AJSL XLI (1924-5), pp. 233-42; also W.V. Chambers, The Confessions of Jeremiah: A Study in Prophetic Ambivalence, Diss. D.Phil, Vanderbilt University, 1972, DAI 34 (1973) 2012s-A, chapters 4 and 6.

"For the word of the LORD has become to me
a reproach and derision all day long.
If I say, "I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,"
there is in my heart as it were a burning fire
shut up in my bones,
and I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot." ⁴⁴

Such a protest shows the prophet struggling against the word of God,
rather than being at one with it. This illustrates the humanity of
the prophet more than his representation on behalf of God.

The second example concerns the reproaches found in 12:1, 15:18
and 20:7. 12:1-6 is striking because of its associations with the
 $\hat{r}ib$ form of address. The forensic overtones are particularly apparent
in 12:1:

"Righteous art thou, O LORD,
when I complain to thee
(כִּי אֲרִיב אֵלֶיךָ);
yet I would plead my cause to you
(אֲךָ מִשְׁפָּטִים אֲדַבֵּר אוֹתָךְ)."

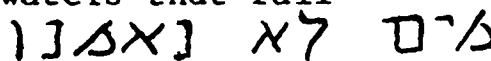
The $\hat{r}ib$ is used metaphorically to indicate a situation of
adversity.⁴⁵ The expression מִשְׁפָּטִים אֲדַבֵּר concerning
"speaking in judgement" is like Jer.1:6; 4:12; 39:5 and 52:19. In
these contexts, God is declaring judgement on Jeremiah's enemies. In

⁴⁴ Carroll's observation that this is the community unable to
contain their despair hardly does justice to the language and context
within 20:1ff.: cf. op. cit. (1981), pp. 126ff. On the personal
interpretation of this verse in the context of the imagery in
20:7ff., cf. note 46 below.

⁴⁵ Cf. B. Gemser, 'The $\hat{R}ib$ - or Controversy-Pattern in Hebrew
Mentality', Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East (eds. M.
Noth and D.W. Thomas), SVT III (1955), pp. 120-37, especially pp.
134ff., on Jeremiah; also W.L. Holladay, 'Jeremiah's Lawsuit with
God', Interp 17 (1963), pp. 280-87; also J. Muilenburg, 'The
Terminology of Adversity in Jeremiah', Translating and Understanding
the Old Testament (Essays in Honour of H.G. May), (eds. H.T. Frank
and W.L. Reed), Abingdon and New York, 1970, pp. 42-63. On the use
of the controversy motifs in this confession, cf. Wimmer, op. cit.,
pp. 150ff. and McKane, Jeremiah Vol I, ICC, pp. 261-2.

the confession of Jer. 12, Jeremiah is protesting because such judgement has not taken effect. His protest is intensified by applying the same formula of judgement to God himself. The reproach is bold indeed, for it is directed to God rather than from God.

The reproach in 15:18 is equally audacious. The reference to the incurable wound has some associations with the communal laments, but the reproach qualifying it is very different:

"Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?
Wilt thou be to me like a deceitful brook,
like waters that fail
()?"

The motif of water that fails to give life is also found in an oracle (2:13) and a hymnic lament (17:13) where the people are accused of forsaking God, the fountain of living water. As in 12:1, Jeremiah is implying that God accuses the people of betrayal through the prophet, and yet betrays his prophet as he suffers on behalf of the people. In the prophet's present experience, God is little more than a dried-up river bed. The prophet's sense of outrage against God suggests that these are hardly the words of one who is supposedly the bearer of a prophetic office. The 'I' form here concerns the prophet himself.

20:7 is more explicit in its reproach. Here God is accused as seducer as well as the unjust judge; instead of the rhetorical question as in 12:1, this is a flat accusation:

"O LORD, you have seduced me (כִּתִּיתָנִי)
 And I was seduced (וְאֶפְתָּ);
 thou art stronger than I (חֲזָקָתִי),
 and thou hast prevailed (וְתוֹכַל)."⁴⁶

This may have some association with the seduction imagery used by Hosea in an oracle of salvation to the undeserving harlot Israel (cf. Hos.2:14 (MT 2:16) אֲנֹכִי מִכְתִּיהָ), which uses כִּתִּי with respect to God "enticing" Israel away from other gods. In Jeremiah, the address is to the God who has accused his people of having been seduced by other gods (cf. Jer. 3:1-5, where Judah is denounced as a harlot), yet who has similarly seduced his prophet with words of hope, which have led instead into suffering and isolation from the people. כִּתִּי has other sexual connotations, for example concerning the rape of a virgin (cf. e.g. Ex.22:15) and the temptation to sexual immorality (cf. e.g. Prov. 1:10). חֲזָקָה has similar connotations (cf. Dt.22:25). These are ironic in the context of the prophet's own call to celibacy in Jer. 16. The prophet is again speaking in protest against his prophetic office, rather than mediating the words of God through it.

A third example which illustrates the discontinuity of the 'I' of the prophet and the voice of God concerns the curses in 15:10 and 20:4. In 15:10, the prophet apostrophises his own mother:

"Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me,
 a man of strife (אִישׁ רִיב)
 and contention to the whole land!..."

The phrase אִישׁ רִיב again indicates the forensic overtones of

⁴⁶ The RSV reads "You have deceived me/ and I was deceived." On the seduction imagery in this verse, cf. D.J.A. Clines and D.M. Gunn, "You tried to persuade me" and "Violence! Outrage!" in Jeremiah xx 7-8', VT XXVIII (1978), pp. 20-7; also J.L. Crenshaw, 'Seduction and Rape: The Confessions of Jeremiah', in A Whirlpool of Torment, Philadelphia, 1984, pp. 31ff. Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL pp. 398-401 predictably denies the seduction imagery. McKane takes a more open view, although observes that this is not the only imagery influencing 20:7-9: cf. Jeremiah Vol I, ICC, pp. 469-70.

this protest against the justice of God in the prophet's own life. The prophet is all but cursing the one who bore him; such an action would be unthinkable in any public liturgy. No prophetic office is apparent here: the prophet is speaking for himself, and certainly not for God.

The prophet's discontinuity with the purposes of God is even more explicit in 20:14ff.:

"Cursed be the day
on which I was born!
The day when my mother bore me,
let it not be blessed!" (v.14)

The idea of the "womb" as the prophet's "tomb" in v. 17 indicates that this is clearly a curse on life itself. The five separate curses, on the prophet's day of birth (v.14) and the messenger who brought such news (vv.15-16, three times) and on the day and man together (v.17) reflect the dramatic shift in despair after 15:10. The lack of form in these verses (compared with Job 3, a more contrived literary prayer, probably influenced by this passage) probably indicates the absence of any liturgical concerns. This is more a private soliloquy than any public declaration. The prophet is hardly speaking out of any sense of representing the concerns either of God or the people at this point: it is thus significant that Reventlow says nothing about this complaint.

The humanity of the prophet is clearly apparent in these examples. The self-absorption and self-pity portray little of one in a representative role speaking on behalf of God. The next question is whether this feature suggests that the prophet is speaking in the confessions on behalf of the people, as the cult-functional interpretation would rather believe.

Several factors suggest that this too is unlikely. Even in the communal laments, the oracle of judgement has brought into focus that the prophet's concerns and people's concerns were not always one and the same.⁴⁷ The prophet's use of the 'I' form in the lament of God in 12:7ff. also illustrated this.⁴⁸ Within the confessions, three factors show the prophet is detached from his people rather than at one with them.

The first concerns the protests of innocence. Given the indictments made earlier against the people, there is some inconsistency here if the prophet is suddenly proclaiming them guiltless. Jer. 15:11 and 18:20 are two significant examples, since they refer to the prophet's obedience in his intercessory activity, and so suggest a period before this was forbidden him, as in the deuteronomic explanations of 7:16 and 14:11:

"So let it be (MT: אֲלֹהִים יְהוָה),⁴⁹ Lord,
if I have not entreated thee(אֲלֹהִים - לְאֵל שְׂרוּתָךְ)
for their good,
if I have not pleaded with thee on behalf of the enemy
in the time of trouble and distress!"(15:11)⁴⁹

This and the following protest occur in the context of the prophet's concern with God's lack of justice; it is not surprising that both have associations with the rib appeal:

⁴⁷ Cf. p. 58, note 42 previously.

⁴⁸ Cf. pp. 58-9 of this chapter.

⁴⁹ The Hebrew is obscure, but one could read אֲלֹהִים יְהוָה "Then God said", thus making this a reply by Yahweh: cf. Mckane, Jeremiah Vol I, ICC pp. 343 and 347-8, who translates שְׂרוּתָךְ "survive", thus "Yahweh answered, There will be a better future for those who survive". The LXX reading γένοιτο δέσποτα is preferred by the RSV, making the response to the cursings in 15:10 also appear to be by language of oath, as in terms of law. On the views for and against this reading of vv. 10-11, see also Holladay, Jeremiah (1986), p.446.

"Is evil a recompense for good?
 Yet they have dug a pit for my life.
 Remember how I stood before thee
 to speak good for them,
 to turn away thy wrath from them." (18:20)

The intense threats of vengeance which follow this last protest (18:21-23) reflect the failure of the prophet's intercession and his sense of frustration at the cost of obedience in fulfilling his intercessory role. At this point, he is in fact rejecting the value of such intercession, rather than affirming it. This is a far cry from the prophet's public stand with the people in intercession. In its overall context, 18:13-17 are presented as God's lawsuit against the nation, and vv.19-23 as Jeremiah's lawsuit against God, reminding him (as in Jer.12:1ff.) of the contract already made. ~~Vers~~ 19 is the call of attention to hear the case, v. 20 is the case itself, which hinges upon the innocence of the defendant, and vv.21-22a as the suit. ~~Vers~~ 22b is then the specific accusation, v.23a is the address to God as the judge who already knows the case, and v.23b,c,d is the demand for the execution of justice. Such an interpretation shows that the prophet is speaking for himself as the one who is innocent; he cannot be referring to the people who have refused to hear him, for they are only worthy of punishment. This prayer would be a contradiction to anyone in prophetic office.

The same sense of innocence which is made explicit in these two examples occurs implicitly in every confession, for always the prophet appeals to the justice of God to defend him against the mockery and persecution of a people who will listen neither to words of intercession nor to those of judgement. For example, in 11:19, the prophet compares himself with the innocence of a lamb led to the slaughter. The phrase כַּבֵּשׁ אֶלֶף has associations with Ps. 44:12 and Is. 53:7. In Jeremiah, an original use of the

description of innocent suffering is seen in the prophet analogy of the lamb (עֶזְרָא) brought to the slaughter. This contrasts with the use of the phrase כָּצֵאן אֶל־כָּל (used of the nation) in Ps. 44, and the phrase כָּשָׁה לְטֹבַח יוֹבֵל (used of the servant) in Is. 53:7. The prophet's undeserved suffering is emphasised in his peculiar choice of vocabulary. Similarly the pleas for God to "try" and "test" the prophet indicate that he has no sense of guilt; his concern is only for the vindication of his integrity (cf. 11:20; 12:3 and 20:12). These protests of innocence hardly pertain to the people, but rather to the 'I' of the prophet wounded by his people. 50

Second, the exclamations of isolation (seen in 9:1; NT 9:1) illustrate that the 'I' here pertains to one experiencing intense persecution. The prophet is speaking only for himself, as seen in 15:17:

"I did not sit in the company of merry-makers
(לֹא יָשַׁבְתִּי בְּסוּד שִׂמְחָה),
nor did I rejoice;
because thy hand was upon me (אֶפְנֵי יָדְךָ),
I sat alone (בְּדָד יָשַׁבְתִּי)
for thou hadst filled me with indignation." 51

The expression בְּדָד יָשַׁבְתִּי refers to the isolation of a leper (cf. בְּדָד יָשַׁב in Lev. 13:46 regarding the one who stays "outside the camp". In the context of the above verse from Jeremiah, it is preceded by the phrase אֶפְנֵי יָדְךָ, which is used by the

50 This picture fits aptly with that of the persecuted prophet in the prose narratives: cf. e.g. 37:11-21, on his imprisonment near Anathoth, and 38:1ff., on the same in Jerusalem.

51 Reventlow notes the personal details here are to particularise Israel's needs: op. cit., pp. 221-5; Carroll similarly sees this cannot be the prophet who elsewhere had such friendship with the people as in chs. 26-9 and 32-9: cf. Jeremiah, OTL, p. 336. These two comments illustrate well the less flexible interpretation of the prophetic 'I'.

deuteronomist of the compulsion of individual prophets in 1 Kgs.18:46; 2 Kgs.3:15 and Jer.1:9a; it also occurs in relation to Ezekiel in Ezek.1:3; 3:14,22 and 8:1. Together these portray the prophet as one isolated from his people because of his oracles of judgement and their response of mockery and persecution. The phrase **בְּסוֹד־שִׁחִיקִים** is used in the Piél in the positive sense of "merrymakers" (RSV) rather than the Qal form which has more pejorative overtones; this further implies the isolation of the prophet from all aspects of society, and not only from those who wished him direct harm. The prophet hardly speaks as one united with his people, or as one speaking on behalf of them.

Another example of the prophet's isolation is found in 20:8-10, referred to earlier with respect to his God-forsakenness, where the prophet feels he has been made to be a reproach and derision, and isolated even from those closest to him:

"For I hear whispering.
Terror is on every side!
'Denounce him! Let us denounce him!'
say all my familiar friends,
watching for my fall."⁵²

The same sense of being rejected by familiar friends is evident in 11:21 (the deuteronomic-style oracle to the prophet, with the reference to Anathoth making explicit what is implied in 12:6). 12:6 is a similar oracle where the prophet is told not to believe the deceitful plottings of those even within his own house. It is difficult in the context to interpret this as portraying allegorically the other nations threatening Israel. The prophet

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McKane summarises the personal aspect of this isolation well: "...as one who is under constant siege, a beleaguered soul, hard-pressed and continually crying out for help." (Jeremiah Vol I, ICC, p.472)

speaks out of outrage at the loss of the fellowship which normally was the source of comfort and wholeness and the blessing of God. ⁵³

A third illustration of the prophet's discontinuity with the people is in the threats of vengeance offered for particular enemies, where Jeremiah hopes to be the one to escape such punishment. This is made clear in 17:18:

"Let those be put to shame who persecute me,
but let me not be put to shame;
let them be dismayed,
but let me not be dismayed;
bring upon them the day of evil;
destroy them with double destruction!"

It was seen earlier how the cult-functional allegorising of references to the prophet's enemies in terms of those outside the community is inappropriate. The enemies are those within the prophet's closest circle of associates, including his own family (12:6), his familiar friends (20:10), the men of Anathoth (11:21), the religious leaders (18:18), and what appeared to be "the whole land" (15:10). Clearly the deuteronomic editors who were responsible for editing at least two of these passages (cf. 11:21 and 18:18) understood the enemies to be those within the community, and in some close association with the prophet.

A good illustration outside the confessions of the prophet's sense of isolation is in 5:1ff. When searching for just one soul worthy of pardon, no one could be found. The prophet saw that the whole community was responsible for the rejection of the word of God. Judgement would indeed fall on particular opponents, but also on all those within the community who opposed his message. It makes

⁵³ Cf. H. Seidel, Das Erlebnis der Einsamkeit im Alten Testament, Theologische Arbeiten Band XXIX, Berlin, 1969, pp. 13-20 and 110-24.

little sense to think of these threats on enemies in terms of judgement on those outside the community.

The similar theme is brought out in 18:23, where the prophet ends his threats of vengeance (vv.21-22) with a request that the people's sin might not be forgiven. This is in marked contrast to his own pleas of integrity, asking only for vindication and restoration:

"Yet, thou, O LORD, knowest
all their plotting to slay me.
Forgive not their iniquity,
nor blot out their sin from thy sight." (18:23a,b)⁵⁴

The theme of vindication is also evident in 20:11, which portrays such a change of mood to confidence in God that the verse is often seen as additional:

"But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior;
therefore my persecutors will stumble,
they will not overcome me..."(20:11a,b)

This cannot be a representative prayer on behalf of the people's welfare; it is a request from the wounded prophet that he will be vindicated whilst they await their fate. Ultimately the prophet who believed so deeply that the people's destiny was to be judgement could not accept that his welfare should be the same as theirs.

One conclusion follows from these examples. The 'I' of the confessions is neither the prophet speaking on behalf of God, nor is the 'I' that of one speaking on behalf of the people. The 'I' is Jeremiah, who is speaking to God about the people for himself. It is significant that Reventlow, so persuaded by the public dimension of the confessions, only refers to four of these, omitting those which

⁵⁴ McKane, Jeremiah Vol I, ICC, p. 438 notes that no cultic model quite fits the sentiments expressed here. Again a communal context context strains at the most obvious meaning.

demonstrate most the state of inner conflict and tension.⁵⁵ The confessions reflect the prophet at prayer in a private rather than a public capacity. Their standing within the Jeremianic traditions as genuine personal prayers opens the way for the possibility of the same in a number of individual psalms.

(III) THE CONFESSIONS AND THE PSALMS:
A BALANCE OF "TRADITIONALISM" AND "PERSONALITY"

Earlier literary critics, observing correspondences between the confessions and psalms in language and form, often differed over which was the primary influence. The predominant view was to see Jeremiah as the innovator. For example, Cheyne, Driver, Cornhill all accepted this position.⁵⁶ French scholars who took this same view include Gelin and Bonnard.⁵⁷

Form critics have generally preferred to account for the correspondences in reverse. Baumgartner, following Gunkel, was the most notable example, proposing that the psalms provided the basic raw material for Jeremiah, and his independent prophetic consciousness caused him to deal creatively with both ~~psalmic~~ forms and

⁵⁵ Cf. Reventlow, op. cit., pp. 213ff., citing 15:10-21, 17:12-18 and 11:18-12:6.

⁵⁶ Cf. Cheyne, op. cit., p.122; Driver, op. cit., p.118; Cornhill, op.cit., p. 151.

⁵⁷ Cf. Gelin, art. cit., pp. 858ff.; Bonnard, op. cit., pp. 13-23.

language, which in turn influenced the forms and expressions of later individual psalms.⁵⁸

The acceptance of a pre-exilic dating for many of the psalms has resulted in seeing the influence of a common store of cultic styles and expressions of which both the psalmists and prophets were aware. Bonnard's theory is that Jeremiah, or his disciples, composed over thirty psalms.⁵⁹ It would be more cautious to assume that a common store of conventional phraseology accounted for these similarities. Because no single confession relates convincingly to one specific psalm, direct correspondences have to be dealt with more carefully. It is likely that Jeremiah would be familiar with many of the psalms from his associations with the Temple cult, and so naturally incorporate and adapt the accepted types into his own prayer forms. It is equally likely that some later psalms, influenced by the preaching of the traditions of a suffering prophet such as Jeremiah, would occasionally take up this style in their own prayers of suffering. A two-way process is therefore more probable, and one which, as Baumgartner observes, pertains to general rather than specific copying from one complete confession or psalm:

"...nicht mehr die Anhängigkeit der Propheten von einzelnen Psalmen, sondern von Psalmenstil..."⁶⁰

This section will make no attempt to hypothesise whether the linguistic correspondences relate to direct borrowing. Instead, the

⁵⁸ Cf. Baumgartner, op. cit., pp. 80ff. The influence upon Baumgartner was W. Campe's, Das Verhältnis Jeremias zu den Psalmen, whose thesis was that six psalms (Pss. 1; 6; 31; 35; 79 and 135) influenced Jeremiah.

⁵⁹ Cf. Bonnard, op. cit., pp. 27ff., assessing Pss. 1; 6; 7; 16; 17; 22; 26; 35; 36; 38; 40; 41; 44; 51; 55; 69; 71; 73; 74; 75; 76; 78; 79; 81; 83; 86; 99; 106; 109; 119; 135 and 139. See also pp. 235ff.

⁶⁰ Cf. Baumgartner, op. cit., p. 92.

similarities between the confessions and psalms will be assessed in order to see the balance in each between "traditionalism" and "personality". These words are used by Mowinckel with respect to the cult-functional interpretation of psalmody, but they are also appropriate for the confessions.⁶¹ The relationship between traditionalism and personality will be assessed with respect both to the forms and to the language of the confessions and psalms.

a) The adaptation of forms in the confessions and the psalms

The practice of adapting conventional forms for a particular purpose was not unusual within the prophetic traditions. Jeremiah was by no means the only prophet to do so. The genius of the pre-exilic prophets was that they did this so often, yet were still accepted as authoritative by later generations.⁶²

Nor did the creative use of forms by Jeremiah occur only in the confessions. It was seen earlier that some of the communal laments were more often completed by way of a judgement oracle than the expected salvation oracle, thus making the lament form a parody against the people, and indicating their suffering was caused by

⁶¹ Cf. Mowinckel, 'Traditionalism and Personality in the Psalms', HUCA 23 (1950-51), pp. 205-231; also edited and in PIW², chapter XVII.

⁶² Cf. von Rad, Die Botschaft, pp. 13-27, 28-47, 48-57, E Tr The Message, pp. 15-29, pp. 30-49, 50-59; R.E. Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, Oxford, 1975, pp. 87-92; C. Westermann, Grundformen prophetischer Rede, München, 1960, pp.93ff. and 102ff., E Tr H.C. White, Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech, London, 1967, pp. 81ff. and 98ff.; M. Haran, 'From Early to Classical Prophecy: Continuity and Change' VT XXVII (1977), pp.385-397; also J.H. Hayes, 'Form Critical Study of the Prophets' in An Introduction to Old Testament Study, Abingdon: Nashville, 1979, pp. 143-9.

disobedience. Within the confessions, the most striking feature is that in their present order they appear to have been arranged to reveal a gradual deterioration in their adherence to form.

In Jer. 11, the structure is quite clearly that of narrative, plea and answer. Verses 18-20 are the lament proper: although the introduction is unusual (v.18), v. 19 is a clear protest of innocence and v.20 the typical change of mood (with the wāw adversative) into a statement of confidence followed by threat of vengeance. Verses 21-23 stand as the more expected salvation oracle for the prophet himself. As well as lament, a rîb pattern is discernible, albeit used in a metaphorical way, rather than suggesting literally the context of some court or temple trial.⁶³ This is found for example in the expressions שָׁכַח צֶדֶק and כִּי אֵלֶיךָ גָּלִיתִי אֶת־רִיבִי in v.20. This would result in v.18 being the presentation of the case, v.19 the plaintiff's defence, v.20 the statement of the case, v.21 the judge's verdict, v.22 the threefold sentence and v.23 the conclusion to the case. Whichever form is most likely, there is a clear progression and structure within the prayer.

Jer. 12 is also classifiable as a lament. Verse 1a is as difficult to place as 11:18, but vv.1b -2 are more clearly the question and reproach, v.3a the protest of innocence, v.3b the plea and threat of vengeance, v.4 the lament proper, and vv.5-6 are the divine answer. This answer is less typical because of its rhetorical

⁶³ On the literature on the rîb pattern, cf. note 45 previously. This metaphorical use suggests the possibility of the same in the psalms: cf. Chapter Seven, 'Suffering before God', pp. 286ff.

question formulae (v.5) and its lack of reassurance (v.6).⁶⁴ The rîb associations are again apparent in questioning the justice of God.⁶⁵

Jer.15:10-12 and 15-18 may be seen partly as laments, and 15:19-21 is a type of salvation oracle. There is some possibility that the metre in 15:10-12 could be read as poetry, thus making vv.10-11 the complaint and v.12 the answer.⁶⁶ This is certainly less typical than Jer.11 or 12. 15:15-18 is similarly less regular: vv.15-16a form the plea and desire for vengeance, and vv.16b-18 are the complaint itself. The protest of innocence in the middle of this, with its bold accusations, is unusual. The following salvation oracle (vv.19-21) is also unconventional because of its conditional nature (v.19a).

Jer. 17:14-18 also follows a less predictable structure. Verse 14 is the complaint, and v.15 the request (though again the content is particular and unusual), v.16 is the protest of innocence, v.17 is a further plea then statement of confidence, and v.18 is the threat of vengeance. There is no suggestion of any salvation oracle; the deuteronomistic addition of the hymn in vv.12-13 earlier may well have been to compensate for this. The use of the rîb form is in v.18, in the request for favour and demand for punishment.

18:18-23 starts with a deuteronomistic introduction to the lament, probably to account for the intensity of the threats of

⁶⁴ Cf. Baumgartner, op. cit., pp. 52-60; McKane, Jeremiah Vol I, ICC, pp. 765-6.

⁶⁵ Cf. p. 61 previously, on Jer. 12:1.

⁶⁶ Cf. Bright, art. cit. (1974), pp. 62 ff.

vengeance to follow. This has little in common with the superscriptions of the psalms. Like Jer. 17, the form is far from typical, although features common to lament emerge in vv. 19-23. V.19 is the request, v.20 the reason for it, vv.21-22a the curse, v.22b a complaint, v.23a a statement of confidence and v.23bcd further curses.

Jer. 20:7ff. are difficult to incorporate into any form. Only vv.10-13 fit anything like a lament, with v.10 as the complaint, v.11 the change of mood to confidence, v. 12 further threats of vengeance, and v.13 the thanksgiving song, although each of these four verses could be seen as later additions. There is no way of adequately classifying vv.7-9 and 14-18, which are best described as "prophetic soliloquy".

Although Mowinckel has frequently argued for a balance between traditionalism and personality in the adherence to forms in the psalms, the strongest criticism of his application of the cult-functional interpretation is that he ends up limiting the personality of the psalmists to a strict adherence to traditional norms. Reventlow's cult-functional reading of the confessions does exactly the same. For example, Jer.15 is made to conform to a conventional form, in order to propose a public function for the prayer, and Jer. 20, which reveals the most disintegration of form, is ignored completely.

A different view of the psalms emerges if one takes the confessions as models for the different degrees in the relationship between traditionalism and personality. For example, Jer.11 shows that more emphasis is placed on traditional conformity to accepted prayer forms, where the situation portrayed is apparently more within

God's control. By contrast, Jer. 20 shows how personality affected the composition of the prayer, for here the contents reflect the lack of control in the situation. Throughout the other confessions, there is considerable variation in the balance of traditionalism and personality with regard to the use of form.

This same interpretation can be applied to particular psalms. The emphasis in cult-functional studies on the classification of forms as some sort of science has given the impression that there is little variation of form in the psalms, such as would be expected of a liturgical text. However, the forms of many psalms have evidence of the same personal adaptation as in the confessions. This will be dealt with in detail with respect to the individual psalms associated with suffering, but a brief summary here will illustrate that this is the case.

Nearly one third of the Psalter is classified more by content than by form. There is no common pattern of form in any of the psalms found in the categories of psalms classified for example as wisdom psalms (Pss. 1, 19, 37, 49, 112, 119, 127, 128, 139), the historical psalms (Pss. 78, 105), the prophetic exhortations (Pss. 14, 50, 52, 53, 58, 75, 81, 91, 95) the liturgies (Pss. 15, 24, 134) the communal and individual psalms of confidence (Pss. 115, 125, 129, 133; 3, 4, 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 84, 121, 131) and the royal psalms (Pss. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144).⁶⁷ Of the remaining forms (the hymns, thanksgivings and laments), the hymns offer the most adherence to a general form, although the balance of

⁶⁷ On the classification of these psalms, see the chart on p. ii.

calls to praise and motives for praise is very different in each psalm, and there are several hymnic fragments in other psalms.⁶⁸ The thanksgivings and laments, where in fact the aspect of personal testimony in the heights and the depths of human experience is often most apparent, offer many examples of variation and adaptation of conventional forms.⁶⁹

The forms of the confessions and also of the psalms are thus not always preserved with the adherence to traditionalism often assumed of them. The human element of inspiration is an important factor in the compositions of both. Berridge's observation is apt in this respect:

"The adaptation of an established Gattung does not at all mean that no content of a personal nature may be contained within this Gattung. Again, the structure of any given Gattung may itself be modified, in order that it may serve the specific purposes of the person who has adopted the Gattung.⁷⁰

Gunkel, as the scholar most associated with the implementation of form-criticism on the psalms, also endorsed this position. First, even when conventional forms are used with evident consistency, they are to be understood as an expression of genuine personal involvement on the part of the poet, and second, when the forms have undergone some adaptation, the personality of the composer is the influence

⁶⁸ On the adaptation of forms in the hymns, cf. Chapter Six, 'Communion with God', pp. 237ff.; also Szörenyi, op. cit., pp. 119ff.

⁶⁹ On the variations of form in the laments, cf. Chapter Seven, 'Suffering before God', pp. 286ff.; also Szörenyi, op. cit., pp. 125ff.; on the varied forms in the thanksgiving, cf. Szörenyi, ibid., pp. 132ff.

⁷⁰ Cf. Berridge, op. cit., pp. 18-19; also H.-J. Stoebe, 'Geprägte Form und geschichtliche individuelle Erfahrung im alten Testament', SVT XVII (1969), pp. 212-29.

behind this. ⁷¹

The cult-functional interpretation is inclined to neglect reference to the personality of the composer in this way.⁷² A study of the forms used in the confessions, and the application of these conclusions to the psalms, would advise us to take more seriously the personal as well as the traditional elements in the composition of psalmody.

b) The adaptation of language in the confessions and psalms

It was noted earlier that the confessions have by far the greatest number of psalmic correspondences in the book of Jeremiah.⁷³ There are of course other examples which occur outside the confessions. These often have other correspondences both in the Jeremianic and the psalmic traditions, and demonstrate that direct borrowing one way or the other is difficult to ascertain.

Within the poetry passages, hymnic correspondences include Jer. 10:13/ Ps. 135:7 (see also Jer. 51:16) and Jer. 33:11/ Ps. 106:1 and 107:1. Correspondences used in oracular material in Jeremiah include Jer. 6:20b/ Ps. 40:7; Jer. 8:17/ Ps. 58:5-6; Jer. 10:25/ Ps. 79:6; Jer. 23:12/ Ps. 35:6 and Jer. 50:15 / Ps. 137:8. Associations with

⁷¹ Cf. Einleitung, pp. 10-11, 182-3, 260-61, 281-4; also 'Psalmen', RGG² IV, especially cols. 1622-29.

⁷² Mowinckel's most developed reference to this, in all his studies on the psalms, is in a few pages of the article on traditionalism and personality, as in PIW², pp. 126-7, 131-2, 139.

⁷³ See p. 55, note 36.

expressions of confidence are found in Jer. 14:9/Ps. 46:6 and Jer. 16:19/Ps.18:3. Two additional wisdom sayings occur in Jer. 10:24/Ps.6:2 and Jer. 17:7-8/ Ps.1:1-3. Outside the confessions, the only lament forms which suggest some psalmic correspondences are Jer.9:1 (MT v.23) /Ps. 6:7 and Jer. 45:3 (a prose lament) /Ps. 69:4.

Elsewhere outside the confessions, other linguistic correspondences are found in short phrases in the prose passages. In most cases these are probably due to the deuteronomistic influences. These include Jer. 7:33/Ps. 79:2-3; Jer.14:16/Ps. 79:2-3; Jer. 16:21/Ps. 83:19; Jer. 19:11/ Ps.2:9; Jer.23:23-4/ Ps. 139:7; Jer.24:9/ Ps.44:14-15; Jer.25:15/ Ps.75:9; Jer. 29:12 and 33:3/ Ps.50:15; Jer.30:3 and 33:7/ Pss. 14:7, 53:6, 85:2 and Jer. 39:17/ Ps.50:15.

Within the confessions, there are far more psalmic correspondences within each particular unit. This is hardly surprising if the context is assumed to be the prophet himself, facing trials, isolated by persecution, cursed by his fellow men, and threatened with physical abuse; these aspects of suffering will be seen to be the contexts of many psalms of the individual, and the conventional language of prayer was thus appropriated and adapted for similar situations of suffering.⁷⁴

The following examples are the most significant: Jer. 11:19 ("...cut him off from the land of the living") and Ps.52:7 (see also Is.53:8); Jer.11:19 ("that his name be remembered no more") and Ps.83:5; Jer.11:20 and 20:12 ("God who triest the heart and mind...") and Ps.7:10 (also a deuteronomistic phrase); Jer.12:3

⁷⁴ On the language of suffering reflecting particular life-settings in individual psalms, cf. 'Suffering with God', pp. 278ff.

("Thou knowest me") and, for example, Ps.40:10; Jer.12:3c ("like sheep for the slaughter") and Ps.44:23; Jer.15:15 ("it is for thy sake that I bear reproach") and Ps.69:8; Jer. 15:21 ("I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked") and Ps. 37:40; Jer. 17:14 ("Heal me...save me") and Ps. 6:3, 54:2; Jer.17:14 ("for thou art my praise") and Pss.71:6, 109:1; Jer.17:14 ("for thou art my hope") and Ps.71:5; Jer.17:17 ("...in the day of evil") and Ps.27:5; Jer.17:18 ("let my persecutors be shamed, but do not let me be ashamed") in Pss. 31:18, 35:4 and 71:13-14; Jer. 18:20 ("yet they have dug a pit for my life") and Ps. 35:7; Jer.18:21 ("let their wives become childless and widowed") and Ps.109:9ff.; Jer. 18:22 ("For they have dug a pit to take me...") and Ps. 140:6; Jer.18:23 ("forgive not their iniquity") and Ps.109:14; Jer.20:7 ("everyone mocks me") and Ps.22:8; Jer.20:9 ("there is in my heart as it were a burning fire") and Ps.39:4; Jer.20:10 ("...terror on every side") and Ps.31:14; Jer. 20:10 (" 'Let us denounce him!' say all my familiar friends") and Ps. 41:10. Another example is Jer.15:21 ("I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked") and Pss. 37:40, which may be traced back to a common deuteronomistic influence (e.g. Dt. 2:24; Dt. 3:3; Ju. 8:22 and 2 Kgs. 3:10,13).

Two observations may be made concerning the use of psalmic language which is found both in the confessions and also elsewhere in Jeremiah. The first is that the borrowing almost always concerns the individual lament forms. The exceptions are Pss. 83 (a communal lament) and Ps.44 (a royal psalm). Typical phraseology and conventional forms are thus integrally related. Second, the use of such typical language is only rarely a formulaic expression; the correspondences between the confessions and the psalms show that considerable adaptation has taken place.

This latter feature of adaptation is also evident in the psalms of lament. The general cultic phraseology which pervades them is rarely used in an absolute formulaic way between one psalmic parallel and another. This will be discussed in detail with respect to the psalms on the problem of suffering, where it will be seen that the addresses to God to come and help, and the descriptions of the distress have obvious associations with other psalms but have very rarely been taken up as a formulaic expression.⁷⁵

In addition to general psalmic language, the confessions also have several examples of particular prophetic phraseology. This language of course has few associations at all with the psalms. The expressions pertain to the prophet's own calling and conflict with the word of God. From the prophet's intimate knowledge of God, the despair is deeper and the expressions of it bolder than in any of the psalms. These examples have been discussed in the previous section, and include Jer.11:21-23; 12:4,6; 15:10-11,16-17,18,19-20; 17:15-17; 18:18; and 20:7, 8-10, 14-18.

Scholars of a cult-functional persuasion no doubt believe that there is a discontinuity between the way these expressions of particular prophetic piety are developed in the confessions and the way more general, traditional expressions are used in the psalms. Mowinckel is typical of this view:

⁷⁵ See 'Suffering before God', pp.275-8, notes 46-62, with particular reference to the works of Tsevat, Culley and Watters and Aejmelaeus in this respect.

"Jeremiah did not compose psalms, but he poured out his heart in guided words".

"Terms and phrases, which literally and according to their true meaning refer to external disasters, as for instance illness, are used by Jeremiah about his personal religious problems and needs, i.e., in a new meaning....What we find here is....the first beginnings of an emancipation of its style and type from the cult, and a re-modelling of it for independent, personal poetry." ⁷⁶

In brief, the psalms are constrained by traditionalism in their use of language whilst the confessions are more open to the infusion of personality. For example, of the psalms:

"...Rarely is there a clear allusion to the poet's personal situation, rarely anything definite and concrete, almost invariably only what is typical of a whole circle, in the most general terms. It is of the nature of the cultic psalm that it cannot express the individual's definite, once-for-all, experiences and emotions." ⁷⁷

By contrast, a few scholars have expressed more confidence in the way that the language of the psalms does display the particularities and personality of the suppliant. ⁷⁸ Examples from the psalms themselves suggest that their proposals are closer to the evidence than Mowinckel's observations. Nine examples of particularity are found in the eighty one communal psalms. These are Pss. 60:8-10/108:8-10 (oracular material in communal laments);

⁷⁶ Cf. PIW ², p. 109 and p. 149, (also note 12 on the lack of such emancipation in the Psalter). See also 'The "Spirit" and the "Word" in the Pre-Exilic Reforming Prophets', JBL 53 (1934), pp. 199-227, especially pp. 213-7; also 'La connaissance de Dieu chez les prophètes de l'Ancien Testament', RHPR XXII (1942-3), pp. 69-105, especially pp. 91ff.

⁷⁷ Cf. Mowinckel, PIW ¹, pp. 30-31.

⁷⁸ For example, Balla, op. cit., pp. 26ff.; R.B. Culley, Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms, Toronto, 1967, pp. 98-100; Westermann, Der Psalter, Stuttgart, 1967, pp. 16ff., E Tr The Psalms, Minneapolis, 1980, pp. 13ff.; also Bellinger, Psalmody and Prophecy, pp. 24-7.

74:4-8,9; 79:1-4; 83:6-9,10-13 (also communal laments); 45:11-16; 72:10,15; 110:4b (oracular material in royal psalms); and 132:6-7(a liturgical fragment on the finding of the ark). Another fourteen references occur in the sixty-nine individual psalms. These are Pss. 22:8-9,17-19; 31:7,12-14; 35:11-16; 42:5-7; 51:6,12-14; 55:13-16,21-22; 69:8-9,10-13,22,23; 71:6,9,18; 120:2,5-7; 141:5-6 (all individual laments); 16:4; 27:7-10 (individual psalms of confidence); 40:7-9 and 41:9-10 (individual thanksgivings). A number of textual corruptions are found in these examples, as if the later translators found the particular expressions difficult to understand themselves.⁷⁹

In conclusion, just as the use of forms in Jeremiah showed that there was a proper interaction of traditionalism and personality, so too the language of the confessions has shown the same. This is explicable in terms of its context within the prophetic traditions. However, this phenomenon is not unique to the confessions of Jeremiah. Several psalms also reflect this interaction of traditionalism and personality, not only with respect to their use of form, but also in their adaptation of typical language. Compared with the prophetic elements in the confessions, this may be different in the degree to which the traditional and personal elements relate to each other, but to deny this altogether does not do justice to the evidence.

The cult-functional interpretation of Jeremiah's confessions operates in one of two ways. Either it tries to ignore the aspects of creative and independent personal piety in order to make them

⁷⁹ The best examples are Pss. 16:4; 27:7-10; 22:8-9,17-19; 31:7 and 141:4,5-6.

public liturgical texts like the psalms: Reventlow was noted as one example of this. Or it accepts the distinctively individual features, yet denies that there are traces of the same in the psalms: Mowinckel has been seen to exemplify this. Either way, the consequence for a study of the piety of the psalmists is the same: they are viewed mainly for their "traditionalist" rather than "personality" value, and an unnecessary tension is created between the personal and traditional contributions in the composition of psalmic prayers.

(IV) CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study of the confessions has shown that there is considerable continuity between the prophet's prayers and the psalms of the individual. First, a history of the parallel issues in studies in both types of literature has borne this out. Second, an assessment of the 'I' form in the confessions revealed that these are genuine, personal prayers, and pointed to the likelihood of the same in those psalms which suggest individual life-settings. Third, a study of the balance of traditionalism and personality in the adaptation of the forms and language of both confessions and psalms illustrated that the element of personal appropriation and creativity is evident in each.

The confessions are the most relevant example for a study of

personal prayer in the psalms. Nevertheless, other prayer models in the Old Testament literature also offer important insights. In the conclusion to his book on prose prayers, Greenberg claims that it was not so much liturgical prayer as spontaneous extempore prayer which provided the "spiritual loam" out of which the personal piety of prophets such as Jeremiah grew.⁸⁰ Even though this may be somewhat of an overstatement in the light of the psalmic correspondences with the confessions, Jeremiah's complaints combine together both the features of extempore prayer using common patterns of human speech and also set liturgical prayer composed by gifted poets. Other scholars who have offered studies on the influence of the more spontaneous, particular prayers of the laity alongside the more formulated, general prayers found in the Psalter include Hempel, Heiler, Wendel, Westermann, Blank, Gonzalez, Abrahams, C.W.F. Smith, Clements and Reventlow.⁸¹ The evidence from such scholarship amply demonstrates that genuine individual prayer is to be found at every

⁸⁰ Cf. M. Greenberg, Biblical Prose Prayer as a Window to the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983, p. 57.

⁸¹ Cf. J. Hempel, Gebet und Frömmigkeit im Alten Testament, Stuttgart, 1922; F. Heiler, Das Gebet. Eine religionsgeschichtliche und religionspsychologische Untersuchung, München, 1923, pp. 53-58, 71-75, 150-56; E. Tr. S. McComb, Prayer. History and Psychology, New York, 1932, pp. 12-18, 23-28, 65-73; A. Wendel, Das freie Laiengebet im vorexilischen Israel, Leipzig, 1932, pp. 8ff., 15ff., 62ff.; C. Westermann, 'Gebet' in RGG³, II, Tübingen, 1958, cols. 1209-17, especially cols. 1213ff.; also Praise and Lament, pp. 168-83; S. Blank, 'Some Observations Concerning Biblical Prayer', HUCA 32 (1961), pp. 75-90; 'Prayer' in IDB III, New York, 1962, pp. 857-67, especially pp. 858ff.; A. Gonzalez, 'Prière dans l'Ancien Testament' in SDB 8, Paris, 1972, cols. 555-585, especially cols. 566f.; I. Abrahams, 'Prayer' in EJ 13, Jerusalem, 1972, pp. 978-82, especially pp. 978-80; M. Greenberg, 'On the Refinement of the Conception of Prayer in the Hebrew Scriptures' AJS Review Vol. One (1976), pp. 57-62; R.E. Clements, The Prayers of the Bible, London, 1985, pp. 1-14; also H.G. Reventlow, Gebet im Alten Testament, Stuttgart, 1986, pp. 9ff.

level of pre-exilic Israelite society. Furthermore, the different literary traditions in the Old Testament make it clear that a great variety of personal prayers could be uttered by any number of lay individuals, even away from the sanctuaries, and thus outside the more obligatory practices.

This evidence suggests the likelihood that the confessions were as much influenced by the practice of popular prayer as that of psalmic prayer. It is even possible that this same "spiritual loam" of popular prayer was the context for some of the psalmists. This cannot of course be proved, due to the anonymity of the psalms, but scholars such as Albertz, Gerstenberger, Conrad and Schenker have defended this case well.⁸² The theory can be founded on one of two assumptions: either that the cultic professionals who composed psalmody were in close association with the popular prayer life of the people, or some psalmists were not cultic professionals at all, but rather gifted lay members who would be more likely to be influenced by popular piety.⁸³

The most extensive examples of popular prayer are found in the prose prayers, which within their different literary complexes are quite clearly presented as genuine, personal petitions, rather than

⁸² Cf. Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, pp. 14ff. and 23ff.; Gerstenberger, Der bittende Mensch, pp. 3ff. and 163ff.; Schenker, art. cit., pp. 12-18; and Conrad, art. cit., pp. 486ff.

⁸³ Albertz, ibid., pp. 164ff. and Gerstenberger, ibid., pp. 147ff. both accept the theory of cultic professionals at local sanctuaries. C.H. Dodd, The Bible Today, Cambridge 1948, p. 155, and D.R. Ap-Thomas, 'Some Notes on the Old Testament Attitude to Prayer' SJTh 9 (1956), pp. 422-9, and Westermann, Der Psalter, pp. 14ff., E Tr The Psalms, pp. 12ff. all assume that some psalmists were gifted lay members of the community.

compositions which others might use in the cult.⁸⁴ Most scholars would see ~~that these~~ prayers have little in common with the psalms.⁸⁵ This is however questionable, for although they represent the more extempore form of personal prayer, they are associated indirectly with the psalms by their correspondences with the confessions. The language is more particular, the speech forms are briefer, but they have discernible patterns and use conventional prayer styles like those found in both the confessions and psalms. Any comprehensive study of personal piety cannot but take these prayers into account.

Individual prose prayers are found in most of the literary traditions of the Old Testament. In the JE traditions, examples include Gen. 4:13-14 (Cain's reproach), Gen. 15:2-3 (Abraham's petition), Gen. 20:4-5 (Abimelech's petition), Gen. 24:12-14, 27 (Abraham's servant's petition and thanksgiving), Gen. 28:16-17 (Jacob's praise), Gen. 32:9-12 (Jacob's confession and petition), Ex. 3:11,13; 4:1,10,13; 5:22-23; 17:4 (petitions of Moses), Nu. 22:10-11, 34; Nu. 23:4 (petitions and confessions of Balaam). The priestly editor includes two prayers by individuals, namely a petition by Abraham (Gen. 17:18) and a reproach by Moses (Ex.6:11,30). The deuteronomist uses several such prayers, including Dt. 3:24-5 (Moses' petition), Ju. 6:22, 36-7,39 (Gideon's praise and petition), Ju.11:30-31 (Jephthah's petition), Ju. 13:8 (Manoah's request), Ju. 15:18 and 16:28,30 (Samson's petitions), 1 Sam. 1:11

⁸⁴ Cf. Greenberg, ibid., pp. 6-7; J.W. Corvin, A Stylistic and Functional Study of the Prose Prayers in the Historical Narratives of the Old Testament, PhD Emory University, 1972, DAI 33 (1972) P387-A, pp. 46-52; E.G. Newing, pp. 25-65 of The Prose Lamentations of Pre-exilic Israel, D Phil, University of St. Andrews, 1978, Aslib XXVIII/1, No.63; also Reventlow, op. cit. (1986), pp. 81ff.

⁸⁵ For example, Mowinckel, PIW ¹, pp. 40-41; Tsevat, op. cit., p. 8; Corvin, op. cit., pp. 43-47; also Greenberg, op. cit., pp.5ff.

(Hannah's petition), 1 Sam. 3:10 and 16:2 (Samuel's petitions and reproaches), 2 Sam. 15:31 (David's petition), 2 Sam 24:10 (David's confession), 1 Kgs. 3:6-9 (Solomon's petition), 1 Kgs. 19:4, 10, 14 (Elijah's petitions and reproach), and 2 Kgs. 20:3 (Hezekiah's reproach). Even the chronicler includes three individual prose prayers in 1 Chr. 4:10 (Jabez's petition), 1 Chr. 21:8 (David's confession) and 2 Chr. 1:8-10 (Solomon's petition). Within the prophetic literature, examples include Isaiah's confession and petition (Is. 6:5 and 8), Hezekiah's petition (Is. 38:3) and Jer. 1:6 and 14:13 (Jeremiah's reproaches), Jer. 45:3 (Baruch's lament), and Jon. 4:2-3, 8-9 (Jonah's reproach). The wealth of these examples from such diverse types of literature clearly demonstrates the widespread phenomenon of genuine, personal prayer.⁸⁶

Although the prose prayers offer the most instances of personal piety, two other examples of prayer are also important. The first is the poetic prayers. These have correspondences with the psalms, not only in their psalmic language and forms, but also in the way they are sufficiently ambiguous to have a more general reusability. In their narrative contexts, examples of such prayers appropriated by individuals for their own life-setting include 1 Sam. 2: 1-10; 2 Sam. 1:19-27; Is. 38:10-20; Jon. 2:2-9 (MT 3-10); Dan. 2:20-23.⁸⁷

Another example is a later literary development in the personal

⁸⁶ This list only concerns prayers by individuals from personal life-settings. For other comprehensive lists of prose prayers, cf. Corvin, op. cit., Appendices I, II and III; Newing, op. cit., pp. 66-73; Greenberg, Biblical Prose Prayer, pp. 69-70, note 3.

⁸⁷ For example, see Gunkel, 'Psalmen', RGK ² IV, cols. 1615-6, 'Lieder des Einzelnen'; also Mowinckel, PIW ¹, p. 191; PIW ², p. 110; Greenberg, art. cit., pp. 87-90. Reference to Is. 38 and Jon. 2 is made in Chapter Five, 'Life, Death and God', pp. 67-8.

prayers of Job. The laments against the enemy (Job 6:13-27; 19:13-19 and 30:1-15) and complaints against God (Job 7:11-21; 9:14-24, 10:2-17, 13:23-27; 14:13-17; 16:7-14 and 19:7-12) and the personal laments concerning illness and suffering (Job 3:1-26; 6:1-12; 7:1-10; 9:25-31; 10:18-22 and 19:13-22) as well as the expressions of trust (16:19-21 and 19:25-27) are all relevant. Job 3 has already been noted for its correspondences with Jer. 20. Here the wisdom influence demonstrates that genuine personal prayers were composed in psalmic styles without any apparent need for gifted cultic professionals. 88

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse these examples of prayer in any detail. Together they illustrate that the psalms of the individual have several other associations. They may be different in degree from these other prayer models, but they are by no means different in kind. This chapter has shown that their closest proximity is to the confessions, but the implications on their correspondences with other types of prayer may be taken wider than this.

It is necessary at this stage to limit this thesis to a study of

88 A comparison between Jer. 20 and Job 3 was discussed on p.64 previously. See also H.W. Robinson, 'The Cross of Job' (first published as a monograph in 1916), in The Cross of the Old Testament, pp. 9ff.; D.N. Freedman, 'The Structure of Job 3', Bib 49 (1968), pp. 503-8; Westermann, Der Aufbau des Buches Hiob, Stuttgart, 1977, E Tr A. Muenchow, The Structure of the Book of Job, Philadelphia, 1981, chapters 2,3 and 4; R. Davidson, The Courage to Doubt, London, 1983, pp. 128ff. and 175ff.; Crenshaw, 'Murder without Cause: Job', in A Whirlpool of Torment, Philadelphia, 1984, pp. 57-75; N.C. Habel, The Book of Job, OTL, London, 1985, pp. 98-112; also Reventlow, op. cit. (1986), pp. 265-9.

the psalms themselves. The following chapters will assess six different aspects of personal piety found in the Psalter. Taken together, these features will illustrate that the psalms are rich in their various reflections on human experience, in all its heights and depths, so that, like Jeremiah's confessions, not only "traditionalism" but also "personality" may be seen to play an important part in their composition.

PART B

EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL PIETY IN THE PSALMS

PREFACE TO PART B

In the following six chapters, several important issues have not been discussed in any detail. For example, little is made of the separate collections of psalms within their canonical context; this is because the earlier life-settings of the composers are of greater relevance for this study than the eventual cultic usage or editorial setting.¹ Similarly, minimal attention is given to the superscriptions of the psalms; these are seen as later additions, and so are not paramount in understanding the earlier expressions of piety within a psalm.² Thirdly, confident assumptions on the date, provenance and authorship of the psalms are avoided; the main pre-occupation is with the common life-experiences of the psalmists which can be understood regardless of a particular cultural context.³

These omissions are because the following chapters concern selected examples of the personal piety of the psalmists, and are not intended to be studies of separate psalms.

¹ Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, § 13, pp. 433ff.; Mowinckel, PIW ², pp. 193ff.; Kraus, BKAT XV/I, § 3, pp. xii-xviii; Anderson, NCB, pp. 24-9; Sabourin, The Psalms, § 3, pp. 6ff.; E. Lipinski and I. Saint-Arnaud, 'Le Psautier' in SDB IX, Paris, 1979, cols. 187ff.; G.H. Wilson, The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, SBL Diss Series 76, California, 1985, pp. 163ff. and 190ff.; Miller, Interpreting the Psalms, pp. 14ff.; Seybold, Die Psalmen. Eine Einführung, Stuttgart, 1986, pp. 11-35.

² Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, § 14, pp. 455ff.; Mowinckel, PIW ² pp. 207ff.; Kraus, BKAT XV/I, § 4, pp. xviii-xxx; Childs, 'Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis', JSS 16 (1971), pp. 137-50; Anderson, NCB, pp. 43ff.; Sabourin, The Psalms, § 4, pp. 11ff.; Wilson, The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, pp. 173-81; Miller, Interpreting the Psalms, pp. 26ff.; also Seybold, Die Psalmen, pp. 89-93.

³ Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, § 12, pp. 415ff.; Mowinckel, PIW ², pp. 146ff.; Kraus, BKAT XV/I, §§ 7 and 8, pp. lvi ff. and lxi ff.; Sabourin, The Psalms, § 5, pp. 17ff.; Lipinski and Saint-Arnaud, 'Le Psautier', cols. 128ff.; also Seybold, Die Psalmen, pp. 36ff.

CHAPTER THREE TRUST IN GOD

"Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us."
(Ps. 62:9)

An attitude of trust in God pervades the psalms, for wherever there is a prayer or testimony offered from distress or thanksgiving, each psalmist *relies* upon God's providence. The form-critical classifications of communal psalms of confidence (e.g. Pss. 115; 125; 129 and 133) and of individual psalms of confidence (e.g. Pss. 3; 4; 11; 16; 23; 27; 62; 84; 121 and 131) are the most obvious examples of sustained trust in God, although the same themes are represented in other form-critical categories also.¹

An assessment of such a broad theme as the psalmists' experience of faith in God illustrates the problems of interpretation in the literary-critical and cult-functional methods, for each seeks to contextualise such expressions into a particular historical setting or an explicit type of cultic activity. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the pervasiveness of the experiences of trust defies any specific contextual classification. The expressions of trust are not entirely contingent upon any specific social or cultural setting, for they pertain to what is understood and shared in the whole of human experience. This observation will be demonstrated in the first section which examines the explicit vocabulary of trust in the psalms, and also in the later sections

¹ Cf. Gunkel/Begrich, *Einleitung*, § 4, pp. 117ff. and § 5, pp. 172ff.; also Begrich, in 'Die Vertrauensäußerungen im israelitischen Klagenlied des Einzelnen und in seinem babylonischen Gegenstück', *ZAW* 46 (1928), pp. 221-60.

which assess the diversity of life-experiences which are behind the more implicit references to trust in God.

(I) A WORD-STUDY OF THE HEBREW WORDS FOR TRUST

A study of the words used to describe trust in God should be set against the limitations of such an assessment. First, a more semantic analysis of the particular choice of language does not of itself always lead to the aesthetic understanding of the more profound attitudes behind such language.² Second, as well as the etymology of a particular word being important, of equal if not more consequence is a study of the use of the word in different psalms compared with the use in other parts of the biblical literature.³ The following word-study will therefore discuss not only the semantic and etymological issues, but also the meaning and use of the words within particular psalms. Four words of trust used by the psalmists will be assessed according to their order of frequency.⁴

² Cf. G. Wenham, Faith in the Old Testament, TSF Conference Lectures, Queen's University, Belfast, 1975-6, Part Three, 'Faith in the Psalms'; pp. 18-19, concluding a study of four Hebrew words for trust (אָמַן "believe"; אָמַן "trust"; אָסַן "take refuge"; and אָמַן אָמַן "trustworthiness") also notes the limitations of this approach.

³ For a detailed discussion of this subject, cf. J. Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language, London, 1961, Chapter Six, especially pp. 158-60; also J.F.A. Sawyer, Semantics in Biblical Research, London, 1972.

⁴ For the word-study here and in the following chapters, use has been made of relevant articles from TWAT (TDOT), TWOT, TWNT, BDB and ACHB. These have been listed in the bibliography, and a work is only referred to here when specific use is made of it in the discussion.

(a) $\Pi\cup\Gamma$

Derivatives of $\Pi\cup\Gamma$ are found over one hundred and eighty times in the Old Testament, thirty seven of these with religious connotations ⁵. When used in the context of trust, the word is normally used to depict safety or security by having someone or something in whom to place solid confidence.

The semantic field of this word has two particular associations. On the one hand, it refers to confidence which has been misplaced, whether in riches (Prov. 11:28; Pss. 49:7; 52:9), or in military power (Dt. 28:52; Is. 31:1; Jer. 5:17; Ps. 44:7), or even in man himself (Jer. 17:5; Prov. 25:19; Ps. 118:8; 146:3). Alternatively confidence may be properly placed in God. In 2 Kgs. 18-19, Hezekiah repeatedly places his trust in God despite Rabshekah's taunts and threats (18:5,19,20,21,22,24; 19:10, each using $\sqrt{\Pi\cup\Gamma}$). Even Job's radical questioning of God is based upon a confident trust in him which allows freedom for such doubts to be expressed (Job 31:24; 39:11, both using $\sqrt{\Pi\cup\Gamma}$).

Within the psalms, $\Pi\cup\Gamma$ occurs most frequently in the Qal, mainly using the perfect (Ps. 28:7, and thirty five other times), but also the imperative (Ps.37:3, and eighteen other times). Sometimes $\sqrt{\Gamma\chi}$ is used (e.g. Pss. 4:7; 56:5), or $\sqrt{\Gamma\psi}$ is used (e.g. Pss. 31:16; 37:5). The Hiph'il is used only rarely (cf. Ps. 22:11): the direction of trust is from man to God.

The idea of trust misplaced and rightly placed is distinguished in the LXX. The negative sense is usually translated $\pi\epsilon\iota\theta\omega$, and

⁵ Cf. A.J. Jepsen, ' $\Pi\cup\Gamma$ ' in TWAT I, cols. 608-15, E Tr TDOT II, pp. 88-94.

the positive sense ἐλπίζω. This is best seen in Ps. 115, where v.8 uses the word πειθω concerning trust in idols, whilst vv. 9,10 and 11 use the word ἐλπίζω concerning trust in God. Where trust is used of God, his dependability is emphasised. A repeated phrase is "trust in the mercy (בְּחַסְדּוֹ) of God": examples include Pss. 13:6; 25:2; 26:1; 28:7; 31:7,15; 32:10; 55:24; 56:5,6,13; 86:2 and 143:8.

בטח implies an experience of God, and not merely an intellectual assent. This experience is testified by the way the psalmists seek to share their confidence in God with others. When such calls to others to trust occur, בטח is mostly used to indicate an experience to be shared. For example, in Ps. 37:5b, the psalmist exhorts the congregation "Trust in him (וּבְטַח עָלָיו), and he will act"; or in Ps. 62:9a, the call is "Trust him (בְּטַחוּ בּוֹ) at all times, O people". Other examples of exhortations to share the psalmist's trust include Pss. 4:6; 9:11; 32:10; 37:3; 40:4; 112:7; 115:9,10,11; 125:1; 135:18 and 146:3.

(b) חסה

Derivatives of חסה are found thirty times with religious associations in the Old Testament, twenty four of these occurring in the psalms. Unlike בטח, the profane sense is rare, and when used the meaning of the noun מַחֲסֶה is "shelter" or "protection" (e.g. Is. 4:6; Job 24:8).

In the psalms, the Qal is most frequently used, with a preference for an emphatic ב concerning God as the object of trust (e.g. Pss. 2:12; 5:12; 7:2; 11:1; 16:1; 18:3; 25:20; 31:2,20;

34:9,23; 37:40; 57:2; 64:11; 71:1; 118:8,9; 141:8; 144:2). The examples are all from individual or royal psalms, showing the more personal usage of this term .

Whilst trust as confidence (= **בטח**) may be wrongly placed , trust as refuge (= **חסה**) is always directed towards God. An example of this is found in Ps. 118:8:

"It is better to take refuge (**לחסות**) in the LORD than to put confidence (**לבטח**) in man."

When trust is directed to God, **חסה** is preferred; when directed to man, by contrast, **בטח** may be used.

The ideas of physical refuge and God as refuge conjoin when the suppliant acknowledges trust in the sanctuary as his refuge. This is apparent in 1 Kgs 1:59, when Adonijah seeks refuge by the altar of the temple. It is occasionally apparent in the psalms, where it is used not so much of God himself as his sanctuary; for example, see Ps. 61:5:

"Let me dwell in your tent for ever!
Let me hide (**חֲסֶה**) under the shelter of your wings!"⁶

Unlike **בטח** , the term **חסה** is rarely used as an imperative exhortation. It is usually found in prayers addressed only to God, where the psalmist expresses his personal vulnerability (e.g. Pss. 7:2; 11:1; 16:1; 18:3; 25:20; 71:1; 141:8 and 144:2). These are experiences of private trust which involve God and the suppliant alone (**בְּךָ יְהוָה חָסִיתִי**); they are not part of the confident assertions

⁶ The RSV translates 61:4 [MT5] as "Oh to be safe under the shelter of thy wings". Reference to the "wings" as refuge is found also in Pss. 17:8, 36:8, 57:2 and 63:8, and the "tent" as refuge is found in Ps. 27:4-5. The language most probably reflects a poignant wish of an exile for safety in God's temple.

of trust which upbuild public confidence.

(c) יָדָא

Derivatives of יָדָא occur less in the psalms. The Hiph^ll is mostly used. Its occurrences outside the psalms associate the term with firmness, support and strength: for example, in 2 Kgs. 18:16, it is used of the pillars of support in the temple. The Niph^{al}l participle means "to be dependable, sure" used of people (Nu.12:7; 1 Sam. 2:35), of God himself (Dt.7:9), and of God's covenant (Ps. 89:28). The Hiph^ll in the psalms implied trust as certitude. The full meaning of this is found in the word play of the Hiph^ll and Niph^{al}l in Is. 7:9. Ahaz is told that unless he believes (Hiph^ll) he will not be established (Niph^{al}l), or that without trusting faith, he will have no stability.⁷ Further associations of this term with confidence are brought out in the word יָדָא ("So be it!"), for example used at the end of Pss. 41:14 and 106:48. It is a term also used in its Aramaic form by Jesus to express the certainty of a matter (Mt. 5:18,26).

The occasional use of יָדָא in the psalms concerns a confident response to God's initiative. Like יָדָא, this sort of trust is never misplaced outside God. The LXX accords this positive application by translating יָדָא as πιστεύω, a term used many times to imply certitude of faith in the New Testament. It actually

⁷ Cf. J.C.C. van Dorssen, De Derivata van de Stam יָדָא in het Hebreeuwsch van het Oude Testament, Amsterdam, 1951, who contrasts the term in the Qal, Niph^{al}l and Hiph^ll, with reference to the different prepositions used with the Hiph^ll to indicate degrees of confident faith.

occurs only occasionally in the LXX translation of יָדָא .⁸ The most likely explanation for the infrequency of this term in Hebrew is because of the noun derivative יָדָא יָדָא which describes the steadfastness of God's attitude to man (e.g. Pss. 36:6; 89:2,3,6,9,25,34; 92:3; 119:75, 90; 143:1). There would be a natural reluctance for man to apply to himself the consistency and dependability shown by God, thus rendering expressions using יָדָא to describe trust from man to God as only rarely appropriate.⁹

The most important reference to this term is found in a prayer in Ps. 116:10. The RSV translates this as "I kept my faith" (יָדָא יָדָא) to indicate the certitude aspect. It is also used of trusting firmly in God's commands, in Ps. 119:66. Elsewhere it occurs in indictments of others who do not have this certain faith in God. In Ps. 106:24 it is used of those in the wilderness "having no faith (לֹא יָדָא יָדָא) in his promise". Ps. 78:22 similarly judges the fathers "because they had no faith (לֹא יָדָא יָדָא) in God.

(d) יָדָא

The root יָדָא has associations with trust as hope.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Weiser, 'πίστις' in TWNT VI, pp. 182-97, E Tr TDNT VI, pp. 174-90, who observes that יָדָא is the most important aspect of faith Old Testament, because of the central importance of the LXX translation πίστις in the New Testament. Although the word occurs slightly more in the Pentateuch than in the Psalter, it would appear that these assertions are influenced more by the New Testament usage than the Old Testament evidence.

⁹ Cf. van Dorssen, *op.cit.*, p. 127, noting how often this word is paralleled with יָדָא to indicate God's "faithful love".

¹⁰ Other important roots are יָדָא , for example in Pss. 25:3,5,21; 27:14; 37:7,9; 39:7; 40:2; 52:10; 69:7 and 130:5; also the verb יָדָא which occurs in Pss. 33:20 and 71:5.

Outside the psalms, the term sometimes means to wait for a period of time for ultimate good: this is used in the Niph'al in Gen 8:12 and Ezek. 19:5, and in the Piel in Job 14:14. Within the psalms, this sense of waiting for ultimate good is brought out in the LXX translation of יחל as ἐλπίζω.

The use of יחל as referring to trust and hope is seen in the threefold testimony of trust in Ps. 33:20ff. The future perspective of the psalmist is that of waiting for ultimate good:

"Our soul waits (חַכְתָּה) for the LORD....
Because we trust (בַּטְחָנוּ) in his holy name.....¹¹
Even as we hope in thee (כְּאִשֶּׁר יִחְלֵנוּ לָךְ)."

A similar future orientation is found in Ps. 39:8, a psalm contrasting the transience of man with the faithfulness of God. Again trust is expressed as hope for ultimate good to come:

"And now, O LORD, for what do I wait? (מַה־לִּי יָתִי)
My hope (תוֹחִלָּתִי) is in thee."

Other occurrences in the psalms take up stereotyped phraseology. For example, the two exhortations "O Israel, hope in the Lord!" in Pss. 130:7 and 131:3 use יחל with the force of the Piel.¹² A similar phrase occurs in the first person singular (Pss. 38:16; 69:4), and in the second person plural (Ps. 31:25) and sometimes in

¹¹ For a discussion of the "name" of God inspiring trust, see the following discussion on pp. 105ff.; Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 198-9, E Tr OTL pp. 294-5 notes the paradoxical way the psalmist here draws hope from past experience of God.

¹² Weiser, DATD 15, pp. 533 and 537, E Tr OTL pp. 772 and 777-8 notes that the corrupt state of 130:7 suggests it is an addition, although sees 131:3 as integral to the psalm. Both examples however appear to show the way the individual testifies from his own experience of confidence in God to encourage the community: so too Gunkel, GKAT pp. 563-4; Oesterley, TP, pp. 527, 529; Kraus BKAT XV/II, pp. 874-5 and Anderson, NCB, p. 877.

the imperative form (Pss. 42:12 and 43:6 : הוֹחִילִי לֵאלֹהִים , or "Hope in God!"). From these examples, we see that this aspect of trust as hope is applied not only to the individual (as in Pss. 31, 38, 42-3 and 69) but also to the nation (as in Pss. 130 and 131).

To summarise, the experience of trust has four related metaphorical expressions within the psalms. The first concerns an experience of security and stability with God; the second reflects an experience of need and refuge in God; the third suggests an experience of confidence and certitude with God; and the fourth is an experience of expectation and hope with God.

Each of these experiences pertains to a diverse number of life-settings, which are not always as clear to perceive as the historical-critical or cult-functional interpretations would appear to assume. The following sections will develop the implications of this observation, in order to show that attempts to over-classify the ambiguous language in the psalms are apt to assume too much about the context in which they were written.

(II) THE EXPERIENCE OF TRUST AS SECURITY IN GOD

This study looks at expressions of trust which explicitly use the term נִצָּח as well as more implicit expressions of confidence in God. Two particular means of inspiring such trust will be examined. The first concerns the word of God, and the second, the name of God.

(a) Trust in the Word of God

Several scholars have understood that in the psalms the references to the "word" inspiring such trust concern a Heilsorakel.¹³ The changes of mood from fear to faith are seen to have arisen from the psalmist's certainty of being heard from the receipt of an oracle. Statements such as Ps. 3:5 substantiate this theory:

"I cry aloud ($\chi\gamma\pi\chi$) to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy hill" ¹⁴

Further evidence is found where the quotation of an oracle is given using a first person report. The most obvious examples are Pss. 12:6; 50:5ff., 16ff.; 60:8-10/ 108:8ff.; 75:4ff.; 81:7ff.; 89:20ff.; 91:14-16 and 95:8ff.

These psalms show that a cultic official would often mediate words of assurance to the suppliant. The examples are mainly communal psalms, with the exception of Ps. 12. This would suggest these psalms were part of some greater public liturgy. The question remains, however, whether other individual psalms which have no explicit reference to oracular activity move from fear to faith only on account of some word of assurance being offered through the cult.

The word of God is only implicitly identified as an oracle six

¹³ Cf. Mowinckel, Kultusprophetie und prophetische Psalmen, PsSt III, pp. 68ff.; also PIW ², chapter XII; also Begrich, art. cit., proposing priestly as well as prophetic mediation of such oracles. See also A.R. Johnson, The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody, Cardiff, 1979, on the recipient of oracles usually as the king.

¹⁴ The imperfect tense ($\chi\gamma\pi\chi$) could equally read "As often as I cried ...he answered"; if so, this need no longer be a reference to an actual oracle as to having received repeated actual help from "the God of Zion". Cf. Anderson, NCB, p. 73.

times in the psalms. ¹⁵ Ps. 107:19ff. recalls the "words" of deliverance God offered to the people in their distress; Ps. 119:81 equates the "word" with the hope of salvation; Ps. 130:5 shows the psalmist waiting for a word to be offered to bring him vindication; Ps. 141:6 pleads for the "word" (of an earlier oracle) to be fulfilled; and Ps. 56:5, 11-12 repeats a refrain of praise to God's "word", which has changed fear to trust (using נבט):

"In God's word will I praise
In God have I trusted (נבט)
and will not fear" (v.5) ¹⁶

These last four examples illustrate that the word is in fact occasionally identified as an oracle in a few individual psalms.

However, references to the "word" inspiring trust are not limited to oracular material alone. Ps. 33 is a hymn on creation. Verse 6 makes it clear that the word inspiring this psalmist's trust is by no means an oracle:

"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made
and all their host by the breath of his mouth."

Such reflection on this word clearly inspires faith and trust, as was seen earlier in the threefold expressions of trust at the end of this psalm in vv. 20-22. The "word" in v. 6 refers to the creative command of God, using the ancient Near Eastern concept of the word in creation, as in Gen.1. Trust is thus evoked by reflection on the "word" of God, but without oracular intervention. A similar example

¹⁵ Cf W.H. Schmidt, ' נבט ' in TWAT II, cols.101-33, E Tr TDOT III, pp.111-25, on the word of God.

¹⁶ The RSV reads more generally "In God whose word I praise/ In God I trust without a fear." Our translation is to depict how the psalmist turns to God at his very moment of fear. The use of the "word" need not imply a specific oracle, but, like Ps. 119:164, God's "words of comfort" to his people. The fact that this is a refrain, repeated in vv.11ff., would affirm this interpretation.

of trust evoked by the creative word is found in Ps. 147:15 and 18, where God sends forth his word to transform his earth.

Another way in which the "word" inspires trust is in relation to the law. Ps. 119 frequently describes in synonymous terms how the word as promise and the word as law deepen the psalmist's trust in God (e.g. vv. 49, 56, 89 and 96). Ps. 147 similarly places the "word" and "statutes and ordinances" in parallelism. In Ps. 105:8 the "word" and "statutes of the covenant" are in parallelism.

We may conclude that the experience of trust as security in God is often inspired by a "word" of God, but that it is by no means always the word as mediated through oracular activity. Sometimes it may be that the word is part of personal reflection, for example, through reference to creation and the law. The word as a source of inspiration for the psalmists is not only dependent on the external support from cultic activity, but also on more internal reflection upon personal experience. This latter source of inspiration is not open to further detailed contextualisation.

(b) Trust in the Name of God

The "word" ($\aleph \beth \daleth$) of God occurs only eighteen times in the psalms, outside Ps. 119. The "name" ($\aleph \psi$) of God by contrast occurs over one hundred times in sixty seven psalms. This frequency has suggested to some that the power of the name of God, mediated through cultic activity, more regularly inspired the trust of the

psalmists than an oracular word.¹⁷

Wevers sees that the proclamation of the name of God through the cult actually supplants the need for an oracle. However, the relationship between the power of the name and the word is sometimes closer for the psalmist than for Wevers; for example, Ps. 138:2 praises God's name and God's word in the same context. This does not however undermine Wever's basic thesis, that the proclamation of the name of God occurred through cultic mediation: the name of God does seem to be particularly effective in procuring vindication. For example, Ps. 135:13,14 praises God's name and then proclaims the people's vindication; in Ps. 91:14 God declares his protection of the psalmist, because he "knows my name". Ps. 54:2 appeals to God to save "by thy name". Other examples where the psalmist's trust is evoked from reference to God's name include Pss. 7:18, 69:31 and 116:13,17. The psalmists can speak of loving the name of God (Ps. 5:12), of fearing the name of God (Ps.61:6) and of bearing testimony to the name of God (Ps. 22:23).

It appears from these verses that expressions of trust in the name of God are not dependent on cultic activity alone. The temple, the ark, the sacrifices, and the law itself were all tangible aspects of cultic activity, evoking trust by their physical presence; however, the name of God is a more abstract concept, like the word of

¹⁷ See for example J.W.M. Wevers, 'A Study of the Form Criticism of Individual Complaint Psalms', VT VI (1956), pp. 80-96. Wevers offers no categorisation of the different ways the power of the name of God is appropriated in these sixty seven psalms; a cultic mediation of the name is generally assumed to be the case.

God, and therefore more open to a metaphorical interpretation.¹⁸ The psalmists often use the name of God metaphorically in referring to its inspiring their trust. For example, in Ps. 9:11, the ongoing process of knowing God's name inspires trust:

"And those who know thy name
will put their trust (וַיִּבְטְחוּ) in thee."

Similarly, the trust that God will act "for the sake of his name" (e.g. Pss. 23:3; 25:11; 31:4; 109:21; 143:11) assumes a more spiritualised appeal to God to act for the honour of his name. This is exemplified in Ps. 115:1:

"Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
But to thy name give glory."

In addition, the references to giving "praise to God's name" (Pss. 7:18; 9:3; 18:50; 34:4; 44:9; 66:5; 68:5; 69:31; 92:2; 99:3; 113:1 135:1,3 and 148:5) suggest a spiritualised reflection on God's name beyond that proclaimed through the sanctuary.¹⁹ And like the word of God, the name of God is praised as part of creation

¹⁸ On the issue of metaphorical and "spiritualised" language, cf. Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Teil 2/3, Basel, 1935, § 21, 'Die Grundformen der persönlichen Gottesbeziehung', pp. 23ff. and 36ff., E Tr J. Baker, Theology of the Old Testament, Volume Two, London, 1967, chapter XXI, §§ 2 and 4, 'Fundamental Forms of Man's Personal Relationship with God'. Also G. von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments I, München, 1957, 'Die Anfechtungen Israels und der Trost des Einzelnen' pp. 381-415, E Tr D.A.G. Stalker, 'Israel's Trials and the Consolation of the Individual', Old Testament Theology Volume One, 1975, pp. 383-418. Von Rad notes that consolation was made available not only through external rites such as priestly oracles and refuge in the sanctuary, but even before the exile, through the language of prayer, where God is known by emanations such as "light", "life", "glory" and "name". On this same issue, see also H.-J. Hermisson, Sprache und Ritus, pp. 25ff. and 106ff.

¹⁹ On God's name as an extension of personality, cf. L.H. Brockington, 'The Hebrew Conception of Personality in Relation to the Knowledge of God', JTS XLVII (1946), pp. 1-11; also A.R. Johnson, The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God, Cardiff, 1942, Part II, concerning the spirit, word and name of God.

(Ps. 8:2,10). Another creation hymn, Ps. 33, as already noted, praises the word of God (v. 6) and ends with an expression of trust (נִסַּח) in the name of God (v.21). To trust the name of God may therefore be a metaphor to indicate simple confidence in God himself; such trust need not, as Wevers implies, be encouraged every time through cultic proclamation.

We may conclude that expressions of trust in God's word and God's name are linked not only with cultic activity, but also with the psalmist's own reflections upon God's presence experienced beyond any particular cultic festival. The horizons of the psalmist's trust are sometimes tied to a specific time and place within a cultic framework, and at other times offer empirical expressions of trust which have a more spiritualised orientation.

(III) THE EXPERIENCE OF TRUST AS NEED FOR GOD

Albertz rightly notes that one of the distinctions between individual and communal laments is that the community uses expressions of trust which depict a deliberate choice in Yahweh (or Elohim) as their God, whilst the individual has no such choice to make, fleeing to God for the only source of protection. For example, Albertz observes of the more personal familial piety:

"Wenn der einzelne Mensch sich in höchster Todesnot mit seinem Vertrauensbekenntnis an Gott klammert, dann trifft er damit keine bewusste Entscheidung für oder gegen Gott.....Er flieht darum so "selbstverständlich" zu seinem Gott, so wie ein weinendes Kind zu seiner Mutter läuft, um dort Schutz und Trost zu finden."²⁰

²⁰ Cf. Albertz, op. cit., pp. 32-37, on the two expressions "my God" and "our God" in the different laments. The quotation is from pp. 35-6.

The word for "trust" normally used in individual psalms to indicate the need for refuge in God is **חֹסֶה** . For example, Ps. 7:2 starts typically with this:

"O LORD my God, in thee do I take refuge (**חֲסִיתִי**)."

Ps. 16:1 also begins the same way:

"Preserve me O God,
for in thee I take refuge (**כִּי־חֲסִיתִי בְךָ**)."

Similarly in Ps. 17:7ff., as the psalmist clings to God alone, he appeals to God as "Saviour of those who seek refuge. " (**מוֹשִׁיעַ חוֹסִים**). Ps. 31:2 is the same, beginning like Ps. 7:1:

"In thee O LORD, do I seek refuge (**חֲסִיתִי**)."

and the theme is carried through to v.20 where God's goodness is proclaimed for "those who take refuge (**לְחוֹסִים**) in thee".

Ps. 57:2 starts similarly:

..."for in thee my soul takes refuge (**חֲסִיָּה**)."

So also does Ps. 71:1:

"In thee, O LORD, do I take refuge (**חֲסִיתִי**)."

A final example might be Ps. 141:8, where the psalmist expresses his vulnerability which leaves him to trust God alone:

"In thee I seek refuge (**חֲסִיתִי**);
leave me not defenceless!"

The frequent references to taking "refuge" in God once more raise questions concerning the literal use of language, with respect to seeking asylum in the sanctuary, as well as the metaphorical use, with respect to finding spiritual safety with God alone. Other descriptions of God as a rock (**סֶלַע**) in Pss. 18:3; 31:4; 40:3; 42:10; 71:3 and 144:2, and as a defence (**צוּר**) in Pss. 18:32,47; 27:5; 28:1; 31:4; 61:3; 89:27; 92:16 and 95:1 all suggest rather the figurative appropriation of language

concerned with God's protection. נִסְכָּא is thus best read as a spiritualised expression concerning safety with God; it is to be contrasted to the more literal term מִלְאָה , which refers to the sanctuary as a refuge or asylum in Nu. 35:6,11,12,13,14,15,25,26,28 and Josh. 20:2,3,13, but which never even occurs in the psalms.²¹

The theme in these examples is that God alone is the source of protection, as the psalmist continually expresses his need and vulnerability. The repeated formulae used to express this need show how much this has become part of conventional phraseology. By borrowing from the popular prayers of his day, the psalmist gains comfort in reflecting how his need has been experienced by others before him who have also shared later in God's restoration.

Where expressions of trust suggest an element of choice for God, preference is given by contrast to the word בְּטַח . For example, Ps. 86:8 states

"There is none like thee among the gods, O LORD."

which is set against the expression of trust in v. 2:

"Save thy servant who trusts (בְּטַח) in thee."

Similarly, Ps. 135:5 proclaims Yahweh as the people's God:

"...our LORD is above all gods"

The psalm closes with an indictment of other nations who have chosen idols instead (vv. 15-18) and who trust (בְּטַח) in them (v. 18b).

²¹ Cf. D. Eichhorn, Gott als Fels, Burg und Zuflucht, Diss. Marburg, 1969, on the literal and spiritual language used to describe safety in God.

By contrast, $\text{נִסְּחַ$ occurs almost entirely in individual psalms, and the theme is always that of God as the only source of help. Other examples not referred to above include Pss. 5:12; 11:1; 25:20; 34:9,23; 36:8; 37:40; 61:5 and 64:11.²²

In conclusion, regarding trust expressed as a need for God, there is a clear distinction seen in the use of $\text{נִסְּחַ$ between need experienced by the community and need experienced by the individual. Here at least there is one clear example of the way that personal, individual piety is as evident in the psalms as the representative, communal piety which is so prominent in the cult-functional interpretation of the psalms. The psalmists' expressions of piety cannot be categorised in one way more than the other. The diverse expressions concerning trust in God indicate that both personal and communal piety play their part.

(IV) THE EXPERIENCE OF TRUST AS CERTITUDE IN GOD

Several individual psalms move between despair and certitude without any explicit reference to an assurance given by a word from God or by the proclamation of the name of God. In some cases the psalm then ends in a state of trust, usually on a high note of elation and rejoicing. But in other psalms, further doubt and despair follow the expressions of trust; if any cultic mediation had taken place, one might argue it was somewhat ineffective.

Whether or not a psalm ends in confident trust, an adequate

²² Other relevant psalms include three royal psalms (Pss. 2:12; 18:3,31 and 144:2); a prophetic exhortation probably also involving the king (Ps. 91:4); and a communal thanksgiving (Ps. 118:8,9).

explanation for the varying changes of mood is that of the inner dialogue in prayer. Such moods have after all been testified in Jeremiah's confessions and in the selected prose prayers.

Psalms which end on a note of confident trust, after earlier cries of reproach and despair, include Pss. 7, 13, 26 27 and 71. Ps. 7:17 ends with a vow of thanksgiving, but this is the only explicit expression of trust throughout the psalm. Ps. 13:6 ends on the same contrasting note of trust after previous despair:

"(But) I have trusted thy steadfast love
(וְאֲנִי בַחֲסֶדְךָ בִטְחֹתִי);
my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation."

Ps. 26:12 ends on a quieter note of trust, although the certitude expressed in the last verse contrasts with the pleas of innocence and integrity in the rest of the psalm:

"My foot stands on level ground (בְּיָשׁוּר);
In the great congregation I will bless the LORD."²³

Ps. 27 also ends the lament of vv.7ff. quite abruptly with an expression of certitude:

"I believe (לֹא אֶאֱמָנָה) that I shall see
the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living!" (v.13)²⁴

Ps. 71 has the same pattern; the lengthy calls for help and descriptions of distress move suddenly into hope and trust in the middle of the psalm (vv. 14ff.), and are sustained till the end of the psalm, to reach a paean of praise:

²³ The word **יָשׁוּר** is difficult to understand. It is probably from **יָשַׁר**, so that the suppliant is pleading for God's "righteousness" or "vindication"; this would fit with the previous pleas of integrity (vv. 1,3,11). The psalm therefore ends not only with confident trust but also an implicit plea of innocence.

²⁴ Textually the verse is difficult; some words appear to be missing. If **לֹא** is to be translated as a conditional rather than emphatic expression, the verse could be paraphrased "I would have despaired if God's goodness had not been there."

"But I will hope continually (וְאֲנִי תָמִיד אֵיחָל),
and will praise thee yet more and more."(v.14)²⁵

Psalms which express certain trust and then move back to despair include Pss. 25, 38, 86 and 141. Ps. 25 moves from motifs of confidence in vv. 8-15 to pleas for further help in vv. 16-18, and ends with waiting for God to act in v. 21:

"...for I wait for thee (כְּוִיתִיךָ)."

Ps. 38 offers an expression of confidence in v.16, but ends with final invocations in vv. 20-21,22-23:

"Make haste to help me!"(v.23)

Ps. 86 offers a long prayer of confidence in vv. 8-13, but again ends with pleas to be heard in vv. 14-17:

"Show me a sign of thy favour!"(v.17.)

Ps. 141 expresses confident trust in God in vv. 6-7, but ends in vv. 8-10 with further invocations:

"Leave me not defenceless!"(v.8)

Within the discussion of trust in the word of God, it was seen that the argument for a priestly salvation oracle is most convincing when the words of assurance are actually referred to.²⁶ A priestly salvation oracle may also be proposed in accounting for the sudden changes in mood evidenced within the first list of psalms referred to above. Nevertheless, caution is necessary in assuming oracular activity to be behind every sudden expression of trust; in the second

²⁵ Pss. 13:6, 26:11-12 and 71:14 of these examples all show the use of what Westermann calls the "wāw adversative"- or the use of the wāw to indicate a change of mood: cf. Westermann, Praise and Lament, pp. 70-72. This should be attributed to the style of the psalmist; it need not indicate an oracle, particularly as it does not occur in every case where a distinct change of mood is evident.

²⁶ Cf. pp. 103ff. of this chapter.

list of psalms, the changing moods of trust are part of a continuing dialogue of prayer; no cultic mediation is referred to, nor is it necessary to appeal to it. Such an explanation may also be given for psalms in the previous list; the argument works both ways, as the psalms in the first list offer little clue as to their actual life-setting.

In conclusion, a change of mood from doubt to trust need not always imply outside cultic intervention for the psalmist, but rather may be understood more simply as the contrasting moods of the suppliant's prayer.²⁷ This again illustrates the limitations of the cult-functional interpretation which seeks to categorise the psalmists' expressions of trust in terms of cultic intervention alone.

(V) THE EXPERIENCE OF TRUST AS HOPE IN GOD

The word study of the term $\gamma\eta$ and related terms showed how close expressions of trust were to those of hope. The two aspects of hope which inspired the faith of the psalmist were those concerning the national hopes of the cultic community, and those with a more metaphorical application pertaining to the lifetime of the psalmist.

Most studies on future hope in the Psalter have focussed on more eschatological elements. These assume that the psalmist is most preoccupied with theological themes transmitted through the major festivals of Israel and kept alive by the prophets' teaching.

²⁷ Cf. Goldingay, 'The Dynamic Cycle of Praise and Prayer', pp. 87ff., on the interchangeability of lament, plea and praise, and the way these could be inspired either by ritual activity or by an inner experience of faith.

For Gunkel, such eschatology originated in the prophets and from there was used in the theology of the enthronement psalms, royal psalms and prophetic exhortations.²⁸ For Mowinckel, eschatology grew out of the disappointed hopes for the king and nation in the late monarchy; these were expressed in hymns sung at the annual autumnal festival, and out of this an enthronement festival developed. Mowinckel sees that the themes of this eschatology- such as the world rule of Judah from Zion over the nations, and the establishing of Yahweh as king over all the earth- are found not only in Gunkel's list of psalms, but scattered throughout the Psalter whenever a psalm was composed for the enthronement festival.²⁹ For Mowinckel, most expressions of hope in the psalms pertain indirectly to Israelite eschatology and are part of the liturgy of the autumnal festival.

Setting aside the eschatological themes in the communal psalms, which accord generally with Mowinckel's interpretation, we need to assess whether the individual psalms also take up the great traditions of the nation to gain hope for the future. To a limited extent, Mowinckel's thesis stands: the history of God's dealings with the nation occasionally becomes the focus of hope within a few individual prayers, and on most occasions the horizons of the psalmist suggest the suppliant might be the king.

²⁸ Gunkel's ideas were published before major editions of Mowinckel's work; cf. for example, Die Propheten, Göttingen, 1917. The two articles on the prophets and the psalms in RGG² IV, cols. 1538-54 and 1609-30 respectively also develop this argument. See also Einleitung, § 9, VII and VIII.

²⁹ Cf. Mowinckel, PsSt. II: Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie, pp. 210ff and 315ff. on the origin of Israelite eschatology. For example: "Ich sah schliesslich, dass die ganze Eschatologie ein in die Zukunft verlegtes Thronbesteigungsfest war." (p.220) See also PIW¹, pp. 189ff.

One clear example is found in Ps. 77:4ff.,12ff.:

"I will call to mind (**אֶזְכֶּר**) the deeds of the LORD;
Yea, I will remember (**כִּי-אֶזְכֶּרָה**)
thy wonders of old."(v.12)³⁰

The whole psalm suggests the speaker is the king. The same theme is evident in Ps. 71, which is a reflective prayer by one in old age. Vv. 15, 16 and 17 show how the psalmist recalls similarly the "righteous acts" and "mighty deeds" of God, and these supply the inspiration for the hope expressed in v. 14:

"But I will hope (**אֶחָל**) continually."

The relationship between personal and national hope can also work in the other direction. Pss. 130 and 131 start with expressions of intimate trust

"...like a child quieted at its mother's breast" (131:2)
and move beyond this to encouraging the hope of the nation:

"O Israel, hope (**יֶחֶל**) in the LORD!" (130:7; cf.131:3)

Such exhortations reflect how personal trust furbished national hopes, just as the national faith inspired personal hopes. There is a clear overlap between personal trust and national eschatology, and to this extent Mowinckel's observations are correct.

However, several other psalms reflect the expressions of hope and trust, but these have no national or eschatological awareness of the type Mowinckel identifies with hope. They include Pss.

³⁰ The Ketib reads "I will proclaim (**אֶזְכֶּר**) thy wonders..." but this seems to destroy the parallelism of vv. 12 and 13, which uses four synonymous expressions to recall God's goodness. The Qerē is thus preferable, and fits with v.6 which reads "I consider (**חֲשַׁבְתִּי**) the days of old..." Ps. 77:12 shows that the suppliant is given personal hope from reflection upon the nation's history.

27, 35 and 42-3.

In Ps. 27, the lament in vv. 7ff. moves from calls for help and descriptions of distress to a final expression of hope in v. 14:

"Hope (לִּי) in the LORD,
Be strong and he will strengthen your heart,
And hope again ($\text{לִּי} : \text{פִּי}$) in the LORD!"³¹

The psalm has no reference whatsoever to the great historical traditions of the community. The movement from fear to hope concerns rather the personal life-setting of the psalmist:

"For my father and mother have forsaken me,
but the LORD will take me up."(v.10)

Ps. 35 has extended calls for help (vv. 1-8; 11-17; 19-27) interspersed with expressions of trusting hope (vv. 9-10; 18; 28). There are no references to the concerns of the nation; the psalmist uses familial imagery to indicate his personal concerns:

"I went about as one who laments his mother..." (v14b)

As with Ps. 27, the expressions of hope concern only the experience of the psalmist.

Pss. 42-3 moves rapidly between descriptions of despair and calls for help (42:2-6a, 7-8, 10-12a; 43:1-3, 5a) which are interspersed with expressions of trust and hope; we have already noted the use of the formula

"Hope ($\text{לִּי} \text{ הוֹחֵלִי}$) in God!" (42:6)
or
"Hope ($\text{לִּי} \text{ הוֹחֵלִי}$) in God!" (42:12 and 43:5)

³¹ The RSV reads: "Wait for the Lord,/Be strong and let your heart take courage/Yea, wait for the Lord!" By emphasising the idea of "waiting", Kraus, BKAT XV/I sees the suppliant is waiting for another salvation oracle. Yet by understanding the verse as expressing "hope" through an internal dialogue with God in prayer, there is in fact no need to transpose oracular activity into the psalm. For this view, cf. Weiser, DATD 14 p. 171, E Tr OTL, p. 254 and Oesterley, TP, p. 197.

The resources for hope again have no reference at all to the historical traditions of the nation. Instead, hope is inspired by simple reflection on the continual presence of God throughout the psalmist's changing moods:

"By day the LORD commands his steadfast love;
and at night his song is with me." (42:9)³²

When reflecting on the past, hope is refreshed by the recollection of great moments of public worship, rather than by any nationalistic ideology, in spite of the situation in exile (cf. 42:7):

"These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God" (42:5)

These expressions of hope are based upon personal reminiscences of God's presence in public and in private worship. They pertain to the life-experience of the suppliant.

In conclusion, trust when expressed as hope may on the one hand take up the great theological traditions of the cultic community, and develop these into brief eschatological utterances concerning the future of the nation. This is most evident in the hymns and royal psalms, and there is a little evidence for it in a handful of individual psalms also. On the other hand, expressions of hope may also be rooted within the life-setting of the psalmist. This is especially evident in the individual laments, and resources for such hope are drawn more reflectively from the life-experience of the

³² The verse is difficult to translate in its context. Weiser, DATD 14 pp. 234ff., E Tr OTL pp.344ff places the last four words at the beginning: "By day I pray to the God of my life/ And at night I sing to his praise." The verse is best seen in contrast to the personal reflection of v.5 where the suppliant remembers the resources offered to him through the worship of the cult, and recollects new strength given through his own private devotion.

psalmist alone. This shows the internal as well as the external influences upon the psalmists' piety, and demonstrates again the need for caution in the over-use of the cult-functional method which interprets the hope of the psalmists mainly in terms of inspiration from outside the suppliant himself.

(VI) CONCLUSION

The experience of a trust and faith in a benevolent deity is a common feature in many religions in the ancient Near East. A good example of this is found in the Babylonian prayers.³³ Expressions of trust obviously differ in each religio-cultural context, but the experience of the need for trust, confidence and hope is a shared constant phenomenon in both Babylonian and Israelite religion.

Berger's theory of the sociology of knowledge has developed this idea of the constant in religious experience within different cultural settings. Berger notes there is a common drive, whatever the social and religious contexts, to order life's experiences in relation to the transcendent. A perception of the transcendent may be shaped by a number of variables, and each perception becomes "typified" within its particular social context, so that a "symbolic

³³ Cf. Widengren, The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation, pp. 140ff., 213ff., 229ff., and 251ff., on the similarities in the religious thought in the individual laments. See also W.W. Hallo, 'Individual Prayer in Sumerian: The Continuity of a Tradition', JAOS 88 (1968) pp. 71-89; also Albrecht, op. cit., pp. 101-39, examining the personal piety in old Babylonian letters, and pp. 158-64, noting differences between expressions of piety in Mesopotamia and Israel.

universe" emerges, where what is experienced below shapes what is perceived above.³⁴ The common experience is the need to find some form of order, particularly when threatened with hostilities suggesting this is a chaotic universe. If such order cannot be found in this world, the hope for it is translated into a world beyond.

This understanding of a common experience within different cultural contexts, expressed through a number of cultural variables is most important with respect to affirmations of trust in God in the psalms. On the one hand, the common experience of the need to trust God has been seen to pervade the psalms, whether apparent through the explicit vocabulary of trust or through the implicit attitude of confidence, and is an experience which is understood and shared by all who seek to use the psalms, regardless of time, space and culture. On the other hand, the expressions of trust which arise out of this common experience have a number of variables, and in this respect, each expression is contingent upon a different religio-historical setting.³⁵

Two examples from this chapter illustrate this point. The first concerns the relationship of the psalmists' prayers to cultic activity. A psalm may be accompanied either by ritual enactments (often seen by the use of mythical language) to actualise dramatically the reordering process which is longed for. Alternatively, the words of the psalm may be considered sufficient

³⁴ Cf. P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, London, 1967, Part One, III, pp. 49ff., 'Language and Knowledge in Everyday Life'; also Part Two, pp. 115ff., concerning the ordering of life into a "symbolic universe".

³⁵ See Part (I), p.102, concluding the study of the Hebrew words for trust.

in themselves to set in action the reordering process from God. This was discussed in the section on the experience of trust as security in God. Trust was seen to be founded sometimes on the power of the word and name of God as they were mediated through cultic activity, and at other times it pertained to a more spiritualised assurance, expressed figuratively, whereby the psalmist drew his resources from praying to God on his own. 36

Another example concerns the language of trust as hope in God. Sometimes expressions of trust referred literally to the hope in some future physical restoration, concerned with the rebuilding of Zion, the land, and the temple. At other times, expressions took on a more metaphorical and personal appropriation, often ambiguously expressed, concerned by contrast with God's intervention in the life-experience of the psalmist. 37

The cult-functional method in particular has developed an interpretation of the psalms which is interested primarily in the expressions of trust as historically contingent upon a particular period in Israelite religion. The psalms are seen from the light of what has been socially and religiously conditioned. Little attention is given to any fundamental life-experience (in this case, of trust) which is common to human existence everywhere.³⁸ The more historically orientated method is obviously important in enabling an

³⁶ See Part (II), 'The Experience of Trust as Security in God'; also Part (IV), 'The Experience of Trust as Certitude in God'.

³⁷ See Part (V) 'The Experience of Trust as Hope in God'.

³⁸ Cf. Mowinckel, PIW ¹ pp. 1-2, which sets his approach against a "background of the historical and religio-phenomenological understanding" (p. 1).

understanding of how particular time-conditioned expressions of faith have been ordered from the common experiences of the psalmists. But this can account for only one level of interpreting the psalms. By being limited to the function of such expressions within a particular cultic community, such methods are unable to explain how and why the experiences of the psalmists have been understood and shared by readers of the psalms in totally different religio-historical contexts. 39

In conclusion, an assessment of the psalmists' experiences of trust in God illustrates the limitations of the cult-functional interpretation of the psalms, because this particularly emphasises the time-conditioned expressions of trust, rather than the common human experience behind them. If it is accepted that the psalmists offer an experience of trust in God which is capable of being appropriated beyond the boundaries of one particular religio-historical context, then we must conclude that the cult-functional method needs to be complemented by an interpretation which accounts for the broader personal concerns of the psalmists.

39 Cf. Brueggemann, 'Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function', pp. 3ff.; also Butler, 'Piety in the Psalms', pp. 391-2.

CHAPTER FOUR

PENITENCE BEFORE GOD

"When I declared not my sin,
my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long." (Ps. 32:3)

In contrast to the preceding chapter, which demonstrated how much the psalmists were aware of the need to trust in God, there are few explicit references to any need for forgiveness. It would appear initially that a study of penitence in the psalms is thus limited in scope, and can offer little in questioning the cult-functional interpretation on this issue.

This is not the case. In spite of the few explicit references, the concept of penitence was familiar to many psalmists. As was seen with the study of trust in God, a statistical survey of specific words only deals with the most obvious references to an aspect of piety. Many of the psalmists reveal an attitude of penitence even though the language offers no explicit vocabulary to illustrate it. As well as study of the language associated with penitence, an assessment of the deeper levels of contrition in the psalms is important. For example, the requests for healing and restoration in the lament forms are often offered with an understanding that an inner experience of forgiveness and the outer sign of physical restoration are two parts of the same whole. The word-study in the first section thus needs to be set within the larger context of the study of the attitudes of the psalmists in the later sections.

(I) A WORD STUDY OF THE HEBREW VERBS CONCERNED WITH PENITENCE AND FORGIVENESS

In addition to words which refer explicitly to an attitude of penitence, several other more general pleas for forgiveness and restoration are also used frequently by the psalmists. Examples of such pleas include the expression "remember not..." (אלֹ-תִזְכֹּר), which in Pss. 25:7 and 79:8 is used with "sin" as the object (cf. חַטֹּאת in 25:7 and עֲוֹנוֹת in 79:8); similarly the prayer "hide your face!" (הַסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ) in Ps. 51:11 is also used in this context with respect to admission of sin; the request to God to "turn away!" (שׁוּבָה), used of his anger (אֵף) in Ps. 78:38 and his wrath (חֵלֶה) in Ps. 106:24 is another example.

However, the purpose of this study is to assess the more consistent explicit vocabulary concerned with penitence and forgiveness. Six words will receive attention; three of these are used outside the psalms with specific priestly associations concerning forgiveness and atonement, whilst the other three have more figurative connotations.¹

¹ Relevant entries in TWAT (TDOT), TWOT, TWNT, and ACB have been used, in addition to articles in BDB, IDB and RGG³. Again these are only referred to when use is made of a particular study. Other references include G.B.Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament, Oxford, 1925, especially pp. 55ff.; R. de Vaux, Les Sacrifices de l'Ancien Testament, Paris, 1964; W.F. Forrester, 'Sin and Repentance in the Psalms', ClRev 41 (1956) pp. 663-74; and H. McKeating, 'Divine Forgiveness in the Psalms', SJT 18 (1965), pp. 69-83.

(a) כפר

A brief discussion of the etymology of כפר and its occurrences in other biblical traditions is important, so that the use of the term in the psalms can be assessed properly from the overall context.

B. Janowski has rightly noted that the problem of understanding the root כפר is that of separating theology from etymology.² On the one hand, associations may be found with the Akkadian root kapāru /kuppuru, meaning "to wipe away". Certainly this is implied in the parallelism of כפר with כחל meaning "to wipe away, blot out" in Jer. 18:23. In the priestly material of Leviticus and Numbers, the word usually has associations with purificatory rituals, emphasising the efficacious power of the blood of the sacrifice.³

On the other hand, associations might also be found with the Arabic root kafara /kaffara, meaning "to cover"; this may describe a more partial aspect of atonement than the previous meaning of "to blot out". It is difficult to ascertain whether the Akkadian or Arabic meaning influenced the Israelite usage most. Milgrom proposes,

² Cf. B. Janowski, Sühne als Heilsgeschehen. Studien zur Sühnetheologie der Priesterschrift und zur Wurzel KPR im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament, WMANT 55, Neukirchen, 1982, pp. 15ff., referring to the general problems of etymology discussed by James Barr. See also Th. C. Vriezen, 'Sündenvergebung im AT', RGG³ VI, Tübingen, 1962, cols. 508-11; F. Maass, 'כפר pi. sühnen' in THAT I, München-Zürich, 1971, cols 842-57; J. Milgrom, 'Atonement in the OT (כפר, kippēr)' in IDBSV, Nashville, 1976, pp. 78-82; G. Gerleman, Die Wurzel kpr im Hebraischen Studien zur alttestamentlichen Theologie, Heidelberg, 1980; also A. Schenker, 'Köper et expiation', Bib 63 (1982), pp. 32-46.

³ Cf. Milgrom, art. cit., pp. 78-9; Janowski, op. cit., pp. 29-60.

on theological grounds, that a meaning concerned with a more primitive notion of atonement would have been the earliest in use in Israel; Janowski, by contrast, understands the Akkadian word association to be the earliest influence upon Israelite religion.⁴ By the post-exilic period, the two associations of this word are found in parallelism with two different Hebrew roots. Neh. 4:5 (MT 3:37) reads: "Do not cover ($\sqrt{\text{כס}}$) their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out ($\sqrt{\text{מח}}$)." This would suggest that the two associations of forgiveness were not always seen as distinctive.

The noun derivation is used for "ransom money", for example in Ex. 30:12. The meaning of "ransom" with respect to the price of a life is found in Ex. 21:30 and Nu. 35:31-32. Derivatives of קָנָה occur forty nine times in the priestly codes of Leviticus, usually in the context of effecting some release from sin by an offering to God. In Lev. 8:15 and 16:20, this is by sprinkling ritual blood to atone for the guilt of the worshipper. The motif of "ransom" could be implicit in this particular act, in that the innocent life (of the animal) was used as the ransom for the guilty life of the suppliant. The word כִּפּוּר used in Lev. 16 and Ex. 25 which is normally translated "mercy seat" suggests the same idea of ransom being accepted and forgiveness being offered. This does not imply an understanding of forgiveness in terms of propitiation. The noun קָנָה in Ex. 21: 30 and in Nu. 35:31-2, and the verb $\sqrt{\text{קנ}}$ in Gen. 32:20 (MT21) both describe reconciliation between two estranged parties, rather than payment of indemnity to appease

⁴ Cf. Milgrom, *ibid.*, pp. 81-2; Janowski, *ibid.*, p. 101 offers a chronological table of the influence of the term from Akkadian and from Arabic in Hebrew.

the anger of the one offended.⁵

This more personal reconciliatory idea of forgiveness is most evident in the psalms. Whether the word is used to depict the "covering" of sin, or the "blotting out" of sin, or even a "ransom" or "expiation" for sin, none of the four occurrences in the psalms indicates any accompanying cultic activity. The word is used in a spiritualised way, with God as the subject. Instead of the priest being understood as the mediator of forgiveness, God is described as the one who "wipes out" the sin, or regards the sin as "covered", or who "ransoms" the suppliant from his guilt.

Other examples using **כָּסַח** with God as the subject outside the psalms are found only in a negative sense, in requests that God will "not forgive". Here too, the negative form also implies the figurative rather than the ritual use of the term, for it is difficult to see how God's "not forgiving" could be enacted in a priestly purificatory ritual.⁶ The only cultic enactment would be some cursing ceremony, which would focus on the efficacy of the word rather than of the rite. Of the few examples found particularly in the prophets (for example, Is. 22:14), there is nothing to suggest that such a ceremony is in fact the context of this expression.

The following four examples from the psalms illustrate the figurative, spiritualised appropriation of the term **כָּסַח**, and show that the meaning of either "cover" or "blot out" is possible in

⁵ Cf. Schenker, art. cit., pp. 44-6.

⁶ On the theme of "do not forgive", cf. Janowski, op. cit., pp. 115-6.

each case.

The first example is found in a recital of Israel's history, in Ps. 78:38:

"Yet he, being compassionate,
forgave their iniquity (**יִכְפֹּר עוֹן**)."

It is used as part of an imperative call for help in Ps. 79:9:

"Deliver us, and forgive our sins (**וְכַפֵּר עַל־הַטְּאוֹתֵינוּ**)
for thy name's sake!"⁷

It is used as a motif of confidence in Ps. 65:4:

"Iniquitous deeds have mastery over me
But you forgive (**אַתָּה תִּכְפֹּרם**) our transgressions." ⁸

One other reference in the psalms uses the term more specifically with the meaning of "ransom", as seen by the parallelism in the verse. Ps. 49:8 uses man as the subject of **כֶּפֶר** in this case:

"A brother (**אָח**) cannot redeem a man (**לֹא־יִפְדֶּה אִישׁ**)
and he cannot give to God a ransom for him (**כֶּפֶרָו**)" ⁹

In conclusion, despite its associations with priestly ritual outside the psalms, **כֶּפֶר** takes on only a figurative meaning within the psalms. This spiritualised appropriation of a term for

⁷ The phrase **כֶּפֶר עוֹן** is probably deuteronomistic (e.g. 1 Sam. 3:14; Jer. 18:23) occurring elsewhere in Is. 22:14: See also Janowski, op. cit., pp.115ff. This deuteronomistic influence would occur most naturally in historical psalms such as 78 and 79.

⁸ The RSV reads: "When our transgressions prevail over us
thou dost forgive them (**תִּכְפֹּרם**)."
The difficulty is whether to read the first half of the verse as singular or plural: the LXX and V read the whole verse in the first person plural. Similar expressions in Pss. 38:5 and 40:13 suggest that the translation here in 65:3a could also use the singular form, as in the MT.

⁹ The RSV reads: "Truly no man can ransom himself
or give to God the price of his life"
On other variant translations, cf. Gunkel GHAT, p. 211 and Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 363 and 366.

forgiveness will also be seen in other examples.

(b) נלו

The more literal meaning of נלו is "send away", and when used with "sin" as the object, or in another context of penitence, the best translation is "pardon".

Like כפר, outside the psalms, נלו has priestly associations, for example in Lev. 4 and 5, concerning the sin-offerings and guilt-offerings (e.g. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18, 26), and also in the acts of atonement described in Lev. 16:21, 30, 32. However, unlike כפר, נלו occurs not only in the psalms, but elsewhere outside Lev. without any reference to priestly activity. In the following examples, God is directly the provider of forgiveness; no reference is made to priestly ritual.¹⁰

נלו is used in Moses' intercessory prayers for the peoples' sin in Ex. 34:9:

"Pardon (נלו חת) our iniquity and sin."

It is also found in Nu. 14:19-20:

"Pardon (נלו חת) the iniquity of this people."

Its occurrence as intercession is likewise found in the first prayer of Amos in Am. 7:2:

¹⁰ Cf. J.J. Stamm, 'נלו slh vergeben' in THAT II, cols. 150-60, and also his book, Erlösen und Vergeben im Alten Testament, Zürich, 1940, pp. 57ff.

"O LORD God, forgive (סלח־נא) I beseech thee!" ¹¹

סלח is used by the deuteronomist in Solomon's prayer for forgiveness at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kgs. 8:30,34,36,39,50. Deuteronomic associations are also seen in the passages concerning forgiveness offered in the new covenant, in Jer. 31:34 and 33:8 and 50:20. In exile, second Isaiah proclaims that this pardon is offered to anyone who seeks it; there is no suggestion here of intermediary cultic activity:

"Seek the LORD while he may be found...
for he will abundantly pardon (כי־ירבה לסלוח)."
(Is. 55:6-7)

Like כפר , within the psalms סלח is always used with God, rather than the priest, as the subject. It is used within descriptive and declarative praises to God, extolling what God can do; no reference is made in these psalms to what man must do through ritual activity. Ps. 86:5 uses סלח in descriptive praise of God:

"For thou, O LORD, art good and forgiving (וסלח)..."

In Ps. 130:4 it again describes a quality of God:

"But there is forgiveness with thee (כי־עמך הסליחה)..."

In Ps. 103:3, the word is also used descriptive praise of God

"...who forgives (הסלח) all your iniquity..."¹²

סלח is used once as an imperative call to God in penitence.

¹¹ Cf. Milgrom, art. cit., on this term being for the revoking of punishment as well as request for forgiveness. Am. 7:3,6 is significant in that here God only revokes punishment, but does not offer forgiveness.

¹² The whole psalm is full of what Westermann calls "hymnic participles", or "descriptive praise". Verses 1-5 of this psalm focus on the more personal care of God, and vv. 6ff. on his care of the nation.

Like Ps. 79:9 which uses כַּפַּר in this way, Ps. 25:11 pleads for God's forgiveness:

"For thy name's sake, O LORD,
pardon my guilt (וְסָלַחַת לְעוֹנִי),
for it is great."¹³

In conclusion, psalms which use the term סָלַח illustrate that no explicit reference is made to any priestly mediation or purificatory rites to make the pardon effective. As was seen in the use of כַּפַּר, the language has more spiritualised connotations, where God is directly the giver of the forgiveness sought.

(c) נָשָׂא

The root נָשָׂא means "lift up", or "bear, carry". The Ugaritic nš2 and the Akkadian našu have the same connotations. In Hebrew, the Qal occurs over six hundred times. The word is used more in a profane sense, and occurs only rarely in a cultic setting with reference to some ritual act of atonement. It can mean literally "lift up", for example one's hands (e.g. Dt.32:40; Pss. 28:2 and 63:5), or one's head (e.g. in bold independence, Ju. 8:28; Job 10:15). More figurative examples concern one's eyes (e.g. Gen. 13:10,14; cf. Ps. 123:1), or one's heart, or voice. It has the more literal meaning "to bear, carry", when used, for example, concerning loads or burdens (Gen. 37:25; 44:1) or gifts as tribute (2 Sam. 8:2,6).

The figurative meaning "bear, carry" has close associations with forgiveness. It is used of "bearing" guilt or iniquity, as in

¹³ The plea is most striking in the context of the confession of "great guilt". Dahood, AB Vol I, p. 157, suggests that this may refer to the sin of idolatry, in the context of the guilt confessed as in Ex. 32:30 and 2 Kgs. 17:21.

Gen. 4:13 (of Cain) and Nu. 14:34 (of the people in the wilderness). It is also used of "bearing" or "offering" human forgiveness. It occurs with respect to Joseph and his brothers in Gen. 50:17, and to Abigail and David in 1 Sam. 25:28.

In relation to forgiveness from God, the only specific cultic associations are found in the ritual of the scapegoat "bearing" guilt on the day of atonement, as in Lev.16:22:

"The goat shall bear (נָשָׂא) all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land..."

Is. 53:4 develops this motif of one bearing guilt of another, within a context of forgiveness offered by God without reference to priestly activity. Here the Levitical associations have been given a different theological meaning:

"Surely he has borne (נָשָׂא) our griefs and carried our sorrows".

נָשָׂא occurs in four psalms, three of which are thanksgivings for forgiveness already received. The actual process by which the sin was "carried away" is not described; it might have been through some cultic ritual, or through some form of intercession, or simply and directly as a result of prayer to God. Ps. 32:1,5 uses the word in a testimony of thanksgiving:

"I acknowledged my sin to thee,
...then thou didst forgive (נָשָׂאתָ)
the guilt of my sin." (v.5)

The term also occurs in a communal thanksgiving:

"Thou didst forgive (נָשָׂאתָ) the iniquity of thy people,
thou didst pardon (כָּסִיתָ) all their sin." (Ps. 85:3)

Ps. 99:8 uses the term to describe God's character, in the same way that נָשָׂא was used in Ps. 86:5, as referred to earlier:

"...thou wast a forgiving God to them...
(אֵל נָשָׂא חַיִּית לָהֶם)"

Only one psalm has an imperative call to God to forgive. This is again Ps. 25, which uses this imperative form of סָלַח in v. 11, referred to above. In v.18, a different form is used, but with the same meaning:

"Consider my affliction and trouble,
and forgive all my sins (וְנָשָׂא לְכָל-חַטֹּאותַי)."

In each of the three Hebrew terms discussed, only once is the verbal form used as a direct appeal to God to forgive. The preference is to thank God for forgiveness, rather than to request it.

Three other terms for forgiveness deserve brief mention. Unlike the other three words, each of these has only a profane and literal meaning, and never occurs outside the psalms with particular cultic connotations. When used of forgiveness each term takes on a vivid metaphorical application.

(d) כָּסַח

The root of כָּסַח means "cover", "conceal", or "hide". It is used literally of frogs "covering" Egypt in Ex. 8:6 (MT 8:2), and of the cloud "covering" the tabernacle in Nu. 9:16. It is used of "concealing" the blood of Joseph in Gen 37:26. The noun כֶּסֶח usually refers to clothing as outward "covering".

In relation to forgiveness, the imagery is that of "covering" sin. This again has no reference to particular priestly activity, either inside or outside the psalms. The LXX usually translates כָּסַח as καλύπτω, giving the word its figurative associations. Outside the psalms, it occurs in Nehemiah's prayer against the

of life which God has written; this implies a fear of being forgotten by God on account of sin, as in Ex.32:32,33. It is used as a curse for the annihilation of the psalmist's enemies in Pss. 69:29 and 109:13,14. It is used similarly in Jer. 18:23:

"nor blot out (אֶל־תִּמְחֶה) their sin from thy sight."

The theme of "blotting out" sin is used positively by second Isaiah, particularly in descriptions of the activity of God. It occurs in Is.43:25, following a rebuke on empty sacrifices which cannot of themselves "blot out" sin:

"I, I am He who blots out (מַחֶה) your transgressions for my own sake..."

It is also used in Is. 44:22:

"I have swept away (מַחֲרִיתִי :or "blotted out") your transgressions like a cloud..."

In neither of these examples is any ritual activity described as the means by which the forgiveness offered by God might become effective.

The word occurs once in the psalms in relation to forgiveness of sins. As seen in second Isaiah, the more spiritualised use of the term is apparent. In Ps. 51:3,11 the psalmist pleads for the cleansing and removal of sin. מַחֶה is one of several metaphors used: ¹⁵

"..according to thy abundant mercy
blot out (מַחֶה) my transgressions...."(v.3)

¹⁵ The richness of metaphorical imagery in 51:3ff. is again demonstrated in the threefold description of sin, the threefold ascription of praise to God, and the threefold plea for forgiveness, in terms of "blotting out" (מַחֶה), "washing" (כֹּסֶה), and "cleansing" (טָהַר). Cf. Anderson, NCB, pp. 392-3 and Kraus, BKAT XV/I p. 385.

Like the word $\eta\sigma\zeta$, the use of $\eta\eta\lambda$ in connection with sin is a useful metaphor to express the complete eradication of sin. Rather than referring to particular cultic rituals, it is used inside and outside the psalms as a figure of speech.

(f) $\eta\eta\lambda$

$\eta\eta\lambda$ is another example of a word used in a non-ritual sense with reference to forgiveness of sin. Its original meaning implies movement, "pass by", "pass over", "pass through", and occurs over five hundred and fifty times in this respect.

In the Hiph^l, it is used to mean forgiveness in the sense of "causing to pass by sin". Examples include Nathan's words of forgiveness to David in 2 Sam 12:13, and David's later prayer for forgiveness in 2 Sam 24:10. It is used in Job's reproach to God for not apparently forgiving his sin in Job 7:21:

"Why dost thou not....take away
($\eta\eta\lambda$) : "make pass away") my iniquity?" .

The psalms use this term rarely. One example is Ps. 119:39, where, like David, the psalmist pleads with God to forgive:

"Turn away ($\eta\eta\lambda$) the reproach which I dread..."

We may conclude that although specific references to forgiveness are sparse within the psalms, their occurrences reflect the figurative appropriation of the vocabulary of forgiveness, which is claimed directly from God, and is never explicitly dependent upon any ritual activity. This is the case even with the first three verbs,

$\eta\sigma\zeta$ and $\eta\eta\lambda$ and $\eta\eta\lambda$, which occur sometimes outside the psalms with explicit cultic associations.

The cult-functional interpretation is so concerned with the hypothetical process by which forgiveness is made effective that it is apt to deal inadequately with the experience which is behind the expressions pertaining to forgiveness. The cultic approach has little to say about the rich metaphorical imagery employed by the psalmists. The above study gave some evidence of this oversight, showing the breadth of understanding of this experience, whether expressed in terms of wiping away, or concealing ($\sqrt{\text{כפר}}$) sin, or of the sending away, or pardoning ($\sqrt{\text{סלח}}$) sin, or of the carrying away ($\sqrt{\text{אש}}$) or covering ($\sqrt{\text{כס}}$) or the blotting out ($\sqrt{\text{חל}}$) of sin, or in terms of sin being passed by ($\sqrt{\text{עבר}}$). The study showed how little is said about the function of the cult with respect to forgiveness.

It is therefore apparent that an understanding of the experience of forgiveness cannot be found from the cult-functional perspective alone. The relationship aspect in the receiving of forgiveness is paramount to the psalmists, and this is just as important as the more technical and functional language concerning penitence and forgiveness found in the priestly codes.¹⁶ The aim of the rest of the chapter is to explore further this more personal understanding of penitence and restoration in the psalms.

¹⁶ Cf. Eichrodt, Theologie, 1939, Band III, § 3, 'Sünde und Vergebung', pp. 81ff., E Tr Theology Vol. Two, XXIII, 'The removal of sin', pp. 457ff.

(II) FORGIVENESS AND THE CULTIC COMMUNITY

Some psalmists offer implicit requests for forgiveness, yet claim paradoxically that God should hear because "righteousness" should prevail.¹⁷ Righteousness, whether from the psalmist's situation or from God, is the criterion for forgiveness. Such conflicting assertions usually appear in psalms where the actual confession, or request for forgiveness, is never made explicitly.

For example, Ps. 7:4-5 offers a plea for help with a hint of penitence:

"O LORD my God, if I have done this¹⁸
If there is wrong in my hands..."

The confession is not pursued in the psalm itself. Nevertheless, this particular verse suggests that the psalmist is reflecting on the possibility that the allegations of some sin committed may well be valid in the light of the present suffering. Yet, unless vv. 7-12 are to be understood as a later addition, the psalmist later pleads:

"...judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me." (v.9)¹⁹

Another example is found in Ps. 25. An implicit confession of sin is apparent in v. 7:

¹⁷ The different aspects of the psalmist's claim to be "righteous" ($\text{p}^{\text{'}}\text{T}\text{Y}$) will be discussed in Chapter Eight, 'Pleasing God', pp. 342 ff.

¹⁸ Gunkel, GHAT p. 25, and Weiser, DATD 14 p. 92, E Tr OTL p. 136 note that the suppliant's reference to "this" (NXI) concerns the false accusations held against him, rather than any specific act he knows he has committed. In this way the confession is more general than particular.

¹⁹ Anderson, NCB p. 97, notes that the psalmists' plea to be "righteous" ($\text{p}^{\text{'}}\text{T}\text{Y}$) is really a claim to be "not guilty". The context of this claim within God's judgement of the world would then be to give that sense of innocence "cosmic proportions": cf. Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 92-3, E Tr OTL, pp. 117-8.

"Remember not the sins of my youth,
or my transgressions..."

An explicit confession follows in vv. 11: "Pardon ($\sqrt{\text{חלל}}$) my guilt!" and v. 18 : "Forgive ($\sqrt{\text{חש}}$) all my sins!"; both these verses were referred to earlier. These confessions may be contrasted with the psalmist's belief that he should be vindicated for righteousness' sake. In v. 2, the request is that he should not be put to shame (חש-ל-א-בן-ש) and in v. 10 the psalmist asserts God is merciful to "those who keep his covenant and testimonies".

Ps. 106, a communal lament, has a clear confession of sin in v. 6:

"Both we and our fathers have sinned;
We have committed iniquity;
We have done wickedly..."²⁰

Nevertheless, this verse and vv. 7-46 following, which continue to portray the nation's rebellion against God, are set in the context of a confidence that God will honour and bless the righteous:

"Blessed are they who observe justice,
Who do righteousness (קדש) at all times!" (v. 3)

One explanation for such paradoxical expressions is that on the one hand the psalmist is recalling specific sins which he supposes have caused particular grief, whilst on the other hand there is a broader sense of "being righteous" by virtue of being part of the covenant community. Confidence in God's general protection for his

²⁰ The threefold form of confession is apparent as seen also in Pss. 32 and 51 previously. This example is formulaic, for it takes up exactly the same three verbs of confession in 1 Kgs. 8:47 (חש ; חלל ; חש), although the psalmist applies it with the sense of corporate rather than individual accountability.

people is greater than fear of God's anger for particular sins.²¹ Whether implicit or explicit, confession can only be offered because the suppliant believes that God is for his forgiveness and restoration, because of his צדקה and his רחום. If this sense of ultimately "being in the right" with God did not prevail, the offering of any confession at all in the hope of being forgiven would be meaningless. Penitence is necessary for forgiveness to be effected; and forgiveness is given because the love of God for his people is seen within their history to be stronger than his anger. This is illustrated from a psalm which expresses the relief of forgiveness:

"For his anger is but for a moment (רגע),
and his favour is for a lifetime (חיים)." 22
(Ps. 30:6)

Because of this confidence, penitence is a form of instruction which brings one back to God:

"Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way." (Ps. 25:8)

It is perhaps this same confidence in the love of God demonstrated through the people's history which persuades another psalmist to draw the radical conclusion that God's forgiveness is available not only for the covenant community, but also outside it:

²¹ Such a perspective also lies at the heart of the tension between judgement and hope in the prophetic message, seen for example in Jeremiah's intercessory prayers which are set alongside his prophetic invective. Cf. Eichrodt, *op. cit.*, Band III, pp. 136ff., E Tr Vol. 2, pp. 455-7.

²² Dahood, AB pp. 181-3 substitutes "death" for "moment" to make antithetic parallelism with "lifetime", so that the verse reads "His anger is for death/ his favour is for life". This reading is unnecessary if one accepts that instead antithetic parallelism is intended between "moment" (רגע) and "lifetime" (חיים), as the suppliant reflects on God's overall care throughout his life: cf. Oesterley, *TP*, p. 202, and Kraus, BKAT XV/1, pp. 240 and 242.

"O thou who hearest prayer!
To thee shall all flesh come
confessing their sins (

(עֲדִיד כָּל-בָּשָׂר יִבְאֹו
דְּבַרִּי עֲוֹנוֹת)
(Ps. 65:3-4) ²³

We may conclude that whether the psalmist is praying for the sins of his community, or for his own particular sins, confidence in the availability of forgiveness is drawn from the righteousness of God offered to the covenant community at large. Within those psalms which appeal not only for forgiveness, but also for righteousness, the grounds for hope reside not so much in the suppliant's own righteousness as in his belief in the righteousness of God expressed within his dealings with the community as a whole. In these psalms, therefore, the issue of penitence is not so much an individual affair, but rather it concerns more the suppliant's standing within the basic "righteousness" of the covenant community. McKeating summarises this as follows:

"...the psalmist is not crying in the dark, but making his request in the context of a relationship that is known and tried. " ²⁴

From the interests of personal piety, it is again the relationship aspect which brings about assurance of forgiveness; no reference is made to the efficacy of any particular ritual activity. In this case the relationship is that of the community before God,

²³ בָּשָׂר is used generically in Ps. 56:5, and there is no reason to reject the same interpretation here, particularly as it is emphasised as כָּל-בָּשָׂר. Verse 4a reads literally "with words of iniquities" (דְּבַרִּי עֲוֹנוֹת); the RSV translation is "on account of sins". A paraphrase would read "confessing their sins". In this verse, the psalmist's radical vision could imply that the God of universal judgment must also have the capacity to become the God of universal forgiveness.

²⁴ Cf. McKeating, art. cit., pp. 75-6.

rather than *of the* individual alone before God, but it is nevertheless based on a more personal understanding of forgiveness than that normally associated with the cult-functional interpretation.

(III) FORGIVENESS AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Several individual psalms imply by contrast that forgiveness is an individual affair. Their appeals to God refer not so much to the motif of "righteousness", but rather to the suppliant's particular innocence.

For example, Ps. 39:2 begins with a protest of innocence:

"I said, 'I will guard my ways (אֲשַׁמְרֶה דַּרְכִּי)
That I may not sin (אֶחַטֹּא) with my tongue..."²⁵

The psalmist then proceeds to confess his sin:

"Deliver me from all my transgressions (אֶכֹּל פִּשְׁעִי)"
(v.9.)

This acknowledgement of sin is affirmed again in v.12:

"When thou dost chasten man
with rebukes for sin(עַל-עוֹן)..."

Ps. 69 is a similar example. The psalm starts with a description of distress (vv. 2-4), which is followed by a protest of innocence:

²⁵ Oesterley, TP, p. 230 amends "my ways" (דַּרְכִּי) to "my words" (דִּבְרִי) to create better parallelism with "my tongue". It is questionable whether such parallelism is possible in this verse; the verbs "guard" (שָׁמַר) and "sin" (חָטָא) still do not bear any relationship to each other. The "sin" implied here could either be that of complaining against God (cf. Job 1:22, 2:10) or that of cursing the enemies (cf. Job 31:30; also Jer. 18:23).

"More in number than the hairs of my head
are those who hate me without cause;
...What I did not steal
must I now restore?" (v.5) ²⁶

The psalm follows immediately with an acknowledgement of sin:

"O God, thou knowest my folly;
the wrongs (אֲשָׁמוֹנִי) I have done
are not hidden from thee." (v.6) ²⁷

Some explanation for this apparent paradox is necessary. This is partly found in the various terms used for "sin". ²⁸ For example, Ps. 69:6 confesses sin as אֲשָׁמָה ; this word occurs mainly in the Holiness and Priestly Codes and in Ezekiel, and refers to the "guilt-offering" which atoned for offences which could be covered by some form of compensation. In the context of Ps. 69, the suppliant pleads that adequate compensation has been made for his folly (v.6). Because his guilt should have been removed by the required offering, he should now be declared in effect "innocent". In this light, Ps. 69:6 is not a confession of sin at all, but a development of the protest of innocence in 69:5.

The anomaly in Ps. 39 is also clarified by understanding the words used to denote "sin". In 39:9, the term is נַפְשִׁי . This is a common word in the psalms, used for example in Pss. 5:11; 19:14; 25:7; 32:1; 36:2; 51:3,5; 59:4; 65:4; 89:33; 103:12 and 107:17.

²⁶ The similarities of this protest with Ps. 35:11 and Jer. 15:10 leads Anderson, NCB, p. 501 to note that this could refer to some "proverbial expression of innocence", probably referring to the keeping of laws such as are recorded in Lev. 6:5.

²⁷ The psalmist is not suggesting that the actual allegations of his enemies are true (cf.v5), but rather because he is experiencing some form of intense suffering (vv.2-3,27), he must have sinned at some point to deserve such apparent punishment.

²⁸ Cf. R. Knierim, Die Hauptbegriffe für Sünde im Alten Testament, Gütersloh, 1965.

Its literal meaning indicates a revolt, or rebellion (used of nations, as in 1 Kgs. 12:19 and 2 Kgs 1:1). Its use in the psalms and in Job (cf. Job 7:21; 13:23; 33:9; 34:6) refers to the defiant attitude of the suppliant, or of the suppliant's enemies, against God. When used as in Ps. 39:9, in the context of previous reproaches made to God, the psalm could read "Deliver me from the act of rebellion (in my complaint) against you".

In 39:12, the word is ןל. The root means "bend" or "twist" and, with respect to sin, indicates the crookedness or perversity which will not follow the ways of God. Within the psalm, the suppliant is declaring that his very act of complaint and reproach is the "transgression" which provokes the chastening of God. The fact that these two stronger words for "sin" are used in the confession, rather than other terms such as חטא ("miss the mark", used in 39:2, or הלש ("stray away") suggests that it is a particular act of rebellious accusation to God in prayer which the psalmist is confessing. He has in fact "sinned with his tongue" by his prayer of complaint (cf. Job 2:10), the very sin from which he protested innocence in 39:2.

Most psalmists understand "sin" as a specific act. There is no reference to confession for a general state of "being" in sin before God. This is why conversely in some psalms the protests of innocence are so intense, and no general confession of sin is made: forgiveness is not deemed necessary, for the psalmist is quite clear that he has no specific sin to confess. Relevant psalms include Pss. 18:24; 26:1-7; 44:18-19 and 101:2-5. For example, Ps. 18:24 reads:

"I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt (ואֲשֵׁתֶר לַעֲוֹנִי)."

Pss. 26 and 101 proclaim at length blamelessness and integrity. These protests of innocence are close to some of Jeremiah's confessions and Job's laments, and raise the question of theodicy. Rather than proclaiming the suppliant's complete lack of guilt, they emphasise instead his innocence in a specific context. The suppliant claims not to have committed specific acts of sin, despite the allegations of his enemies to the contrary.

The psalmist's understanding of sin as specific acts is seen not only within protests of innocence but also within confessions of sin. In the nine psalms referred to in the word study as examples of requests for forgiveness, the three words used to describe the "sin" are אָחַץ and פָּשַׁע and עוֹן . When עוֹן is used in Ps.. 78:38; 103:3; 25:11; 32:5; 85:3; 51:3,7,11, the suppliants are recalling particular acts of defiance against God which require forgiveness. Similarly when אָחַץ is used in Pss. 79:9; 32:1,5; 85:3; 25:18 and 51:3,11, specific deeds of negligence are to be understood as requiring confession. So too when פָּשַׁע is used in Pss. 65:4, 32:1,5 and 51:3, the reference is to active sins of rebellion against God. Although there is a "poetic silence" concerning the biographical details of specific sins, the confession never reflects upon the general state of being in sin. Ps. 51:7, using the words עוֹן and אָחַץ in the confession of sin, is also to be interpreted as a confession of sin within a specific context, where the psalmist remembers particular failures throughout his life. It was not intended, from the context, to be a generalised reflection

on congenital sin. ²⁹

The cult-functional position is that the psalms were composed as representative prayers for "everyman" to use, and this leads to interpreting the psalmists' confessions of sin in a most generalised way. ³⁰ However, although there are few details concerning specific sins, it is apparent that most psalmists protest their innocence or confess their sinlessness with a view to acts of omission or commission from their own life-setting. The paradoxical statements of innocence alongside confessions of sin, and the excessive proclamations of blamelessness, make little sense unless the psalmists are reflecting upon their own particular sins, and not upon representative sin in general. This is the particular human dimension to the psalmists' prayers of penitence and forgiveness: although the cult-functional method acknowledges this to be important, the concern with the typical and representative life-settings often results in an oversight of the human processes within the composition of the psalms. We may conclude that this is particularly evident in the above study of the more personal accounts of penitence and forgiveness.

(IV) FORGIVENESS AND HEALING

Psalms which plead not only for forgiveness but also for specific evidence of that deliverance testify to particular life-

²⁹ Cf. Oesterley, TP, pp. 85-6, and Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 386-7.

³⁰ For example, see Mowinkel in PIW 2, p. 1, on the question of personal (private) laments, and p. 126, on the way composers of psalms were bound more by tradition and wrote vicariously for others rather than from their own particular, specific needs.

experiences, rather than to typified situations. Sometimes this is seen when the psalmist requests restoration for his people; in individual psalms, it is found in pleas for some form of physical healing.

The cult-functional interpretation would propose that some form of ritual lies behind these requests for healing. One example is found in Seybold's monograph, which proposes a two-part ritual, that of a more private ceremony of crying and fasting in repentance which resulted in purification and atonement, and then, only after healing and forgiveness had been offered, that of a visit to the sanctuary in order to offer public testimony and praise. Pss. 107, 38, 41 and 88 are seen as relevant examples.³¹ Seybold's problem is the hypothetical nature of his argument: nowhere outside the psalms is there sufficient data to support that such a two-part ritual ever took place, and even within the Psalter, the two parts proposed for the ritual rarely appear to come together in the same psalm. In order to avoid the more tentative features of the cult-functional theories, it would appear to be more important to see from what is actually within a psalm what the psalmists actually understand more personally about the relationship between healing and forgiveness.

Ps. 106 is an example of a prayer for forgiveness and the restoration of the nation. The connexion between past and present sins and the pressing calamity is evident in the explicit confession of sin in v. 6, discussed previously in a different context: ³²

³¹ Cf. Seybold, Das Gebet der Kranken, pp. 56ff. See further reference to Seybold's theory in this thesis, Chapter 7, 'Suffering before God, p. 257, notes 13 and 14.

³² See Section II of this chapter, p.139.

"Both we and our fathers have sinned (חטאנו);
 we have committed iniquity (העויןנו)
 we have done wickedly (הרשענו)".

This is set against a deuteronomic-type credo which connects the effect of suffering with the cause of sin throughout the nation's history.

Again, in Ps. 85:3, a thanksgiving for the restoration of the land is given alongside gratitude for God's gift of forgiveness:

"...thou didst restore the fortunes of Jacob
 Thou didst forgive the iniquity of thy people;
 thou didst pardon all their sin."³³

Such psalms reflect the prophetic message, seen for example in Hosea and Jeremiah, which proclaimed that genuine acknowledgement of sin could result in release from disaster.

An example of a reference to forgiveness alongside actual healing is Ps. 103, which in hymnic style blesses God for both:

"Bless the LORD, O my soul...
 who forgives (הסלח) all your iniquity
 who heals (הרפא) all your diseases."(v.3)

Another example is in Ps. 41:5, which combines a confession of sin with a plea for healing:

"As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me;
 heal me (רפאה נפשי),
 for I have sinned against thee (כי־חטאתי לך)!"

As with Pss. 7 and 69 discussed earlier, the psalmist is not confessing those sins his enemies accuse him of committing, but other acts of sin which he believed have caused his suffering. The request for healing is therefore not only for release from suffering, but also for vindication from the false allegations of his enemies. This

³³ See p. 32 of this chapter for an earlier use of this verse.

echoes again the implicit confession of sin in Ps.7:4-6, which expressed hope that God would alleviate the sufferings described in 7:2-3. Similarly in Ps. 41:13, the psalmist prays with all integrity (כִּתְּבָה), and confesses those sins which might prevent his healing.

Ps. 38 is similar. The suppliant's sufferings have physical manifestations, presented in vivid figurative terms (cf. vv. 5-8), and some sort of disease has caused his isolation:

"My friends and companions
stand aloof from my plague (וְיָלֵךְ)
and my kinsmen stand afar off."(v.12)³⁴

As before, a causal connection is made between this suffering and sin, in v.3:

" ...there is no health in my bones because of my sin."

For this reason, a poignant confession of sin follows in v. 18, implying that the offer of forgiveness will also bring the necessary healing.

Ps. 32 is another illustration of this. The psalmist testifies in vv. 3-4 that physical disorders are the result of unconfessed and so unforgiven sin:

³⁴ The word וְיָלֵךְ translated "plague" in the RSV could be a figurative description of acute general affliction (cf. Pss. 39:11; 73:14) or more specifically leprosy (cf. Lev. 13:2; Dt.24:8)

"When I kept silence, my bones wasted away
 through my groaning all day long.
 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me;
 my tongue (לִשְׁׁנִי : literally, "my moisture") was as dry
 as the summer droughts." ³⁵

Physical healing is only one aspect of this psalmist's experience of forgiveness; another is more general "deliverance" (לְדַלּוֹתַי) from trouble (v.7). Yet both are tangible evidence of restoration alongside the unseen gift of forgiveness (cf. v.2).

These observations may explain why so few psalmists actually offer confessions for sin, and why so few specific references to forgiveness occur in the psalms. The psalmists do not so much ask for inner forgiveness, as for specific deliverance, such as from death, disease, oppression or danger. If manifestations of restoration could be openly perceived, then the unseen gift of forgiveness would also be assumed. ³⁶

Two common words used in pleas for deliverance are לְדַלּוֹתַי and לְפָדוֹתַי . ³⁷ Both have associations with redemption in physical, tangible terms. לְפָדוֹתַי is used of the defence of a near relative on

³⁵ The RSV reads for v.3a [MT 4a] "When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away"; by preserving the more literal translation above, a starker sense of suffering is presented. The suppliant felt the hand of the anger of God (v.5a: cf. 38:2; 39:11). Verse 5b is obscure: in the context of earlier physical descriptions of suffering, לִשְׁׁנִי , meaning "moisture", may be paraphrased as "saliva", or "tongue", thus depicting some severe fever. The RSV translation is more general: "my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer."

³⁶ This is one of the issues in the account of the healing of the paralytic, recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels (Mk.2:3-12; Mt. 9:2-8; Lk. 5:18-26). Here, Jesus reverses the order of priorities. The offer of forgiveness is given first (cf. Mk. 2:5) and the outward demonstration of this occurs later (cf. Mk. 2:10-11).

³⁷ On the interpretation of both these words, cf. C. Barth, Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments, Basel, 1947, pp. 133ff.; also J.J. Stamm, op. cit., Teil I.

behalf of an injured party, releasing him from danger. The word means "redeem" or "deliver". God is the one who "redeems" in the Exodus traditions (Ex. 6:6 ; 15:13). The psalms also use $\sqrt{\lambda\lambda}$ in the context of the deliverance from Egypt (Pss. 74:2; 77:16 and 78:35). It is a common theme inspiring hope in another "exodus" in second Isaiah (Is.43:1; 44:22,23; 48:20; 52:9). The psalmists also use $\sqrt{\lambda\lambda}$ to appeal to God to "redeem" them, for example, from death itself (cf. Pss. 69:19; 72:14; 103:4). Like the "redemption" from Egypt, this "redemption" would be open for all to see. It is therefore seen as outer confirmation of the inner restoration of the suppliant before God, and is thus associated with words of healing and forgiveness. Ps. 103, for example, uses $\sqrt{\lambda\lambda}$ immediately after recalling God's blessing of healing ($\sqrt{\lambda\phi\gamma}$) and forgiveness ($\sqrt{\eta\lambda\sigma}$) in vv. 3 and 4.

The word $\eta\tau\phi$ means "buy back", "redeem", or "free".³⁸ In legal codes, it refers to repayment of money for change of ownership. Like $\sqrt{\lambda\lambda}$, it is used to refer to the "redemption" from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 13:13, 52), and is again used in the psalms with respect to this deliverance (e.g. Ps. 78:42). It is a term used for physical redemption by the deuteronomist (Dt. 7:8; 15:15), and not surprisingly finds its way into passages in Jer. concerning another "redemption" (Jer. 31:11; MT.12). It occurs in the psalms with respect to asking for "redemption" from danger (e.g. Pss. 26:11; 31:6; 49:16; 71:23). In Ps. 130, which praises God for the gift of forgiveness ($\sqrt{\eta\lambda\sigma}$) in v. 4, $\eta\tau\phi$ is used as a synonym for

³⁸ Cf. Stamm, art. cit., col.90, who presents a table and shows the term only occurs ten times in Ex. and eleven times in Nu., but surprisingly is found seventeen out of the seventy times in the psalms, preferring the figurative use of the term.

the forgiveness of sin in v. 8:

"And he will redeem (יִפְדֶּה) Israel
from all his iniquities (עוֹנוֹתָיו)."

Both לֹאֵל and יִפְדֶּה demonstrate the way in which words used to plead for tangible deliverance may also imply pleas for unseen forgiveness. Another word used in this way is לָצַד , "deliver", used in Ps. 79:9 in parallelism with סָפַח , "forgive". Also relevant is יִשְׁעֵהוּ , "save".³⁹ Both these words may be used with the same two meanings, concerning external and internal deliverance. Just as the psalmists rarely request forgiveness alone, neither do they request physical restoration and healing on its own. Even Ps. 51, with all its emphasis on internal forgiveness, ends with a plea concerning the physical restoration of Zion. The physical and spiritual components of suffering were closely related and the psalmist rarely asked for the one without expecting the other.⁴⁰

We may conclude that forgiveness was not something which the psalmist experienced only internally. It was part of a more obvious experience of deliverance which served as a testimony and assurance both for the psalmist and the whole cultic community. From this, we

³⁹ On the use of יִשְׁעֵהוּ in the psalms, cf. J. Barr, 'An Aspect of Salvation in the Old Testament' in Man and his Salvation. Studies in memory of S.G.F. Brandon (eds. E.J. Sharpe and J.R. Hinnells), Manchester, 1973, pp. 39-52. Barr notes the infrequency of the term in the Pentateuch and concludes that the term has more personal connotations, as seen in personal names and in the poetic tradition, particularly the prayers of the psalms (p. 48).

⁴⁰ This "unity" of component parts is discussed by J. Pedersen, Israel, Its Life and Culture, Copenhagen, 1926, in 'The Soul, Its Powers and Capacity', especially pp. 123ff. See also A.R. Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel, Cardiff, 1964², especially Parts I and IV. See also McKeating, art. cit., pp. 71-74, who discusses the relationship of forgiveness and healing with particular reference to Pss. 6, 38 and 90.

can infer again that rather than a typical repeatable setting, a plea for specific restoration lay behind many of the psalms concerned with forgiveness and healing.

(V) FORGIVENESS AND PENITENCE

One important issue discussed in the word-study concerned the means by which forgiveness was made available. The conclusion was that the process did not appear to be as inextricably linked with cultic ritual as had often been proposed.

The attitude of penitence is essential in receiving forgiveness. Several psalms expand what is involved in the act of penitence. Its major components are integrity and humility. Deliverance, whether spiritual or physical, can only be offered to those who are humble before God, as Ps.18:28, a royal psalm, makes clear:

"For thou dost deliver (יִשְׁלַח) a humble people;
but the haughty eyes thou dost bring down."

In Ps. 25, the pleas for forgiveness in vv. 11-18 are preceded by the proclamation that the humble will be heard by God:

"Therefore he instructs sinners (יִלְמַד) in the way.
He leads the humble (יִנְיָו) in what is right,
and teaches the humble (יִנְיָו) his way." (vv.8b-9)⁴¹

The same attitude of humility is seen in the use of $\sqrt{\text{גָּדַל}}$, used for example in Ps. 38:19. Within deuteronomic literature, the

⁴¹ Reference to the identity of the יִנְיָו will be discussed in Chapter 8, 'Pleasing God', pp. 334ff.; the relevant literature is found in note 35, p.334.

term may indicate deep anxiety (cf. I Sam. 9:5 and 10:2, concerning Saul's father's worry over the loss of his asses). Used in relation to the suppliant before God, it can indicate deep sorrow at the loss of communion with God due to sin:

"I confess my iniquity,
I am sorry ($\lambda \lambda \tau \lambda$) for my sin." (38:19)

In Ps. 39, the suppliant prefaces his confession by reflecting first upon his transience before God. The contrast with his own imperfections served to lead him to affirm that his hope could only be in God alone:

"Behold, thou hast made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing in thy sight...
And now LORD, for what do I wait?
My hope is in thee.
Deliver ($\eta \zeta \iota \lambda \eta$) me from all my transgressions."
(vv.6,8,9)

Ps. 51, with its lengthy confession of sin, emphasises the same need for integrity and humility:

"Behold, in the inner being ($\beta \eta \eta \omega \tau$)
you desire faithfulness;
therefore in my secret heart ($\omega \beta \sigma \tau \eta \tau$)
make me know wisdom." (v.8) ⁴²

The plea for forgiveness is in this case unusual, for it has more concern for the inner renewal of the spirit than with eventual physical restoration or healing:

⁴² On this psalm, cf. H.-J. Stoebe, Gott sei mir Sünder gnädig. Eine Auslegung des 51 Psalms, Neukirchen, 1958. Verse 8, referred to here, is difficult to understand grammatically. If seen in the context of v. 5, it is a little clearer. The RSV reads: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being;/ therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart." Mowinckel understands from Babylonian counterparts that the terms "inward being" ($\beta \eta \eta \omega \tau$) and "secret heart" ($\omega \beta \sigma \tau \eta \tau$) are technical expressions to describe a secret initiation ceremony: cf. PsSt. I, p.142. However, the root $\omega \beta \sigma$ is also used in Pss. 19:13 and 90:8, where it is best understood as a general plea for inner integrity. On this latter reading, see Gunkel, GHAT p. 223 and Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 387-8.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me." (v.12)

Ps. 51 also offers insights into the relationship between cultic activity and removal of sin. The figurative language for forgiveness used throughout this psalm suggests that v.7, with its references to "washing" and "purging" could be understood metaphorically rather than literally. Verses 18-19 are the most explicit concerning what is primarily acceptable to God:

"For thou hast no delight in sacrifice (זָבַח);
were I to give a burnt offering (קָרָבַן),
thou wouldst not be pleased.
My sacrifice (זָבַחִי) acceptable to God
is a broken spirit;...(vv.18-19) ⁴³

Although it is inappropriate to generalise from this prayer about the effectiveness of sacrifice per se, it is clear that this psalmist understands in this case that inner repentance will elicit God's forgiveness more than any sacrifice. Even vv. 20-21, which is generally seen as a later addition, in its anticipation that God will once more be pleased when appropriate sacrifices are again offered, do not imply expiatory sacrifices are the most pleasing to God. The reference is to sacrifices of praise, as a response to God's rebuilding of Zion:

⁴³ זָבַחִי could be pointed as זָבַחִי ("sacrifices") or as זָבַחִי ("my sacrifice"). The latter would fit the more personal tenor of the psalm. The suppliant appears to be praying that as no specific atoning sacrifice could cover his sin, the only sacrifice he could offer was his penitent heart. Cf. Gunkel, GHAT pp. 225-8; Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 389-90. For a contrasting cult-functional interpretation, cf. Mowinckel, PIW² pp. 17ff. and 21ff.; also Hermisson, Sprache und Ritus, pp. 46ff.

"...rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
 then thou wilt delight in right sacrifices
 (זִבְחֵי צֶדֶק),
 in burnt offerings (עֹלֹת) and whole burnt offerings."
 (vv.20-21) ⁴⁴

Thus when sacrifice is given a positive evaluation in this psalm, it is as a response to God's goodness rather than a means of acquiring it. This is a striking admission in a psalm which so profoundly recognises the need for forgiveness; it is also echoed in other psalms which proclaim that the acknowledgement of gratitude is the only sacrifice which will please God. Examples include Pss. 27:6; 107:22 and 116:17, all of which use זִבְחֵי rather than עֹלֹת. In Pss. 50:14,23 and 69:31, תְּנוּחָה is used for a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and in both examples, the reference is to a prayer of thanksgiving rather than to particular cultic activity, reflecting a similar attitude to sacrifice as in Ps. 51. The association of תְּנוּחָה with prayer rather than ritual is most probably due to its root נָחַח which can mean either "confess", as in the confession of sin in Pss. 32:5 and 38:2,9 or "acknowledge", as in the testimony of thanksgiving in Pss. 89:6 and 95:2.

Ps. 40 also questions the immediate efficacy of expiatory sacrifice. There is no explicit reference to forgiveness in this psalm, but the suppliant pleads for God's mercy (v.12) and also for his deliverance ($\sqrt{\text{לִישׁוּעָא}}$) (v.14). It appears that the psalmist has offered the appropriate sacrifices for his deliverance, but in his case they have been ineffective:

⁴⁴ עֹלֹת has associations not only with offerings for sin (cf. Lev. 1,8,16) but also, as in Ps. 51:21, with thankoffering expressing joy to God (e.g. Gen. 8:20ff.; 1 Sam 6:14). The term normally used for thankoffering in the psalms is זִבְחֵי; the use of עֹלֹת is therefore unusual.

"Sacrifice (זָבַח) and offering (נִסְחָא)
 thou dost not desire;
 ...burnt offering (לֶחֶם) and sin offering (חַטָּאת)
 thou hast not required." (v.7) ⁴⁵

The psalmist's spoken prayer however was acceptable:

"Then I said, "Lo, I come..." (v.8a) ⁴⁶

The words of the prayer were efficacious because they were apparently spoken with inner integrity:

"I delight to do thy will, O my God,
 thy law is within my heart." (v.9)

Against this background, the lack of reference to the value of expiatory sacrifice in Ps. 40 is understandable. The prayer of the psalmist is the most effective means of attaining God's forgiveness.

Ps. 86 is another illustration of the offering of oneself in prayer as the means of effecting God's forgiveness. The suppliant's cry of need is way of arousing the $\tau\omicron\pi$ of God:

"for to thee I cry all day" (v.3)
 "for to thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul" (v.4)
 "abounding in steadfast love ($\tau\omicron\pi$)
 to all who call on thee"(v.5)
 "hearken to the cry of my supplication"(v.6)
 "In the day of my trouble I call on thee" (v.7)

No reference at all is made to any accompanying expiatory or purificatory sacrifices for the sin.

⁴⁵ Mowinckel, PIW 2, p. 23, notes that this is not so much a negation of sacrifice as a spiritual reinterpretation of its value. Weiser, by contrast, sees this categorically pushes aside the whole sacrificial cult: cf. DATD 14, p.228 E Tr OTL, p. 338. Between these extremes, it is possible to see this as a prayer of temporary despair at the inefficacy of a particular sacrifice and the need for the sacrifice of the obedient heart: on this, cf. Gunkel, GHAT pp.169 and 171, and Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 308-10.

⁴⁶ Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 305 and 309 paraphrases this from the context: "Ich selbst bin das Opfer!", giving this a similar meaning to Ps. 51:18-19.

In conclusion, the psalmists do not usually associate penitential prayer with sacrificial offering. When pleading for forgiveness to be made available, there is either a silence about offering appropriate atoning sacrifices, or a questioning of their immediate efficacy. If sacrifice is referred to at all in the prayer of the penitent, it does not pertain to an atoning sacrifice, but rather to sacrifices of thanksgiving after forgiveness has been made effective.

For the suppliant, the most important offering to move God is not so much the sacrifice, but rather the spoken prayer of confession; this is the true reflection of his inner integrity and humility. Such prayer may evoke God's pity (cf. Ps. 103:13) or even avert his anger (cf. Pss. 79:8; 32:4; 39:11-12; 51:6). Sacrifice in general is never denied as a means of moving God; however, it is quite clear that in the prayers requesting forgiveness, cultic activity (if in evidence at all) takes place as much through the spoken words of the psalmist as through any accompanying ritual enactments. This accounts in part for the different portrayal of the cult in priestly legislation and in the psalmic prayers. It is interesting that in the priestly law codes, of the different purificatory rites concerned with the removal of sin by means of water (Lev. 14:5; Nu. 8:7, 19:9) and fire (Nu. 31:21ff.) and blood (e.g. Lev. 16:14-19; Dt. 21:9ff.), only the first of these is referred to at all in the psalms (Ps. 51:9). From the evidence in the psalms, ritual enactment and the recital of a prayer of penitence appear to be quite separate activities; the limitation of the cult-functional approach is that it has presumed to know too much about the integration of the ritual and prayer in the psalms. The

suppliant's spoken prayer and his accompanying attitude have not therefore been given the full attention they deserve; this is another example of the way that the significance of the personal piety of the psalmists has been a neglected phenomenon.⁴⁷

(VI) CONCLUSION

The prayers of penitents take on many different forms in the psalms. The three issues discussed above illustrate this well. First, even if it is likely that the psalms which speak of the need for forgiveness were accompanied by some form of priestly ritual, no reference is explicitly made to this; the language used for forgiveness has a more figurative than literal application, and the emphasis is more on the efficacy of the spoken prayer than any atoning ritual. Second, although forgiveness was normally experienced within the context of the cultic community, a number of psalms also illustrate a more individual awareness of sin and forgiveness in specific terms, suggesting that the suppliant is probably praying in a more private setting. Third, although most psalmists expected some tangible manifestation would accompany the receipt of forgiveness, in a few psalms, such as Ps. 51, forgiveness was requested more simply and directly for its own sake.

Each of these difficulties involves one underlying issue,

⁴⁷ Cf. B.A. Levine, In the Presence of the Lord, Leiden, 1974, pp. 40ff.; Eichrodt, Theologie 1939, Band III, pp. 118ff., E Tr Theology Vol. Two, pp. 443ff.; also R.J. Thompson, Penitence and Prayer in Early Israel outside the Levitical Law, London, 1963.

namely the relationship of these particular psalms with the cult. One interpretation would assume a cultic context for all the psalms on forgiveness, whether or not this were made explicit in the psalm itself. Even if this were the case, it still cannot be denied that for most of these psalmists, cultic ritual is of secondary importance to the words of their prayer. The psalmic prayer may be seen as the "spirit" which gives life to the "law" of ritual and sacrificial cleansing. The personal piety of the psalmists in this way helped to make the practices of sacrifices and rituals in the law "the organ of the spirit" which the prophets often called for.⁴⁸

On the other hand, it is of course just as possible to have empty words of spoken prayer as it is to present vacuous ritual offerings; the pre-exilic prophetic message makes this clear. For example, in Is. 1:12-17, ritual offerings are ineffective (vv.13-14) as also is prayer (v.15). The primary concern is with the inner integrity of the people's worship, in word, and life and ritual. Nevertheless, the latter, because of its implicit symbolism, is more open to the belief in its independent efficaciousness; ritual cannot indicate explicitly the need for inner contrition and integrity in the way that the spoken words of confession are able to do. This is why the psalms concerned with penitence hold that the words of prayer are of first importance, and any accompanying ritual is secondary. It is in fact the words of the prayer which give the meaning and efficacy to the accompanying offerings.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Cf. H.H. Rowley, 'The Unity of the Old Testament', BJRL 29 (1945-6), pp. 326-58. The Psalms are seen to stand midway between the Law and the Prophets (pp. 352-3).

⁴⁹ Cf. Hermisson, op. cit., pp. 29ff, who discusses this relationship of spoken word and enacted rite with respect to sacrifice and penitence.

It is therefore apparent that a contingent relationship exists between the process of the removal of sin and the expressions of forgiveness, or between the cultic practices and the psalmists' prayers for forgiveness. On account of this, the psalms of penitence are able to transcend a historical setting. They are timeless, in that as prayers of confession, they can be detached from any one cultic context of atonement. As poetic prayers of penitence, reflecting upon the common human predicament of remorse and guilt, their figurative language offers an ambiguity which enables them to be used by innumerable penitents in a variety of settings. If the rites were of such inextricable importance, it would be impossible to account for the use of the so-called "penitential psalms" (Pss. 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143) as prayers of confession, not only in the Judaic but also in the Christian traditions. ⁵⁰

Because the cult-functional interpretation in particular has emphasised the time-conditioned expressions of penitence within a particular religio-historical setting, it has been apt to overlook the psalmists' more obvious human dilemma of guilt and forgiveness. As was seen in the previous chapter on trust in the psalms, this is because the cult-centred approach has understood that the function of

⁵⁰ Cf. R.E. Prothero, The Psalms in Human Life, chapter 4, 'The Psalms in the Middle Ages', which refers several times to the penitential psalms. See also A.G. Martimort, I.H. Dalmais, P. Journel (eds.), L'Eglise en prière IV: La liturgie et le temps, Paris, 1983, pp. 206-23, E Tr M.J. O'Connell, The Church at Prayer IV: Liturgy and Time, London, 1985, pp. 190-206, on the use of the penitential psalms in the Canonical Hours of Prayer and in the Latin Primer.

the expressions of the psalmists are more significant for study than the experiences evident behind such expressions. In consequence, the cult-functional method deals only with one level of interpretation of the psalmists' prayers. Another interpretative level is necessary, namely that which gives as much attention to the psalmists' experience of the need for forgiveness, as to one particular cultic context in which that forgiveness might have taken place.

CHAPTER FIVE DEATH, LIFE AND GOD

"What profit is there in my death
if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise thee?
Will it tell of thy faithfulness?
Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me!
O LORD, be thou my helper!" (Ps. 30:10-11)

Even a cursory reading of the psalmists' view of life and death results in an overwhelming impression of their affirmation of life and their terror in the face of death. There are of course difficulties in understanding from the poetic imagery precisely what the references to "death" and "life" imply. One view, popularised by Barth, interprets the allusions to "death" in a figurative way: the psalmist has experienced such loss of strength and vitality that his present experience is analogous to death itself. The consequence of this view is to read allusions to "life" and "life for evermore" as pertaining only to earthbound existence.¹

The alternative is to interpret the references to "death" as literal allusions to the physical end of existence; this might concern either its untimely nature, or the expected outcome of human life. From this interpretation, there is more scope that the references to "life" pertain not only to temporal existence, but might instead suggest a quality of life with God transcending physical death.²

¹ Cf. Barth, Die Errettung vom Tode, pp. 93ff.; also Westermann, 'Anthropologische und theologische Aspekte des Gebets in den Psalmen' (1973), pp. 95-6; also Kraus, Theologie, BKAT XV/III, pp. 205ff.

² Cf. A. Bentzen, 'Der Tod des Beters in den Psalmen', Gottes ist der Orient. Festschrift O. Eissfeldt, Halle, 1947, particularly pp. 57-60, which questions Barth's "patternising" of references to death in the psalms; cf. also N.J. Tromp, Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament, Rome, 1969, particularly pp.137-40, following Dahood's earlier analysis.

The expressions concerning fear of death and love of life are most important in an assessment of the psalms as personal prayers. Even the cult-functional interpretation of these descriptions of life and death, whether figurative or literal, understands they pertain to the experience of an individual.³ So too the cult-functional reading concedes that these are part of historical life-settings, rather than mythical or cultic representations of typical situations.⁴ However, there are still two areas where this interpretation is open to question from the interests of personal piety in the psalms. First, a comparison with the Babylonian material leads to an assumption that the psalmists' depiction of "death" normally has the figurative meaning of death experienced in the midst of life. Second, this leads to the assumption that the psalmists understood "life" only within the limits of human existence.⁵ This is due to the underlying hypothesis that because the psalms are prayers written for liturgical use, their concerns should represent those of the cult, and so offer no interest in life beyond the grave.

The purpose of this chapter, with its emphasis on the personal prayers of the psalmists, is to question the more monochrome cult-functional interpretation that the psalmists' expressions of piety

³ Cf. PIW¹, p. 240: "We are here dealing with a conception which naturally can only be applied to an individual."

⁴ Cf. PIW¹, p. 245, denying the role of the king in representing a suffering dying deity in this way: "That here we have quite matter of fact human beings in historical political conditions must be obvious on any sober-minded and unprejudiced interpretation."

⁵ Cf. PIW², pp. 112-3, on Pss. 34, 37 and 49. The inflexibility in Mowinckel's approach concerning life after death is discussed by S.H. Hooke, 'Life and Death: V. Israel and the After Life', ET 76 (1965-66), pp. 326-9.

always suggest a type of cultic orthodoxy, particularly when faced with the crisis of death as the end of this life.

The two hesitations referred to above will be discussed in two stages. The first is to examine whether the psalmists' understanding of death ~~always~~ conforms to a more metaphorical understanding as an occurrence in the midst of life. The first half of the word-study on מות and its various synonyms will demonstrate that a more literal understanding of death as the last enemy of life is most frequently intended; even where the more figurative usage occurs, it is still expressed within the shadow of the ultimate fear of final death. It is the terror of death itself, rather than something rather like death, which has moulded these prayers of the psalmists.

The second stage is to assess the psalmists' references to life, particularly in the context of the predominant awareness of final death. The second half of the word-study on the use of חיים will demonstrate that some psalmists perceived that life with God might be experienced beyond final death. At this point, the psalmists' individual insights are most evident: these intuitive hopes hardly conform to the representative cultic faith.

The final two sections of this chapter will assess the implications of such diverse views of life and death, and will show that, as well as speaking in terms most appropriate for vicarious representative piety, the personal fears and hopes of particular psalmists are everywhere in evidence. The conclusion will assess the extent to which the cult-functional interpretation needs to place more emphasis on the psalms as personal prayers.

(I) A STUDY OF THE HEBREW WORDS FOR DEATH AND LIFE

In demonstrating that the more physical, final understanding of death is usually implied in the several synonyms used, reference will also be made to the occurrences of these words outside the psalms in order to set the psalmists' usage in their appropriate comparative context.

(a) מוֹת

מוֹת in the narrative literature nearly always refers to physical, literal death. The Hiph¹l/Hoph¹al can mean "to kill", "to execute", and "to put to death". It occurs repeatedly as a threat both in the Covenant Code (e.g. Ex. 21:12,15,16,17,29) and in the Priestly Code (e.g. Lev. 20:2,9,10,11,12,13,16,27). Examples outside the legal material include Gen. 27:2 (יוֹם מוֹתִי); Nu. 35:25,28,32 (אַחֲרֵי מוֹתִי); Dt. 31:29 (אַחֲרֵי מוֹתִי); and 1 Sam. 15:35 (עַד־יוֹם מוֹתוֹ).

By contrast, in the poetic passages, the noun also has figurative associations, where it describes a personal power threatening the well-being of the sufferer. The clearest example is found in Jer. 9:21 (MT 20):

"...death has come up into our windows,
it has entered our palaces..."

Similarly, the personified use of "Belial", probably from the root בלע ("to swallow"), found in Ps. 18:5/1 Sam 22:5, reflects this mythological, personified understanding of death. This has associations with the Canaanite Mot, the "swallower" of the dead into

the underworld.⁶ Alternative personified readings of Belial include "the worthless one", from the words לַיִן אֵלֶּיךָ, "without worth", and also "the destroyer", from בִּלְעָד, "to confuse, confound".⁷

The poetic medium of the psalms and the lack of any narrative framework results in difficulties in understanding exactly what the psalmists' experience of death really involved. Two exceptions where poetic references are found within a narrative context are therefore most important. One is Jonah's psalm of thanksgiving. In Jon. 2:2, the cry לַיִן אֵלֶּיךָ is as if Jonah has already experienced death itself.⁸ The mythological associations in the narrative and the impossibility of a prayer from the dead both indicate that Jonah has not experienced death, but only the danger of dying. The experience of being restored to life is described as having been revived from death.

A similar example is found in Is. 38, where Hezekiah, before he was healed, believed that he would experience death (here, also

⁶ For example, cf. ANET ³, pp. 138-42, which uses the phrase "godly Mot".

⁷ Literature on the personification of death includes Pedersen, Israel I/II, pp. 158ff.; also Tromp, op. cit., pp. 125-7; also J. E. Hogg, 'Belial in the Old Testament', AJSL 44 (1926-7), pp. 56-8; also D.W. Thomas, 'לַיִן אֵלֶּיךָ in the Old Testament', Biblical and Patristic Studies in Memory of R.P. Casey (eds. J.N. Birdsall and R.W. Thomson), Freiburg, 1963, pp. 11-19.

⁸ Cf. A.R. Johnson, 'Jonah 2:3-10: a Study in Cultic Phantasy' in Studies in Old Testament Prophecy presented to T.H. Robinson (ed. H.H. Rowley), Edinburgh, 1946, pp. 85-102, especially pp. 100-101.

לִיָּאֵשׁ) for the rest of his life, because of his sickness.⁹ This has correspondences with prayers in the Babylonian literature, where the word balātu, "to live", is also used to mean "to recover health"; Gula, the goddess of healing, is called "she who gives life to the dead".¹⁰

The word מָוֶת occurs only in twenty psalms. In most of these examples, in contrast to the above two poetic examples using לִיָּאֵשׁ, there is a clear literal meaning, with respect to death at the end of life. Two of these are historical psalms. In Ps. 78:50, it concerns the death of God's enemies, and in Ps. 107:18, the near-death of his people. Its occurrences in five royal psalms offer the same reading. In Pss. 9:14, 18:5-6, 89:49 and 118:17, the king in each case praises God for release from danger and physical death. Even in Ps. 33:19, a hymnic example, the parallelism of life and death justifies a more literal interpretation. Other references are in individual psalms. Even here, most occurrences suggest that the psalmist is thinking of his impending final death. Examples include Pss. 6:6; 7:14; 13:4; 49:15; 55:16; 56:14; 88:6,11; 116:3,8,15 and 143:3.

Three individual psalms nevertheless use מָוֶת by contrast to suggest a more figurative reference to death as an experience in the midst of life, similar to the use of לִיָּאֵשׁ in Jon. 2 and Is. 38. For example, Ps. 22:16 describes suffering in this way:

⁹ Cf. J. Begrich, Der Psalm des Hiskia, FRLANT NF 25, Göttingen, 1926, particularly pp. 22-3, concerning Hezekiah's experience of the underworld whilst still alive.

¹⁰ Cf. ANET³, p. 310, for a Babylonian prayer, which reads: "...the goddess Gula who restores the health of the dead(ly sick) and bestows life."

"thou dost lay me in the dust of death"
 (וְלַעֲפָר-מוֹת) (v.16) ¹¹

More positively, Ps. 23:4 rejoices in God's protection when faced with an experience like that of death:

"Even though I walk
 in a valley of deathly darkness (בְּגֵיא צִלְמוֹת)
 I fear no evil." (v.4.) ¹²

From the context of the psalm, the picture, following the shepherding imagery, is that of wanderings in deep ravines, and describes death as an ever-present threat.

Ps. 55 has one literal reference to final death (v.16) but earlier depicts a present experience of death and its terrors:

"...the terrors of death (וְאִי-מוֹת-מוֹת)
 have fallen upon me" (v.5)

In the three examples of the figurative use of מוֹת with respect to an experience in the midst of life, the word is always qualified by another image, be it that of dust, darkness, or terror.

¹¹ Cf. H.H. Schmid, 'Mein Gott, mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen? Psalm 22 als Beispiel alttestamentlichen Rede von 'Krankheit und Tod', WuD NF 11 (1971), pp. 119-40.

¹² The RSV reads: "Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil". צִלְמוֹת could be translated "deep darkness", having associations with the Accadian salamu and Arabic salama, "be dark", with û as an abstract ending. The reading "darkness" is also possible by taking the word as a compound noun, צֶלַ ("shadow, shade") and מוֹת ("death"). Cf. Dahood, AB I p. 14, on the evidence of similar compound nouns in Ugaritic. D.W. Thomas also affirms this latter reading, but sees מוֹת is used in a superlative sense to indicate a very deep shadow, emphasising the aspect of darkness associated with death: cf. ' צֶלַקְמוֹת in the Old Testament', JSS 7 (1962) pp. 191-200. See also J.Eaton, 'Problems of Translation of Ps. 23: 3ff.', BiTr 16 (1965), pp. 171-6, and A.A. Anderson, NCB, p. 277, where צֶלַקְמוֹת is read as צֶלַקְמוֹת. For a full discussion of the relevant literature, concluding that the MT צֶלַקְמוֹת is most appropriate, cf. W.L. Michel, ' Ṣlmwt , "Deep Darkness" or "Shadow of Death"?' BR 29 (1984), pp. 5-13.

It is striking that these are the only clear psalmic examples which use **לֹוֹת** in this way. As well as suggesting an experience of death whilst still alive, even these psalms also show the imminent threat of final death, and thus are to be seen in some continuity with the other seventeen examples which use **לֹוֹת** with more literal connotations. In conclusion, in spite of all its mythological associations, **לֹוֹת** is only occasionally used in the psalms to refer to death as an experience in the midst of life, and is normally used with respect to the fear of final death.

(b) בֹּר

Outside the psalms, **בֹּר** has the same literal associations as does **לֹוֹת**. Within the narrative literature, it is used of a cistern, or well (cf. 2 Sam. 23:16), or a pit large enough for concealment (cf. 1 Sam 13:6), where corpses may be disposed of (cf. Jer. 41:7,9).

Within the psalms, **בֹּר** appears frequently both with **שְׁאוֹל** and **לֹוֹת**. In every case, it describes the fear of being near to final death. Ps. 30:4 is a thanksgiving for release from this experience:

"O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol,
restored me to life (**חַיִּיתָנִי**) from among those
gone down to the Pit (**מִיֹּרְדֵי בֹר**)" ¹³

¹³ **חַיִּיתָנִי** could also read "kept me alive", confirming that the psalmist never actually experienced death. The *Qerē* of the final part of the verse reads "from my going down to the Pit". Weiser, DATD 14 p. 179, ETr OTL, pp. 266 appropriately translates this "O Lord, thou hast snatched away my soul from hell, / restored me to life and delivered me from death."

It is used similarly, without any specific reference to death or Sheol, in the thanksgiving of Ps. 40:3 :

"He drew me out of the desolate pit (בֹּר שֵׁאוֹן)..."¹⁴

In Ps. 88:4-5, it describes the psalmist's terror of imminent death:

"...and my life draws near to Sheol.

I am reckoned among those who go down to the Pit (בֹּר)."
(vv.4-5)

The same meaning of being near to death is also found in Ps. 28:1:

"...lest, if thou be silent to me,

I become like those who go down to the Pit (בֹּר)..."

That this "going down to the Pit" was a formulaic expression to describe final death is indicated by its occurrence also in Ps. 143:7c:

"Hide not thy face from me,

lest I be like those who go down to the Pit(בֹּר)."

In conclusion, in the thanksgivings, בֹּר is used to describe an experience of release from imminent physical death, and in the pleas for help in the laments, it is used to depict the fear of annihilation by death. In spite of the poetic ambiguity, the references pertain to the fear of death as the end of life, rather than an experience analogous to death in the midst of life.

(c) קָבַר

A similar use is made of קָבַר . The literal associations with death are seen from קָבַר , "to bury", used over a hundred and thirty times of human burial. In the poetry outside the psalms,

¹⁴ An alternative reading for בֹּר שֵׁאוֹן is "pit of tumult", from the root שָׁחַ , " crash into ruins", or " roar". The "roaring" would concern the fearsome waters of the underworld, as in Ps. 65:8, a reading confirmed by reference to טֵיט הַיּוֹן ("miry bog") later in the verse.

the noun קבר is also used to depict literal, final death. In Is. 14:19, קבר is translated "sepulchre", a meaning consistent with its context; and in Ezek. 32:22ff., קבר is used to describe the graves of Israel's enemies.

When קבר is used in the psalms, it retains its associations with the tomb, or the grave. Ps. 49:12 suggests the literal usage, describing the way the rich will perish:

"Their graves (MT: קברם) are their homes for ever..."¹⁵

Ps. 88:12 also uses the literal meaning of קבר as "grave" in its rhetorical question concerning the experience of God's love after final death:

"Is thy steadfast love declared in the grave (קבר),
Or thy faithfulness in Abaddon?"¹⁶

The reference to physical, final death is further implied by the use of קבר in 88:6, where the suppliant compares his present condition to the physically dead:

"...like the slain that lie in the grave (קבר)..."

In conclusion, קבר is in fact nowhere used to portray an experience of death within this life. Its meaning refers only to the physical grave, and to the fear of final death.

¹⁵ Because vv. 11 and 13 set this verse in the context of dying and perishing, the translation "graves", or קברי, in line with the Versions, is preferable to the reading קברם "innermost parts", as in the MT.

¹⁶ The use of נדבך, used in parallelism with קבר here, only occurs in this one psalm, although it is found in wisdom poetry such as Prov. 15:11, 27:20 and Job 26:6. From the root נדבך "to perish", its particular use in Ps.88 is to depict death as the once-for-all destruction of life.

(d) תַּנְּשׁוּ

The word תַּנְּשׁוּ has two possible associations. If derived from the root תַּנְּשׁוּ, the noun derivative may mean "destruction"; if from the root תַּנְּשׁוּ, meaning "force down", the derivative could simply mean "the pit". Occurring nine out of twenty three times in the psalms, it is only twice used with respect to death.¹⁷ In Ps. 16:10 it is used in parallelism with לֹאֵשׁ:

"For thou dost not give me up to Sheol,
or let thy godly one see the Pit (תַּנְּשׁוּ)." ¹⁸

Ps. 103:4a also uses the term positively to describe God's loving protection in the context of forgiveness and healing (v.3):

"...who redeems your life from the Pit (תַּנְּשׁוּ)..."

In this psalm, the reference to healing would imply that תַּנְּשׁוּ refers to an experience of being saved from imminent physical death.

In conclusion, the brief references to תַּנְּשׁוּ also depict death as the fearful end of all human life.

(e) אֶדְוָה

Outside the psalms, אֶדְוָה clearly denotes final death. Man, without the breath of life, must return to the dust of the earth

¹⁷ Outside the psalms, the other most significant reference for this study is in Job 33:22, where תַּנְּשׁוּ is used in parallelism with תַּנְּשׁוּ, (תַּנְּשׁוּ), where it is most appropriately understood as "pit", and where the context depicts death literally as the end of life.

¹⁸ A.A. Anderson, NCB pp. 145-6, assumes תַּנְּשׁוּ to mean "destruction", and, because this would infer some belief in the resurrection of the body if taken to refer to literal death, prefers to see the psalmist here as alluding to some release from mortal perils. If, however, תַּנְּשׁוּ can read "pit", then reference to life beyond death need not include the concept of actual resurrection, but a shadowy hope in some unknown life beyond.

(Gen. 3:19; see also Eccles. 3:20). Even in poetic passages, this word describes literal, physical death, for example in Job 10:9 and 17:16, where it is used to indicate the hopelessness in this life because all must return to the "dust of death".

Two psalms use עפר to describe death as the end of all life. Ps. 104:29 contrasts it with the creative power of God:

"...when thou takest away their breath,
they die(יגועון),
and return to their dust (אל-עפרם)."
(v.29)¹⁹

Ps. 30:10 uses the word to describe final death:

"What profit is there in my death (דלי),
if I go down to the Pit (אל שחת)?
Will the dust (עפר) praise thee?
Will it tell of thy faithfulness?"²⁰

In conclusion, only Ps. 22:16, referred to previously, uses the phrase "dust of death" (עפר-מות) to depict an experience of death whilst still alive. Normally, עפר is used, as with the other synonyms, to speak of the fear of death in its final sense.

(f) תמותה and שער-מות

Two other expressions use the word מות . The first,

¹⁹ The psalmist is referring more to the general cycles of nature than to particular human life; God breathes into nature to give new life, and conversely the dying seasons suggest the absence of the breath of God. Cf. Weiser, DATD 15, p. 459, E Tr OTL, p. 670.

²⁰ The use of דלי (literally, "my blood") for "life" underlines the reference to final death; life is the blood itself. The verse could be paraphrased "What advantage do I gain in dying?" as by Anderson in NCB, p. 244; alternatively, "What is the good of my death to thee?" as by Weiser in DATD 14, p. 179, ETr OTL, p. 266. For this psalmist, survival in this life is the only means of knowing God.

תמותה , found for example in Pss. 79:11 and 102:21, may be translated literally "children of death". The immediate context of these examples is physical imprisonment, where final death is an imminent possibility. The RSV translation "those doomed to die" offers this interpretation, although the more positive description "those appointed to die" or "those worthy of death" might be more suitable. Therefore this is yet another reference to death in its physical, final sense.

Second, the usual translation of שַׁעַר יְמוֹת is "gates of death", as in Pss. 9:14; 107:18 and Job 38:17. Is. 38:10 uses the synonymous term "gates of Sheol". This phrase has several mythological associations; in the Babylonian laments, it is used of Ishtar's descent to the underworld. It depicts graphically the primordial fear of the closing of life and entering the realm of the dead.²¹ It is also an appropriate way of depicting death as a present experience in the midst of life. One example is found in Is. 38:10, where Hezekiah prays, "I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years". Therefore this expression, like that of מות itself, is most open to both a figurative and final appropriation.²²

²¹ Cf. A. Heidel, 'Death and the After Life' in The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels, Chicago, 1963, pp. 170ff. for a discussion of this term and its use in Babylonian laments.

²² References to death in both a figurative and final sense are also found in Job. For example, in Job 7:1-10; 10:18-22; 14:1-6 and 17:1-2, Job fears the finality of physical death, as the result of his illness. On the other hand, cf. Job 16:7-15; 19:7-12 and 30:9-15, which refer to the experience of death in the midst of life, in present suffering.

(g) שְׁאוֹל

It is most difficult to ascertain the root of שְׁאוֹל, and within this particular assessment, the etymology is not an essential part of understanding the usage of the term in the psalms.²³ Like the term מוֹת, שְׁאוֹל is another term the psalmists use to depict on the one hand death as the physical end of life, because of the associations of שְׁאוֹל with the grave, yet on the other hand it has more figurative and has mythological connotations, as a place of subterranean waters in the realm of the dead, which some psalmists feel they have entered whilst still physically alive.

Outside the psalms, the understanding of Sheol as a place for those physically dead occurs where שְׁאוֹל is paralleled with קִבְרִי (e.g. Gen 37:35; 42:38; 44:19,31; 1 Kgs.2:6,9; Job 7:9; 14:13 and 21:13). Sheol is also understood in this way when used in parallelism with קִיּוֹן (e.g. Is. 14:11; Job 19:6) and קִיּוֹן (e.g. Job. 26:6; Prov. 15:11 and 27:20); all of these concern final death. Sheol, as the grave, is the place where all must go, good and bad

²³ Four explanations are possible. All of these show the figurative, mythological associations of the term. First, cf. L. Koehler, 'Schēol', Th Z 2 (1946), pp. 71-4, who interprets Sheol as "wasteland", from שָׁוָה ("be waste", as in Is 6:11 and possibly Nah. 1:5), with the ל as affirmative. Second, Sheol has been associated with שָׁאַל ("ask"), which would imply Sheol is a place of enquiry, although the official attitude to necromancy in Israelite religion would cast doubts on such overt usage (cf. Dt. 18:8ff.; Is. 8:9 and Ps. 106:28). Third, Sheol has been connected with שָׁוָה ("hollow out"); although the root does not occur in the Old Testament, the noun derivative is found in Is. 40:12, meaning the hollow of the hand. The picture of Sheol as a deep, hollow pit in the centre of the earth in Babylonian literature and in the post-biblical tradition where it is called "the deep of the sea" would confirm this meaning. The most obvious problem of this etymology is accounting for the confusion between ש and ס. Fourth, Eichrodt sees the link with שָׁוָה, reading Sheol as "the western land"; the place of the setting sun becomes the gateway of the netherworld. Cf. Theologie, Band II, pp. 112ff., E Tr Theology, Vol Two, pp.210ff.

alike (e.g. Gen 37:35, of Jacob; Nu. 16:30,33, of Korah). Such descriptions of Sheol are formed from empirical observations of a tomb, which is dark, gloomy, and silent; in the depressing descriptions of Job, it is worm-ridden also (Job 17:13-16). It is, for Job, a place of no return (cf. Job 7:9). In Sheol there is no work, no thought, no knowledge, and no wisdom (Eccles. 9:10).

Within the psalms, Sheol is used to refer to final death through being analogous to a Palestinian tomb, when used in parallelism with **בֹּרַי**, for example in Pss. 30:4 and in 88:4-6. In Ps. 88, Sheol is used synonymously with both **בֹּרַי** and **קִבְרִי**. Because Sheol is thus identified with the grave of the dead, and thus ritually unclean, it is devoid of any presence of God:

"...and my life draws near to Sheol (**לְשֹׁאֵל**).
 I am reckoned among those who go down to the Pit (**בֹּרַי**);
 ...like the slain that lie in the grave (**קִבְרִי**),
 like those whom thou dost remember no more,
 for they are cut off from thy hand."
 (vv. 4-6)

As was seen outside the psalms, this picture of Sheol offers no distinction between the wicked and righteous. Because it refers to the grave, it is the fate of all to be there. This is why in Sheol there can be no memory of God, nor praise of God, as in Ps. 6:6:

"For in death (**בְּמוֹת**) there is no remembrance of thee;
 in Sheol (**בְּשֹׁאֵל**) who can give thee praise?"

The same idea is seen in Ps. 30:9. Although "Sheol" is not found here, the synonyms **שְׁחַת** and **עֶפֶר** are used instead. No Palestinian burial chamber could produce praise; outside the cultic sphere, and therefore unclean, it is uncannily silent:

"The dead (**הַמֵּתִים**) do not praise the LORD,
 nor do any that go down into silence." (Ps. 115:17)

Whenever Sheol is understood as the grave, it is motionless, darkness, and forgetfulness (cf. Ps. 88:11-13): it is the place of

those who are dead forever.²⁴

The other more figurative picture of Sheol describes it in mythological terms as a place of great depth below the earth. This is found in several poetic examples outside the psalms. The deuteronomist uses this picture as in Dt. 32:22, "the depths of Sheol" (עַד־שְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּית) and in 1 Sam 2:6, "he brings down to Sheol" (מִוְרֵיד שְׁאוֹל). It is used in the prophets, for example in Is. 14:9, "Sheol beneath" (שְׁאוֹל אֶת־חַת) and Am. 9:2, "they dig into Sheol" (יַחַתְּלוּ בְשְׁאוֹל). It occurs also in Job 11:8, "deeper than Sheol" (עַמְלָקָה מִשְׁאוֹל).

The psalms also refer to Sheol in this way. In Ps. 139:8, God is above and Sheol is below:

"If I ascend to heaven (אִם־אֶסְקֶנָּה שָׁמַיִם),
thou art there!
If I make my bed in Sheol (וְאֶצִּיעָהּ שְׁאוֹל),
thou art there!"

Sheol is a place of "descent". The idea of "going down" to the pit (if not explicitly to Sheol) was seen in Pss. 30:10 and 115:17. The curse in Ps. 55:16 is explicit:

"...let them go down to Sheol
(יִרְדּוּ שְׁאוֹל)
alive..."²⁵

The curse form is also found in Ps. 63:10, which uses a synonym, "the depths of the earth", for Sheol:

²⁴ Cf. E.F. Sutcliffe, The Old Testament and the Future Life, London, 1946, Chapter VII, who discusses these last four references, as well as Is. 38:10ff. and Ecclus. 17:27ff.

²⁵ The text is not easy to follow; the impression is of the suddenness of death, and may be connected with the account of the clan of Korah in Num. 16:31ff. who "go down" alive to the depths of the earth.

"But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down to the depths of the earth
(יבאו בתחתיות הארץ)."26

Although there are no references in the psalms which actually name Sheol as the place of subterranean waters, outside the psalms this is implied in cosmogonic descriptions of the primordial ocean of chaos waters being under the earth (cf. Gen 1:7).²⁷ In the psalms, it is implied in the fears of drowning in deep waters, which portray an experience of being overwhelmed by distress. It is found in Ps. 69:3:

"I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters (באעמקי-מים),
and the flood sweeps over me (ושבלת שטפתני)."

The connections between dying and drowning are more explicit in Ps. 69:16, which also compares death to the devouring monster of the deep:

"Let not the flood (שבלת מים) sweep over me,
or the deep (מצולה) swallow me up,
or the pit (באר) close its mouth over me."

The same picture is found in the pleas for help in Ps. 144:7:

"...rescue me and deliver me from many waters
(כאים רבים)"28

The same imagery is used in the thanksgiving of Ps. 40:3;

26 The use of תחתיות for the depths of the earth has connotations with the primordial ocean. Cf. ANET³, pp. 61ff., on the mythological sea monster Tiamat.

27 Cf. Pedersen, op. cit., pp. 463-4; also Heidel, op. cit., p. 170.

28 Cf. H.G. May, 'Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbim, "Many Waters"', JBL 74 (1955), pp. 9-21. The unusual parallelism with the "hands of aliens" in this verse emphasises the description of the waters as hostile, primordial forces threatening death.

"He drew me from the desolate pit (**שְׁאוֹן**),
out of the miry bog (**סַחַיִת הַיֶּרֶק**)..."

This imagery is used outside the psalms. Examples include Lam. 3:53-4 and Jon. 2:2,3,5 (MT 3,4,6). In Jonah, the explicit use of Sheol in connection with drowning is clear.

The appeals to God as "a rock" (**צוּר**) or "defence" (**מִלְּךָ**) are often used alongside this imagery. It need not refer to the presence of God in the sanctuary, but could describe the safety found with God above the terrors of the floods of Sheol. Ps. 40:3 suggests this. Ps. 28:1 also calls God a rock, from the fear of the Pit (**צוּר**). Ps. 18:3 begins with the thanksgiving to God as the suppliant's rock (**מִלְּךָ**), repeated in vv. 32 and 47 (in both cases using **צוּר**). Deliverance is described as being drawn out of "many waters" (18:16). Ps. 42:8 uses the imagery of drowning in the context of God as a "rock" (**מִלְּךָ**) in v. 10.²⁹

The allusions to death as an experience within this life occur most frequently in the individual thanksgivings. Ps. 30:10 has been seen to indicate this. The idea is expressed similarly in Ps.86:13:

"...thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol
(**מִשְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּי**)."

Ps. 116:3 also describes the psalmist's earlier sufferings as an experience of Sheol:

²⁹ On the appeals to God as rock, cf. Eichhorn, Gott als Fels, Burg und Zuflucht, referred to on p. 110 previously.

"The snares of death (חבלי-מוֹת) encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol (וּמַצְרֵי שְׁאוֹל) laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish."³⁰

Another example is in Ps. 18:6:

"...the cords of Sheol (חבלי שְׁאוֹל) entangled me,
the snares of death (מִלְקָשֵׁי מוֹת) confronted me."
(v.6)

By using this threatening picture of Sheol as a present experience, some psalmists believe that the wicked should enter Sheol by premature death, as part of the punishment they deserve from God. It is found particularly in the curses upon the wicked, as in Ps. 31:18:

"...let the wicked be put to shame,
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol." (v.17)

The same idea is found in the curse of Ps. 55:16, referred to above. It is curtly proclaimed in Ps. 9:18a:

"The wicked shall depart to Sheol..."

A problem arises when the righteous also seem to be threatened by premature death, and particularly when this threat is contrasted with the prosperity of the wicked who seem to evade any such menace. This problem is often the subject of wisdom psalms. In Ps. 49, the suppliant is surrounded by "men of iniquity", who, far from being near to the terrors of Sheol, enjoy prolonged success (vv. 6-7). The psalmist argues his case: they will die, as all must die (vv.11-12). Their destination is clear. They too must go to the place of those who have died before their time:

³⁰ The personified forces of death in the underworld appear to "swallow up" (לָעַב) the suppliant whilst he is still alive: cf. Weiser, DATD 15, pp. 494-5, E Tr OTL, pp. 718-9.

"Like sheep appointed for Sheol...
...Sheol shall be their home." (v. 15)

This is the fate of the wicked. This particular psalmist sees his own fate differently. The following verse makes an abrupt contrast concerning the suppliant's destiny:

"But God will ransom my soul (יַפְדֶּה-נַפְשִׁי)
from the power of Sheol (מִיַּד שְׁאוֹל),
for he will receive me (כִּי יִקְחֵנִי)." (v.16)³¹

There is a logical progression in this psalm: if the issue is that the wicked are to relinquish good fortune at death, and the righteous are promised good fortune before they die, then the righteous would be worse off than the wicked, for they too must leave their fortune at death, yet also have to endure their ill-fortune which the wicked have escaped from. Rowley summarises the psalmist's consequential belief as follows:

"What the psalmist is saying is that the inequalities of this life will be rectified in the next."³²

In conclusion, several meanings lie behind the psalmists' use of the word Sheol. It is understood by some as an experience in this life of all the terrors of primordial chaos, yet by others as the grave of those physically dead.³³ It is for some a place of unavoidable torment in this life, whilst for others it is a place

³¹ The use of **קָח** in this verse is also found in Ps. 73, which also suggests hope in some "translation" beyond death. A full discussion of this word and related issues is given in the following word-study on "life", pp. 183ff.

³² Cf. H.H. Rowley, 'Death and Beyond', in The Faith of Israel, Sprunt Lectures, Richmond, Virginia, 1955, London, 1956, pp. 150-176, here, p. 171. On Ps. 49, see also Sutcliffe, op. cit., p. 102; also Podechard, Le Psautier Vol I, pp. 220ff.

³³ The two views of Sheol are discussed by Martin-Achard, op. cit., pp. 43ff.

from which the psalmist can be rescued even after final death. The most striking contrasts are to be seen in the fearful protest against the finality of death in Ps. 88 alongside the tentative glimpse of life beyond Sheol in Ps. 49. Such diversity is most clearly explicable from the vitality of human experience. Out of this, it is apparent that the psalmists were not always guided by the external constraints of orthodox, representative cultic theology, but more instinctively by personal hopes and fears from within, caused by a longing for the presence of God at the margins of life.

(h) חַיִּים

The verb חַיִּים (Qal:"to live"; Pi'el:"to keep alive") shares a similar root with other Semitic languages except Accadian.³⁴ Comparisons of this root, and its derivative noun חַיִּים, with the Ugaritic root hwy and the noun hym show that it nearly always concerns life in terms of this temporal existence. For example, the contrast of life and immortality is made clear in Anat's promise in the Aqhat Epic:

"...Ask for life (hym)
and I will give you immortality (blmt)" ³⁵

This reading depends on interpreting "life" and "immortality" in parallelism, where hym is life in its temporal form, and bl-mt is read literally as "not-death". This fits with a similar

³⁴ The Accadian term balātu corresponds to the Hebrew root חַיִּים. Cf. Ringgren, ' חַיִּים ' in TWAT II, cols. 874-98, E Tr TDOT IV, pp. 324-44.

³⁵ Cf. CTA 1.17 VI, 25-8, 2 Aqht VI 27:29, also in ANET ³, p. 151.

parallelism using hym and blmt earlier in the Aqhat Epic:

"In your life (hym) our father, we rejoiced,
In your immortality (blmt) we exalted."³⁶

"Life", in contrast to "immortality", is understood in physical terms of duration and quality. It is a functional term, often used as a synonym for "flesh", "blood" and "breath". The plural form חַיִּים reflects the intensity implied by this word; because this life is all there is, the depth of its quality and the length of its duration are of crucial importance. This is why the threats of illness, persecution and oppression can describe an experience of death in the midst of life, because they take away the fulness of life. The purpose of this study is to examine the various biblical examples of חַיִּים, and to ask if this is the only reading of the word.

Within the psalms, the LXX translates the Hebrew term in two ways, although both interpret "life" in terms of this physical existence. βίος is used to indicate the quality of life, for example in Pss. 16:11; 30:6; 34:13; 36:10; 103:4 and 143:2. ζωή is used to refer to life as the duration of days (e.g. Pss. 7:6; 23:6 and 64:2).

Two biblical phrases using חַיִּים confirm the interpretation of "life" in a temporal sense. The first concerns "the book of the living", which has correspondences with the Babylonian Tablets of

³⁶ Cf. CTA 1.16 I, 14-5 and II, 36-7.

In support of both these readings, cf. Ringgren, art.cit., p. 330, and B. Vawter, 'Intimations of Immortality and the Old Testament', JBL 91 (1972), pp. 158-71, particularly pp. 164-5. Against this, cf. Dahood, AB III, p. xlvi, who reads the two terms as synonyms, and so interprets hym as "eternal life", and from this, interprets חַיִּים as "eternal life" to be found for example in Pss. 16:11; 21:5; 30:6; 36:10; 56:14; 69:29; 116:8-9; 133:3 and 142:6.

Destiny, which refer to the register of the living. In such diverse uses in Ex. 32:32, Is. 4:3, Dan. 12:1 and 1 Enoch 47:3; 108:3 the names of the righteous are seen to be written in such a book, with the result that they are to be spared from premature death. Mal.3:16 develops the same idea, calling this "the book of remembrance" (ספר זכרון).

Three psalms refer to this "book". In Ps. 56:9, הלא בספרתך ("are they [my tears] not in your book?") is probably a gloss, but alludes to a record of the sufferings of the righteous, held by God, which will result in their vindication by God in this life. In Ps. 69:29, the phrase used is ספר חיים. In terms reminiscent of Ex. 32:32, the psalmist is asking that the names of his oppressors may be removed from the book of the living, so that they will die. In Ps. 139:16, the psalmist acknowledges that even before birth, his "life" (reading גלגל , embryo, instead of a possible emendation, גלגל , righteous deeds) was entered by God into his book. Being "registered" by God in this way affords the psalmist protection within this life. All three psalms are set against the background of righteous suffering; the "book" is the source of the psalmist's confidence that his earthbound life is known and protected by God.

Another phrase used more often in the psalms is "the land of the living" (ארץ חיים). This too shows an understanding of חיים in terms of temporal existence. It occurs in expressions of hope and confidence in the future restoration of the psalmist, for example in Ps. 27:13:

"I believe that I shall see (לולא האמנתי לראות)
the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living (בארץ חיים)!"³⁷

It is used as an expression of confident trust in God's protection in this life in Ps. 142:6:

"...I say, Thou art my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living
(בארץ החיים)."

It is used after a thanksgiving for release from death in Ps. 116:9:

"I walk before the LORD
in the land(s) of the living (בארצות החיים)."

This phrase is a way of expressing the intense relief of being restored to life after an experience of near-death.³⁸

The predominant understanding of חיים by the psalmists is in literal, physical, this-worldly terms. A most important question for this whole study concerns whether the word was always used with respect to human existence alone, or whether it could concern a quality of life with God which might transcend death. As seen earlier, the cult-functional position is cautious about such an interpretation. It is important therefore to see the other ways in which the term is used.

Some indication of another use of חיים is gained by looking at the peculiar Hebraic conception of God, and from this,

³⁷ The verse provides textual difficulties, particularly in the use of לולא ("unless") at the beginning of the verse. A paraphrase might read "I would have given up believing in the goodness of God / if he had not acted here and now."

³⁸ Cf. Ringgren, art. cit., p. 341. For an appraisal of this and the previous expression in terms of eternal life, cf. Dahood, op. cit., pp. xlvī-xlvii.

his relation to man. The very name Yahweh denotes a God who is constantly alive; unlike the Canaanite gods such as Baal, or the Babylonian gods such as Apsû, Tiamat and Tammuz, who are all subject to life and death, Yahweh is the "living God", who endures for ever. Even those scholars concerned with the cult-functional interpretation of the psalms accept this distinctively Hebraic idea of God.³⁹ An example of this is found in Ps. 90:2;

"From everlasting to everlasting
(מְעוֹלָם עַד-עוֹלָם)
thou art God."

There are several other ascriptions to the "living God". These include Ps. 18:47 (חִי-יְהוָה) and Ps. 42:3 (לֹא חָי) and Ps. 84:3 (אֵל-חַי). עוֹלָם is probably from עָלַם, "to hide", as seen later in Ps. 90:8. Twenty of the three hundred biblical references pertain to "hidden time" in the distant past, whilst the others concern the distant future. As with the references to the past, the future is normally understood still as within this temporal existence: this is clearly the case in the references to bondage of a Hebrew slave in Dt.15:17, and to the keeping of statutes in Ex. 29:28. An appropriate translation of this term would be "into perpetuity". The extent of time into the future implied by the use of this term is however conditioned by its relation to the object. This therefore results in a different understanding of "perpetuity" if the object in question is temporal, such as a slave, or eternal, such as the "living God." It is significant that in this latter context, the intensive מְעוֹלָם עַד-עוֹלָם is often used to

³⁹ For a discussion of these contrasting conceptions of the deity, cf. Heidel, op. cit., pp. 137-142; G. Widengren, Sakrales Königtum, Stuttgart, 1955, pp. 69ff; Mowinckel, PIW¹, pp. 138ff.; and Johnson, art. cit., pp. 98-99.

emphasise the extent of time implied, as above in Ps. 90:2. ⁴⁰

Praise to this "ever-living God" is developed in other psalms which praise God as "King for evermore". His everlasting rule is extolled not only in the enthronement psalms, but also in Pss. 10:16; 45:7; 48:9; 66:7 and 89:38. In these examples, this praise may be simply descriptive, and need not be part of some mythical and ritual enactment at a seasonal festival. Other ascriptions which confirm this interpretation are found in Pss. 111:3 and 112:3,9, which praise God's righteousness, rather than his kingship; this is a quality which also will "endure for ever":

"Full of honour and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures (לְעוֹלָם) for ever (עוֹלָם)." ⁴¹
(Ps. 111:3)

Ps. 19:10 speaks of the fear of the Lord in the same way:

"the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring (לְעוֹלָם) for ever (עוֹלָם)..."

In his various emanations, the living God is praised as "enduring" beyond the temporal life of man.

It is significant that some psalmists understand this quality of life is offered to chosen individuals. This is evident in ascriptions where the king is seen to have "life for evermore". Ps. 21:5 speaks of the king being given "length of days" (אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ) for ever and for ever (עוֹלָם וָעוֹלָם). Ps. 61:7 may be translated literally:

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Barr, Biblical Words for Time, London, 1962, pp. 117ff.; also E. Jenni, Das Wort "Olam" im Alten Testament, Berlin, 1953; and Jenni, 'עוֹלָם' in THAT II, cols. 228-43.

⁴¹ עוֹלָם literally means "to stand fast", with the sense of permanence.

"You will add days to the days of the king
his years as generation to generation."

Ps. 89:5 remembers the promises that God has established the king and his descendants "for ever" (לְעוֹלָם־עַד). Two extreme interpretations have been offered for these ascriptions. Either they are simply courtly salutations, offering a wish that the king should enjoy good health, and that his life should therefore be prolonged.⁴² Or they represent the idea of the king "enduring forever", following the belief in the immortality of the king elsewhere in the Fertile Crescent.⁴³ A third alternative is also possible. The salutations could be seen as expressions of hope in the continuation of the king's life through his dynastic rule (cf. 1 Sam. 2:30; 3:13; 2 Sam 7:13,16,24). In this way, the life of the king is seen to "endure" after his physical death. This provides another illustration of the way in which "life" was seen to have some endurance beyond the particular life in question.

If life is seen to "endure forever" with respect to God, and if the king's life is seen to outlast his physical death, references by the psalmists which speak of "life for evermore" (using עַד and לְעוֹלָם and לְעוֹלָם־עַד) may therefore also suggest an understanding of life beyond this earthly existence. It is apparent that, although death represents the destruction of life's forces, there are a number of references to indicate that death did not always imply the

⁴² Cf. Weiser, DATD 14 pp. 143-4, E Tr OTL p. 213 (on Ps. 21), and DATD 15 p. 302, E Tr OTL p. 444 (on Ps. 61); also Johnson, art.cit., pp. 91ff.

⁴³ Cf. Oesterley, 'Early Hebrew Rituals' in Myth and Ritual (ed. S.H. Hooke), pp. 111ff., especially p. 145, on the deification of the Hebrew king; also J.R. Healey, 'The Immortality of the King: Ugarit and the Psalms', Or 53 (1984), pp. 245-54, Pss. 21:3-5, 61:7 and 72:19 suggesting that the king would receive immortality (pp. 252-3).

complete annihilation of life itself. For example, personality was seen to "live on" in its scattered parts, through the bones, the blood, or the name.⁴⁴ Even the depiction of Sheol does not always necessitate a place of extinction of the personality; although it is where the shadow of the former life existed, and is thus associated with fear and torment, it nevertheless illustrates in a negative sense the possibility of life beyond the grave.⁴⁵

Three psalms which refer more positively to "life for evermore" are worthy of consideration in this respect. In Ps. 16:11, the psalmist thanks God for pleasures given "for evermore":

"Thou dost show me the path of life (אֶרֶץ חַיִּים)
in thy presence is fulness of joy,
in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore
(נַעֲמֻת בְּיָמֶיךָ נָצַח)."

The first part of the verse probably refers to the psalmist's experience of the counsel of God in this life. The final phrase could then be read in two ways. Either it qualifies the first part, referring to God's gifts in this life only.⁴⁶ Alternatively, it could be a progression of ideas, in that God who offers "life" offers "more than life". In this way, the reading is rather like that of the promise of Anat referred to in the Aqhat Epic.⁴⁷ Much

⁴⁴ Cf. Johnson, art. cit., pp. 86ff.; also Rowley, op. cit., pp. 155ff.

⁴⁵ Cf. Rowley, ibid., p. 156.

⁴⁶ This is the most acceptable interpretation. Cf. Kirkpatrick, CB, p. 175; Gunkel, GHAT, p.55; Podechard, op. cit., pp.66ff.; Mowinckel, PIW 1, p.241; Martin-Achard, op.cit., pp. 147ff; and E.F. Sutcliffe, op. cit., pp. 69ff.

⁴⁷ Cf. p.183 of this chapter. Cf. Rowley, op. cit., pp. 174-5, who is one the few scholars who interprets the progression of thought leading from God's protection in this life (vv.5-6) to God as the source of strength in the hereafter (vv.10-11).

depends on the reading of נצ . Its root נצ means "gain victory", or "excel", or "shine continually"; in a later prophetic passage it actually refers to God's victory over death (Is. 25:8). One translation could be again "into perpetuity". The extent of time referred to by נצ is conditioned by the reference to communion with God, who "lives" perpetually beyond the temporal life of man. This is clearly a shadowy intuitive hope, but it suggests, within the progression of thought in the psalm, that life in this world has a quality in communion with God which might endure forever.

This idea is also found in Ps. 49:10. The psalmist reflects that the "ransom" (פדו) of life can only be from God (vv.8-9). God's power is found not only in death, but beyond it too:

"...that he should continue to live on for ever
 $(\text{וְיִחְיֶה עוֹד לְנֶצַח})$
 and never see the Pit
 $(\text{לֹא יִרְאֶה הַשְּׁחִית})$." (v.10)

The text itself is difficult to translate. נצ is again used, to indicate the security of the righteous in God, contrasted with the transience of the wicked and rich (vv.6-8). Within the context of the following verses which imply that the righteous who know God will be "ransomed" from Sheol, whilst the wicked will remain there, this verse could refer to the hope of communion with God which will "endure" for ever. ⁴⁸

Ps. 73:26 is the third example. Instead of נצ used to qualify חַי , עוֹלָם is used. Instead of using חַי , the synonyms "flesh" and "heart" occur instead:

"My flesh (בָּשָׂר) and my heart (לֵב) may fail,
 but God is the strength (צֹר : "rock") of my heart
 and my portion for ever (עוֹלָם).

⁴⁸ For a previous discussion of Ps. 49, cf. pp.181-2 .

A number of interpretations are possible here. Würthwein, Ringgren and Barth see that it reflects a time when, within some cultic festival at the turn of the new year, the suppliant, who is the king, witnesses some mock battle between "life" and "death", and makes the above proclamation by way of a mythological belief concerning the gift of God's life for the coming year.⁴⁹ Birkeland and Gunkel, on the other hand, note that the suppliant cannot be making a mythological statement about death, for vv. 4-8 and 10-12 clearly show his experience is of the reality of cosmic powers, rather than a mythological representation of them.⁵⁰

Although refuting any reference to a belief in the resurrection of the dead, A.A. Anderson and Martin-Achard by contrast observe that some reference to life beyond death here is "not impossible."⁵¹ The reference to being "received" by God in v. 24 earlier, with the use of $\sqrt{\pi\kappa\lambda}$ (also used with reference to Enoch's translation beyond death in Gen. 5:24, and to Elijah in 2 Kgs. 2:3ff.) has correspondences with Ps. 49:16, referred to previously. It suggests again some intuitive hope in a "translation" to a form of life with God, instead of living without God, after death. The psalmist finds no satisfactory answers concerning the suffering of the righteous and the lot of the wicked until v. 24. If this verse still refers to

⁴⁹ Cf. E. Würthwein, 'Erwägungen zu Psalm 73' in Festschrift A. Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag (herausg. durch W. Baumgartner, O. Eissfeldt, K. Elliger und L. Rost), Tübingen, 1950, pp. 532-49; also H. Ringgren, 'Einige Bemerkungen zum lxxiii Psalm', VT III (1953), pp. 265-72, especially p. 270; also Barth, op. cit., pp. 152ff.

⁵⁰ Cf. H. Birkeland, 'The Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament', St Th III (1950), pp. 60-78, especially pp. 70-71, refuting Barth's interpretation; also Gunkel, GHAT, pp. 151-2.

⁵¹ Cf. Anderson, NCB, p. 537; also Martin-Achard, op. cit., pp. 158-65.

some sort of material reward, then לְחַיֵּה is a strange way to describe it.⁵² Moreover, as was seen in Ps. 49, the problem of the wicked is not satisfactorily answered in terms of rewards and punishments in this life alone. We may conclude that the reference to לְחַיֵּה in Ps. 73:26 pertains not only to this life, but to life beyond final death.

One other reference to "life for evermore" which uses לְחַיֵּה , is found in Ps. 133:3. This however demands a different interpretation altogether from that offered in the previous three examples. In Ps. 133, the psalmist first praises unity in fellowship (v.1), and then affirms the promises of God heard in Zion:

"...For there the LORD has commanded his blessing,
life for evermore
($\text{לְחַיֵּה הַיּוֹם וְלָדוֹר וָדוֹר}$)" (v.3)

Dahood predictably sees this as another reference to "life eternal".⁵³ This seems to be assuming too much of the term in this particular context. Unlike the other three psalms, nowhere is the question of theodicy and future accountability expressed. Rather, the context is that of confidence in God's presence in temple worship. לְחַיֵּה therefore concerns the blessing of "continual well-being" experienced by all who partake in such worship. In this psalm, there is no understanding of life with God other than in this life alone. This stands in contrast to the use of the term in Pss. 16, 49 and 73 referred to above.

These three psalms are therefore the only examples of the use of

⁵² Vawter, art. cit., p. 162, n.18 questions this, on the basis that לְחַיֵּה can also denote an unexpected action of God in this life as in Am. 7:15: the context of Amos and this psalm are however somewhat different. Cf. Rowley, op. cit., p. 172 in affirming this reading of לְחַיֵּה in Ps. 49.

⁵³ Cf. Dahood, AB III pp. xlvi-lvii, and pp. 252-3, on Ps. 133.

□ ִ ִ □ which hint at a tentative belief in life with God forever. In each case, there is no suggestion of any hope in the resurrection of the body. Instead, it is a shadowy faith in the endurance of life with God, rather than in Sheol, after death. Even during the pre-exilic period, which has been seen as the probable setting for many of the psalms, a tentative glimpse of life enduring beyond death would not be entirely unthinkable, given the expectations of life beyond the grave found among Israel's neighbours. ⁵⁴

This study of Hebrew words for death and life leads to two clear observations. The preoccupation with personal, final death is the most dominant theme in psalms which speak of dying. The literal references to death far outweigh the more figurative allusions to something analogous to death in this life. Surprisingly little evidence was found of the use of mythical language suggesting either representative experiences or ritual practices of a dying and rising king or cultic leader.

Furthermore, out of this preoccupation with physical death, there are occasional glimpses of life with God which might extend beyond it. Three psalms have been seen as particularly relevant, where the influence was seen to be the personal life-experience of the psalmist.

⁵⁴ For a comparison of these beliefs in Israel and in Egypt, cf. Sutcliffe, op. cit., Chapter I; for those in Babylon, cf. Sutcliffe, ibid., Chapter II, and Heidel, op. cit., pp. 137ff.; for those in Canaan, cf. Martin-Achard, op. cit., pp. 183ff. See also M. Gruenthaner, 'The Future Life in the Psalms', CBQ 2 (1940), pp. 57-63 and Rowley, op. cit., pp. 160ff.

(II) LIVING THIS LIFE WITH GOD

It has become clear that the psalmists understood life and death predominantly in literal, physical terms. The purpose of this study is to assess the implications of this temporal view of life upon the personal piety of the psalmists.

It has already been seen that because "life" for the psalmists is a gift of God, it is pervaded with an intense quality. To have communion with God is to have life; to be "godless" is to be "lifeless".⁵⁵ Such a perspective results in two different responses to the gift of life.

The first response is life-affirming. Because life is so fragile and finite, survival is the purpose of existence. One or two hymns affirm life in this way, although they are more generalised and reflective. Ps. 104:27-29 is an exceptional affirmation in a hymn. It is mostly expressed in the individual thanksgivings and individual psalms of confidence. Pss. 30:4, 40:3-4, 86:13, 116:9 and 138:7 are thanksgivings for restoration to wholeness in this life, after a reprieve from near-death. Pss. 16:9-10, 23:4-5, 27:1, 63:4-5, 84:2-3 and 131:2 all trust in God's power to prolong the suppliant's years: this is the primary concern of each prayer.

The second attitude concerns an intense apprehension at any threat of death. Death is the greatest enemy, if God is no longer there. This view, which obviously holds no hope for life with God beyond final death, is found especially in the individual laments.

⁵⁵ Cf. Barth, op. cit., pp. 93ff. and 166ff.; also Brueggemann, 'From Hurt to Joy, from Death to Life', pp. 3ff.

Ps. 6, praying for forgiveness and healing, reflects upon the fearful annihilation at death:

"For in death there is no remembrance of thee;
in Sheol who can give thee praise?" (v.6)⁵⁶

In Ps. 13, the suppliant also dreads his final death:

"...lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death
(פֶּן־אֶשָּׁן הַמּוֹת)." (v.4)⁵⁷

In Ps. 28, the psalmist fears the silence of God, which is a foretaste of the silence of death:

"...my rock, be not deaf to me,
lest, if thou be silent to me,
I become like those who go down to the Pit." (v.1)

Ps. 39 laments the brevity and vanity of life:

"Behold, thou hast made my life (יָמַי : "days")
a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime (יְדִי)
is as nothing in thy sight.
Surely every man stands as a mere breath!" (v.6)⁵⁸

Ps. 55 describes the terrors of death in terms of physical disorders here and now, and is prevented from any enjoyment of this life by the threat of its imminent termination:

⁵⁶ Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 88-9, E Tr OTL, p. 131 notes the this-worldly interest of the psalmist, who sees that death severs every bond between God and man. This has similarities with Pss. 30:10, 88:11-12 and 115:17, all discussed previously, and stands in stark contrast to Pss. 16, 49 and 73, which look more hopefully beyond death.

⁵⁷ Other references comparing death with sleep are found in Job 3:13; 14:12 and Ps. 76:5. In each case they concern fear at the loss of vitality caused by final death.

⁵⁸ Weiser, DATD 14, p. 222 E Tr OTL, p. 329, observes that life is vanity for this psalmist if death is seen to end all communion between God and man. See similarly Oesterley, TP, p. 90, and Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 301-2.

"...the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.
And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;..." (vv.5 -7)

Ps. 88 is a psalm without any affirmation of life. The fear of death is so overwhelming it is expressed both as a present experience and a future threat:

"I am reckoned among those who go down to the Pit;
...like one forsaken among the dead..."
(vv. 5 ,6)

Ps. 89, a royal psalm ending with an individual lament, also considers the brevity and vanity of life. The language is not necessarily bound up with myth and ritual; as was seen in Ps. 73 earlier, even the king sees his ultimate and inescapable enemy as death:

"What man can live and never see death?
Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?"
(89:49)

In Ps. 143 , the psalmist again fears death because it represents the final silence and absence of God:

"...Hide not thy face from me,
lest I be like those who go down to the Pit." (v.7)

Several other psalmists preoccupied with the fear of death portray it as a personal enemy. In these psalms, God is addressed in the language of warfare, as if he alone must do battle with death's chaotic forces. The calls to God to "Arise!" (e.g. Pss. 3:8; 7:7; 44:27; 68:2) reflect this spiritualised use of the language of holy war. Similarly, calls to God to "Deliver!" (e.g. Pss. 31:16; 59:2; 142:7; 143:9) and to "Awake!" (e.g. Pss. 7:7; 35:23; 44:24 and 59:5) imitate battle cries expressed in the context of the fight against the final enemy, death.

These different emphases illustrate that the life-experience of the psalmists has entered the psalmists' contemplation on temporal life with God. It is not just that the poet has become personally involved with his prayer on account of writing it for someone else; he is not identifying himself with some typical situation called "death".⁵⁹ Because death is the one certainty in every life, it is obvious that at this point every psalmist was able to depict his own experience of the personal realities of faith in God against the threat of his own final death. These may involve the heights of affirmation and fulfilment in life, or they may show the depths of scepticism and despair. Whatever the mood in a particular psalm, it would be surprising if it were not expressed out of the genuine reflections of the psalmist concerned with his own transience. In this way the cult-functional emphasis is turned on its head: the psalm dominated by reflections upon death is best understood primarily for the one writing it, and only secondarily for the one using it. The fact that such reflections on death are open to others to share and emulate is due to the common experiences of the psalmists and the users of the psalms when they each reflect upon the consequences of finite life in the face of death.

⁵⁹ Compare this with Mowinckel's understanding of the composition of psalmody in PIW², pp. 134-7.

(III) LIVING EVERMORE WITH GOD

The purpose of this section is to examine the more unusual insights of the few psalmists who hold that life with God may extend beyond death. The fact that this view is expressed so rarely should be sufficient indication of the way that such bold hopes are not so much founded upon representative piety as upon individual experience. This is personal intuition, and has nothing to do with any explicit doctrine of resurrection. They are to be seen in stark contrast to the few earliest references to the hope in a resurrection, which are clearly extended to the nation as a whole, as in Hos. 6:1-3; 13:14; Ezek. 37; Is. 25:8 or Is 26:19. In each of these prophetic contexts, the focus is on the future of a holy nation, or on the faithful remnant from that chosen nation.⁶⁰ In the psalms, whenever such hopes are expressed, they pertain always and only to individual apprehension, and have no indication of this more communal appropriation of the prophetic examples.

This personal reflection on life beyond the grave is formed upon two different life-experiences. The more positive of these is to do with the conviction that the psalmist's present communion with God cannot be destroyed at death.⁶¹ One example of this, referred to earlier, is in an individual psalm of confidence. The more negative influence pertains to the disappointed hopes in the justice of God, which is seen to be entirely ineffective in this life, and so had to

⁶⁰ Cf. Martin-Achard, op. cit., Chapter II, pp. 74ff., 'The Proclamation of the Resurrection and the Destruction of Death'.

⁶¹ Cf. Eichrodt, Theologie, III, § 24, 'Die Unzerstörbarkeit der individuellen Gottesgemeinschaft', pp. 148ff., E Tr Theology, Vol. Two, Chapter XXIV, 'The Indestructability of the Individual's Relationship with God', pp. 517ff.

be deferred until after death.⁶² Two examples here occur in the wisdom-influenced psalms which lament the success of the wicked.

Ps. 16 has already been referred to with respect to the use of **נָסַח** in v. 11.⁶³ This psalm of confidence is an example of the shadowy hope that communion with God might outlast death. The first part of the psalm reflects on the importance of that communion which is by day and night (vv. 5-9). The psalmist clearly believes such intimacy will afford him special protection at the time of his death:

"For you will not leave my soul for Sheol,
You will not allow your Holy One (**קִדְשׁוֹ**)
to see the Pit." (v.10)⁶⁴

This could of course refer to a hope to be spared from an untimely death. However, in the context of the previous verse, and from the insights in the following verse on the hope of communion "forever" (**נָסַח**) there is another way to interpret the psalmist's thought. It is just possible that he is expressing the hope that he will not reside in Sheol for ever, but rather will continue in communion with God.⁶⁵

⁶² Cf. E.F. Sutcliffe, op. cit., Chapters IX and X.

⁶³ Cf. pp. 190-1 of this chapter.

⁶⁴ The RSV translates this "For thou dost not give me up to Sheol/ or let thy godly one see the Pit." See again Rowley, op. cit., p. 175, note 2, on vv.10 and 11 of this psalm as reflecting hope in life beyond the grave.

⁶⁵ Ps. 116:15 might be added as an example of the hope at least that those "saints" who are in communion with God are remembered by God because of their untimely death, but the text is difficult to interpret more explicitly. Dahood, AB III p. 149 however accepts this reading.

So too Ps. 17:15 suggests a vision of God after "sleep", a reference which Dahood again concludes concerns a beatific vision after death: cf. AB I, p. 99 and AB III, pp. 1-11. Most scholars however would prefer to interpret this as referring to an experience of God ("the face of God") after a night of waiting for an oracle from God in the sanctuary or temple.

The belief that the justice of God would vindicate the innocent sufferer beyond death has already been discussed in Pss. 49 and 73, the two wisdom psalms in question. Ps. 49:15-16 make it clear that the psalmist sees himself, in contrast to the wicked, to be both "ransomed" (פִּדְיוֹן) and "received" (לִקְחָהּ) by God.⁶⁶

Ps. 73:23-28 also looks at life beyond death from the same perspective of innocent suffering. Verse 26 has been discussed in the earlier study.⁶⁷ In addition, vv. 23-24 are most significant:

"Nevertheless, I am continually with thee;
thou dost hold my right hand.
Thou dost guide me with thy counsel,
and afterward (אַחֲרַיִם))
wilt receive me to glory (כְּבוֹד תִּלְקַחְנִי)." ⁶⁸

As in Ps. 49, the psalmist has despaired of the prosperity of the wicked (vv 1-12) and asserts his suffering is unjust (vv. 13-14). Whether by vision, oracle, or an indirect means, the presence of God found within the sanctuary offered new insights and hope (vv.17ff.). The wicked have one destination, death itself (vv. 19-20, 27), whilst the suppliant has communion with God in this life (v.23) which cannot be broken by death (v. 24). The justice of God is thus deferred until after death.

One other wisdom psalm worthy of mention in this respect is Ps. 139, which ends with the plea of vindication, "... and lead me in the way everlasting (דֶּרֶךְ עוֹלָם)!" The psalm concerns two contrasting themes, namely God's authority over heaven and hell (cf.

⁶⁶ On Ps. 49, cf. pp.181-2 and p.191 of this chapter.

⁶⁷ On Ps. 73:26, cf. pp.191-3 of this chapter.

⁶⁸ Weiser, DATD 15 pp. 349-50, E Tr OTL, pp. 513 ff. notes the wāw translated as "nevertheless" contrasts future assurance beyond death with previous doubts within this life. Anderson, NCB, p. 537 reads this as pointing to some communion beyond the grave, albeit "hope without shape".

vv. 7-8), and the suppliant's communion with God which existed even before his birth (v.13-16). The final prayer could be a request for communion which would outlast death as well as birth, where the psalmist envisages a different future for the just and unjust (as seen in the curses on the wicked in vv. 19-21).⁶⁹ However, a more plausible reading of v.24b could simply be "...lead me in the ancient way!", following Jer. 6:16 and 18:15. Because this latter interpretation is the more likely, it is best to be cautious about this psalmist's understanding of life beyond death.

In the previous chapter on trust as hope in God, it was seen how frequently the expressions of hope in God occurred in the psalms, and how the focus of this hope is expressed mainly within this-worldly categories.⁷⁰ Examples of this in psalms which concern the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked are Pss. 37:25-26, 35-36 and Ps. 112:9-10, where the psalmists believe that God's vindication and justice will be worked out entirely in this life. It is precisely against this backcloth of earthbound hope that expressions in Pss. 49 and 73 pleading for God's justice may be judged. In these two psalms, the question is whether the righteous are ever vindicated by God in this life. Their hope is thus deferred until after death. In this respect, Pss. 49 and 73 offer a different perspective from the usual expressions of hope found in the psalms. They represent, like Ps. 16 referred to earlier, more independent and original aspects of personal piety. Although such psalms are few,

⁶⁹ Cf. Sutcliffe, op. cit., p. 102 and Weiser, DATD 15 p. 558, E Tr OTL pp. 807-8.

⁷⁰ Cf. Chapter 3, Section (V), 'The Experience of Trust as Hope in God', pp. 114 ff.

they raise questions about the typical representative faith which the cult-functional interpretation assumes to be normative in the Psalter.

(IV) CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that the psalmists were more preoccupied with death as the final threat to all life, than as a partial experience in the midst of life. The result of this observation has been to propose that the references to life, in some contexts, concern a quality of life with God which endures beyond final death.

The genuine hope and fears of particular psalmists were seen in those psalms which were concerned mostly with the fear of final death. They were also evident in psalms concerned with partial death, for these still reflected the personal fears of imminent or premature death, in the light of the psalmists' own transience and fragility. In those other few psalms whose hopes rose beyond the widespread official beliefs of the day, and thus anticipated the later tenets of faith in the resurrection of the dead by referring to the possibility of life with God for evermore, the more independent personal piety of particular psalmists was seen to be evident.⁷¹

⁷¹ Cf. Sutcliffe, op. cit., Chapter X; Birkeland, art. cit., pp. 75ff.; Martin-Achard, op. cit., pp. 218ff., on the development of the personal hopes of life beyond death into more formulated belief in the resurrection of the dead, evidenced in Dan. 12:2, The Book of Wisdom, 2 Macc. and Enoch.

The purpose of this study has been to show that when the psalmists speak of something as urgent and threatening as their final death, the representative and typical influence in psalmody has at times been made subservient to own life-settings. The psalmist appears to be writing firstly out of his own experience; if the psalm was initially intended for others to use, the common link between the composer and the user is that of the same human sense of finitude and transience. In other words, even if the psalm is written as a cultic prayer from its inception, the psalmist can in fact be more himself when speaking about death than any other life-situation (for example, illness, persecution, slander and enemy oppression), for death is the one experience he knows he too must face. A psalm with the fear of death as its dominant theme is as much the psalmist's own genuine expression of piety, using all the cultic styles and forms available to him, as it is a model for anyone else to use. The fact that others used these psalms which speak of death at various cultic occasions is as much due to the appeal of the common experiences of the psalmists than to the intention on the part of each composer to create a traditional cultic prayer. In many respects, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, the cult-functional interpretation also conceded this.⁷² However, this concession was never taken to its logical conclusion, in re-assessing how this affects many different reasons for psalm-writing, and how this implies a more dynamic relationship between traditionalism and personality in psalmody.

The single thread running through this chapter is that the

⁷² Cf. p.164 of this chapter, especially notes 3 and 4.

psalmists speak of death in life-centred categories. This is why they move beyond the ritual and mythical enactments of death primarily as an event in this life, and concern themselves as well with the real and ultimate issue of final death itself. This is why their genuine, personal experience of life in the face of death is capable both of representing the official view of death as the end of all things, and also of reaching forward to new hope beyond it.

Finally, their life-centredness also accounts for the way the psalmists reach beyond their immediate religio-historical setting to touch anyone who also might experience the same fear of dying, or the same hope in the face of death.⁷³ The life-centredness of a psalm is as significant a part of psalmody as any pre-determined cultic function it might have. This same life-centredness is the only satisfactory explanation for the way that the psalmists have mysteriously enabled successive generations to face death, even though they say so little about what happens beyond it.

⁷³ Cf. Prothero, op.cit., particularly Chapters 5 and 6, who lists a number of Christian saints who have died with the words of psalms on their lips. See also C.S. Lewis, 'Death in the Psalms' in Reflections on the Psalms, Glasgow, 1961, pp. 34ff.

"The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him,
and he makes known to them his covenant."
(Ps. 25:14)

The theme of communion with God, like that of trust in God, pervades the Psalter. Over two thirds of the psalms use the second person address in prayerful communion with God; even psalms which refer to God in the third person are full of testimony to various aspects of communion with God received previously.¹

The purpose of this chapter is to attend to those aspects of communion with God found in the psalms which have correspondences with those found in the prophets, particularly in Jeremiah. Although a good deal has been written concerning the different functions of the prophets in the psalms, little has been published regarding the similar way both prophets and psalmists understood their experiences of communion with God.

Three features will receive particular attention. The first concerns again the specific life-settings within many of the psalms: psalmists expressing either a longing for restored communion with

¹ Fifty-five psalms have no address to God in the second person. This occurs where the form is a prophetic address, for example in the royal psalms (Pss. 2; 20; 45 and 110) and in the prophetic exhortations (Pss. 14; 50; 52; 53; 78; 81; 91; 95; 105 and 107); it occurs in the didactic influence within the wisdom psalms (Pss. 1; 19; 34; 37; 49; 73; 127 and 128); this is also the case in the testimonies of confidence in Pss. 11; 23; 32; 62 and 133; and no second person address occurs in the hymns and liturgies full of exhortations to praise (Pss. 24; 29; 33; 46; 47; 93; 96; 98; 100; 103; 111; 112; 113; 114; 116; 117; 121; 122; 124; 129; 134; 135; 136; 146; 147; 148; 149 and 150). From this list, expressions of communion addressed to God are mainly evident in psalms reflecting a particular state of distress.

God, or rejoicing in that communion now restored, are concerned not so much with typical, recurring situations but rather with circumstances in their own life-setting. This issue of a particular context for prayer has been discussed with respect both to Jeremiah's confessions, and to the psalms describing fear of imminent death.² Sections (III) and (IV) of this chapter will discuss the issue of particularity in the psalmists' experience of communion with God.

Second, many psalmists understand their communion with God as a dialectical personal relationship, where either man or God speaks and the other listens. Even when the mood is one of contemplation and reflection, communion for the psalmists is primarily dynamic and responsive, rather than static and passive. Jeremiah's complaints to God also understood communion with God in this way. Section (II) of this chapter will assess the extent of this aspect of communion in selected psalms.

Third, many psalmists also perceive of communion with God involving not only some experience of his presence, but also a practical response of obedience to his laws. Whether it is the individual or the community who are drawn into the presence of God, each has a responsibility to respond in obedience to the covenant commands. This is of course the heart of the eighth and seventh century prophetic message, which repeatedly emphasised what were the implications of the presence of God in their midst. The confessions also revealed that the prophet's privilege of experiencing intimate communion with God through his call resulted in his facing the

² Cf. Chapter Two, 'Jeremiah's Confessions', pp.59ff.; also Chapter Five, 'Life and Death before God', pp.169ff. and pp.194ff.

demands of such communion in speaking the prophetic word. The psalmists' awareness of the same moral implications in their communion with God will be discussed in Section (I) below, in a study of two key themes of communion.

(I) A STUDY OF SOME HEBREW WORDS PERTAINING TO COMMUNION WITH GOD:
"LOVING" GOD AND "KNOWING" GOD

(a) אהב

In the light of the deuteronomic teaching in the Shema' (Dt. 6:4ff.) which requires parents to teach their children to "love" (אהב) the Lord God with all their heart and soul and might, it is striking that the psalmists rarely state their love for God in this explicit and direct way. אהב is used in several psalms, but its references normally have God as the subject ; the psalmists speak surprisingly rarely of their love for God, reasons for which will become evident below.

Outside the psalms, several shades of meaning have been proposed for אהב , by giving the word different etymological associations. Some would emphasise more its occurrences in describing different human relationships, whilst others note more the physical and sexual

aspects.³ By far the most frequent usage concerns that of human relationships. This is seen in the way the LXX translates אָהַב as ἀγαπάω. Occasionally φίλεω is used instead, when the love concerns things such as food (Gen. 27:9) or sleep (Prov. 8:17; 29:3). In the few examples where sexual love is obviously intended אָהַב is translated as ἐράω (cf. Prov. 7:18; Est. 2:17).

אָהַב describes a number of different relationships, whether with respect to the opposite sex (Gen. 24:67; 29:18,30; Ju. 16:4,15; 1 Sam. 18:20), or to family love (Gen 22:2; 25:28; 37:3; 44:20; Prov. 13:24), or to love between superior and inferior (cf. Prov. 9:8; Ex. 21:5; 1 Sam. 18:16,22). The deuteronomist uses it to describe God's loving compassions for his people and commitment in relationship with them (cf. Dt.7: 8,13; 10:15; 23:6; also Hos. 11:4; Jer. 31:3; Is. 43:4; 63:9).

In the psalms, God's love as אָהַב is similarly not only a feeling of affection for his people. Those who experience it are expected to make a moral response. Ps. 11:7a is one example:

"For the LORD is righteous (יָדָוּ),
he loves (אָהַב) righteous deeds" (לֵב יָדָוּ)".

The same theme is in the hymnic praise of Ps. 33:5:

³ Cf. D.W. Thomas, 'The Root אָהַב in Hebrew' ZAW 57 (1939), pp. 57-64, supporting the biliteral root suggested by Schultens as אָה, "blow", "breathe heavily with desire", contrasted with Driver's proposal that the biliteral root is אָה, meaning more generally "be inclined to". G. Wallis, ' אָהַב ' in TWAT I, cols. 108-28, E Tr TDOT I, pp. 101-18, especially col. 109 (German) and p. 102 (E Tr) and E.B. Borowitz, 'Love', EJ Vol I, cols. 523-30 both emphasise the physical, sexual connotations of the root. Similarly, H. Hirschberg, 'Some additional Arabic Etymologies in Old Testament Lexicography' VT XI (1961) pp. 373-85, especially p. 373 on אָהַב in Hos. 11:4, concludes that אָהַב is connected with the Arabic 'ihāb, "skin, leather", and that the word primarily denotes physical stimulation.

"He loves righteousness and justice
 (אֱהָב צְדָקָה וּשְׁפָט)
 the earth is full of the steadfast love (חַסֵּד)
 of the LORD."

Ps. 37:28 also links together love and justice:

"For the LORD loves (אֱהָב) justice (שְׁפָט)..."

Ps. 97:10 and Ps. 146:8 both affirm this more personally:

"The LORD loves (אֱהָב) those who hate evil;..."
 (97:10)⁴

"...the LORD loves (אֱהָב) the righteous (צְדִיקִים)."
 (146:8)

When the psalmists do speak of their own love for God this naturally assumes both the feeling of affection and the sense of obedient commitment to God's will. This is made clear in the several references to love for the laws of God, for example expressed repeatedly in Ps. 119; verses 97, 113 and 165 speak of loving God's תּוֹרָה, and verses 47, 48, and 127 of loving God's מִצְוֹת.

This sense of practical obedience implicit in an experience of God's love partly explains why the psalmists are diffident in affirming their own love for God, which was only a pale reflection of God's loving commitment to them. When such an affirmation occurs, the usual form is with respect to loving the various emanations of God, for example his name, his salvation, or his sanctuary. For example, in Ps. 26:8, after making excessive claims of integrity at having obeyed God's laws, the suppliant proclaims:

⁴ The MT אֱהָב reads literally "Lovers of the Lord, hate evil!"; cf. Weiser, DATD 15, p. 432; E Tr OTL, p. 631 for a similar interpretation. However, such a note of warning does not fit readily with the previous rejoicing. "The Lord" could be the subject of both lines, thus reading אֱהָב and אֲהַב rather than the imperative form: cf. Anderson, NCB, p. 690.

"O LORD, I love (יְהִי לְךָ) the habitation of thy house,
and the place where thy glory dwells". (v.8)⁵

Similarly, Ps. 122:6 speaks of "love" ($\sqrt{\text{יְהִי לְךָ}}$) for the city and its sanctuary.

Love for the name of God is also usually associated with the sanctuary. Ps. 5 speaks of the presence of God in temple worship (v. 8) and ends by exhorting those present to praise God:

"...that those who love ($\sqrt{\text{יְהִי לְךָ}}$) thy name
may exalt in thee." (v.12)

Ps. 69:37 similarly speaks of those who love ($\sqrt{\text{יְהִי לְךָ}}$) God's name in connection with experiencing the presence of God in the temple.

Also in the setting of cultic worship, Pss. 40:17b/70:5b speak of loving the salvation of God. The preceding parallelism refers to "all who seek ($\sqrt{\text{יְהִי לְךָ}}$) thee" (Pss. 40:17a/70:5a), a term used elsewhere for turning to the sanctuary for help and protection (cf. Pss. 24:6; 27:8; 69:7).⁶ The relevant verse is another exhortation to praise:

"...may those who love ($\sqrt{\text{יְהִי לְךָ}}$) thy salvation ($\sqrt{\text{יְהִי לְךָ}}$)
say continually, "Great is the LORD!" (Ps. 40:17; 70:5)

Only two psalmists speak boldly of "loving the Lord". In Ps. 31, after a lengthy lament (vv. 2-19) the suppliant ends the thanksgiving with an appeal to the congregation:

⁵ This need not be an oath of purification before a ritual ceremony of purification (cf. vv. 6ff.) as Weiser believes (cf. DATD 14, p. 164; E Tr OTL, pp.243-4). Nor need it be an oath declaring asylum in the sanctuary (cf. Dahood, AB I, p. 162). The expression could more simply be a figurative way of the suppliant expressing indirectly his love for God (cf. Anderson, NCB, p. 217).

⁶ Cf. Kraus, BKAT XV/ I, p. 310; Anderson, NCB, p. 320; also Westermann, 'Die Begriffe für Fragen und Suchen', (1974), pp. 162ff.

"Love (יְהוָה) the LORD, all you his saints! (כָּל-חַסִּידֶיךָ)"
(v. 24)

The imperative form further suggests that such love is not only an experience of God, but also a commitment to his commands.

In Ps. 116, also within the context of cultic worship (vv. 12ff.), the suppliant offers the required testimony of thanksgiving before the assembly:

"I love (יְהוָה) the LORD
because he has heard my voice and my⁷ supplications."
(v.1)

The psalmist's understanding of love for God in this context is not only heartfelt gratitude because God has heard the suppliant's prayer, but also an obedient response of public proclamation in thanksgiving.⁸ It is typical of the way the word יְהוָה has been seen to be used, with moral as well as experiential overtones.

(b) יָדָה

Although יָדָה occurs rarely in the psalms, and is never used in parallelism with יְהוָה, it is significant because, unlike יְהוָה, it is used in theophoric names, indicating that it was

⁷ The MT has no object. However, such an expression "I love, because..." is unusual. The context assumes Yahweh is being addressed in prayer, and the RSV follows the Versions in adding "the Lord" as the object of the clause here. Cf. Kraus, BKAT XV/II, pp. 792-3; Anderson, NCB, p. 791. Dahood however prefers to translate this "Out of love for me, Yahweh did hear...." following a similar construction using accusative of cause in Prov. 12:15. Although the expression reflects a boldness of piety which is rare in the psalms, the RSV translation is not discordant with the rest of the verse, where the psalmist is testifying to his continuous sense of grateful love (יָדָה in perfect tense) for what God alone has done.

⁸ Another word used only once in the psalms, and that with God as the subject, is יָדָה, translated "delight in" or "desire" (cf. Ps. 68:17, of God's delight in Zion). Outside the psalms it is used of man, although often with negative connotations (cf. Gen. 3:6 and Ex. 20:17) and never in man's address to God.

part of familial personal piety in the giving of names to children.⁹
 Of the verbal forms, the frequent use of the Pi'el expresses the
 intensity of love and intimacy arising from natural family bonds. ¹⁰

In Ps. 103:13, רחם is used to describe the love of God
 in this familial way:

"As a father pities (רחם) his children,
 so the LORD pities (רחם) those who fear him." ¹¹

Normally רחם is used of a superior to an inferior: as in
 family relationships, it is the helplessness of the weak which evokes
 pity from the strong (cf. Is. 13:18; Jer. 50:42). The psalmist in
 Ps. 18:2 is therefore unusually bold when he proclaims:

"I love thee (ארחם), O LORD, my strength." ¹²

Ps. 18 is in fact the only example of רחם (used here in the
 rarer Qal form) used in a direct address to God. This is similar

⁹ For example, cf. "Jeroham" in 1 Sam. 1:1 and 1 Chr. 6:27,34. On the
 use of רחם in personal names, cf. also M. Noth, Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung, BWANT 46, Leipzig, 1928 = Stuttgart 1966; also
 Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, B.II, 'Die theophoren Namen als
 Ausdruck der persönlichen Frömmigkeit', especially pp. 49ff., 74ff.,
 and 62ff., on רחם.

¹⁰ Cf. L.J. Coppes, 'רחם' in TWOT Vol.II, No. 2146; also G.
 Schmuttermayr, 'RHM. Eine lexikalische Studie', Bib 51 (1970), pp.
 499-525.

¹¹ The figurative use of רחם with respect to familial love is also
 seen in Is. 49:15, which compares a mother's compassion (רחמי) for
 her children with God's care for his people. Other examples of this
 love include Hos. 2:23(רחמי); 11:1-4; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9; Is. 45:11; 63:16;
 64:8. This is found mainly in the prophets.

¹² This is not found in the parallel account in 2 Sam 22:2ff. As with
 the unusual expression of the psalmist's love in Ps. 116:1, it could
 be a gloss and could be read instead as "I exalt you"
 (ארחם) following Pss. 30:2 and 145:1. Nevertheless, the
 reading of רחם here would be consistent with the tenor of the
 psalm; cf. vv. 20 and 51. Kraus, BKAT XV/I, p. 142 and Anderson,
 NCB, p. 154 are cautious about using this term, whilst Weiser, DATD
 14, pp. 126-7; E Tr OTL p. 188 affirms it.

to the reluctance to use loving God in the way of a bold form of address, with the exceptions of Pss. 31:24 and 116:1 discussed previously. This diffidence is again explained by the suppliant's sense of inadequacy at meeting the moral requirements which are an integral part of the profound experience of such love.

(c) יָצַח

יָצַח , "to be pleased with", or "to take delight in", is used in a similar way to אָהַב and אָהַבָהּ . Outside the psalms, like אָהַב , its physical and emotional connotations are found in expressions concerning the love of man for woman, as in Gen 34:19; 1 Sam. 18:22; Est. 2:14. It is also used anthropomorphically to show God's pleasure, for example in David (2 Sam. 22:20) and in Solomon (1 Kgs. 10:9), but also in more abstract qualities such as truth (Ps. 51:6) in knowledge of himself (Hos. 6:6) and in the keeping of the laws of the sabbath (Is. 56:4).

A few psalmists acknowledge that God "delights" (יָצַח) in them, seen for example, in Pss. 18:20; 22:9 and 37:23. Yet again, however, no psalmist speaks of himself as the subject in "delighting" in God. As was seen in the use of אָהַב and אָהַבָהּ , love for God as יָצַח is expressed more indirectly in terms of delighting in the law of God (Ps. 1:2) and in the commandments of God (Ps. 112:1; 119:35), and in God's people (Ps. 16:3), and in God's will (Ps. 40:9).

Thus יָצַח also has connotations of obedient commitment as well as the experience of affection and joy. As with the previous terms used for love, this is why the psalmists never use it in a direct address to God himself.

(d) ‫חַסֵּד‬

‫חַסֵּד‬ is one of the most frequent words used to depict God's love.¹³ Predictably, this is never used with respect to man's love for God.

Because ‫חַסֵּד‬ is so associated with the character of God in the psalms, no suppliant seems able to affirm that his own love for God has such qualities of compassion or consistent commitment. Like ‫חַסֵּד‬, discussed under trust in God, the psalmists feel unable to respond to God in the same way he responded to them.¹⁴

The literature on the meaning and use of ‫חַסֵּד‬ is profuse.¹⁵ The word again implies both love as a moral commitment, in terms of loyalty to the demands of the covenant, and also love as an

¹³ ‫חִסַּד‬, "cleave in love", is one other term, but is only found once in the psalms. Ps. 91:14 reads "Because he cleaves to me in love (‫חִסַּד‬ ‫בִּי‬ ‫יְיָ‬) I will deliver him." This is probably due to deuteronomic influence, as the word occurs elsewhere mostly in the deuteronomic literature (e.g. Dt. 7:7; 10:15; also Is. 38:17).

¹⁴ On God's faithfulness as ‫חַסֵּד‬, and the infrequency of the psalmists' use of ‫חַסֵּד‬ to describe their faith in God, cf. Chapter Three, 'Trust in God', Section I, pp. 99-100.

¹⁵ Cf. N. Glueck, Das Wort hesed im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauch als menschliche und göttliche gemeinschaftgemässe Verhaltungsweise, BZAW 47, Giessen, 1927, especially pp. 22-4 on Hosea, and pp. 66-7 on selected psalms; cf. also N.H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, London, 1944, especially pp. 94-170 on hesed; also H.-J. Stoebe, 'Die Bedeutung des Wortes Häsed im Alten Testament', VT 2 (1952) pp. 244-54, especially p. 252, on the psalms; also K.D. Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible, Harvard Semitic Monographs 17, Montana, 1978, especially Chapter VI, pp. 215ff. on the psalms; Sakenfeld's sequel to this dissertation, Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective, Philadelphia, 1985, also has the last section on hesed in the psalms.

expression of feeling, in terms of compassion freely offered.¹⁶

Outside the psalms, לחם is used frequently of man's love for his neighbour. In all human relationships, it is used with the more emotional connotations, concerning firstly a free choice of love, with duty and commitment to follow.¹⁷ With respect to the לחם of God, this is sometimes found in parallelism with רחם and חן (e.g. Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 103:4) demonstrating that God's love also is primarily personal and compassionate, and is only secondly conditioned by moral obligation and commitment.

In the psalms, לחם again is used with respect to God's compassion for man more than it is used concerning his obligation to man. This is particularly evident in the individual laments. In Ps. 17:7, after a protest of innocence, the psalmist pleads:

"Wondrously show thy steadfast love (לחם)..."

In Ps. 25:7, it is within a plea for God's mercy and forgiveness:

"according to thy steadfast love (לחם),
remember me..."¹⁸

Other examples include Ps. 26:3; 31:8; 40:11,12; 42:9; 51:3;

¹⁶ The former view is that taken by Glueck, op. cit., pp. 3ff.; the latter is developed by Sakenfeld, op. cit., pp. 24-45, on human relations, and pp. 93ff. on God's hesed especially to individuals. This latter association with compassion and mercy is also assumed in the LXX translation of לחם normally as $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, and the V translation as misericordia.

¹⁷ Cf. Ruth's love for Naomi, shown in Ruth 2:11-12 and called לחם by Boaz in Ruth 3:10; also Jonathan's love for Saul in 1 Sam. 20:8,14,15, later ratified by a commitment in v.17. See Sakenfeld, op. cit., pp. 107 and 147; also R.L. Harris, TLOT Vol I, No. 698 for a discussion of this issue.

¹⁸ Ps. 25:6 also refers to לחם with respect to God, in parallelism with לחם (both in the plural) and ends "...for they have been from of old." Here the appeal for mercy is also within the understanding of לחם as a covenant commitment between God and his people.

63:4; 69:17; 88:12 and 89:50. לֹדֶן is also used in descriptive praises of God; examples include Pss. 48:10; 92:3; 103:4; 107:43; 119:88,149,159; and 138:2, as well as in the repeated refrain in Ps. 136.

The psalmists often experience a sense of awe in response to God's love as לֹדֶן . This is made explicit in Ps. 62:12-13. The suppliant is referring either to an oracle once received, or to some cultic recital of the mighty acts of God. He proclaims on the one hand the love of God which protects him, and on the other, the power of God which defeats his enemies:

"Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power (לֹדֶן) belongs to God;
and that to thee, O LORD,
belongs steadfast love (לֹדֶן)."

This loving communion mingled with fear is evident in several psalms. In Ps. 25:14, fear as יִרְאָה , or "reverence", is found in parallelism with חֶסֶד , or the friendship of God:

"The friendship (חֶסֶד) of the LORD
is for those who fear him (לִירְאָיו)....".

Such "fear" alongside this intimate communion may be contrasted with the use of פֶּחַד , or "dread fear", used normally of the way the suppliant's enemies encounter God (cf. Pss. 14:5/53:6). By contrast, fear as יִרְאָה is normally associated with the suppliant's experience of reverence before God as well as intimacy with God (see also Pss. 31:20; 34:10,12; 61:6; 66:17; 103:11, 13; 112:1;

128:1,4; 130:4 and 147:11).¹⁹ The closeness of love and fear for God is clearly seen in the parallelism of Ps. 145:19-20, a hymn of descriptive praise:

"he fulfils the desire of all who fear (יִרְאֵהוּ) him,...
The LORD preserves all who love him
(יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ)." ²⁰

In conclusion, the psalmists' understanding of loving communion with God is an ideal model of what the pre-exilic prophetic message was constantly demanding, namely a profound experience of God's presence resulting in an obedient response to his covenant commands.

(e) יָדָע

Loving God is frequently found in parallelism to knowing God. Ps. 36:11 is one example of this:

"O continue thy steadfast love (חַסְדְּךָ) to those who know thee (יִדְעֶיךָ)." ²⁰

In Hosea, both "love" and "knowledge" describe not only human relationships, but also man's communion with God. Hos. 2:19 (MT v.21) speaks of Israel being "betrothed" to God "in faithfulness" (אֱמוּנָה); Hos. 2:20 (MT v.22) shows this is so that the people may "know" (יָדָעוּ) the Lord. Hos. 4:1 is an accusation that the

¹⁹ On the experience of fear and love in communion with God, cf. B.J. Bamberger, 'Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament', HUCA 6 (1929), pp. 39ff.; also R. Sander, Furcht und Liebe im Palästinischen Judentum, BWANT 35, Stuttgart, 1935; also Ringgren, op. cit., pp. 47-49 on this concept of God in the psalms; also Eichrodt, op. cit., Part Three, Chapter XXI, on fear of God and love of God as fundamental forms of man's personal relationship with God; also C.J. Catanzaro, 'Fear, Knowledge and Love: A Study in Old Testament Piety', Can J Th 9 (1963), pp. 166-73.

²⁰ יִרְאֵהוּ in this psalm of praise is clearly intended to pertain to the reverence and awe inspired by cultic worship, as also in Pss. 34:8; 86:11 and 102:16. Cf. Kraus, BKAT XV/II, pp. 948-9, and Anderson, NCB, p. 939.

people show neither דַּעַת אֱלֹהִים nor חֶסֶד in the land. Also in Hos. 6:6, "steadfast love" (חֶסֶד) and "knowledge of God" (דַּעַת אֱלֹהִים) are proclaimed to be as important as cultic sacrifice.²¹

As with the various synonyms for love, יָדַע has the implicit meaning of an intimate relationship bound by some moral response of obedience. This is found again in the message of Hosea, and also in Amos. Hos. 13:5 uses יָדַעַתִּי within an oracle of judgement, concerning God's "knowledge" of his people within the wilderness period; similarly Am. 3:2 uses יָדַעַתִּי to indicate God's particular call of his people and their special responsibility as a result. The psalms of praise use this same idea of God's activity in history which should draw out a response of obedience from the people. The Hiph'il of יָדַע is normally the form which is used for God's action:

"The LORD has made known (יָדַעַתִּי) his victory..."
(98:2)

"He made known (יָדַעַתִּי) his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel" (103:7)

Ps. 106:8 uses the same construction with respect to the exodus, in the context again of an appeal for the people's obedient response.

Other uses of יָדַע concern God's particular knowledge of man, and reflect a more particular personal piety, where the psalmist is known by God within daily human life, rather than within

²¹ Cf. J.L. McKenzie, 'Knowledge of God in Hosea', JBL 74 (1954), pp. 22-27, which examines the two terms דַּעַת אֱלֹהִים and דַּעַת יְהוָה , concluding that the latter is associated with practical, individual morality, and not only with the mediation of sacral law. For an earlier discussion of this issue, cf. H.W. Wolff, '"Wissen um Gott" als Urform der Theologie von Hosea', EvTh 12 (1953), pp. 533-52, and the questions raised for example concerning Wolff's understanding of sacral law by E. Baumann, '"Wissen um Gott" als Urform der Theologie von Hosea?', EvTh 15 (1955), pp. 416-25, and Wolff's reply to Baumann, in 'Erkenntnis Gottes im Alten Testament', EvTh 15 (1955), pp. 426-31.

the domain of national history.²² Again, in each context the reference to God's knowledge leads on to imply the need for some obedient response. Ps. 37:18 speaks of God who "knows (יָדַע) the days of the blameless" and Ps. 44:22 of God who "knows (יָדַע) the secrets of the heart", and Ps. 94:11 of God who "knows (יָדַע) the thoughts of man". Ps. 103:14 refers to God who "knows (יָדַע) our frame". Ps. 69 speaks of God's particular, personal knowledge of the psalmist's distress in terms reminiscent of Jeremiah:²³

"O God, thou knowest (יָדַע) my folly" (v.6)
 "Thou knowest (יָדַע) my reproach,
 and my shame and dishonour." (Ps. 69:6a, 20)

Ps. 139 similarly speaks of God's all-pervading knowledge of the psalmist:

"Thou knowest (יָדַע) when I sit down and rise up..."(v.2a)
 "Even before a word is on my tongue,
 lo, O LORD, thou knowest (יָדַע) it altogether."(v.4)

There are several other references where the psalmists depict יָדַע more explicitly with moral implications.²⁴ Examples include "knowing the way" of God, as in Pss. 25:4, 67:3, and 142:4. This understanding of the knowledge of God again has correspondences with both Hosea and Jeremiah. In the Confessions, יָדַע occurs repeatedly to indicate the prophet's intimate communion with God

²² On the two different aspects of individual and national piety in the psalms, cf. Albertz, op. cit., pp. 23ff.

²³ The call of Jeremiah is founded upon God's "knowledge" of the prophet since birth: cf. Jer. 1:5. The Confessions frequently refer to this "knowledge" within the appeal for help: cf. Jer. 12:3, 15:15 and 17:16. Such knowledge is particular and individual, for it separates the prophet who responds to it from the people who do not respond: cf. Jer. 4:22; 5:4-5; 8:7; 9:3,6,18 and 19:4. Cf. Mowinckel, 'La connaissance de Dieu', pp. 74ff.

²⁴ Cf. G.J. Botterweck, ' "Gott Erkennen" im Sprachgebrauch des AT', BBB 6 (1951) pp. 143ff.; also R. Bultmann, ' γινώσκω ' in TWNT Vol I, cols.668-715, E Tr TDNT Vol I, pp. 689-714.

has always resulted in a testing of his own obedience:²⁵

"The LORD made it known to me (וַיְהוֹה הוֹדִיעַנִי)
And I knew (וַיֵּדָע)..."
But, O LORD of hosts, who judgest righteously,
who triest the heart and mind..." (Jer. 11:18a, 20a,b)

The same theme of God's knowing man and thus testing his obedience is implied in Ps. 26:1-2; in this context, communion with God is expressed by using הָלַךְ and בָּטַח instead of יָדָע:²⁶

"Vindicate me (שִׁפְטֵנִי), O LORD,
For I have walked (הֵלַכְתִּי) in my integrity,
and I have trusted (בִּטְחֹתִי) in the LORD without wavering.
Prove me, O LORD, and try me;
Test my heart and mind."

Outside the psalms, Hannah's psalm of thanksgiving declares explicitly that knowledge is a moral quality, as in 1 Sam. 2:3

"...for the LORD is a God of knowledge (אֱלֹהֵי דַעַת)
and by him (MT: אֵלֵי) actions are weighed." ²⁷

Again the same associations of intimate knowledge and moral responsibility occur in repeated use of derivatives of יָדָע, in Ps. 139:1-6, and v. 23:

"O LORD, thou hast searched me and known me (וַתֵּדַע)!"
(v.1)

"Search me, O God, and know my heart (וּדַע לִבִּי)
Try me and know my thoughts
(וּדַע שְׂרָעֵפִי)" (v.23)

²⁵ Cf. Bredenkamp, *op. cit.*, Chapter 2, Section 2, 'Knowledge of God in the Confessions and Psalms.'

²⁶ הָלַךְ is a synonym for knowing God when it implies an experience of communion resulting in obedience. It is often used to indicate man's communion with God, for example of Noah (Gen. 6:9) and Enoch (Gen 5:24) and of Abraham (Gen. 17:1; cf. 48:15). It is used of communion with God in Pss. 26:1,3; 56:14; 116:9; and 119:45. Cf. Bredenkamp, *op. cit.*, Chapter 2, Section 1, 'Walking with God and Walking before God'.

²⁷ The *Qerē* לָוִי is read here in preference to the MT אֵלֵי. On the interpretation of this verse in the context of the "theology of reversal" which follows, cf. R.W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC 10, Waco, Texas, 1983, pp. 15-16.

The psalmists rarely describe the process by which the experience of knowledge may be found. Those references to knowing through "seeing" or "hearing" are probably more figurative than literal, although a few imply such knowledge is found through the physical senses. Examples include Ps. 63:3, concerning "looking upon" God in the sanctuary, (using not only $\sqrt{\eta\chi\gamma}$ but also $\sqrt{\eta\tau\eta}$, as in the vision of God in Is. 6:1) and Ps. 62:11-12, concerning "hearing" God through an oracle, (using $\sqrt{\gamma\delta\psi}$, again as in Is. 6:8).²⁸ Beyond this point it is impossible to ascertain what the physical experience of "knowing God" entailed. Nevertheless, even in the figurative expressions, the experience and language of the prophets is often evident.

In the article on the knowledge of God in the prophets, with particular reference to Amos, Hosea and Jeremiah, Mowinckel observes that the intimate and pragmatic aspects of these prophets' knowledge of God mark the beginning of a particular individual awareness of the presence of God.²⁹ Mowinckel's concern in this article is only with the piety of the prophets; no reference is made to corresponding

²⁸ Other figurative references to "seeing" God include Pss. 27:13; 34:9; 66:5 and 139:24 (all using $\sqrt{\eta\chi\gamma}$); references to "hearing" God include Pss. 81:6; 85:9; 95:7 (using $\sqrt{\gamma\delta\psi}$). On the particular, individual aspects of knowing God, cf. Brockington, 'The Hebrew Conception of Personality', pp. 1ff.; also A.R. Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel, Cardiff, 1949, 1964², especially pp. 82ff., note 5.

²⁹ Cf. Mowinckel, 'La connaissance de Dieu', pp. 93ff., on Jeremiah; see also 'The "Spirit" and the "Word"', pp. 199ff., and the postscript to this paper in JBL 56 (1937), pp. 261-65; all three articles emphasise the individual experience of God in the pre-exilic prophetic message.

"intimate and pragmatic" expressions concerning the knowledge of God in the psalms. Considering Mowinckel's assumptions on the pre-exilic dating of the psalms, this is surprising. The explanation is of course that Mowinckel's interpretation of the language of the psalms as general and stereotyped led him to the conclusion that the piety of the psalmists pertains to representative, typical situations rather than to the same specific, individual awareness of God found in the prophets.³⁰ As was seen with Mowinckel's interpretation of the confessions, the failure to apply his conclusions on prophetic piety to the psalms has resulted in a minimalist approach to the value of particular, personal expressions of piety used by the psalmists.

By contrast, in perceiving that both the psalmists and prophets shared a similar view of communion with God, correspondences between their expressions of piety are made possible. The following three sections will develop further the different ways such correspondences are brought about.

(II) COMMUNION AS CONTEMPLATION OF GOD

Although the Judaic and Christian traditions have used the psalms as mystical prayers, it is unlikely that they expressed a mystical experience of complete absorption into the deity in their original context. The sense of awe and diffidence with respect to the psalmist's awareness of the love and knowledge of God is an

³⁰ See Chapter Two, 'Jeremiah's Confessions', pp. 82-3, notes 76-77, on Mowinckel's comparisons of the language of the confessions with the psalms. See similarly PsSt I, pp. 95ff., and Religion und Kultus, § 17, 'Das Gebet und der Psalm', pp. 115ff.

indication of this. Even where contemplation of God is implied, for example in the psalms of confidence, there is little suggestion of a continuous sense of mystical oneness, for the suppliants' moods change too frequently within each psalm.

Very few studies have attempted to show that a mystical union with God is found in the psalms. Those who do so reveal a tendency to read into the psalms traits of mysticism from a later period and a different spiritual tradition. For example, an early assessment of the "mystic passages" in the psalms by C.G. Montefiori concluded that in Pss. 16; 17; 43 and 73 the intimacy of communion between man and God evidenced a private, mystical "absorption" into God. Some fifty years later, a similar study by J. Casper concluded that over twenty psalms of the individual reflected a mystical experience the divine.³¹

A more recent study of private, mystical experience by H.J. Franken uses particular vocabulary to propose that several psalmists have a mystical awareness of God's presence.³² Franken sees this evidence in psalms which reflect an "extended personality", or an experience of peaceful and mystical union with God. These compare with psalms of the "restricted personality", where the experience of lament, reproach and protest reflects more the distance of God.³³

³¹ Cf. C.G. Montefiori, 'Mystic passages in the Psalms', JQR 1 (1888), pp. 143-61; also J. Casper, Mystik in den Psalmen, Klosterneuburg, 1937.

³² Cf. H.J. Franken, The Mystical Communion with Jhwh in the Book of Psalms, pp. 92ff.

³³ Cf. Franken, ibid., Chapter III, 'Personality. Its Restriction and Extension'.

Two problems emerge from a study of mystical contemplation in the psalms. The first concerns the vocabulary of such communion, which is seen to express an experience "in" God, rather than one in relationship "with" God. Franken's study, for example, gives little attention to the sense of distance between God and man. Some confusion may be due to the different definitions of mysticism. Franken assumes mysticism is an experience of union or identification with the deity, rather than an intimate and immediate communion with God. The following assessment of the vocabulary of contemplation will illustrate that it is difficult to find Franken's understanding of mystical experience in any of the psalms. ³⁴

A second problem concerns the choice of psalms which apparently suggest this mystical oneness. With the exception of Ps. 16, Franken selects not the psalms of confidence, as might be expected, but rather psalms of lament. Examples include Pss. 18, 25; 27; 31; 36 and 43; all use the lament form, and demonstrate instead some protest at God and thus the so-called "restricted personality". The following assessment will show the importance of taking into account the context of the whole psalm in attempting to show that mystical experience is evident.

The word נִשְׁחַן (נִשְׁחַן) "to muse" or "to meditate" occurs in three psalms. Once this is in a communal lament (Ps. 77), once in an individual lament (Ps. 143), and once in a hymn of praise. The

³⁴ This point is also made by Ringgren, The Faith of the Psalmists, pp. 56ff. Ringgren's discussion of supposedly mystical vocabulary has been useful for the study of the terms נִשְׁחַן and נִשְׁחַן and נִשְׁחַן and נִשְׁחַן below. The same criticism of Franken is developed by Mowinckel, PIW 2, pp. 143-5.

lament forms indicate that this cannot refer to absorption with God, for the dominant theme of the psalm is that of protest at God's distance. Ps. 77:13 reads:

"I will meditate (הִגִּיתִי) on all thy work,
and muse (אֶשְׁחַחֵהּ) on thy mighty deeds."

The focus of the "musing" in this psalm is not so much God himself, as emanations of God, seen through his activity in history. The parallelism with $\sqrt{\text{הגה}}$ suggests not so much silent meditation, as the verbal repetition of religious phrases.³⁵ The use of שׁוּחַ in Ps. 119:15, 23, 48, 78 and 148 also points to the verbal recitation of the law, as the psalmist contemplates God's mighty works.

Ps. 143:5 has some correspondences with Ps. 77:

"I remember (זָכַרְתִּי) the days of old,
I meditate (הִגִּיתִי) on all thou hast done;
I muse (אֶשְׁחַחֵהּ) on what thy hands have wrought."

Here the context also suggests that the psalmist is recalling ($\sqrt{\text{זכר}}$) and repeating ($\sqrt{\text{הגה}}$) and musing upon ($\sqrt{\text{שׁוּחַ}}$) the accounts of God's activity in history, in order to be given fresh resources of courage in present distress. "Contemplation" is apparently verbal, and offered from an experience of the distance of God. It is hardly a silent experience of mystical oneness.

Ps. 145:5 uses the word in a different context:

³⁵ הגה may refer to any low sound, for example, the moaning of a dove (Is. 38:14; 59:11) or the growling of a lion (Is. 31:4). It is used of mourning sounds (Is. 16:7; Jer. 48:31) and of conspiring words of the enemy (Pss. 2:1; Is. 59:3,13). The phrase "meditation of my heart" ($\text{וְהִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ}$) is used in parallelism with "words of my mouth" (אֲמִירֵי פִי) in Ps. 19:15. Nowhere in the psalms is הגה used to suggest meditation in silence.

"Of the glorious splendour of thy majesty,
and of thy wondrous works, I will meditate (אֲשִׁיחָה)."36

The focus of meditation again appears to be upon the "works" of God (v.5b) and some cultic theophany of God (v. 5a), rather than upon union with God himself. It is experienced within the cultic community, and hardly presumes an private mystical absorption into God.

דָּמָה is another word which might suggest private, silent absorption into God. It is used in imperative appeals to God, who should not hold silence (e.g. Pss. 83:6). In this way, it is associated with forthcoming action, rather than with passive reflection. דָּמָה occurs with regard to the psalmist's personal contemplation of God in Pss. 4:5; 37:7 and 131:2, where every time this concerns "waiting" or "standing still" before God makes his ways known. 37 In each case, it is linked with trust and hope, as in Pss. 4:6 (using בָּטַח); 37:3 (using בָּטַח); and 131:3 (using יִחַל). דָּמָה is thus more associated with expectancy than mystical absorption.

Two other important words indicate the intimacy of the

36 Vv. 4-7 of the psalm speak of public worship in proclamation and singing. Verse 5a reads literally "The honour of the glory of your majesty and of the things..." Anderson, NCB p.937 translates this verse "They shall speak of the glorious splendour of thy majesty...", following 11 QPsa (col. 16), changing the MT וְדִבְרֵי (and of the things) to וְדִבְרֵי and changing וְפִלְאֹתֶיךָ (wondrous works) to וְפִלְאֹתֶיךָ, thus reading "...and I will meditate on your wondrous works." If דָּמָה is to be seen in parallelism to שִׁחָה in this verse, the meditation is anything but silent and private.

37 Franken understands this suggests "dumbness" in awe of God, as the suppliant is lost in silent, mystical union: cf. op. cit., Chapter II, on dmm /dmh. However, 1 Sam 14:9 offers an alternative understanding of the same verb: the emphasis is on expectant waiting for God to act, rather than awesome silence.

suppliant's contemplation of God. The first is **דבֿל**, used in an individual lament, Ps. 63:9; the impression is of intimate security with God:

"My soul clings to thee (**דבֿל נפֿשי אַחֲרֶיךָ**);
thy right hand upholds me."³⁸

The use of the preposition **אחֲרֵי** here places the verb in its appropriate context; even if intimate experience is implied, it suggests one of "cleaving after" God, rather than being "absorbed into" God. It expresses briefly the psalmist's awareness of the intimate protection of God, as in other similar expressions in Pss. 27:10 and 131:2. Such intimacy does not assume the oneness of man and God, but rather the vulnerability of man before God.

Similarly **חֲשֵׁן** is used in an oracle in Ps. 91:14 to indicate an intimate relationship between the suppliant and his God:

"Because he cleaves to me in love (**כִּי בִי חֲשֵׁן**)
I will deliver him;
I will protect him,
because he knows my name
(**יָדָעַתִּי שְׁמִי**)."

חֲשֵׁן has already been seen to suggest intimate fellowship. However, as also with the parallel expression **יָדָעַתִּי**, no bond of mystical union is intended in the use elsewhere.³⁹

A similar meaning is evident in the expression of intimate communion with God as **יָדָעַתִּי**.⁴⁰ Used to represent familiar

³⁸ Anderson, NCB, p. 458 translates the first part of the verse "I follow hard after you", and notes that the figurative use of the verb **דבֿל** ("cling"), used in the deuteronomic literature, refers to obedience and loyalty to the commandments of God (as in Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:5; 30:20). This corresponds with an earlier discussion of similar expressions for "love", which concern not only intimacy but also obedience before God.

³⁹ On **יָדָעַתִּי**, cf. Section (I) of this chapter, pp. 13ff.

⁴⁰ For an earlier discussion of **יָדָעַתִּי**, cf. Section (I) of this chapter, p. 217.

conversation with human friends (cf. Ps. 55:15), it also occurs in Amos 3:7 to indicate the familiar intimacy in God's communication of his word to his prophets. It is found only once in the psalms to show the physical aspect of "speaking" friend to friend with God. This is as part of a didactic testimony within an individual lament, in Ps. 25:14a:

"The friendship (ṭḥ) of the LORD
is for those who fear him..."

This psalm has been discussed in relation to the suppliant's experience of unforgiven sin and guilt. The use of ṭḥ in this psalm hardly suggests any peaceful mystical absorption, but rather the suppliant's yearning for the restoration of intimate communion with God by being restored to the covenant community.

These examples show that even the most figurative expressions of communion as contemplation upon God always imply some distance between man and his Creator, and never refer to a passive union with the divine. Furthermore, each of these verses used are part of changing moods within the overall context of a psalm of protest: even if such mysticism did occur, it was but for a fleeting moment.⁴¹

It is surprising that Franken refers only rarely to the psalms of confidence, for these sustain throughout a mood of contemplation upon God. Perhaps Franken's omission is not only due to the lack of mystical vocabulary in these psalms, but also that their moods of

⁴¹ Another attempt to find mysticism in a psalm of lament is offered by C. Stuhlmuehler, 'Psalm 22: The Deaf and Silent God of Mysticism and Liturgy', BTB XII (1982), pp. 86-90. The analysis again presupposes a definition of mysticism which is more akin to a Christian understanding than that evidenced within pre-exilic Israelite religion.

contemplation do not in the end conform to a mystical experience as he understands it.

Ps. 16 is a contemplation of God as supremely good, and has no note of dissonant protest. Ps. 23 is a contemplation of God as shepherd and host, and again is full of peace and joy throughout. Ps. 62 contemplates God as the only one worthy of trust, and likewise retains throughout a mood of quiet confidence in God. Ps. 84 is a contemplation of the presence of God in the sanctuary, and the mood of joyful communion is constant. Ps. 131 is a psalm of contemplation on the intimate familiar protection of God. Ps. 133 contemplates the presence of God through the cultic community, and again is full of trust and peace.

However, as well as a consistently contemplative mood in the presence of God, another feature present in all these psalms is that each psalmist's contemplation is focussed upon the cultic community (cf. Pss. 16:3; 23:5-6; 62:8,11-12; 84:1-7,10; 131:3; 133:1,3). This is no private mysticism, in being absorbed into the divine, but rather a dynamic experience of the presence of God through the praise and ritual of cultic worship. ⁴²

In actual fact, the psalmists' experiences of contemplation are not so much influenced by mysticism as by a dialectal type of piety particularly evident in prophets such as Jeremiah. Heiler's distinctions between "mystical prayer" and "prophetic prayer" are

⁴² Several wisdom psalms could have been added here, but they are less appropriate insofar as the most important focus of their contemplation is not so much on God as on man, and on the blessings due to him on account of keeping the law: examples include Pss. 1; 19B; 37; 49; 112; 119; 127 and 128.

most illuminating in understanding this more precisely.⁴³ The associations with "prophetic prayer" may be illustrated in three different ways.

First, the psalmists' contemplation of God is not so much a general intuitive awareness of the divine, independent of any historical setting, but usually each psalm concerns a specific life-setting which relates to the form of complaint and lament. Second, the norm for the psalmists' contemplation of God, particularly in the psalms of confidence, is usually expressed in relation to a community context, rather than emerging from some private self-absorption. Third, these reflections are expressed through several changes of moods of doubt as well as of faith, reflecting the heights and depths of human experience, rather than through an ongoing attitude of absorption with God alone; this is found not only in the laments, but also in the psalms of confidence.

These characteristics are part of a piety which Heiler terms "prophetic".⁴⁴ The observation that the psalmists share this in common with the prophets fits with the conclusions of the previous section concerning the similar correspondences in their understanding and use of words for "love" and "knowledge" of God. It is far more likely that the psalmists' contemplation of God should not so much be associated with a mystical type of contemplation, unknown anywhere else in the biblical literature, but should rather share the already familiar prophetic experience of communion with God, which was

⁴³ On the distinctions between mystical and prophetic prayer, cf. Heiler, Das Gebet, Chapter IX, pp. 348ff. E Tr Prayer, Chapter IX, pp. 222ff.

⁴⁴ Cf. Heiler, ibid., pp. 407-9, E Tr pp. 283-5; also Bredenkamp, op. cit., pp. 10ff.

founded upon an active relationship with God rather than a passive absorption into the divine.

(III) LONGING FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD

Several psalms bear witness to an urgent, intense longing for God. This is expressed in two different ways. The first concerns the longing for God to act and to demonstrate his protection and vindication of the psalmist. The context is normally that of lament; such urgent requests and imperative calls for help will be discussed in the following chapter on suffering before God.⁴⁵ Examples include Pss. 22:3, 12, 21; 35:1-3, 22ff.; 40:14-18 / 70:2-6; 55:2-4; 69:2,7ff.; 141:1 and 143:7-9.

Another type of longing is also evident, where the psalmists ask simply to be given a new experience of God's presence for its own sake.⁴⁶ The longing for God in these psalms is as much concerned with the internal evidence of God's presence as with the external manifestations of it. These few psalms are distinctive and are not immediately classifiable in terms of typical, representative piety, for they contrast with the normal perspective in the psalms, which is more materially and physically concerned with external manifestations of God's presence.

The three following examples of this show the psalmist as absent from the presence of God in cultic worship. These psalms all

⁴⁵ Cf. Chapter Seven, 'Suffering before God', pp. 275ff.

⁴⁶ Cf. G.W. Anderson, "'Sicut Cervus'", pp. 394ff.

use the lament form, and the expressions of longing are normally found in the descriptions of distress.

Ps. 42:2-3 is a longing for God in exile:

"As a hart longs (**לַעֲרֵב**) for flowing streams,
so longs (**לַעֲרֵב**) my soul for thee, O God.
My soul thirsts (**לִשְׁאֹב**) for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold the face of God?" ⁴⁷

The imagery of panting and thirsting describes the psalmist's physical, personal need for God's presence. On the one hand, the longing is related to some physical manifestation of God's presence, namely, restoration to the Temple (cf. 43:3-4). However, on the other hand, whilst in exile, the suppliant still longs for an experience of God's presence to sustain him in the present moment of taunts and rebukes (42:4, 11). Precisely because he is isolated from the cultic community, the presence of God is his only hope of sustenance. It is primarily a spiritualised understanding of longing for God; the more material expectations concerning restoration are the outcome of this communion, rather than the actual substance through which communion was possible.

Ps. 63:2-3 is another example of such longing expressed in similar figurative terms:

⁴⁷ Cf. Anderson, "'Sicut Cervus'", p. 395; also R. Rios, 'Thirst for God (Psalms 41 and 42)', Scripture 2 (1947), pp. 34-8; also E. Haag, 'Die Sehnsucht nach dem lebendigen Gott (Pss. 42-3)', GuL 49 (1976), pp. 167-77. The imagery of "living water" as an experience of the "living God" has been seen to be appropriated personally by Jeremiah in Jer. 2:13; 15:18 and 17:13.

"O God, thou art my God, I seek (ךןןשך) thee,
 my soul thirsts (ןךסז) for thee;
 my flesh faints (ןסז) for thee,
 as in a dry and weary land
 where no water is." ⁴⁸

The psalmist (possibly the king, from verse 12) then remembers the presence of God once experienced in the sanctuary (63:3; cf. 42:5). The expression of longing is very like Pss. 42-3. Although the suppliant is absent from God's presence normally experienced in the sanctuary, his prayer is for an experience of God even before he is restored to cultic worship.

Ps. 143 does not clearly indicate a setting in exile. Nevertheless, like Pss. 42-3 and 63, the psalmist longs firstly for God's presence in itself (v. 6), and only then for the outward demonstration of it through deliverance from his enemies (v.9). Verse 6 uses similar imagery to Pss. 42 and 63:

"I stretch out my hands to thee;
 my soul thirsts for thee
 like a parched land
 (ןפשי כארץ-עיפה לך)." ⁴⁹

Several other psalms by contrast reflect a longing for God whilst present at worship in the temple. The most obvious example is Ps. 84. The psalmist is also concerned with the spiritual benefits of communion with God in the sanctuary; no specific material benefits are requested, apart from God's blessing on the

⁴⁸ The term normally used for seeking God in the sanctuary (שןן) is not used. כןןש has a broader application, and is used in wisdom literature for seeking God and wisdom (cf. Job 7:21 and 8:5 (of God); Prov. 1:28 and 8:17 (of wisdom). It would be an appropriate expression for one in exile remembering earlier times of being in the sanctuary (cf. v.3) but who is now denied such access. Cf. Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 440-2; also Anderson, NCB, p. 456; see again Westermann, 'Die Begriffe für Fragen und Suchen' (1974), pp.162ff.

⁴⁹ For a discussion of this psalm, see Section (II), p. 226.

king (v.10) and God's favour and honour (v.12). From this inward, spiritual awareness of the presence of God in the temple, the psalmist longs for an even deeper communion with God with his whole being, as seen in v.3:

"My soul longs (נַפְשִׁי), yea, faints (וְגַם כָּל־לִתְהַלָּל) for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God."

We may conclude that a few psalms suggest a private, personal longing for the presence of God above all material benefits, and some psalmists even request it when absent from cultic worship. Such pleas for an inner conviction of God's presence are reminiscent of the confessions of Jeremiah, particularly Jer. 15, 17 and 20, where the prophet pleads for God's presence whilst in isolation from the cultic community. It is not surprising that similar expressions of piety are found in both the psalms of lament and the confessions, for the life-settings of both are within a context of suffering whilst removed from the cultic community.⁵⁰ The longing for God's presence in prophets such as Jeremiah and in the psalms suggests that a particular experience has created this unusual spiritual awareness. This again raises questions about the cult-functional assumptions that such laments are really ritual texts for typical, representative occasions.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 67ff. ; also von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments I, München, 1957, 'Die Anfechtungen Israels und der Trost des Einzelnen' pp.381-485, E Tr D.M.G. Stalker, Old Testament Theology, Volume One, London, 1962, 1975,² 'Israel's Trials and the Consolation of the Individual', pp.383-418.

⁵¹ On Pss. 42-3, composed for use when absent from the temple, cf. Mowinckel, PIW², p.20. On Ps. 63, composed by a cultic prophet as a communal lament by the king, cf. PsSt I, pp. 41, 82; PsSt III, p.78; PIW¹, pp. 48ff., 220 and 226. On Ps. 143, written as an Awen psalm against workers of magic, cf. PsSt I, p. 124 (later seen as a communal lament for use against enemy nations in PIW¹, p.239). On Ps. 84, composed as a processional liturgy for the king, cf. PsSt II, p. 333; PsSt III, p. 78; PsSt V, p.35; PsSt VI, pp.29 and 32.

(IV) JOYFUL COMMUNION WITH GOD

Several psalms of complaint and lament might well have been composed in a private setting only later to be incorporated into public liturgy. Such a practice is easier to establish within the traditions of Christian hymnody, but the anonymity of the psalms should not rule this out as a possibility. The most likely examples will be the focus of discussion in the following chapter.⁵²

By contrast, the most obvious context for psalms of praise and thanksgiving is always within the presence of the cultic community. This is not like the Christian tradition, where there are many examples of private prayers of praise becoming part of public Christian hymnody.⁵³ Within Israelite religion, such a practice would be a contradiction in terms, for the focus of praise in the Psalter is always that of the community; praise assumes an aspect of testimony before an attendant audience.

For example, the meaning and use of ללן and its synonyms, and the use of נתן always reflect a setting of testimony and participation within the cultic community. The verb ללן meaning "to shout, acclaim, praise" occurs in the psalms mainly in the imperative form, assuming therefore the presence of the cultic

⁵² See Chapter Seven, 'Suffering before God', Section (IV) 'The Context of Suffering', pp. 296 ff. ; examples of private prayers of complaint becoming Christian hymnody are given in note 114, p 307.

⁵³ Examples of private Christian prayers of praise becoming used as hymns include "Amazing Grace", by John Newton (1725-1807), written shortly after his conversion after a storm at sea, but only used publicly some sixteen years later when he became ordained. Also "Now Thank we all our God", by M. Rinkart (1586-1649) was composed in German as a grace for his family, and used as a national thanksgiving at the end of the Thirty Years War. Also "Let us with a Gladsome Mind", by John Milton (1608-74) was written in 1623 initially as a school exercise translation of Ps. 136.

community in the summons to praise. Where the volutive is used, when the suppliant declares his intention to praise God upon restoration, this suggests an offering before the congregation, as seen in Pss. 22:26ff.; 40:10-11; 57:8-12 and 71:22-24. The synonyms שִׁיר, "to sing, shout joyful praises", שִׁיר, "to sing praises", בָּרַח (Pi'el), "to praise", מָדַל (Pi'el), "to magnify", מָלַח (Pôlêl), "to exalt" and שִׁיר (Pi'el), "to sing, praise" have the same connotations of praise as testimony within the worshipping community. Even the terms תָּדַר and תָּדַן, which are usually translated "to thank", have confessional and acclamatory aspects, whether used as nouns to mean literally "sacrifices of praise" (e.g. Ps. 66:14-20) or used figuratively to mean "thanksgiving" (e.g. Ps. 69:31-34).⁵⁴

Nevertheless, even in such public expressions of praise and joy, the individual and communal aspects often stand in a dialectical relationship to one another. Crusemann's study of the different forms of hymns of praise is relevant here, in that a distinction is made between imperative hymns (using a plural form of address to the congregation, followed by יְיָ) and participial hymns (using several successive clauses) and optative hymns (using the third person plural imperfect or jussive form) and individual hymns (using the first person singular in the imperfect or cohortive). All are part of public liturgy, but the extent of individual appropriation varies

⁵⁴ Cf. Westermann, Praise and Lament, pp. 30ff; J-L. Vesco, 'Hymne et Supplication dans la Prière du Psautier', La Maison-Dieu 121 (1975), pp. 22-55, especially pp. 24-35; L.J. Coppes, 'שִׁיר', TWOT I, No. 500; also C.G. Cumming, The Assyrian and Hebrew Hymns of Praise, New York, 1934.

from one type of hymn and of another.⁵⁵

Westermann's earlier studies also examined the different uses of the "I" form within the hymns, following the consequences of Gunkel's form-critical analysis.⁵⁶ In taking up Westermann's observations that both descriptive and declarative praises are found in the Psalter, it is possible to assess how in each of the two aspects of praise the "I" is used in different ways.

Westermann notes that in descriptive praise, God is extolled for his general blessings and various acts of goodness in his dealings with his people. This may occur in psalms which praise God as creator (for example, as in Pss. 19a; 29; 33; 104 and 148) or in psalms which praise God for his general goodness throughout the history of the people (for example, Pss. 78; 105).⁵⁷ In these psalms, the individual and the community are united as one body in praise of God.

If the focus of descriptive praise is the character of God, the focus of declarative praise is human life and what God has done to relieve the plight of man's existence.⁵⁸ Whilst descriptive praise

⁵⁵ Cf. F. Crüsemann, Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel, BWANT 32, Neukirchen, 1971.

⁵⁶ Cf. Gunkel, RGG ², cols. 1622-4, ¶s 12 and 14, and also Einleitung, ¶ 2, pp. 32ff., on the 'I' form in the hymns and in the thanksgivings. See also Westermann, Praise and Lament, pp. 30-5.

⁵⁷ Pss. 135 and 136 may be added as examples of descriptive praise for God's general goodness both in creation and in the nation's history.

⁵⁸ Brueggemann, 'Psalms and the Life of Faith', JSOT 17 (1980), pp. 3-32, refers to the declarative praise as "reorientation" back to communion with God. Brueggemann also criticises the cult-functional neglect of this more particular personal piety in the psalms on p. 26, Note 39.

extols God for what he is, independently of the particular context of the psalmist, declarative praise extols God for what he has done, usually with respect to one particular deed of benevolence at one point in history. This may concern an event in the life of the community, for example, in Pss. 65 and 67, which recall God's goodness at a harvest time, or in Pss. 68; 76; 118 and 124, which remember victories in battle, or in Ps. 147, which recalls safe return from exile.⁵⁹

More frequently, declarative praise may concern an event in the life of the individual, for example for release from death, illness or physical danger.⁶⁰ Sometimes such declarative praise is offered at the end of a psalm, after the protest, showing a different change of mood from all that has preceded it. This motif was referred to earlier, and includes Pss. 22:23-27; 31:22ff.; 69:31ff.; 71:22f. and 109:30-31. This offering of declarative praise at the end of a lament is peculiar to Israelite psalmody: it is unknown in the Babylonian lament forms.⁶¹

Alternatively, declarative praise may occur as part of the actual lament, whereby the psalmist offers praise which is either preceded or followed by motifs of the lament form, such as descriptions of distress or calls for help. Examples include Pss.

⁵⁹ Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, pp. 68ff., 274ff. and 315ff.; Westermann, Praise and Lament, pp. 81-90; also H.H. Guthrie, Theology as Thanksgiving, New York, 1981, pp. 1-30.

⁶⁰ Cf. Westermann, Praise and Lament, pp. 102-112; also Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, pp. 23ff.; also Butler, art. cit., pp. 390ff.

⁶¹ Cf. Westermann, Praise and Lament, p. 152; also pp. 36ff., 54ff. and 103ff.

26:7; 40:5ff.; 71:15-16, 17ff. and 86:8-13.⁶² This feature is again peculiar to Israelite psalmody. Outside the Psalter, it is also found in Jonah 2, an example of declarative praise offered even before restoration has taken place.

The offering of praise may also occur at the beginning of an individual psalm, so that the whole psalm is dominated by declarative praise: examples include Pss. 9:2-3, 4ff.; 30:2-4, 5ff.; 34:2-4, 5ff.; 92:2-5, 6ff.; 116:1,5ff. and 138:1-2, 4ff. Wherever they occur, the "calls to praise" in both communal and individual psalms concern particular acts of God, seen for example in Pss. 66:2-5; 81:2ff.; 95:1ff. and 135:19-20 in the communal psalms, and in Pss. 28:6-8; 30:5-6; 31:22ff.; 32:11 and 34:4 in the individual psalms.

Whereas the praises in the communal psalms are predominantly descriptive, declarative praise is a common feature in the individual psalms and is used as a testimony to the attendant congregation about God's specific and personal care. Such praise may be ambiguously expressed, emphasising more the inner state of joy than the external circumstances which gave rise to it; it may be brief, and it may even be accompanied by descriptive praise. Nevertheless, as seen in the four examples below, a particular life-setting lies behind each of the individual psalms in question.

Ps. 30 is a thanksgiving for release from the psalmist's enemies (v.2), from sickness (v.3) and from death (v.4). The psalm begins

⁶² Cf. Westermann, *ibid.*, pp. 152ff.; S.B. Frost, 'Asseveration by Thanksgiving', *VT* VIII (1958), pp. 380-90; W. Beyerlin, 'Die tōdā der Heilsvorgewärtigung in den Klageliedern des Einzelnen', *ZAW* 79 (1967), pp. 208-24; also Goldingay, 'The Dynamic Cycle of Praise and Prayer', (1981), pp. 85ff.

with several brief testimonies of declarative praise, for example:

"I will extol thee O LORD,
for thou hast drawn me up,
and hast not let my foes rejoice over me.
O LORD my God, I cried to thee for help,
and thou hast healed me." (vv.2-3) ⁶³

The psalmist then exhorts the congregation to participate in praise:

"Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints.." (v.5). The descriptive praise of the character of God follows, which even here relates back to the psalmist's own experience of sickness, for he understood it as due to some personal sin resulting in the chastisement of God:

"For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime." (v.6a)

The psalmist then returns to the earlier theme of declarative praise, testifying to what God has done in his own life-setting (vv.6b,7ff.).

Ps. 34 is full of examples of declarative praise:

"I sought (סוד) the LORD,
and he answered me (יָשָׁב),
and delivered me from all my fears...
This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
(שָׁמַע יְהוָה),
and saved him out of all his troubles." (vv.5,7) ⁶⁴

The psalm is dominated by the testimony of the suppliant, that what

⁶³ The first two lines of v. 2 may be paraphrased, "I will extol you (סוד) / for you have exalted me (יָשָׁב)," implying that God's act of restoration demands the psalmist's act of declarative praise.

⁶⁴ The references to God "answering" (יָשָׁב) and "hearing" (שָׁמַע) in this semi-acrostic psalm, as well as the use of סוד for "seeking" God all suggest a visit to the sanctuary resulting in some oracle of salvation. This need not imply, as Mowinckel suggests, that the psalm is an Awen psalm composed for general cultic use (cf. PsSt I, pp. 95,130 and PIW I, pp. 112ff.); the personal testimony through the declarative praise and the acrostic device would question this, as emphasised also by Gunkel against Mowinckel in GHAT, pp. 142-4.

God has done for one, he can also do for others (vv.9ff., 12ff., 16ff.) No descriptive praise is evident here: the psalmist is acutely aware of God's personal, particular activity in human affairs.

Ps. 116 was probably offered along with a sacrifice of thanksgiving, with vv. 1-11 serving as didactic testimony, and vv. 12ff. as the vow of praise. It is therefore fitting that the psalm should begin with declarative praise:

"I love (אֶהְבֵּתִי) the LORD,
because he has heard
my voice and supplications...." (v.1) ⁶⁵

A reported lament used as a testimony of thanksgiving, similar to that in Ps.41 and Is. 38, follows this praise. The descriptive praises are found in vv. 5ff, although these still relate back to the psalmist's own experience of the restorative grace and mercy of God:

"Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;..."

The suppliant returns explicitly to the theme of what God has done for him in the declarative praise of v.6b:

"...when I was brought low, he saved me..."

This theme continues through to the vow of praise, and the psalm ends with the typical call to all present to praise God.

Ps. 138 has several associations in theology and language with second Isaiah, although it is impossible to ascertain which has influenced the other. There is no reason however to read this psalm as a communal thanksgiving, on account of the associations of the descriptive praise in vv. 4-6 with for example Is. 45:1 and 49:7.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of אֶהְבֵּתִי in this verse, cf. p.212.

The declarative praise throughout the rest of the psalm suggests rather that this is a personal testimony of thanksgiving, probably from the exilic period. The references to the praise before the gods, and the suggestion of worship "toward the temple" (אל-היכל) in vv. 1-2, as well as the sense of the suppliant still being in trouble (v.7) could point to a thanksgiving of one still exiled in Babylon.⁶⁶ The psalm comprises two personal testimonies of declarative praise (vv.1-3; 7-8) interwoven with more general descriptive praise (vv.4-6). It begins with thanksgiving:

"I bow down toward thy holy temple
and give thanks to thy name for
thy steadfast love and thy faithfulness;..." (v.2)

The declarative praise occurs when the suppliant recalls a particular time of God's specific goodness to him:

"On the day (כִּי־אָמַרְתִּי) I called,
thou didst answer me..."(v.3a)

This passes over into the descriptive praise (vv. 4-6) and the suppliant ends the psalm by a combination of declarative praise and motifs of confidence, remembering the particular care and protection afforded him:

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
thou dost preserve my life;..." (v.7a)

A comparison of declarative praise with descriptive praise in these psalms serves to highlight the personal and specific aspects of declarative praise. This is not only evident in the psalms: the same brief but personal testimony of gratitude to God is found in

⁶⁶ Objective criteria for dating the psalms are difficult to find. Weiser, DATD 15, pp. 551-2, E Tr OTL, pp. 551-2 sees the reference to the temple (v.2) as a response to some cultic theophany and sets the psalmist within the pre-exilic period. By contrast, Oesterley, TP, pp. 549ff., and Kraus, BKAT XV/ II, pp. 910-12 interpret these details from an exilic Babylonian setting.

many theophoric personal names, which also declare a particular act of God in the life-experience of the individual.⁶⁷ Whether in psalms of thanksgiving or in the giving of names to children, a characteristic of declarative praise is its particular personal appropriation.

Because of this specifically personal aspect, it is not surprising that little declarative praise is found in the communal psalms. Only seven of the eighty one communal psalms use declarative praise (cf. Pss. 65; 67; 68; 118; 124 and 147, referred to earlier), and even these psalms are dominated by the longer more general expressions of descriptive praise. Declarative praise in the communal psalms is almost entirely found in the thanksgiving form. Only one of these seven examples of declarative praise occurs in a communal lament (Ps. 85:11-14). This may be compared with the many examples of declarative praise found at the beginning, middle or end of the individual laments, as well as in the individual thanksgivings. The preference in the communal psalms is for more general, extensive descriptive praise, because these psalms are more clearly designed for typical, recurrent festal occasions.

A weakness in the cult-functional interpretation of the psalms is that it gives insufficient attention to the distinctions between descriptive and declarative praises. Scholars such as Mowinckel understand that most psalms of praise were composed to serve the needs of one festal occasion. The chapter on the enthronement

⁶⁷ Cf. Westermann, Praise and Lament, p. 32, note 19; also Noth, Die israelitischen Personennamen, pp. 133ff., and Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, pp. 49-77, on the particular personal piety normally evidenced in theophoric personal names.

festival in PIW¹ is an important illustration of Mowinckel's method in this respect. Over one third of the Psalter is incorporated into this festival. The more obvious psalms of descriptive praise (the "enthronement psalms", namely Ps. 47; 93; 96; 97; 98 and 99) are assumed to be the primary collection for such a festival; however, by the end of the chapter, every type of psalm of praise has been included, whether of general, descriptive praise or particular, declarative praise.⁶⁸ Nothing is made of the different appropriations of descriptive and declarative praises.

Westermann correctly questions whether there is sufficient evidence for one particular festival which would absorb such different psalms of descriptive and declarative praise. The number of psalms incorporated into one such festival leave one with a concept of the cult which is both limitless and confused. For example,

"The whole tendency to explain as many as possible or even all of the Psalms either by the "ideology" of a specific (and only just discovered) festival, by a cultic schema, or by the connection of a basic myth with a specific ritual (Hooke) seems to me...to have produced meager results for the understanding of the individual Psalms. The concept "cult", which is basic for all the branches of this line of research, became in the process more limitless and confused."⁶⁹

All that can be known from the praises in the psalms is that there are two distinctive ways of addressing God. General and descriptive

⁶⁸ Mowinckel nowhere lists explicitly the psalms associated with the enthronement festival. Nevertheless, it is possible to see the extent of his methodology from PIW 1, Chapter V, pp. 106ff. First listed are the enthronement hymns themselves (Pss. 47; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99) on pp. 106ff.; to these are added Pss. 132; 84; 68 and 24 (p. 117); Ps. 89 (p. 118); Pss. 65; 67 and 118 (p. 120); Pss. 47 and 81 (p. 121); Pss. 46 and 110 (p. 133); Pss. 48 and 72 (p. 142); Pss. 74; 89 and 104 (p. 144); Pss. 126; 85 and 14/53 (p. 147); Ps. 58 (pp. 148-9); and Pss. 75 and 76 (p. 151), as well as numerous passages from second Isaiah supposedly influenced by the festival.

⁶⁹ Cf. Westermann, Praise and Lament, p. 21.

praises suggest a context not only in one festival, but in a number of festival occasions. Particular and declarative praises suggest a setting of thanksgiving for God's goodness for a specific event.

In conclusion, when communion with God is expressed as praise, the individual is involved in the community's worship in two different ways. The first is within the communal psalms, where especially in the descriptive praise, the individual is absorbed as one within the praises of the community, just as the individual was absorbed into the laments of the community on other occasions. The second is within the individual psalms, where the psalmist offers his own genuine testimony using declarative praise; some dialectical relationship is evident in the exhortation offered from the individual to the listening community.

Both these aspects of praise are essential, for in descriptive praise, the joy of the community encourages the piety of the individual, and in declarative praise, the testimony of the individual upbuilds the faith of the community. In this latter respect, correspondences with the prophets are again apparent. The hortatory role implicit in the psalmist's testimony may be compared with the way individual prophets testified to God's goodness before a listening community, and appealed for their obedience on account of it.

(V) CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to emphasise the more particular and personal aspects of the psalmists' communion with God, and to show ways in which several comparisons may be made with the prophetic understanding of such communion. The first example was seen to be the way such communion was interpreted by psalmists and prophets alike not only in terms of experience but also of moral commitment, particularly evident in the vocabulary of "loving" and "knowing" God. Second, correspondences were found in the way both psalmists and prophets used prayer to express a vibrant reciprocal relationship between man and God. Third, in psalms which showed a longing for communion with God, the desire for God's presence in itself was reminiscent of the spiritualised understanding of communion with God in prophets such as Jeremiah. Fourth, associations were suggested also in the psalmists' use of declarative praise as a personal testimony to the community; this dialectal relationship between the individual and the community is also to be found in the exhortations of the independent prophets.

It was noted in the introduction to this chapter that studies in the relationship between psalmody and prophecy have concentrated not so much on a shared understanding of various aspects of piety, as on the relationship between the forms and functions apparently used by the independent prophets and by cultic prophets in the psalms. ⁷⁰

⁷⁰ The literature is profuse, but more recent works include H.H. Rowley, 'Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets', JSS 1 (1956), pp. 338-61, especially pp. 353-55; Johnson, The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel; also The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody; Eaton, Vision in Worship, pp. 104ff.; also Bellinger, Psalmody and Prophecy, especially the historical survey on pp. 9-27.

Only in earlier literary-critical scholarship was interest expressed in the correspondences between the piety of the independent prophets and the piety of the psalmists.⁷¹

To discuss how and why such correspondences between the piety of the prophets and psalmists occurred is a hazardous process, due to the anonymity of the settings of the psalms. How such correspondences of spirit came about, other than through the common experiences of the more personal structures of pre-exilic Israelite religion, is difficult to ascertain.⁷² It has been seen that Baumgartner's and Bonnard's attempts to be too precise in explaining the correspondences between Jeremiah's confessions and the psalms of lament resulted in two totally different conclusions as to the influences on each.⁷³

⁷¹ See Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 44-6, and notes 7-8. Other more general references include J. Wellhausen, Israelitisch-Jüdische Religion, Berlin, 1894, pp. 81ff.; A Kuenen, Natural Religions and Universal Religions, The Hibbert Lectures, Oxford and London, 1882, printed London, 1902, for example pp. 148ff.; B. Duhm, Die Theologie der Propheten, Bonn, 1875, particularly pp. 1-34, and also Israels Propheten, Tübingen, 1916; W. Robertson-Smith, The Old Testament in the Jewish Church, London, 1895, pp. 278-308. Gunkel's studies on this are extensive: cf. 'Die israelitische Literatur' in Die Kultur der Gegenwart especially pp. 86ff.; cf. 'Die Frömmigkeit der Psalmen' (1922), pp. 94ff., E Tr 'The Religion of the Psalms' (1928), pp. 88ff.; also 'Psalmen' in RGG² IV, cols. 1621-22, on the "geistliche Gedichte"; also Einleitung, § 9, 'Das Prophetische in den Psalmen', pp. 329ff.

⁷² On the "personal structures" of pre-exilic Israel, cf. Eichrodt's Theologie, Volume Two, Part Three, Chapters XX-XXIV; also Kraus, Theologie, BKAT XV/ III, pp. 171ff.; also Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, pp. 4ff.; also Fohrer, 'The Personal Structures of Biblical Faith', pp. 161 ff.

⁷³ See Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 54ff. and pp. 71-2. Bonnard understands Jeremiah to be the primary influence on many psalms of lament, whilst Baumgartner sees the influence in reverse.

Nevertheless, if the concept of personal and particular communion in a reciprocal relationship with God was shared by psalmists and prophets alike, a significant implication emerges. This again concerns the limitations of the cult-functional interpretation of the psalms, exemplified by Mowinckel.

Several times it has been noted that Mowinckel had a clear and positive appreciation of the personal, particular communion with God evidenced in the pre-exilic prophets.⁷⁴ However, partly because of his disaffection with what he saw as a subjective liberal Protestant interpretation of the psalms by scholars such as Gunkel, Mowinckel never allowed his conclusions on the particular personal piety of the prophets to bear upon his interpretation of the communion with God expressed by the psalmists.⁷⁵

The effect of Mowinckel's study, and of others like him who are dominated by a cult-functional view of the psalms, is to create two different types of piety in pre-exilic Israelite religion. The first pertains to a specific, personal communion with God found in prophets such as Jeremiah; the second concerns a typical, representative, public communion with God found in the psalms. One is bound to ask whether communion with God could ever really be compartmentalised in this way. If one allows for the influence of representative, typical piety in the prophets as well as in the psalms, then equal attention

⁷⁴ See Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 82ff., note 76; also this chapter, pp. 222 and 223, notes 29 and 30.

⁷⁵ Cf. Chapter One, 'A History of the Problem', pp. 22ff., note 38, for several references to Mowinckel's criticism of Gunkel and other liberal Protestant scholars.

ought to be given to the influence of genuine, personal piety in the psalms as well as in the prophets. Mowinckel's psalmic studies are limited in so far as his concern is so much more with how the psalms function than with what they express.⁷⁶ Had he found in the psalms the same evidence of personal, particular communion with God that he had discovered in the prophets, Mowinckel would have been more open to the diverse origins and purposes of the psalmists, paying as much attention to their value as personal prayers as to their function as cultic texts. The emphasis within this chapter on the ways that the psalmists shared a common understanding of communion with God expressed by the prophets has been intended to redress Mowinckel's undue emphasis on this typical and representative piety in the psalms.

⁷⁷ Cf. the introduction to this thesis, pp. 2ff., with particular reference to Mowinckel's article on traditionalism and personality in the psalms.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?"
(Ps. 22:2)

The psalmists' sufferings are attributable to at least three different causes. The most obvious, although least frequently expressed, is an admission of their own responsibility for the distress.¹ These few psalms requesting forgiveness in order to effect restoration have been discussed in the earlier chapter on penitence before God.²

Most psalmists accept little responsibility for their suffering. Instead the origin is attributed to one of two other parties. Firstly, God himself is occasionally accused as the direct cause of the psalmist's grief, with the main complaint being that of his apparent unwillingness to act. He does not "see" or "hear" or "answer" the suppliant, who experiences God's hiddenness rather than his immediate presence. The strange paradox is that, through the direct form of address, God is not only accused as the cause of the suffering but appealed to as the answer to it.³ Rather than turning to other gods, or to self-reliance, the psalmists assume help

¹ Cf. Westermann, 'Struktur und Geschichte der Klage', (1954), pp. 44ff., E Tr 'The Role of Lament', (1974), pp. 20ff.

² Cf. Chapter Four, 'Penitence before God', Section (V), 'Forgiveness and Penitence', concerning Pss. 25; 38; 39; 40 and 51. The "penitential psalms", other than Pss. 38 and 51 (ie. Pss. 6; 32; 102; 130 and 143) may also be added to this list.

³ Cf. S. Balentine, The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament, Oxford D.Phil Thesis, 1979, Aslib XXIX/2 No. 4199 (31290/80) MS D Phil d6543, Chapter Five, on God's forgetting (e.g. Pss. 10:11; 13:2 and 44:25) and on God's silence and remoteness (e.g. Pss. 27:7; 69:18; 102:3 and 143:7).

from the God of Israel. These psalms raise the question of theodicy most acutely.⁴

Alternatively, other psalmists blame the various assaults of the "enemies" as the cause of their distress. This is found particularly in the protests of innocence in the lament forms. These psalms will be the focus of the word study in the following section, which examines the different identities of the "enemies".

The purpose of this chapter is not so much to deal with the theological problems of theodicy in the psalms, but rather to ask further questions about the cult-functional reading of the psalmists' suffering. This interpretation schematises and typifies the suffering so that, instead of the context being understood as a literal, particular crisis, it is seen to concern more general, representative situations: instead of the psalm being read as a cry from one in specific need, it is understood to have been written by a cultic professional to be used by any who come to the temple in search of release from their distress. Of course the cult-functional reading admits that, occasionally, the professional poet might compose a prayer himself from a context of actual suffering.

⁴ Works which discuss the problem of theodicy with respect to the psalms include J.J. Stamm, Das Leiden des Unschuldigen in Babylon und Israel, ATANT 10, Zürich, 1946; S.H. Blank, 'Men Against God. The Promethean Element in Biblical Prayer', JBL LXXII (1953), pp. 1-13; H.-J. Kraus, Theologie, BKAT XV/III, ¶ 6, No. 6 'Die grossen Probleme des Lebens', pp. 211ff.; Balentine, op. cit., Chapter Six, 'The Significance of the Motif of the Hiddenness of God for Old Testament Theology'; Davidson, The Courage to Doubt, chapters one and two, on the psalms; J.L. Crenshaw (ed.), Theodicy in the Old Testament, London, 1983, especially the reprinted, translated articles by Eichrodt on providence and theodicy (pp. 17ff.) and by Buber on Psalm 73 (pp. 109ff.); Brueggemann, The Message of the Psalms, 'Spirituality and Theodicy', pp. 168ff.; also art. cit. (1986), pp. 57ff.; and Broyles, The conflict of faith and experience D.Phil, Sheffield, 1984.

Nevertheless, the norm is an empathetic identification with some general crisis, rather than the psalmist speaking of his own immediate personal despair. Mowinckel summarises his own position most aptly in criticising Gunkel for his suggestion that psalms of suffering were composed by individual sufferers at their time of need:

"Haben diese Kranken nichts anderes zu tun gehabt?"⁵

This critique of the cult-functional position will discuss several related issues. The first, referred to already, concerns the nature of the enemies who are normally seen as the cause of the suffering. It is important to the cult-functional reading that a stereotyped picture of the psalmists' enemies emerges, whereby the typical expressions for the cause of suffering are general enough to be repeated by anyone. If by contrast, the psalms reflect a great variety of both national and individual situations of distress, then another reason for their universal validity is as much because of the commonly shared experiences, as it is due to the stereotyped expressions in which they are supposedly couched. The following word-study on the psalmists' enemies will examine this issue of language. Later sections will deal with broader issues of the typical language and forms, asking whether these also always depict archetypal suffering.

⁵ Cf. Mowinckel, PsSt VI, p.13; pp. 6-27 deal more broadly with this issue. See also PIW 2, Chapter VIII, affirming that the personal laments were composed with "Everyman" in mind (pp.1ff.), mainly for use by the king (pp. 8ff.), available for public cultic use (pp. 18ff.).

(I) A STUDY OF THE HEBREW WORDS FOR THE PSALMISTS' "ENEMIES"

The contradictory theories proposed for the "enemies" in the psalms show that the psalmists' sufferings have innumerable causes. Each theory is hardly conclusive, because most psalmists offer only general insights into what the experience of suffering is.⁶

The tentative nature of identifying the "enemies" is further apparent when one observes how the same psalms are used to substantiate entirely different theories. For example, Mowinckel sees the expression פַּעֲלֵי אֵן, which occurs in over twenty psalms and is supposedly implicit in over thirty more, to mean that the enemies were sorcerers, living within the community.⁷ In PsSt I, Pss. 14/53, 36 and 94 are understood as referring to "guilds" of sorcerers; individual laments Pss. 5; 6; 7; 10; 14; 28; 36; 41; 53; 55; 56; 59; 64; 94 and 141 are called 'Aunpsalmen, and Pss. 90:8, 101:8, 125:5, 66:18 and 92:8,10 are also noted for their references. Pss. 4; 12; 26; 27; 31; 35; 38; 42-3; 52; 58; 63; 86; 120; 139; 140 and 144 also suggest the activity of "sorcerers" without using פַּעֲלֵי אֵן; and Pss. 3; 11; 13; 17; 22; 25; 39; 40B; 54; 57; 61; 62; 69; 70; 71; 102; 109; 123; 142; 143 as well as thanksgivings and wisdom psalms such as Pss. 32; 40A; 103; 116; 30; 138; 34; 23; 73; 49 and 37 deal with the "workers of magic" as the suppliants' enemies.

⁶ Cf. G.W. Anderson, 'Enemies and Evildoers in the Book of Psalms', BJRL 48 (1965-66), pp. 18-29, particularly the conclusions on pp. 28-29; also Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 40-43, 'Exkurs 2: Die Feinde des Einzelnen'.

⁷ Cf. Mowinckel, PsSt I, pp. 38ff. and 122ff. See also Pedersen, Israel. Its Life and Culture, I-II, pp. 446-50; N. Nikolsky, Spuren magischer Formeln in den Psalmen, BZAW 46, Giessen, 1927; also A. Guillaume, Prophecy and Divination among the Hebrews and other Semites, London, 1938, especially pp. 272-289; For further discussion of the פַּעֲלֵי אֵן, cf. pp. 270 following.

By contrast, other scholars note that the king is the speaker in many of the communal laments, royal psalms and individual laments, indicating that the enemies are foreign nations oppressing the whole community. For example, Birkeland, seeking to modify Mowinckel's extreme position on the sorcerers as enemies, adopts an equally extreme position himself, using many of the same psalms proposed by Mowinckel as illustrating his 'Aunpsalmen. Not only the more obvious communal laments (Pss. 44; 60; 79; 80; 83; 124 and 125) and the royal psalms (Pss. 18; 20; 21; 89 and 144) refer to the enemies as foreign nations, but also most of the individual laments, as varied as Pss. 28; 61 and 73. Mowinckel was influenced by his pupil and amended his own position, and expanded this group to include Pss. 2; 9-10; 36; 56; 59; 65; 66; 68; 74; 75; 77; 106; 108; 110; 130; 131 and 137. In actual fact, only Pss. 6; 30; 32; 38; 39; 41 and 88 are genuinely individual psalms.⁸

Another interpretation reads 𐤅𐤍 as suggesting the enemies as the rich who oppress the poor, particularly where 𐤅𐤍 is contrasted with the 𐤅𐤍 . A Maccabean dating of party strife is usually seen as the most appropriate context. Again, the same psalms are used to support an entirely different reading of the

⁸ Birkeland, Die Feinde des Individuums, especially pp. 85ff. and 114ff. The same argument is also found in The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms, Oslo, 1955. On Mowinckel's position, cf. PIW ², pp. 1-2.

psalmists' enemies.⁹

Other scholars use these same psalms to propose a pre-exilic dating, because they interpret the references to the enemies conversely as mythological powers of chaos and death which have been personified in order to be dramatised by some ritual involving the king at the autumnal festival.¹⁰

There are however several other scholars who assume that the subject in the individual psalms is a private individual, suffering from the specific attacks of particular groups of enemies. The problem remains in identifying such enemies. They could be the false accusers of the suppliant who bring him to some mock trial.¹¹ Alternatively, they could be fierce persecutors forcing him to take

⁹ On the possible etymological connection of the two words לֵאָוִי (wickedness) and לֵאָוִי (riches), cf. K.-H. Bernhardt, ' לֵאָוִי ' in TWAT I, cols. 151-9, E Tr TDOT I, pp. 140-47. Duhm, Die Psalmen, (1899, 1922²) assumed a Maccabean context, as also R. Kittel, 'Psalmen', RPTK (1905) pp. 187-214, and A. Puukko, 'Der Feind in den Alttestamentlichen Psalmen', OTS VII (1950) pp. 47-65. Pss. 7; 17; 25; 27; 35; 40; 54; 55; 56; 57; 59; 62; 66; 69; 71; 109; 140 and 141 are used most as examples of the enemies as wealthy oppressors.

¹⁰ Cf. Ringgren, Psaltarens Fromhet, E Tr The Faith of the Psalmists, Chapter 4, on the righteous and wicked in the psalms; Engnell, 'Psaltaren', in Svensk Bibliskt Uppslagsverk, cols. 45ff., E Tr 'The Book of Psalms' in Critical Essays on the Old Testament, pp. 116ff; Barth, Einführung in die Psalmen, Neukirchen, 1961, § 17. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, and Eaton, Kingship and the Psalms, both assume the predominant role of the king against the mythological enemy forces, not only in the communal laments, royal psalms but also in most of the individual laments.

¹¹ Cf. Schmidt, art. cit. (1927) and op. cit. (1928); Beyerlin, Die Rettung der Angeklagten, pp. 43ff; also L. Ruppert, Der leidende Gerechte und seine Feinde, Trostberg, 1973. The relevant psalms include Pss. 3; 4; 5; 7; 11; 17; 23; 26; 27; 57 and 63.

asylum in the sanctuary.¹² Or again, they could be those who, rather like the earlier view of workers of magic, have caused some illness to fall upon the suppliant or who are preventing his recovery by their curses and spells.¹³ Another reading is that instead of real enemies, the descriptions are metaphorical and depict various forms of illnesses, or psychological projections from the suppliants' condition of intense suffering.¹⁴

Perhaps the most appropriate reading is the "mixed economy" approach suggested by G.W. Anderson above. Widengren, for example, would prefer to do so on the basis of comparison with Akkadian laments.¹⁵ Gunkel, and more recently Westermann, would also prefer to understand the psalmists' enemies in various ways, without assenting to one dominant theory of interpretation.¹⁶ A number of

¹² Schmidt, op. cit., 1928 discusses this reading. See also Delekat, Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum, on individual laments such as Pss. 7; 12; 26; 27; and 35.

¹³ Cf. Seybold, art. cit. (1971) and op. cit. (1973), particularly pp. 48-55; also Gerstenberger, Der bittende Mensch, pp. 147-60, discusses the role of the familial cult in protecting and restoring the sick suppliant. See similarly Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, pp. 43-8 although the causes of illness are seen as "demonic powers". The appropriate psalms include Pss. 6; 13; 22; 28; 31; 35; 38; 39; 41; 51; 55; 61; 69; 70; 71; 73; 88; 102 and 109.

¹⁴ Cf. Gerstenberger, ibid., pp. 138ff.; also Keel, Feinde und Gottesleugner, pp. 9ff.; Seidel, Das Erlebnis der Einsamkeit im Alten Testament, especially pp. 56-60; also N. Lohfink, 'Projektionen über die Feinde des Kranken im alten Orient und in den Psalmen', Unsere grossen Wörter, Freiburg, 1977, pp. 70ff. The relevant psalms overlap with those in note 13 above.

¹⁵ Cf. Widengren, The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation, pp. 213-4, 230-34, and 243ff.

¹⁶ Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, pp. 207ff.; also 'Die Frömmigkeit der Psalmen' (1922), pp. 2ff., E Tr 'The Religion of the Psalms' (1928), pp. 69-114. Cf. Westermann, 'Struktur und Geschichte der Klage', (1954), pp. 44ff., E Tr 'The Role of Lament', (1974), pp. 20ff., later reprinted in Praise and Lament, pp. 188-93.

other scholars would also apply this more flexible interpretation.¹⁷

At least four different types of enemy oppression may be proposed from the above survey of scholarship. The first three pertain to a more communal reading of the enemies, and the fourth concerns a more individual reading. Firstly, psalms with military descriptions of the enemies suggest these are foreign powers attacking the nation Israel (e.g. Pss. 2:2,10; 44:3,15; 60:8ff.; 66:4,8; 72:9-10; 74:18; 77:15; 79:6; 80:9; 83:7-9; 94:20-21; 106:35-36,41-42; 108:8ff.; 110:5-6 and 118:10ff.). Secondly, when the enemy is described as a political threat upon the personal authority of the suppliant himself (probably the king), they are likely to be opponents from within the nation itself (e.g. Pss. 7:2-3; 10:7-9; 11:2-3; 54:4; 56:7; 59:2-3,4-5; 63:10; 86:14ff.; 102:9 and 140:3,5-6,9). Thirdly, when the enemies are described in a more exaggerated mythological way, not so much physical oppressors as personalised forces of chaos, this suggests some enactment of the power of Yahweh in the drama of the cultic festivals (e.g. Pss. 18:4,18,40-41,49; 68:2,22,24; 89:11,23-24,43,52; 92:7,8,10,12 and 94:3,4,16).

Fourthly, many psalms speak of the enemies in non-military, non-political, non-mythological terms, and the attacks of slander, abuse, and the threats of persecution and of death, as well as the experience of illness and physical suffering, suggest the plain

¹⁷ Cf. Balla, Das Ich der Psalmen, pp. 126ff.; Tsevat, A Study of the Language of the Biblical Psalms, pp. 162ff.; Kraus, Theologie, BKAT XV/III, pp. 172ff. and 178ff.; and Sabourin, The Psalms. Their Origin and Meaning, pp. 114ff. Croft's PhD thesis, The identity of the individual in the Book of Psalms, apparently examines the different identities of the enemies in the individual psalms, but the book (JSOTS 44) was not published at the time of writing.

sense of private individuals suffering various forms of oppressions from numerous sources of evil (e.g. Pss. 5; 6; 13; 17; 22; 25; 27; 28; 31; 35; 38; 39; 40; 41; 42-3; 55; 61; 69; 70; 88; 109; 142; 143). This fourth category demonstrates a clear distinction between the individual and communal experiences of suffering.¹⁸ Within this fourth category the features of particular personal piety are most likely to be evident.

The following study will examine the most common words used to describe those who inflict suffering on the psalmists. These are the אִיְבֹי , the רָשָׁעִים and the פְּעֻלֵי אֹן . The purpose of such an assessment is to demonstrate that each word is not used in any monochrome sense to denote one particular type of enemy oppression, but rather is a flexible and figurative description of a number of very different forms of evil surrounding the suppliant.

(a) The אִיְבֹי

The root אִי , "be hostile to" is also attested in Ugarit ($\text{ }^3\text{h}$) and Akkadian (ayyābu) where it is used to describe physical attacks of enmity and hatred, with respect both to personal and national foes.¹⁹

אִיְבֹי occurs mainly in the individual psalms. Other than three general references, one in a hymn (Ps. 8:3), one in a

¹⁸ Cf. Westermann, art. cit., (1954), pp. 44ff., E Tr in Praise and Lament, pp. 188ff.; also Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, pp. 43ff.

¹⁹ Cf. T.E. McComiskey, ' אִי ' in TWOT, Vol.I, No. 78; also H. Ringgren, ' אִי ' in TWAT I, cols. 228-35, E Tr TDOT I, pp. 212-8.

historical psalm (Ps. 78:53) and one in a prophetic exhortation (Ps. 81:15), the other references outside the individual psalms are within royal psalms (Pss. 18:1,4,18,38,41,49; 21:9; 45:6; 72:9; 89:11,23,43,52; 110:1,2 and 132:18) and communal laments (Pss. 44:17; 74:3,10,18; 80:7; 83:3) and a communal thanksgiving (Ps. 68:2,22,24). In all these examples, these are the enemies of the nation, either as military opponents, "God's enemies" whom he has power to subdue for the honour of his own people (cf. Pss. 8; 44; 45; 72; 74; 78; 80; 81; 83 and 110), or political opponents, who threaten the life of the king (Pss. 21 and 132) or mythological powers (Pss. 18; 68 and 89). The form and context imply that the enemies are those within the community.

אֹיְבֵי occurs in almost thirty individual psalms. In four of these, it is found without any synonyms; these are Pss. 30:2; 41:3,6,12; 61:4 and 138:7. In each context the meaning is very different. In Ps. 41, the enemies are those maliciously speaking evil who visit the suppliant on his sickbed (vv.6-7). In Ps. 138, they are probably the opponents of the king (noting the authority of the suppliant, and vv. 4-5). In Ps. 30 they are associated with the psalmist's experience of death in the midst of life. In Ps. 61 they are those who surround the suppliant, possibly the king, in exile (vv.2-3). It is clear that אֹיְבֵי does not depict one particular type of enemy oppression, but is a figurative expression for a complete range of hostility pitted against the suppliant.

In the remaining individual psalms, the synonyms employed along with אֹיְבֵי clarify this figurative use further. One of the most common parallels is אֹיֵב , "oppressor", depicting the present,

physical experience of the psalmist's suffering.²⁰ In Ps. 3, צַר is used in v. 2, and כָּל־אֹיְבִי in v.8; the active experience is further implied by the use of קִמְּתֵם עָלַי ("those rising up against me") also in v.2. In Ps. 6:8, צוֹרְרִי is used, and כָּל־אֹיְבִי is used in 6:11.²¹ In Ps. 13:3 אֹיְבִי occurs again; 13:5 shows the terms in synonymous parallelism:

"Lest my enemy (אֹיְבִי) say, 'I have prevailed over him';
lest my foes (צַרִי) rejoice
because I am shaken (כִּי אֲלוֹת)."²²

Ps. 27:2 demonstrates several different figurative expressions may apply to those who oppress:

"When evildoers (מַרְעִים) assail me,
uttering slanders against me (לֹאכַל אֶת־בָּשָׂרִי),
my adversaries (צַרִי) and foes (וְאֹיְבִי),
they shall stumble and fall."²³

The last two marked Hebrew words also occur in 27:6 (עַל־אֹיְבִי) and 27:12 (צַרִי). Ps. 69 also uses the two words. Verse 19b reads "set me free because of my enemies (אֹיְבִי)!", and v. 20c ends "my foes (צוֹרְרִי) are all known to thee."²⁴ Ps. 143:12 is another example

²⁰ Other synonyms שׂוֹנְאִי ("haters") and רֹדֵף ("persecutor") and שׂרָרִי ("those who watch over (me)") are all used in the sense of an active present experience; the suffering is not only the threat of intent, as suggested by Westermann in Praise and Lament, pp. 188-93.

²¹ On פָּעַלִי אֶנּוּן, cf. pp. 270 ff.

²² Anderson, NCB pp. 129-30 notes that אֹיְבִי in v.4 (used here in a collective sense) is associated more figuratively with the psalmist's experience of death in the midst of life; אֲלוֹת in v. 5b could thus be read "I am dying" as in Ps. 38:17.

²³ The expression לֹאכַל אֶת־בָּשָׂרִי "devouring my flesh" depicts the enemies as wild beasts (see also Pss. 7:3; 17:12 etc.) The RSV translation "uttering slanders against me" is like that in Dan. 3:8, 6:25 (Aramaic), where the concern is more the destruction of integrity than human life itself. See Anderson, NCB, pp. 220-1.

²⁴ אֹיְבִי is also used alongside שׂוֹנְאִי (my haters") and מַצְחִיתִי ("my destroyers") in v. 5.

of these words in synonymous parallelism:

"And in thy steadfast love cut off my enemies (**אֹיְבֵי**)
and destroy all my adversaries (**כָּל-צָרָי נַפְשִׁי**)
for I am thy servant." ²⁵

Another common synonym with **אֹיֵב** is **שֹׂנֵא**, "one who hates". The first example is in Ps. 9; reference is made to **אֹיְבֵי** in v.4 and to **הָאֹיֵב** in v. 7, and **שֹׂנֵא** is used in v. 14.²⁶ It describes the nature of the enemies again in Ps. 25:19:²⁷

"Consider how many are my foes (**אֹיְבֵי**),
and with what violent hatred (**וּשְׂנֵאת חֹסֶס**)
they hate me (**שֹׂנְאֵנִי**)."

In Ps. 35, the enemy is described in v. 1 as **אֶת-יָרִיבֵי** ("those contending with me") and as **אֶת-לַחֲמִי** ("those fighting against me") and in v. 3 as **רֹדְפֵי** ("those pursuing me") and in v. 11 as **עֲדֵי חֹסֶס** ("testifiers of violence"). In the same psalm, verse 19 uses **אֹיֵב** and **שֹׂנֵא** together:

"Let not those rejoice over me
who are wrongfully my foes (**אֹיְבֵי שָׂקָר**)
and let not those wink the eye
who hate me (**שֹׂנְאֵי**) without cause (**חֲנָם**)."

So too Ps. 38:20 uses both terms together, with a change of phrase:

²⁵ **אֹיְבֵי** also occurs vv. 3 and 9. The phrase **כָּל-צָרָי נַפְשִׁי** is like **מָרְעִים לֹאכַל אֶת-בָּשָׂרִי** in Ps. 27:2; the association between the enemies and the threat of death is again evident.

²⁶ The word **רָשָׁע** which also occurs in vv. 6, 17 and 18 will be discussed on pp. 265 ff.

²⁷ **אֹיְבֵי** is also found in v. 2 of this psalm.

"Those who are my foes (**וְאֵיבִי**)
without cause(**חֵיִם**) are mighty
and many are those
who hate me wrongfully (**שֹׂנְאֵי שֶׁקֶר**)." ²⁸

Ps. 55 also describes the enemies as "haters" in v. 4(**אֹיֵב** and **יִשְׁטָמוּנִי**), and in a negative form in v. 13 (**לֹא-אֹיֵב** and **לֹא-שֹׂנְאִי**). So too Ps. 69:5 shows these interrelated actions of the enemy:

"More in number than the hairs of my head
are those who hate me (**שֹׂנְאֵי**) without cause;
mighty are those who would destroy me (**מַצְמִיתִי**)
those who attack me with lies (**אֵיבִי שֶׁקֶר**)." ²⁹

From these verses, the enemies are described as innumerable, and violent and false in speech and deed, whilst the suppliant is alone and innocent. Nevertheless, each context reveals that their identity is quite different: in Ps. 9 they are enemy nations (cf. v.7), in Ps. 25 they appear to be false accusers, in Ps. 35 they are as violent in action as in speech, being false witnesses at some possible lawsuit case (cf. 35:1,23: **רִיב** ; also 35: 23f. **שֶׁפֶט**) ; in Ps. 38 they are associated with the suppliant's illness (vv. 10ff.), in Ps. 55 they are those who were once closest to the sufferer (vv. 13-16; 21-22), and in Ps. 69 they are those ensnared in idolatry (vv. 23ff.) who oppose the suppliant's stand for God alone (vv. 8ff.). The use of **אֹיֵב** alongside **צָר** and **שֹׂנְאִי** should not be interpreted as one typical expression for the

²⁸ **אֵיבִי שֶׁקֶר** ("lying enemies") in Ps. 35:19a has become **שֹׂנְאֵי חֵיִם** ("lying haters") in Ps. 38:20b. **שֹׂנְאֵי חֵיִם** ("haters without cause") occurs in Ps.35:19b; the parallelism could be completed by emending the unusual **אֵיבִי חֵיִם** ("living enemies") in 38:20a to **אֵיבִי חֵיִם** ("enemies without cause") as in Ps. 35:19b.

²⁹ Verse 15 of this psalm uses **שֹׂנְאִי** again; in v. 19, **אֵיבִי** is used again.

same opposition experienced between one psalmist and another: "those who hate me" is a way of describing the attitude, violence and slander, in general terms, of the very different types of opposition which faced the suppliants in different psalms.

This traditional yet creative use of language in describing the אֹיִבִּים is further evident in the use of other synonyms to describe their violent activity. They are seen as those who "persecute" or "pursue" the psalmist (רָדַף), often followed by imagery of hunting, as of animals. Examples include Ps. 7:6 ($\text{רָדַף אֹיִבִּי נַפְשִׁי}$; see Ps. 143:3 referred to below); Ps. 31:16, ($\text{לֹא יִרְדֹּף אֹיִבִּי וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח יָדָיו בִּי}$); Ps. 35:3 (לֹא יִרְדֹּף ; in v. 19 אֹיִבִּי and שָׁנְאִי occur together); Ps. 69:27 (רָדַף ; see the use of אֹיִבִּי in vv. 5 and 19); Ps. 71:11 (רָדַף ; in v. 10 אֹיִבִּי is used); and in Ps. 143:3 ($\text{כִּי רָדַף אֹיִבִּי נַפְשִׁי}$: "the enemy has pursued my soul").

Another expression used with אֹיִבִּים is those who "watch over" (שָׂרַף) the suppliant.³⁰ This is found in Ps. 27:11 (שָׂרַף ; see the reference to אֹיִבִּי in vv. 2 and 6); in Ps. 54:7 (לֹא יִשְׁרַף ; the use of אֹיִבִּי occurs in v. 9); Ps. 56:3 (שָׂרַף ; see the use of אֹיִבִּי in v. 10); Ps. 59:11 (שָׂרַף ; in v. 2, אֹיִבִּי is used).

One other synonym is found in Ps. 59:3, where the enemies are also called אֲנָשֵׁי דָמַיִם ("men of blood") alongside

³⁰ The noun שָׂרַף ("watcher") is used as a participle, without the mem. Six of the seven occurrences are in the psalms (cf. also Job 36:24). The Qal is sometimes used to mean "lie in ambush" (cf. Hos. 13:7 and Jer. 5:26) and in the context of the enemies' threats in the psalms, the same meaning is likely. Dahood's reading (AB II, pp. 25-6) that the שָׂרַף is a "slanderer" is less convincing.

כַּעֲלֵי אֹן ; אַנְשֵׁי דָלִים also occurs in Pss. 5:7; 55:24 and 139:19. In Ps. 55:24, it occurs alongside הַרְסָה , which is also found in Ps. 43:1. ³¹

The examples of the synonymous terms for the enemies have been restricted to these individual psalms which use אֹן to describe the "enemy" causing the suffering. The personal attacks, by word and deed, upon the suppliant's life and integrity are depicted by a number of synonyms to refer to several different settings of individual suffering. ³²

(b) The רָשָׁעִים

The Qal form of רָשָׁע means "to act wickedly" whereas the Hiph'il normally implies "to find guilty of wickedness", or "to condemn". The psalmists use רָשָׁעִים in the ethical and religious sense, implying that those who "act wickedly" are guilty of particular charges before man and God. They are the "ungodly", whether inside the community or outside it. This is evidenced particularly by the recurrences of the antonyms יִשְׁרָיִם and צַדִּיקִים (e.g. Ps. 37). ³³

A striking factor is that רָשָׁעִים occurs with only one

³¹ Kraus, BKAT/XV I, p. 422 sees אַנְשֵׁי דָלִים as a particular expression for a specific enemy in 59:2-3, where it is a climax to the three previous synonyms. Its occurrences elsewhere (cf. Pss. 5:7; 55:24 and 139:19) hardly justify this reading; it is used simply to describe the violent nature of the suppliant's opponents.

³² Some individual psalms have a detailed description of the enemy, each portrayed in quite different ways, some pertaining more to threats by deeds, others more by words: cf. Ps. 10:2ff.; 17:9ff.; 35:3ff. 19ff.; 38:12ff.; 59:11ff.; 64:3ff.; 91:3ff.; 140:1ff.

³³ On צַדִּיקִים and יִשְׁרָיִם , cf. Chapter 8 , 'Pleasing God', pp. 336ff.

exception in the individual psalms. The exception is Ps. 94, a communal lament. The רשעים here (cf. v. 3, and a synonym מרעים in v. 16), are probably the "wicked rulers", or כסא הוון : "throne of iniquity", concerning those who abuse their authority for evil ends, referred to in v.20. They are also called the פעלי און in vv. 4 and 16.³⁴

רשעים occurs mainly in the psalms which also use the term און (ten out of fifteen psalms). In Ps. 3:8, it is used in parallelism:

"...For thou dost smite all my enemies (כל-איבי)
on the cheek,
thou dost break the teeth of the wicked (רשעים)."

In Ps. 7:10, these are again personal attackers, rather than general forces of evil; this is evidenced not only in the use of צוררי in v. 5 and און in v.6, but also in the parallelism with the "righteous":

"O let the evil of the wicked (רע רשעים)
come to an end,
but establish thou the righteous(צדיק)..."

רשעים occurs frequently in Pss. 9-10. Here, as in Ps 94, these are probably the "wicked" of other nations (cf. vv. 6; 17; 18; 10:2, 3, 13,15; און is used in 9:7). In Ps. 17:9, the two expressions are found in parallelism:

"...hide me in the shadow of thy wings,
from the wicked (מפני רשעים) who despoil me,
my deadly enemies (איבי בנפש) who surround me."³⁵

In Ps. 31, the use of און in vv. 9 and 16 is again

³⁴ For a discussion of the פעלי און , cf. pp. 270ff.

³⁵ The phrase מפני רשעים is unusual. It is possibly intended to compare with the hope to behold the face of God in v. 15 at the end of this psalm. איבי בנפש could be read as "deadly enemies" ("enemies of my soul") or as "enemies in greed": cf. Kraus, BKAT/XV I, p. 132 and Anderson, NCB, p. 150.

complemented by רשעים in v. 18. Ps. 37, a wisdom psalm, has several references to the רשעים. The expression איבי יהוה occurs once in v. 20, in parallelism with רשע. רשע occurs in the singular in vv. 10, 12, 21, and 32, and in the plural in vv. 14, 16, 17, 20, 28, 34, 38 (in parallelism with רשעים, "transgressors") and also v. 40. Elsewhere in the psalm a synonym רעים is used (cf. v. 9; also v. 1, in parallelism with עשי עולה, "workers of perversity").³⁶ As in Ps. 7, the frequent parallels of the "wicked" with the "righteous" show further that the enemies are hardly mythological forces of evil, or enemy nations, but are those within the community who stand as opposed to God in their deeds and actions as those who are צדיקים stand for him.

In Ps. 55:4, אויב and רשע are in parallelism together; "the noise of the enemy" (קול אויב) and "the oppression (or shouts) of the wicked" (עקת רשע) suggest later in the psalm that these are previous friends of the suppliant (vv. 13-14). Ps. 71 also uses אויב and רשע, with other synonyms which again depict the personal nature of their threat for the suppliant: אויבי occurs in v. 10 with ושמרי נפשי ("those watching for my life"). רשע is used in v. 4 along with מעול וחומץ ("the unjust and worthless"). In Ps. 92, the only individual thanksgiving of these examples, איבי is used twice

³⁶ רעים, from רעע, "do evil" occurs mainly in the individual psalms; cf. Pss. 7; 9; 11; 12; 17; 26; 28; 31; 33; 34; 36; 37; 39; 55; 71; 73; 92; 109; 119; 139; 140 and 141. Elsewhere it is found in four prophetic oracles (Pss. 50; 58; 75 and 91) and a handful of communal laments (Pss. 68; 94 and 106) and general hymns (Pss. 97; 101; 104; 112; 129; 145; 146 and 147). As a synonym with רשע, its predominantly personal appropriation is thus evident.

with **פְּעֹלֵי אֹוֹן** in v. 10, whilst **רָשָׁעִים** is also used with **פְּעֹלֵי אֹוֹן** in v.8. The wicked are further described in personal terms by the unique phrase **אִישׁ-בֹּעֵר** ("brutish man") and also by **כֹּסִיל** ("fool") in v. 7. Finally, in Ps. 139:19, the **רָשָׁע** is again placed in parallel with people rather than general wickedness; here they are called **אֲנָשֵׁי דָמַיִם** ("men of blood") who seek to destroy the suppliant.

The **רָשָׁעִים** are therefore usually personal opponents of the suppliant, and like the **אִיבִים**, threaten him by word and deed from within the community. This is further confirmed even in those psalms which use **רָשָׁע**, but have no reference to the enemy as **אֹוֶיב**. In Ps. 26:4-5, the **רָשָׁעִים** are potential company for the psalmist, within his own community:

"I do not sit with false men (**עִם-שֹׁאֵרִים**)
 nor do I consort with dissemblers (**וְעִם-נִעְלָמִים**);
 I hate the company of evildoers (**קִהַל מַרְעִים**)
 and I will not sit with the wicked (**וְעִם-רָשָׁעִים**).³⁷

In Ps. 28:3, the **רָשָׁעִים** occur again in parallelism with the **פְּעֹלֵי אֹוֹן**; in Ps. 36, the **רָשָׁע** are used in v. 2 (singular) to depict one typically wicked, set against God and man, and in v. 12 (plural) as a near potential threat on the suppliant's integrity before God; in vv.12-13, the **פְּעֹלֵי אֹוֹן** are again a synonym with the **רָשָׁעִים**. In Ps. 140, the **רָשָׁעִים** can again only be personal oppression for the psalmist, as seen by the several qualifying terms; in v. 5, **רָשָׁע** occurs alongside **אִישׁ חֲסִים** ("violent man"), a term which is used in v. 2 (**אִישׁ חֲסִים**) alongside **אָדָם רָע**, and which occurs

37 The refusal of different aspects of fellowship with the wicked may be contrasted with the rejoicing in the company of the "great congregation" in v. 12.

similarly in v. 12 (אִישׁ-חָסִים); see also the unique expression לִשּׁוֹן אִישׁ "a man of tongue", or "slanderer" in the same verse). Finally, the same picture of personal oppressors is evident in Ps. 141; again the רָשָׁעִים are twice used synonymously with פְּעֹלֵי אֵין (vv.4 and 9-10). The picture is that of one who feels innocent and alone, pitted against the wicked:

"Keep me from the trap (מִדֶּי פֶחַ) they have laid for me,
and from the snares (מִלְקָשׁוֹת) of evildoers (פְּעֹלֵי אֵין)!
Let the wicked (רָשָׁעִים) together fall into their own nets (בְּמַכְשֵׁרֵיהֶם), while I escape." (141:9-10)³⁸

The same conclusion applies as in the study of the enemy as אֵין. The repeated use of a term, and its depiction only in the most general of terms (due to its context in poetry and as prayer) does not necessitate reading it every time as a particular label for one particular party of people. Quite the opposite is the case: no two psalms use either the term אֵין or the term רָשָׁע in the same way. They apparently describe the groups of wicked within the community, who each cause several different forms of personal suffering for each suppliant. Such personal abuse and oppression should not be considered unusual, even in pre-exilic Israel, when seen in the light of the prophetic literature which portrays social

³⁸ The depiction of the enemies as hunters is common in the psalms. Here, they lay a trap (v. 9a) and a snare (v.9b) and even "nets": רְחֵמִים may be used with respect to hunting animals, as in Is. 51:20. Other psalms using typical hunting imagery include Ps. 7:16; 35:7-8; 57: 7 and 59:4; all are individual psalms. Psalms which reverse the imagery and depict the enemies as animals, as here in Ps. 141:10b, include Pss. 10:9; 17:11-12; 22:13-14,17,21-22 and 59:7-8.

malaise at every level of society. ³⁹

c) The פְּעֻלַּת הַיָּא

יָא is normally associated with "trouble", leading to wickedness, or "emptiness", by rebellion against God. ⁴⁰ This is very much like פְּעֻלַּת discussed previously, and it is often used as a synonym for it. Several references have already been made to the פְּעֻלַּת הַיָּא, with respect to Mowinckel's thesis that these are either sorcerers or enemy nations ⁴¹, and also with respect to the occurrences of the term alongside הַיָּא and פְּעֻלַּת. We have noted already that the expression is unlikely to be used in any monochrome way, whether in a more personal "magical" sense or more national or royal "military" sense. Several scholars have already noted the methodological problems in assuming an inflexible usage, because the פְּעֻלַּת הַיָּא cannot be distinguished from any other term used for evildoers, and conversely, the term is not even used in most of the individual laments (twenty-nine out of forty) to describe the work of the enemy it supposedly depicts. Even within the prophets, הַיָּא has a number of contexts, namely that of cultic abuse (Am. 5:5 and Hos. 6:8 both use פְּעֻלַּת הַיָּא in this respect) or that of political malpractice (as in Is. 31:2, also using פְּעֻלַּת הַיָּא) or that

³⁹ A discussion of this issue with particular reference to the confessions is given in the conclusion to this word-study, pp. 273-4.

⁴⁰ Cf. Bernhardt, art. cit., pp. 140-1; also G.H. Livingston, ' הַיָּא ' in TWOT I, No. 48.

⁴¹ Cf. pp. 254ff. and note 7 of this chapter.

of social wrongs (cf. Mic. 2:1, which uses חֲשָׁבִי אֵין and (פְּעָלֵי רָע). The פְּעָלֵי אֵין are thus hardly one homogeneous group within pre-exilic Israelite society. ⁴²

פְּעָלֵי אֵין occurs in a few communal psalms. These include the two parallel prophetic exhortations, Pss. 14:4 and 53:5, which use no other terms to describe the wicked except for the use of נָבִל ("fool") used in 14:1 and 53:2. No particular party of "evildoers" is evident in these psalms. The term is used three times in the communal lament of Ps. 94 (cf. vv. 4; 16 and 23); the psalm has been discussed previously with respect to the identity of the רָשָׁעִים in v. 3, and it was suggested that here, those oppressing the psalmist are the "wicked rulers" implied in v. 20. ⁴³ In Ps. 101, best classified as a royal psalm, כָּל-פְּעָלֵי אֵין is found together with כָּל-רָשָׁעֵי-אֶרֶץ (v.8); here, they are those who oppose the authority of the suppliant (probably the king), from within the nation (seen in the use of אֶעֱרֹךְ-יְהוָה in v. 8). In Ps. 125, a communal psalm of confidence, the reference to the evildoers in v.5 is found in antithetic parallelism to the וְלִישָׁרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם in v.4, and as in Pss. 14 and 53, only the most general reading of evildoers is intended.

A variety of interpretations for the פְּעָלֵי אֵין is also evident in the individual psalms. It occurs in Pss. 6:9; 7:15; 41:7; 55:4; 56:8; 59:3,6; 64:3; 92:8,10 and 119:133. Each of these psalms

⁴² Scholars who have criticized Mowinckel's thesis include G.R. Driver, 'The Psalms in the Light of Babylonian Research', The Psalmists (ed. D.C.Simpson), London, 1926, pp. 109-75; N.H. Ridderbos, De Werkers der Ongerechtigheid in de individueele Psalmen, Kampen, 1939; G.W. Anderson, art. cit., pp. 24ff; also Bernhardt, art. cit., pp.143-4.

⁴³ On Ps. 94, cf. p. 266.

also refer to the enemy as the אֹיֵב , and their different identities have been discussed earlier. Not one example has anything in it to suggest sorcery as the cause of the suffering. פֶּעַל־אֵן also occurs in Pss. 28:3; 36:13 and 141:4,9. In Ps.36:4 the expression is דַּבְּרֵי-פִי־אֵן . Each of these psalms also refers to the enemy as עָשָׂה and again not one example suggested sorcerers, nor even a foreign power. Of the individual psalms, only Ps. 5:6 refers to the כָּל-פֶּעַל־אֵן without reference to the wicked as אֹיֵב or as עָשָׂה . Here the context is that of the slander upon one falsely accused; the oppressors are also described as שׁוֹרְרִים (v.9), who oppose the suppliant by word and deed. They are no different from the אֹיֵב and the עָשָׂה referred to above.

It is significant that there is no reference to the פֶּעַל־אֵן in other psalms which speak of suffering in such a way that it could be associated with magical or "demonic" powers. For example, Ps. 91 speaks repeatedly of deadly pestilence and terrible destruction; yet no reference is made to the פֶּעַל־אֵן , or, for that matter, to any personalised "enemy" as the source of the suffering. Similarly, Ps. 88 refers to the terror of some deadly disease, without once alluding to the cause as that of any "evildoers". So too Ps. 120 speaks of the treacherous tongues slandering the suppliant in exile, without making any reference to any "evildoers". Even Ps. 22, with all its allusions to the oppressors as in terms of hunting animals (vv. 13, 21,22) only once refers to the אֹיֵב (v.17) and never to any other personal enemy oppression, including the פֶּעַל־אֵן .

This again confirms that any attempts to systematise the same

linguistic references to the "enemy" does injustice both to the nature of the poetic, figurative descriptions and to the variety of personal experiences of evil implied by the psalmists themselves.

Furthermore, there seems little need to postulate some mythological enmity force, or some other imagined evil put forward by a supposed professional cultic poet to serve the needs of anyone in distress. One has only to read of the extent of social injustice, immorality, oppression of the poor, and the general lack of concern for the value of human life as recorded in the eighth century prophetic message to see that throughout this period, in both the northern and southern kingdoms, the threat of enemy oppression in its various forms was a possibility for anyone, whether king, prophet, priest or layman.⁴⁴ Even a cursory reading of the judgement oracles of the prophets, and their appeal for "steadfast love" and "righteousness" and "justice", reveals that evil in all its forms was rife in pre-exilic Israel.⁴⁵ The various enemies lamented in the above psalms are thus part of an experience of the reality of evil infecting their daily lives.

This is in fact precisely what is lamented in Jeremiah's confessions, and the narrative which provides their context reflects

⁴⁴ Diverse examples include J. Bright, A History of Israel, London, 1960, pp. 234ff., 271ff., 288ff. and 310ff; J.H. Hayes and J.M. Miller, (eds.) Israelite and Judean History, London, 1977, pp. 381-434; E.W. Heaton, The Old Testament Prophets, London, 1977, pp. 57-71; H.W. Wolff, 'Prophecy from the Eighth through the Fifth Century', Interp 32 (1978), pp. 17-30, especially pp. 26ff.; and R.R. Wilson, Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel, Philadelphia, 1980, Chapter 5.

⁴⁵ Examples from Amos include Am.2:6-7; 5:10-12; 6:12 and 8:4-6. From Hosea, cf. 4:1-2. From Micah, cf. 2:1-2; 3:1-3,9-11; 6:10-12; 7:2-6. From Isaiah, cf. 1:4-6,16-17, 21-23; 3:16-17; 5:7,20-23 and 10:1-2.

further that the lament over persecution, and physical suffering, and isolation, and verbal abuse, and fear of death are all bound up with the prophet's stand for God in an alien environment. Although none of these typical terms are used to describe the "enemy" in the confessions, it is clear that in each example some personal evil attack on the person of the prophet is the subject of the lament. In Jer. 11, it is the men of Anathoth (v.21) who "devise schemes" against the prophet's life (v.19). In Jer. 12, the prophet complains that the wicked prosper (v.1), implying these are those who will not heed his words and fail paradoxically to be punished for it. In Jer. 15, those who curse the prophet (v.10) and those who are his "persecutors" (v.15) are again the "wicked" who fail to listen to his words. In Jer. 17, it is again those who "persecute" the prophet (v.18), by mocking the validity of his message (v.15), who are the cause of the complaint. In Jer. 18, those who "dig a pit" for the prophet's death (v.20), and plot to slay him (v.23) are again literal enemies who despise his message. Finally, Jer. 20 records another psalm-like theme of the enemies coming from the prophet's previous familiar friends (v.10), who now oppose his message of judgement.

One need not be the king, or a representative leader of the nation, or even a gifted cultic official to speak of the oppression of the enemies. This could be the common experience of any who stood against the tide of oppression for the cause of God- whether a known prominent prophet as was Jeremiah or anonymous gifted poets as were the psalmists. The purpose of the following sections will be to examine further the personal causes of suffering which lie behind the general expressions of prayer within the psalms.

(II) THE LANGUAGE OF SUFFERING

The different levels of outrage in the psalmists' protests are dependent upon the intensity of their suffering and their limits of endurance. It is therefore not surprising that the psalmists used the conventional, traditional phraseology of their contemporaries with varying degrees of creative freedom.⁴⁶ Two different examples will be used to illustrate this. The one concerns the repeated calls for God's help; the other pertains to the descriptions of distress. Both examples occur mainly within the lament forms.

The calls for God to help the suppliant, used in an imperative plea and in the form of reproaches and questions concerning his care, are insistent and clear: God "knows" of the suppliant's distress, and he has the ability to end it. In both communal and individual laments, where this feature mainly is found, the calls and reproaches are usually expressed in traditional, language, which is nevertheless adapted in different degrees according to the unorthodox theology which is expressed, which often accuses God and challenges his power to help.

In the communal laments, Ps. 44:24-27 has a number of imperative calls and reproaches at the end of the psalm. Several formulaic expressions are found here. Examples include "Rouse

⁴⁶ For Mowinckel's less flexible reading, cf. PIW¹, pp. 22-29, pp. 30-31; also PIW², pp. 124ff. See also Tsevat, A Study of the Language of the Biblical Psalms, a technical analysis of one hundred and sixty six examples of phrases used in the psalms and elsewhere in the biblical literature; also R.B. Culley, Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms, Toronto, 1967, especially chapters 5 and 6 on the formulaic systems in the psalms, and the chart on p. 103 indicating the twenty six psalms with a high proportion of formulaic language; also W.R. Watters, Formula Criticism and the Poetry of the Old Testament, BZAW 138, Berlin, 1976, pp. 133-41, on the language of lament; also A. Aejmelaeus, The Traditional Prayer in the Psalms, BZAW 167, Berlin 1986, pp. 16-40, 85-88 and 109-71.

yourself!" (עורר : v. 24a) and "Awake!" (הליץ : v. 24b). ⁴⁷

Another is "Why dost thou hide thy face?"
(למה פניך תסתיר) : v. 25).⁴⁸ Ps. 60 is a similar example

of such pleas and reproaches, found both at the beginning and the end; formulaic expressions include "Restore us!" (תשוב לנו : v.3) and "Hast thou not rejected us, O God?"

(הלאתה אלהים ונחתנו) : v. 12) Similarly Ps.

80: 4, 8 and 20 , with its refrain "Restore us!" (השׁיבנו) and

"Let thy face shine!" (והאר פניך) uses such calls and reproaches from a common store of liturgical language.⁴⁹ Ps. 82:8

"Arise O God, judge the earth"

(קום אלהים שפטה הארץ) and Ps. 74:22 "Arise O God,

plead thy cause!" (קום אלהים ריבה ריבך) is a further example of cultic and forensic language used together.⁵⁰ So too Ps.

94:1 "Thou God of vengeance, shine forth!"

(אל נקמות הופיע) uses the same language in its

imperative calls for help. ⁵¹

⁴⁷ Additional occurrences from Job and second Isaiah have been omitted from this study. On these two expressions, cf. Aejmelaeus, op. cit., pp. 31-3. These examples could be developing earlier battle cries, such as "Rouse yourself!" (from עורר) also found in Pss. 7:7; 35:23; 59:4 and 80:3; and "Awake!" (from קיצץ), see also Pss. 35:23; and 59:5,6.

⁴⁸ On "Why dost thou hide thy face?" cf. Balentine, op. cit., chapter 3, pp. 78-111; other examples occur in Pss. 13:2; 27:9; 51:11; 69:18; 88:15; 102:3 and 143:7.

⁴⁹ Cf. Aejmelaeus, op. cit., pp. 34-7. "Restore us!" (from the root שׁוּב, literally, "take us back into power") is also in Pss. 80:4,8,20 and 85:5. On והאר פניך ("Let thy face shine!") see also Ps. 31:17.

⁵⁰ On "Arise O God!" (from קום) see also Pss. 3:8; 7:7; 9:20; 10:12; 17:13; 44:26; (68:2) 74:22; 132:8.

⁵¹ On "Shine forth!" (from יפיע), see Tsevat, op. cit., p. 14, Note 11 and p. 81, Note 42, also in Ps. 80:2.

Similar appeals and reproaches are found in the individual laments. These include expressions such as "Hearken to the sound of my cry!" (הקשיבה לקול שועי) in Ps. 5:3;⁵² "Give ear to my prayer!" (האזינה תפילתי) in Ps. 17:1;⁵³ "Be not silent to me!" (אל-תחרש אלי) in Ps. 28:1;⁵⁴ "How long, O LORD, wilt thou look on?" (אדני כמה תראה) in Ps. 35:17;⁵⁵ "Vindicate me!" (שפוטני) in Ps. 35:24;⁵⁶ "Do not forsake me!" (אל-תעזבני) in Ps. 38:22;⁵⁷ "Be merciful to me!" (חנני) in Ps. 57:2;⁵⁸ "Deliver me!" (הצילני) in Ps. 59:2;⁵⁹ "Answer me!" (ענני) in Ps. 69:17;⁶⁰ and "Make

⁵² Cf. Aejmelaeus, op. cit., pp. 26-9. "Hearken!" (from קשב) is also in Pss. 17:1; 55:3; 61:2 and 86:6.

⁵³ On "Give ear!" (from אזן) see also Pss. 5:3 (in parallelism with both קשב and שמע); 39:13; 54:3 (in parallelism with שמע); 55:3 (in parallelism with קשב); 77:2; 80:2 and 84:9 (in parallelism with שמע); 140:7; 141:1 and 143:1 (in parallelism with שמע).

⁵⁴ On "Be not silent!" (from חרש), see also Pss. 35:23; (50:3) and 83:2.

⁵⁵ On "How long, O LORD?" (using כמה) see also Pss. 13:2; 74:10; 79:5; (80:4) and 89:46.

⁵⁶ Cf. Aejmelaeus, op. cit., pp. 37-9. "Vindicate me!" (using שפט כצדק) is also in Pss. 7:9; 26:1 and 43:1.

⁵⁷ On "Do not forsake me!" (from עזב) see also Pss. 27:9; 71:9,18; 119:8 (also 22:1, using למה).

⁵⁸ Cf. Aejmelaeus, op. cit., pp. 21-3. "Be merciful to me!" (from חנן) is also in Pss. 4:2; 6:3; 9:4; 25:16; 26:11, 16; 27:7; 30:11; 31:10; 41:5,11; 51:3; 56:2,5; 86:3,16 and 119:18, 132.

⁵⁹ Cf. Aejmelaeus, op. cit., pp. 16-21. "Deliver me!" (using ציל), is also found in Pss. 22:21; 25:20; 31:3,16; 39:8; 40:14; 51:16; 59:2-3; 70:2; 71:2; 69:15; 119:170; 120:2; 142:7; 143:9 and 144:7.

⁶⁰ On "Answer me!" (from ענה) see Pss. 4:2; 13:4; 27:7 and 55:3 (also 65:5, "Answer us!").

haste to help me!" (לעזרתִי חִשָּׁה) in Ps. 71:12. ⁶¹

Both individual and communal psalms of lament use these expressions mainly in a formulaic way; they are a means of drawing attention to the psalmists' needs. The common store of language of the day is the most appropriate means by which a sense of security can be found by using traditional expressions for anger and despair. On this level, Mowinckel's assessment of the typical, representative language of psalmody is a correct observation. Whether this can lead us to presume such psalms were written by professional cultic officials or free poets familiar with the common store of cultic phraseology for prayer is however an open question. ⁶² We noted earlier that the similar calls for help in the Confessions of Jeremiah used the typical style and language of the psalms; Jer. 15:15; 17:14; 18:19, 21,22 and 20:12 are particularly relevant. Thus we have at least one example from the prophets of an individual appropriation of formulaic cultic language, but from an independent poet rather than from a professional cultic official.

A more creative and original use of traditional language is found in the descriptions of distress, which are often presented with vivid metaphors to call attention to the suppliant's vulnerability and the intensity of his suffering. The most striking examples of

⁶¹ On "Make haste to help me!" (with $\sqrt{\text{לעזרת}}$), see Tsevat, op. cit., p. 22 and p. 103, Notes 195-8. Pss. 22:19; 38:22; 40:14 and 109:26 also use this expression.

⁶² Tsevat, op. cit., p. 35 offers no conclusions on this issue. Culley, op. cit., pp. 98-100, is equally uncertain. Westermann notes that much of the language could be as much from profane influence as from cultic liturgy: cf. 'Anthropologische und theologische Aspekte des Gebets in den Psalmen', LJ 23 (1973), pp. 83-96, especially p. 87; also Praise and Lament, pp. 34ff. See also Widengren, op. cit., pp. 20ff. and 315ff.; Balentine, op. cit., pp. 259ff.; and Bellinger, op. cit., pp. 25-7.

complaints which describe dramatically the terror of the distress are in the individual psalms. A few exceptions include communal laments such as Pss. 60:3-5; 79:2-4 and 80:6-7, and royal psalms such as Pss. 18; 89 and 144, which also use vivid descriptions of personal suffering. The communal appropriation of figurative imagery depicting personal suffering is not peculiar to the psalms alone, but has also been seen in the communal laments in Jeremiah, and also in second Isaiah. ⁶³

In the descriptions in the individual laments, frequent correspondences are found with other psalms, showing a use of a common store of psalmic language. Nevertheless, the phraseology is far more free and variable than in the imperative calls for help. The language is ambiguous, because it is figurative and poetic, and it describes the inner experience of distress rather than an external cause, but it is nevertheless far from stereotyped and typical, as the following examples will demonstrate.

The description in Ps. 22:7 is neither formulaic nor intended to represent the needs of 'everyman'. It suggests some experience of personal distress:

"But I am a worm, and no man;
scorned by men, and despised by the people." ⁶⁴

Ps. 22:15-16 takes up imagery of suffering used in other psalms, but the presentation of ideas occurs nowhere else in the psalms. By

⁶³ Cf. Albertz, op. cit., pp. 23ff., on the communal and royal psalms, and pp. 178ff. and 190ff. on second Isaiah. On the similar use in Jeremiah, cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 56ff .

⁶⁴ The metaphor of the "worm" is to symbolise utter degradation and humiliation. It occurs later in Job 25:6, and is taken up by second Isaiah in 41:14 (describing Israel's sufferings) and 53:2ff. (describing the servant's sufferings).

referring as much to the inward fear and anxiety as to outward illness, the impression is intended to shock:

"I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax,
it is melted within my breast..." (v15)

Ps. 31:12-14 offers similar dramatic imagery:

"I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbours ($\text{TX} \Delta$ $\text{'}\text{J}\text{C}\text{W}\text{L}$),
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me..." (v.12) ⁶⁵

Ps. 38:3ff. is another obvious example:

"There is no soundness in my flesh
because of thy indignation;
there is no health in my bones
because of my sin....
My wounds ~~grow foul and~~ fester
because of my foolishness...
I am utterly spent and crushed;
I groan because of the tumult of my heart." ⁶⁶

Ps. 39: 11 offers an unusual direct reproach to God, which has echoes of Jeremiah:

⁶⁵ The similarities between this psalm and the language of the confessions has already been noted. The motif of the sight of the suppliant which causes others to flee is also found in Pss. 38 and 88. A problem of translation is found in line 2, where the use of $\text{TX} \Delta$ ("exceedingly") hardly makes sense. Oesterley, TP p. 206 characteristically changes the consonants to read $\text{XT} \Delta$, "terror", as in Jer. 20:10. Dahood, AB I, p. 189 reads the Δ as part of the previous word, thus making it enclitic or with a masculine plural ending; $\text{TX} \Delta$ is then read as TX , "dread" as in Job 31:23 and Prov. 1:26. The line then may mean "even to my neighbours I am a thing of dread". On this translation, see Anderson, NCB, pp. 250-1.

⁶⁶ The imagery of suffering in terms of a body wracked with pain and groaning in agony is also found in Pss. 32 and 51, where the cause is also seen to be due to sin. Similar descriptions of suffering, without reference to sin, are also found in Babylonian prayers; an interesting correspondence is in the Prayer addressed to Ishtar; cf. ANET pp. 383-5.

"Remove thy stroke from me;
I am spent by the blows of thy hand
(מַתְגֵּרֶת יָדְךָ)." 67

Ps. 55:5ff. is another vivid protest of despair:

"My heart is in anguish within me,
The terrors of death (מוֹת מוֹת יָאִו)
have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me
(יִרְאָה וְרֹעַד יָבֹא בִּי)
And horror overwhelms me. " (vv. 5-6) 68

Ps. 69 is also full of dramatic imagery to indicate the depth of protest. Occasionally actual formulaic language is evident, but normally the suppliant uses language creatively to depict his own particular distress:

"I am weary with my crying;
my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim
with waiting for my God." (v. 4)

"Insults have broken my heart,
so that I am in despair (חָשָׁה : "I am very sick"?)
I looked for pity, but there was none;
and for comforters, but I found none.
They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."
(vv.21-2)

Ps. 71 mixes a description of distress with a appeal for God's help, again in terms that can only indicate a particular life-setting:

67 Cf. Weiser, DATD 14, p. 221, E Tr OTL, p. 327 on the second line as "I am sure to perish through the force of thy hand". מַתְגֵּרֶת ("blows", RSV) is used here to suggest the hostile strength of God experienced by the suppliant.

68 The translation of מוֹת מוֹת יָאִו (RSV "terrors of death") is difficult; it has a superlative force, so that, for the sake of the metre, some commentators (e.g. Briggs, ICC II, pp. 21-22 and Gunkel, GHAT, pp. 236-9) prefer to omit מוֹת altogether. The intention however is to create a picture of intense fear, seen in the use of יִרְאָה וְרֹעַד in the next line.

"I have been as a portent (**סִמָּנִים**) to many;...
 Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
 forsake me not when my strength is spent." (vv. 7a; 9) ⁶⁹

Ps. 88 is full of metaphors which show the suppliant is either near to death, or is experiencing something like the fear and nothingness of death in the midst of life. The language again has associations with other psalms, but is developed originally to depict a particular personal setting:

"Thy wrath lies heavy upon me,
 and thou dost overwhelm me with all thy waves.
 Thou hast caused my companions to shun me;
 thou hast made me a thing of horror to them.
 I am shut in so that I cannot escape
 (**אֲנִי אֶלֶּל אֶלֶּל**)...;"
 (vv. 8-9) ⁷⁰

Ps. 102:4ff is also full of vivid imagery describing physical pain;
 again this cannot be read simply as stereotyped and formulaic:

⁶⁹ The impression of fear is created by using **סִמָּנִים**, "sign" or "portent". Within its context (cf. v.4), the word is hardly used positively to indicate God's care, as seen by Weiser, DATD 15, pp. 339-40, E Tr OTL, pp. 498-0. Rather it indicates intense fear at apparent divine punishment; the word is used with similar negative overtones concerning the plagues in Egypt: cf. Ex. 7:3; 11:9; Dt. 6:22. On this reading, cf. Gunkel, GHAT p. 302, Kraus, BKAT XV/1, pp. 490-1, and Anderson, NCB, p. 513.

⁷⁰ The expression **אֲנִי אֶלֶּל אֶלֶּל** in the last line could either be figurative, describing mental anxiety, or literal; either way this indicates the utter desolation of the suppliant. Cf. Anderson, NCB, p. 427 on the psalmist's isolation from society and from worship.

"For my days pass away like smoke (בִּלְעָשָׁן : "in smoke"),
 and my bones burn like a furnace (כִּדְּוִלֵּה).
 My heart is smitten like grass,
 and withered;
 I forget to eat my bread.
 Because of my loud groaning
 my bones cleave to my flesh..." (vv. 4-6) ⁷¹

Ps. 109 also protests in intense despair, after offering shocking
 curses of vengeance on the suppliant's enemies:

"I am gone, like a shadow at evening,
 I am shaken off (נִנְעָרָה) like a locust.
 My knees are weak through fasting (רָעָה);
 my body has become gaunt." (vv. 23-4) ⁷²

Ps. 143 is another example of despair:

"Therefore my spirit faints within me;
 my heart within me is appalled (יִשְׁתַּוֵּי)...
 I stretch out my hands to thee ($\text{פָּרַשְׁתִּי יָדַי אֵלֶיךָ}$);
 my soul thirsts to thee like a parched land." (vv. 4-6) ⁷³

These examples demonstrate that although there is often some

⁷¹ The MT reads בִּלְעָשָׁן "in smoke". The RSV follows the LXX, "like smoke", following similar expressions in Pss. 37:20 and 68:4. The imagery throughout is of intense heat (cf. the use of כִּדְּוִלֵּה also in Is. 33:14). Weiser and Anderson may well be right in seeing this refers to one emaciated by fever: cf. DATD 15, p.447, E Tr OTL, p. 654 and NCB, pp. 705-6. Dahood, AB II, pp. 11-12 prefers to take this further still by reading נִכְשָׁה ("I forget") as נִכְשָׁה ("I waste away") associating this with the Ugarit root rkh "wilt". The specific life-setting is of course impossible to ascertain, but the repeated appropriation of the physical language of individual suffering is clear.

⁷² The MT reads נִנְעָרָה ("I am poured out") for the RSV "I am shaken off" (נִסְעָרָה). The use of a derivative of נָעַר ("shake off") fits with the simile of the locust. The imagery of fasting (רָעָה) may not be voluntary, but rather forced as a result of intense suffering, as seen in Ps. 102: see Anderson, NCB, p. 765. The context depicts personal, physical pain, and not the personalised pain of the community. For a comparison of the different applications of suffering by an individual and by the community, see Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 56-8 and 59ff.

⁷³ $\text{פָּרַשְׁתִּי יָדַי אֵלֶיךָ}$ need not refer to any cultic ritual or even act of worship, but rather suggest a symbol of dependence on God, as also in Pss. 28:2 and 44:21. The last line of this verse is difficult to translate, for there is no verb; Oesterley, TP p. 566 translates this literally as "My soul is toward thee as a thirsty land". The picture is similar to that concerning thirst for God in Pss. 42:2-3 and 63:2-3.

allusion to other descriptions of despair in other psalms, the language in this case is by no means entirely traditional and formulaic. The expressions of protest are stereotyped and typical. They are often ambiguous because of their figurative style, yet the protests concern a specific situation of distress, not any general, representative one. Even when traditional language is particularly evident, this is still developed in a personal and creative way; the adherence to this sort of traditionalism is an understandable means of holding on to some security and order within a threatening experience of distress.

It is apparent that the experience was so overwhelming that most psalmists did not always organise and control their descriptions of distress and protest to fit conventional styles and phraseology at will. Jeremiah's confessions again offer an important illustration of the same phenomenon; there, too, the descriptions are equally vivid and familiar. The prophet sees himself like a lamb led to the slaughter (Jer. 11:19). He describes his plight as that of a leper (Jer. 15:17: "I sat alone" יִשְׁבְּתִי בַדֶּד). He sees his wounds as incurable, and feels God has deceived him "like waters that fail" (Jer. 15:18). He senses that God has even seduced him (Jer. 20:7: "and I was deceived" וְאֶנִּי נִסְיָנוּתִי). His experience of the word of God is only as reproach and derision (Jer. 20:8). The final confession in the collection is a stark five-fold curse on the prophet's life (Jer. 20:14-18). ⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 62-3 and ~~pp 66-9~~ and notes 46, 50-53 for a discussion on the text and its related literature.

In conclusion, it should now be evident that Mowinckel is apt to be somewhat unyielding in his observations of the language of suffering in the psalms. Because he perceives that such language reveals only the most general details of distress, he therefore concludes that this pertains to repeatable situations imaginatively construed by professional cultic poets. This is to assume too readily that failure to offer particular details of the suffering means that no specific situation of suffering lies behind the language used. The fact that the language is allusive and vague does not in itself imply that it is to be understood as written for a recurrent cultic occasion. From the two above examples of calls for help and descriptions of distress, the psalmists were seen to be partly traditional yet also personally creative in their compositions.

In denying the possibility of some genuine specific experience of suffering behind these expressions of distress, Mowinckel has in fact created a false dichotomy between personal piety and cultic liturgy, because in this instance he sees primarily the role of the cult and not that of personal experience as influencing the language of suffering in the psalms.

(III) THE FORMS USED TO EXPRESS SUFFERING

If Mowinckel's observations on the stereotyped nature of the language of suffering in the psalms is in need of modification, so too is his cult-functional reading of the predictable, consistent use of the forms in the psalms. Mowinckel claims the predictability of the forms invites a classification of types along the lines of botany.⁷⁵ Such claims are in fact disputable, for the forms are often fragmentary and interrupted by frequent changes of mood. These variations are not always explicable by reference to an oracle, or to any other form of cultic mediation.⁷⁶ They are as likely to suggest the depth and urgency in the suppliant's changing moods of prayer, where the conventional forms of the day have given way to serve his own needs. This issue has already been discussed in some detail with respect to the individual adaptation of forms in the confessions of Jeremiah.⁷⁷

It has been noted earlier that even at a superficial level, not all the psalms can be categorised according to form.⁷⁸ For example, some are termed as "mixed styles" and are classified more according to their content. These would include the liturgies (Pss.

⁷⁵ Cf. PIW ¹ pp. 23-29. The comparison with the classification in botany is made on p. 25, emphasising "the fixed style forms" rather than personal effusions of faith so that "the fixed forms provide the easiest point of departure."

⁷⁶ Against the use of an oracle for every disruption of form in the psalms, cf. Chapter Three, 'Trust in God', Section II, pp. 103-5.

⁷⁷ Cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', Section (III), (a), pp. 73-79. Note 70, quoting Berridge op. cit., pp. 18ff. and Stoebe, art. cit., (1969), pp. 212ff., on the adaptation of forms by Jeremiah, is particularly relevant here.

⁷⁸ See 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 77ff.

15; 24 and 134), with their antiphonal elements and calls to praise; the historical psalms (Pss. 78 and 105) with their didactic style and extended calls to praise; the prophetic exhortations, each determined by some oracular material (Pss. 14; 50; 52; 53; 58; 75; 81; 91 and 95) although also including intercessions (Pss. 14/53) calls to praise (Pss. 75 and 81) curses (Ps. 58) and motifs of confidence (Pss. 52 and 91); the royal psalms, so-called more because of their content than their form, some with oracular material (Pss. 2; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89 and 110) and brief thanksgiving forms (Pss. 18; 21; 89 and 101).⁷⁹ Even Mowinckel accepted some of these as exceptions to the rule of the conventional forms of psalmody.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Mowinckel held firmly to the view that the hymns and laments conform overall to conventional forms. Concerning the hymns, this observation on the whole stands. The three main components of the hymn are the introductory call to praise, the motives for such praise, and concluding calls to trust and praise.⁸¹ These are so general that most psalms classified as hymns conform. There are however some exceptions. The most obvious are Pss. 33:18-19, 20-22; 103:1ff.; 104:1, 31-34, and the didactic motifs in Pss. 111 and 146, and the change of address in Ps. 145:4-13a, 13b-20. In addition, Ps. 100 is unusual because of its long introductory call to

⁷⁹ Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, ¶ 8, 'Kleinere Gattungen' pp. 293ff. and ¶ 11, 'Mischungen, Wechselgedichte und Liturgien', pp. 397ff. accepting that most of the psalms were "mixed styles" and later developments of earlier, purer, conventional cultic forms.

⁸⁰ Cf. Mowinckel, PIW ², Chapters XIII and XVI on the disintegration of style, although this is seen as largely due to the "deficient liturgical feeling and taste" (p. 77) of the wisdom writers; see also ibid, p. 139.

⁸¹ Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, ¶ 2, 'Die Hymnen', pp. 32ff. By contrast, see also Mowinckel's more rigid development of this in PIW ¹ Chapters V and VI.

praise (vv. 1-4) and brief concluding clause (v.5), without any inner corpus of reasons for giving praise. Ps. 114 has no introduction, and vv. 7-8 appear to be the proper call to praise, although no other reasons for doing so follow this. Ps. 93 is also unusual, for it has no introduction or conclusion, being rather like an extended paean of motives for praise. Furthermore, none of the so-called "Zion hymns" (Pss. 46; 48; 76; 87 and 122) start with a call to praise, and some have additional motifs such as oracular material (Ps. 87) testimony (Ps.122) and expressions of confidence (Ps. 46).

The forms suggesting the most irregularities are the communal and individual laments, due to their compositions from a less ordered situation of suffering.⁸² The component parts are overall more variable than those in the hymns, with the three parts being the introductory call on the name of God and plea for help, the corpus with its complaints, supplications and expressions of trust, the concluding motifs of trust, including blessing the name of God.⁸³ At this point, Mowinckel's theory of the regular appropriation of conventional forms is most questionable.⁸⁴

Of the communal laments, there are several unusual changes of mood in Pss. 77 and 106 and 126, caused by extended expressions of

⁸² The wisdom psalms are also relevant because of their preoccupation with the theme of suffering. However, an analysis of them has been omitted because, apart from Ps. 139, they do not directly address God in their protest.

⁸³ Cf. Gunkel, *Einleitung*, § 4, 'Die Klagelieder des Volkes', pp. 117ff.; also § 6, 'Die Klagelieder des Einzelnen', pp. 172ff.

⁸⁴ Cf. *PIW* ¹ pp. 229ff. on the supposedly regular communal lament form, and *PIW* ², pp. 9-11 similarly on the individual laments. Only in *PIW* ² pp. 131-2 does Mowinckel admit to the occasional break-up of forms in the laments.

confidence and by an unusual feature of a sudden call to praise (Ps. 106:1,2-3). Ps. 44 has an unconventional form in that it ends with the invocations, and has no introduction. Ps. 79 is also unconventional, starting with a description of distress, and then moving into appeals for help, yet ending more typically with expressions of confidence. Ps. 82 is also different in that it starts with an oracle, and ends with an invocation, but has no real description of distress. In each of these communal laments, the psalmist has allowed his experience of protest on behalf of the community to control the form of the psalm, either by the absence of a formal introduction, or by the ending with invocations rather than with the more typical note of confidence.

The individual laments are more variable in their forms and style, and demonstrate further the psalmists' changing moods of prayer. This is seen for example in the unusual endings of some psalms. Ps. 12 ends with a description of distress (v.13). Ps. 36 starts with a description of distress (vv. 2-5) and moves on to expressions of confidence (vv. 6-7, 8-10), yet ends with invocations to God (vv. 11-13). Ps. 38, in spite of its acrostic structure of twenty-two lines is also unusual in that it ends with a plea for God's honour (vv. 19-20) and a final invocation (vv. 21-22). Ps. 59 ends with two descriptions of distress after two expressions of confidence (vv. 7-8, 9-11; 15-16, 17-18). Ps. 86 adds further invocations to expressions of confidence (vv. 15, 16-17). Ps. 120 starts and ends with a description of distress. Ps. 141 ends with pleas for God's help (vv. 8-10). Ps. 143 starts and ends with a double plea on account of God's honour (vv. 1,2; 9-10, 11-12).

Other psalms which are dominated by the theme of suffering

hardly conform at all to the conventional lament form. Ps. 22 , for example, starts with an exclamation of distress (vv.2-3) and the invocation (v.12) immediately follows an expression of confidence (v.11); further descriptions of distress follow (vv. 13-19), then further invocations (vv. 20-22), and then didactic elements in vv. 24-5 precede the final expressions of confidence (vv. 28-32). Ps. 35 is also unusual: pleas for vengeance (vv. 4-6, 8, 25,6) are interspersed with descriptions of distress (vv. 7, 11-16, 20-21) and vows of thanksgiving (vv. 9-10, 18, 28). Pss. 42-3 intersperse descriptions of distress (42:2-5, 7-8) with liturgical expressions of confidence (42:6, 9, 12; 43:5) whilst the invocations are found near the end of the psalm (43:1,2,3). Ps. 51 is also unusual, for it ends with an invocation (vv. 20-21) and includes very different elements, such as a didactic section (vv. 18-19) a prayer for forgiveness (vv. 8-11) and a prayer for renewal (vv. 12-14). Ps. 55, like Pss. 35 and 42-3, intersperses descriptions of distress (vv. 4-9, 11-12, 13-15, 21-26) with expressions of confidence (vv. 17-19, 24) and various invocations (vv. 2-3, 10, 16). Ps. 69 also has repeated changes of mood, where the descriptions of distress (vv. 3-6, 8-13, 21-22) are found amidst repeated pleas on account of God's honour (vv.7, 14-19, 29-30), with the suppliant again ending by offering invocations (vv. 35-37). Ps. 71, with all its borrowings from other psalms, combines various expressions of confidence (vv. 5-8, 17, 20-21) with pleas on account of God's honour (vv. 1-4, 9-11, 18) and promises of thanksgiving (vv. 14-16, 22-24) alongside a distinctive passage of praise (v. 19).

Two individual laments have no recognisable form whatsoever, and can only be understood as lament on account of their contents. Ps. 39 is made up almost completely of descriptions of distress (vv.

2-4, 10, 11b, 12), and references to prayers once offered (vv. 5-7, 8-11, 13-14). Ps. 88 is similarly made up of descriptions of distress, interjected with despair, and ends as it began (vv. 2-3, 4-10, 15, 16-19); in the middle is the distinctive prayer questioning the goodness of God (vv. 11-13).

The over-emphasis on the psalmists' adherence to conventional forms of lament is the greatest weakness in Mowinckel's cult-functional reading of the psalms, for this is founded upon the assumption that typical forms are used. The extreme adherence to form in order to discern the function of a psalm is such a radical departure from the more cautious form-critical studies of Gunkel, who not only refused to make a consistent connection between the form of a psalm and its particular function in a cultic setting, but also observed that the psalms themselves did not always adhere to the pattern of pure forms, but were rather a later development of earlier models. 85

Although few scholars have offered specific examples to illustrate the inconsistencies in the lament forms, several have noted the inadequacies in Mowinckel's extreme position. The most detailed discussion is offered by Szörenyi, who repeatedly illustrates the way that forms are constantly open to fragmentation and decay, and that laments are more often classified according to their content than to their form. Similarities of style are often more due to the shared experiences of the psalmists than to any

85 Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, ¶s 8 and 11, referred to in note 79 previously. See also ibid., ¶ 12, 'Die Geschichte der Psalmendichtung', pp. 415ff.

conformity to external rules of expression.⁸⁶ One of the best illustrations of this has been seen in Jeremiah's confessions, which not only revealed the use of the rib form as well as that of lament, but also showed in the present order less and less adherence to any conventional form.⁸⁷

It is clear therefore that the psalms of suffering in particular cannot be classified rigidly along form-critical lines. As was seen with the supposedly stereotyped language of these psalms, they exhibit different degrees of creative freedom. The observations could even be extended beyond the use of language and form, to include Mowinckel's similar assumptions concerning the much debated question of metre.⁸⁸ This is also seen to conform closely to the rules expected of cultic psalmody, whereby the function of the poetry as liturgy demanded a similar adherence to regular, predictable rhythm. Because Mowinckel understood that the psalms were written for liturgical recital, the "lucid, numerical formulae" enabled them to

⁸⁶ Cf. Szörenyi, Psalmen und Kult im Alten Testament, § 2, 'Hatte das kultische Gebet eine determinierte und beim Ursprung "reine" Form?', pp. 100ff; see especially pp. 119ff., 125ff., and 133-36. See also Barth, op. cit. (1961) § 8, on the diverse categories of the psalms which prevent any one system of classification (pp. 15ff.). Herzog, 'Psalms', in EJ 13, col. 1314, similarly concludes that "systematic classification ...is bound to be more an exercise in convenience than precision."

⁸⁷ On the use of the rib as well as lament form in the confessions, cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 74ff., and the relevant literature in note 45, p. 61. On the confessions' loose adaptation of conventional forms, cf. ibid., pp. 73ff.

⁸⁸ On the debated question of whether the poetry of the psalms is dependent at all upon sound as well as upon the sense in the parallelism, cf. W.G.E. Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry, JSOTS 26, Sheffield, 1984, Chapter 5, pp. 87ff., and Chapter 9, pp. 222ff.

follow a determinable pattern of sound as well as of sense.⁸⁹

However, a comparison of the different uses of metre in the psalms shows that irregularities of metre are as abundant as inconsistencies of form. These are due not only to external factors such as textual dislocations (as in Pss. 29 and 69) and borrowings from other psalms (e.g. Pss. 113 and 135) or even adaptation for liturgical use (e.g. Ps. 125). The irregularities also concern the more internal issues bound up with the changing moods and independent spirit of a suppliant in particular need. Commentaries are usually agreed that most irregular metre is found for example in Pss. 22; 27; 31; 39; 42-43; 54; 61; 73; 86; 120; 130 and 143; it is no coincidence that these are all individual psalms of suffering.

It is not always, as Mowinckel indicates, a case of traditional stereotyped language and forms and metre suggesting the majority of psalms are ritual texts for representative situations of distress, whether public or private. With respect to the psalms with the theme of suffering discussed above, we can only conclude that even if these were originally intended for cultic use, the psalmists were not so much reflecting upon any typical context of suffering, but were

⁸⁹ On Mowinckel's own assent to a regular phonetic metre in the psalms, cf. Real and Apparent Tricola in Hebrew Psalm Poetry, Oslo, 1958. Mowinckel sees the iambic 4:4 metre (as opposed to the anapaestic 3:2 rhythm) as normative: cf. PIW², Chapter XIX, especially pp. 159, 162, 165 and 173.

rather themselves bound up with a specific, genuine experience of distress. Quite naturally the conventional language, forms, and even metre were utilised and adapted; often, however, these could be regarded as secondary influences to that of the particular life-experience of the psalmist, for it was the experience which had after all initiated the actual composition of the psalm. ⁹⁰

(IV) THE CONTEXT OF SUFFERING

Much has already been made of the correspondences between the psalms reflecting a situation of suffering and the confessions of Jeremiah in terms of their similar forms, language and theology. An important question is whether any psalmists may be seen as composing from the same isolation from the cultic community as did Jeremiah. If this is so, then some psalms reflect a setting of "private devotion". This section will assess this possibility.

Behind the metaphors and imagery, in spite of their ambiguity, it is usually possible to ascertain some general situation of distress. This may be related to national concerns, for example, failure in war (cf. Pss. 44:10-13; 60:3; 108:11-14), or the destruction of the sanctuary (cf. Pss. 74:3, 7-8; 79:1-4), or conspiracies by the nation's enemies (cf. Ps. 83:5), or national exile (cf. Ps. 137:1-6). On the other ~~hand~~, there may be evidence of more individual concerns, such as illness (cf. Pss. 31:10-11;

⁹⁰ Cf. Szörenyi, op. cit., pp. 145-54; also Haddix, Lamentation as Personal Experience in Selected Psalms, pp. vi ff. and Chapter V, 'The Significance of Lamentation'.

38:3ff., 10-11; 41:4ff., 9ff.) or death (cf. Pss. 6: 5-6; 13:4-5; 22:7-9, 15ff.; 23:4; 30:10-11; 39:5ff.; 69:16; 71:9,18; 88:4ff.; 116:3-4; 143:3,) or physical dangers threatening the individual (cf. Pss. 7:2-3; 17:10-12; 25:19-20; 27:2, 12; 35:1ff. 15ff.; 40:14-16; 54:4; 55:3ff., 10ff.; 56:3ff.; 57:5, 7; 59:4-5; 62:4-5; 64:3ff.; 69:5ff., 12; 71:4; 86:14ff.; 109:2ff.; 140:2-6; 142:4-5).

Within these situations of distress, the individual is related to the community in two different ways. The two aspects are the same as those discussed in the previous chapter, with respect to joyful communion with God; they also correspond to the two basic settings which were behind the different figurative allusions to the enemy in the first section of this chapter.⁹¹

Firstly, there are psalms where the suppliant speaks as one voice with the community, representing their needs which are usually described in political and military terms. Here the suppliant, most probably the leader of the community, is most closely identified with the needs of the congregation in interceding for them. The use of the "I" form is interchangeable with the "we" form throughout, with the predominant theme being that of some national distress. The best examples are found in the communal laments: cf. Pss. 44:5-10; 60:11-14/108:11-14; 94:12-23; 106:4-7; 123:1-4.

Secondly, there are psalms when the suppliant speaks from some individual situation of need (whether that of illness, near-death, or physical danger), although still "within" the cultic community,

⁹¹ Cf. Chapter Six, 'Communion with God', p. 246, on the individual and community in praise of God; also pp. 258-9 of this chapter, on the different enemies in the psalms.

in "the great congregation" or among "the saints" (e.g. Pss. 26:12; 30:5; 31:24-25 and 32:11). Here the psalmist's needs are particularly his own, rather than shared in experience with everyone present. That the relationship between suppliant and community is no longer one of common absorption in the suffering is seen in the use of the testimony or exhortation to praise, whereby the community is addressed in the second person.⁹²

Another context arises out of this second way in which the individual relates to the community. There are instances where the suppliant speaks from an individual situation of need, but where the complaint in particular appears to be offered outside the normal expected protection of the cult. The protest in these psalms is at its most intense, because the suppliant is deeply vulnerable, in that not only does God seem to be hidden (a theme also in the communal laments) but the community in which God is to be found is also distant. Some private setting is quite understandable either if the suffering was illness or near-death, for this would be associated with some form of ritual impurity, or if the context was of physical danger, for this would have isolated the suppliant in

⁹² Several explanations have been offered for an apparent cultic context for the psalms of protest. Mowinckel, Johnson and Wevers, propose that the suppliant is in the congregation because he is waiting for the promise of salvation through a cultic oracle. Delekat and Keel hold that the suppliant is receiving asylum within the sanctuary. Beyerlin and Schmidt believe that the suppliant is standing trial before the attendant congregation and hoping through his testimony that he will be proved innocent. Martin-Achard and Seybold see that the suppliant is ill and is waiting for healing by being near to the presence of God in the sanctuary. Cf. pp. 256-7, notes 10-14 for references to these scholars' views.

fear of discovery or reprisal.⁹³ Such a private setting is precisely what was established for the confessions of Jeremiah, where the 'I' of the prophet was seen to speak only for the prophet's own fate and not that of the people.⁹⁴ It was also suggested for a number of individual prose prayers within several different literary contexts, for example, Gideon in Ju.15:18; Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:4,14; Hezekiah in 2 Kgs. 20:2-3 and Jonah in Jon. 4:2-3, and also seen as the context for the laments of Job.⁹⁵

In the following examples, it will be seen that if a private setting is evident at all, it only concerns the lament part of the psalm. Whenever there are features of exhortation and testimony the presence of the community is indicated; the lament was composed from isolation and loneliness, but the thanksgiving upon restoration and answered prayer was composed as a testimony before the cultic community.

To propose a private setting even for a few individual laments in the Psalter is of course controversial. Mowinckel believed that "private psalmody" was only evident in a handful of wisdom psalms, for the sick and the suffering needed some professional help in the offering of prayer.⁹⁶ Gunkel, by contrast, noted such a practice

⁹³ See Albertz, op. cit., pp. 4ff. and pp. 48ff.; also Seidel, Das Erlebnis der Einsamkeit im Alten Testament, pp. 116ff., 'Der Mensch im bedrohten Dasein'.

⁹⁴ Cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp.70-71.

⁹⁵ Cf. 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 88-90 .

⁹⁶ Cf. p.253 of this chapter, note 5; also PIW² , pp. 85-8.

was possible, but only after the exile.⁹⁷ Gerstenberger and Albertz have proposed such a phenomenon could have occurred before the exile, mainly because of comparisons with the Babylonian laments; however, their comparisons result in attributing the setting of relevant psalms to a smaller, more familial cultic situation, rather than to a more private context.⁹⁸ The most radical views are proposed, for example, by Szörenyi and Quell who see that several pre-exilic psalms were composed in an entirely private situation.⁹⁹

Outside the Psalter, at least one pre-exilic lament in psalmic form indicates a context of private devotion for the setting of a psalm. Hezekiah's prayer in Is. 38:10-20 is offered publicly after restoration from illness (v.9), yet the contents of the prayer are almost entirely lament and protest (vv. 10-13, 14-15, 16-19), and it is quite possible that the king, or a professional poet on behalf of the king, composed the complaint at the time of suffering. In the narrative, the prayer as a unit serves as a public testimony of thanksgiving, so that the complaint and petition, concerning the earlier situation, now serve a dramatic purpose in illustrating how such prayer had been answered. Within the Psalter, several psalms of protest would also have been composed as private prayers, to be offered publicly within a cultic setting of thanksgiving; in this way, the suppliant testified to God's goodness by relating first the

⁹⁷ Cf. Gunkel, 'Individualismus und Sozialismus im AT', RGG¹ I, cols. 493-501; also 'Psalmen' in RGG² IV, cols. 1621-23, on the so-called "non-liturgical" psalms.

⁹⁸ On the theories of the Grosskult and the Kleinkult, cf. Gerstenberger, art. cit., pp. 68ff.; Albertz, op. cit., pp. 23ff.; and Butler, 'Piety in the Psalms', R Ex 81 (1984) pp. 385-94.

⁹⁹ Cf. Szörenyi, op. cit., pp. 67ff., 'War das kultische Gebet der Zeit und Natur nach eher als das Privatgebet?'; also Quell, Das kultische Problem der Psalmen, ϕ II, 'Frömmigkeit und Kultus', pp. 18ff., and ϕ VI, 'Die religiöse Gruppe C', pp. 143ff.

earlier prayer of complaint and request, now answered.

Probably the most disputed example in the Psalter is the lament part of Ps. 22. In verses 7-8, the suppliant feels the whole community (לְכָל-אֶרֶץ) is set against him, and in v. 9, he sees his standing for the cause of God has left him only with enemies. There are several similarities with the context of complaint in this lament (vv. 2-22) and the confessions of Jeremiah. Although the concerns of the community are voiced in vv. 4-5, nowhere in the lament itself is the actual witnessing presence of the cultic community assumed: this occurs within the sudden, repeated references to testimony and thanksgiving in vv. 23ff., and, like Is. 38, suggests the whole psalm was offered before the congregation when the more private prayer of protest in vv. 2ff. had been answered.¹⁰⁰

Ps. 31 offers a similar pattern. In verses 7 and 15ff., the suppliant sees his piety is different from those around him; his suffering has set him apart from adversaries, neighbours and friends alike (v.12). There are several Jeremianic references in these verses, for example in v. 14, "in their plottings together against me" (בְּהוֹסְדָם יַחַד עָלַי) and also "terror on every side" (לִגְוֹד אִסְבִּיב), as in Jer. 11:19; 20:10. These suggest an association has been made between the lonely protest of the psalmist and that of Jeremiah. Yet again a sudden, consistent change in mood occurs in vv. 20ff., ending with an exhortation to the community (v.24) with whom the suppliant has been restored.

¹⁰⁰ Mowinckel assumes the whole psalm was composed as a liturgy by or for the king for use on some national occasion of lament: cf. PIW¹, pp. 206, 226, 235. Gunkel assumes the speaker to be an individual, separated from the community: cf. GHAT, pp. 90-95, and Einleitung, pp. 174-5. A few scholars see that the psalm is composed of two sections, offered in the cult after restoration had occurred: cf. Podechard, Le Psautier, I: Pss. 1-75, pp. 102-9.

This indicates that, as in Ps. 22, the prayer of protest has been heard and the thanksgiving has been composed, so that the whole psalm could be offered publicly after restoration to the community had occurred. ¹⁰¹

Ps. 55 is an example of protest at betrayal by those within the community who were closest to the psalmist (vv.14, 21). Their persecution is overwhelming (vv.3-4), so that the psalmist longs to flee for refuge anywhere outside the cultic community (vv.7-8; 9), for schemes and oppression prevent him from enjoyment of cultic worship (v. 15). Like Jeremiah, in betrayal and isolation, the composition of the psalm suggests a setting of fearful isolation, away from those within the community threatening his life. There is no obvious praise and thanksgiving, but the exhortation to the community in v.23 suggests this would be offered before the community, alongside the lament, only upon restoration and vindication. ¹⁰²

Ps. 69 is another psalm with references to isolation and loneliness (vv.11-13), due to the suppliant standing for the cause of God ("for thy sake" עֲלֶיךָ in v.8). This involved some defence of the purity of temple worship (v.10) with the result in loss of fellowship from community and family (v.9). Correspondences are

¹⁰¹ Mowinckel acknowledges the psalm is in two parts, with the oracle in vv. 19-20; cf. PIW¹, p. 219. Many scholars see that the psalm was composed for use in the cult, but with vv. 2-19 separated from the end of the psalm by the offering of an oracle of salvation. However, it must be noted that no hint of an oracle is referred to.

¹⁰² Mowinckel views this psalm as a communal lament, composed and spoken for use against the nation's enemies: cf. PIW¹, p. 219; PIW², p. 20, n.56. Gunkel by contrast sees this as a late private psalm, showing persecution from "party strife": cf. GHAT, pp. 237-8.

again apparent with the protests of Jeremiah 20:7ff.; both prayers complain that suffering for the cause of God has brought about some hostility from within the cultic community. The parallelism in v. 27 bears this out further, as the suppliant senses that his suffering has been brought about both by God and by the community around him. Verses 31-37 is the thanksgiving song; the sudden but consistent change of mood again suggests the time after the protest had been heard when the suppliant offered both lament and thanksgiving as testimony before the congregation. 103

Ps. 71 is another example. In the lament of vv. 1-21, despite its several changing moods, the main focus of attention is on the physical dangers which surround the suppliant. Using many phrases from the store of psalmic language, the suppliant describes his enemies in personal terms, and he has no human help to deliver him (vv. 10-11). The sudden change to repeated praise in vv. 22f. again suggests this is the additional prayer of thanksgiving, offered along with the earlier lament upon restoration to the community. 104

103 Mowinckel again ascertains this is a public psalm of lament, with the king as the speaker: "allegorising" in terms of a personal, private complaint is unnecessary. Cf. PIW¹, pp. 219 and 235, and PIW², pp. 13, 16, 20ff. Gunkel by contrast notes that the speaker seeks to differentiate himself from the community, and the lament is offered in isolation: cf. GHAT, pp. 297-7 and Einleitung, p. 174. Kraus, BKAT XV/II, p. 480 sees that the two halves of the psalm were divided by an oracle of salvation. Anderson, NCB, p. 499 sees that the thanksgiving could have been added after the earlier prayer had been heard.

104 Mowinckel notes briefly that this is a "protective psalm", a communal lament spoken by the leader before the congregation: cf. PIW¹, p. 220. Gunkel again by contrast sees its personal origins, likening the mood of piety in it to that in Pss. 42-3: cf. GHAT, pp. 301-2. Weiser, DATD 15, pp. 338-9, E Tr OTL pp. 497-8 understands the psalm to have been offered by an individual after the prayer of protest had been heard.

Ps. 109 suggests the same pattern, although the balance of lament to praise is different. The curses on the enemies, who are personal rather than enemy nations (vv.4-5) have correspondences with Jer. 17 and 18. The opposition is sufficient to cause the suppliant to call upon God alone (vv. 21-25). The change of mood to thanksgiving, in v.30-31, again indicates a time when the suppliant has been restored to the community, to offer praise for the answer to his earlier protest. ¹⁰⁵

The reverse of this pattern is evident in Ps. 27. Verses 7ff. mark the protest, which suggest a context of isolation, whilst vv. 1ff. suggest the song of thanksgiving connected with the answered prayer. It is uncertain as to why these two motifs have been reversed, although it is evident in at least two other psalms also. ¹⁰⁶ In the protest, the suppliant's enforced solitude is apparent: he has been cast out by his family, his most intimate source of protection (v.10a) and can only trust God alone (v. 10b).

¹⁰⁵ Mowinckel sees the cursing form of the psalm suggests its use in public worship by the leader of the congregation denouncing the enemies of the people: cf. PIW¹, p. 219; PIW², p. 3. (He originally saw this psalm, like Ps. 69, was a ritual text against the sorcerers and workers of iniquity: cf. PsSt I, p. 65n, and PsSt V, pp. 94ff.) Gunkel by contrast proposes the personal nature of the psalm is very different from Babylonian psalms of cursing, and concludes it was composed by an individual in distress: cf. GHAT pp. 476-8. Weiser affirms the psalm was composed in two parts, with vv. 28-31 offered before the congregation after the prayer was heard: cf. DATD 15, p. 474, E Tr OTL, p. 690.

¹⁰⁶ See Pss. 40 and 41. Mowinckel sees Ps. 27 here as part of a cultic liturgy, combining communal praise (vv. 1ff.) with communal lament (vv. 7ff.); he believes it was used at the enthronement festival, with v. 14 representing the oracle by a cultic prophet: cf. PIW², pp. 76, 54; PIW¹, pp. 220, 222, 142. Gunkel sees the psalm as in two parts, with the lament, and even the thanksgiving, composed far from the temple: cf. GHAT pp. 113-4 (vv. 1-6) and 116-7 (vv. 7-14); also Einleitung, pp. 174 and 262. Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 165-6, E Tr OTL pp. 245ff. sees the psalm was composed in two parts, and offered later at the temple after restoration was effected. So also Dahood, AB I, pp. 218-9.

Ps. 41, like Ps. 27, begins with the song of praise offered after healing, before the cultic community (vv. 2-4). The lament referring to the time of suffering follows it (vv.5ff.). The suppliant has clearly been on his sickbed, rather than in cultic worship (vv. 4 and 7; see also Is. 38:1-3). The suppliant's "enemies" are his personal visitors and even his closest friend (v.10), all of whom provoke him in their belief that he will die (vv.6, 8, 9). We may conclude that the psalmist offered the lament, referring back to the time of his illness, before the cultic community after his healing, as a testimony to the power of God and for his own personal vindication (vv.2-3). ¹⁰⁷

There are four psalms which also suggest a context of personal isolation, but which are mainly lament; there is little evidence of the congregation at all, for there is no thanksgiving for an answered prayer. The bleakest of these is Ps. 88; another, Pss. 42-3, reflects a time of exile; and the other two (Pss. 141 and 142) occur in the third Davidic Psalter, where no psalm ends with

¹⁰⁷ Mowinckel sees this is an Awēn psalm, composed as a ritual text for those suffering illness on account of the "workers of magic" and seeking the protection of the sanctuary accordingly: cf. PsSt I, pp. 12 and 173; PIW ², p. 6. Gunkel affirms the personal nature of the psalm, composed at home from an experience of illness: cf. GHAT pp. 173-4; Einleitung, p. 182. Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 231-2, E Tr OTL pp 342-3 and Kraus, BKAT XV/I pp. 312-5 and Dahood, AB I pp. 321-22 all affirm that the psalm was offered in the temple after the prayer for healing had been answered.

explicit thanksgivings for answered prayer. 108

Pss. 42-3 offer important insights into the use of cultic language and forms from a setting far from the community worship (42:7). The suppliant in exile stands alone in his desire for the vindication of God (42:4, 10-11). The enemies are described as an "ungodly people" (43:1), and the suppliant longs to be returned to the community of faith (43:3-4), for his present context is that he only has the memory of the worship of the cultic community to sustain him (42:5). No psalm of praise is evident here; the psalm stands entirely as lament, with the only motif of hope in the repeated refrain. The setting throughout is apparently communion in protest with God alone, with the longing for restoration to the community all the more intense because of it. 109

Ps. 88 is another example of a protest made in apparent isolation from the cultic community. The psalm is so full of the fear of death and a sense of darkness that, if the cultic community

108 Other psalms which might have been discussed include Ps. 4, where in vv. 3-4 the suppliant feels his honour has been shamed; Ps. 35, where in Jeremianic style, the suppliant feels intense oppression by his enemies; and Ps. 62, where in vv. 4-5 the suppliant speaks of mockery and isolation. However, all three examples suggest national implications in the context of distress, so these could be offered instead by the king at some public occasion.

Pss. 38 and 51, have not been included here as their moods indicate more a situation of penitence rather than the protest and complaint evidenced in the other psalms.

109 Mowinckel sees this psalm as another communal lament, with the king as once leader of the pageant now in exile with his people; the psalm was composed for use when away from the temple and its worship. Cf. PIW¹, pp. 242 and 219; PIW², p. 20. Gunkel however sees the psalm as a prayer spoken between God and the psalmist alone, somewhere in exile in the north of Israel: cf. GHAT pp. 178-80; Einleitung, p. 262 n.6, and p. 426. Most scholars favour Gunkel's interpretation: for example, see G.W. Anderson, PCB, pp. 421-22; Weiser, DATD 14, p. 234, E Tr OTL, pp. 348ff.; Kraus, BKAT XV/I, p. 318 and Anderson, NCB, pp. 328-9.

are at all in evidence, their presence has been of little effect. The psalm ends as it began: no offering of praise is given. Although the suppliant offers his protest in the language and theology of the cult of his day, there is nothing in the psalm to suggest the listening presence of the congregation. His protest is offered, like that of Jeremiah, in communion with God alone. ¹¹⁰

Ps. 141 reflects a context of isolation whereby the suppliant cannot conform to the abuses of cultic worship upheld by his contemporaries (cf. v.4, compared with Ps. 69:23ff.). He has stood for "the word of the Lord" (v.6) rather than for the concerns of man (v.5). The psalmist is aware that the only support in his protest is refuge in God alone (vv. 8-10). Again no psalm of thanksgiving has been retained, as the psalmist begins and ends in communion with God alone. ¹¹¹

Although Ps. 142 repeatedly uses cultic language in the descriptions of distress, there is nothing in the psalm to suggest

¹¹⁰ Mowinckel originally saw this was another Awen psalm, composed for others to use when oppressed by the workers of magic: cf. PsSt I, p. 104. Later the enemies (v.18) were identified as other nations, and the psalm was seen as a composition by a cultic prophet for use by the king: cf. PIW¹, p. 129; also PIW² p. 9. Johnson, in The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody, pp.45ff. similarly views the psalm as a composition by a cultic prophet for the king to use. Gunkel by contrast again sees the psalmist is alone and away from the cult, in a situation of isolation like that of Job: cf. GHAT pp. 382ff., also Einleitung, p. 174. Others who affirm Gunkel's reading include Weiser, DATD 15, pp. 399-400, E Tr OTL, pp. 586-7, Kraus BKAT XV/II, p. 608 and Anderson, NCB, pp. 622-3.

¹¹¹ The corruptions in the text (cf. vv. 6-7) make a precise assessment difficult, but it is difficult to accept Mowinckel's earlier view that this was another psalm composed for use against the workers of magic: cf. PsSt I, p. 122. (PIW makes no reference to this psalm.) Gunkel's view is again more likely, that the lament was composed at a time of personal distress away from cultic worship: cf. GHAT, pp. 596-7.

the suppliant is aware of an attendant community. Whether the reference to imprisonment in v. 8 is literal or metaphorical, the verse reads that only after some release from suffering can restoration to the community and praise within the community occur. This is therefore another example of a private protest. No additional psalm of praise upon restoration has been preserved. ¹¹²

We may therefore conclude that there are several lament forms in the Psalter which suggest a composition as a private prayer. They were not written in the first instance with an eye to the becoming cultic texts for everyone to use, but were composed out of a personal sense of outrage and loss, creatively and independently using common cultic language, styles and forms. The fact that such psalms were so eminently capable of being appropriated by others in similar private contexts of suffering suggests some possible continuity between origin and later usage. ¹¹³ Normally these laments would ultimately become part of the worshipping community: they would be brought to the cult as a means of testimony upon restoration, where the climax of the psalm would be the thanksgiving directed to the community.

The incorporation into cultic worship of those few psalms where

¹¹² Mowinckel's earlier view is again that this is an Awen psalm: cf. PsSt I, p. 124. His later view is that it is a communal lament, against enemy nations: cf. PIW ¹, p. 219. Gunkel again understands the suppliant to be concerned with personal distress, possibly at a time of exile: cf. GHAT, p. 600. Following Gunkel, see also Dahood, AB III pp. 922-3, who emphasises the literal reading of "prison" in this respect, and Anderson, NCB, p. 922.

¹¹³ On this sort of use of private psalmody in the sixteenth century, cf. R. Zim, 'Particular prayers of particular persons, in particular greifes eyther of body or soule', in English Metrical Psalms. Poetry as Prose and Prayer 1535-1601, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 80-111.

no thanksgiving is apparent (Pss. 42-3; 88; 141; 142) is more difficult to ascertain: either the thanksgiving testimony has been lost (which is unlikely) or, like those wisdom psalms which suggest a private origin, they entered the cult because of the way their personal experiences, ambiguously expressed in the figurative language of the poetry, were applicable more widely to the human situation. These psalms became re-usable by others, but this was in way that the original suppliant never intended.¹¹⁴ Perhaps the best example of this outside the Psalter is again found in the confessions.¹¹⁵

(V) CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the extent to which the personal piety of the psalmists was a significant factor in the composition of psalms on the theme of suffering. It has been seen that a creative and vibrant piety is evident within these psalms; this has been seen firstly in psalms probably composed for cultic use, and also in other psalms which suggest more a private

¹¹⁴ The practice of private poetry become part of public liturgy is well established in Christian hymnody. Examples of prayers written at a time of distress include "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind", by J. G. Whittier (1807-92), which was part of a longer Quaker prayer and not until twelve years after composition became a Christian hymn; also "There is a Green Hill far Away", by C.F. Alexander (1818-95), composed in Ireland at the bedside of a sick child, and only later given a tune for hymn-singing by William Horsley; also "Oh! For a Closer Walk with God", by W. Cowper, written as private poetry at a time of deep depression.

¹¹⁵ On the way that the "private" confessions of Jeremiah were adapted similarly by the cultic community, cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 51ff.

context for their original composition.

This piety was characterised in several ways. The use of language may be general and allusive, but this does not mean that it always uses stereotyped typical expressions for the purpose of being repeated at other cultic occasions. The psalms of suffering are of course re-usable, but this is due mainly to their allusions to common experiences of distress which are capable of being understood by anyone, even outside the religio-historical setting of Israelite worship. It is not necessarily due in the first instance to any deliberate choice of particular expressions for suffering to render them professionally as liturgical texts. This creative use of the language of psalmody was illustrated with respect to the different terms used for the "enemies" of the psalmists, which were seen not to pertain to any technical expressions for one particularly hostile party, but were rather figurative descriptions of several different acts of animosity throughout the whole of Israelite society. The same creative use of language was also seen in the different adaptations of formulaic expressions calling upon God's help, and in the originality evident in the various descriptions of distress.

If the creative use of conventional language illustrated personal piety, then the creative use of conventional forms (and of metre) illustrated it further still. It was seen that the majority of the individual psalms with the theme of suffering employed the so-called conventional forms of lament with considerable freedom. This was most striking when compared with the forms used for the hymns which, with very few exceptions, followed the conventional forms with more predictability.

Up to this point the discussion centred upon the way Mowinckel had wrongly underestimated the contributions of independent personal piety in the making of a psalm which was probably for cultic use at the outset. The final part of this chapter proposed that such personal piety may not only have been directed towards initial cultic usage, but may have emerged from a context of suffering which revealed more the private devotion of the psalmist. Thirteen of the lament forms in the individual psalms of suffering were suggested as being private prayers (Pss.22; 31; 55; 69; 71; 109; 27; 41; 42-3; 88; 141 and 142). These were seen to have been adapted for cultic use at a later stage when the experiences of suffering within them were appropriated by others in similar situations.

We may therefore conclude that an attempt to do justice to the significance of personal piety in the psalms of suffering must avoid the equation which Mowinckel makes too readily, that the language and forms of the psalms are sufficiently monochrome and homogeneous to point to their always having been written from the outset as compositions for anyone to use. Once Mowinckel's observations on the language and forms of the psalms are seen only as a partial explanation of their origins, then two implications follow.

First, as Mowinckel states but rarely amplifies, psalms designed to be cultic texts were nevertheless written out of a vibrant personal faith; the suppliant poured into the language and forms of the psalms his own expressions of fear and trust. Second, several of the psalms do not even display the characteristics Mowinckel would attribute to them as typical cultic compositions;

these psalms therefore suggest more the initial context of a private personal setting rather than that of a public cultic composition. Whichever option is taken, more attention needs to be given to the contribution of personal piety and individual freedom alongside the more conventional poetic constraints in the composition of a psalm, particularly when the concern is with such a critical situation as that of suffering.

"For the LORD is righteous, he loves righteous deeds;
the upright shall behold his face."
(Ps. 11:7)

It has been seen earlier that communion with God in the psalms, as in the prophets, could not be experienced without a moral response.¹ The purpose of this chapter is to examine the extent to which the psalmists' particular experiences of God guided their understanding of the content of this response.

The relevant psalms include not only the more obvious didactic examples, such as the wisdom psalms, prophetic exhortations and liturgies, but also the more personal laments and thanksgivings. In these psalms, individual experience as much as general instruction taught the suppliant how their inner attitude pleased God as much as the outward response. For example, an experience of sin and suffering taught that forgiveness could only be effected by an act of contrition, whether or not accompanied by a sacrifice.² Conversely, an experience of restoration taught that sacrifices of praise, which fulfilled vows offered during the period of distress, could only please God if supported by an attitude of gratitude and joy.³

The cult-functional interpretation is most restrained in discussing the influence of personal experience on the psalmists' moral response to God. The purpose of this chapter is to explore

¹ Cf. Chapter Six, 'Communion with God', pp. 208ff., 215ff., 218ff., on לְפָנָיו, and on תִּפְתָּח and on יָדָיו.

² Cf. Chapter Four, 'Penitence before God', pp. 153ff.

³ Cf. 'Communion with God', pp. 240-3, on the offering of declarative praise in Pss. 30, 34, 116 and 138.

this lack of concern in more detail. The word-study in the first section will discuss three different ways in which the cult-functional method is found wanting because of its attempts to over-categorise the various terms used to describe those who please God, without giving due attention to the variables of individual insights and experience.

(I) A STUDY OF HEBREW TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE THOSE WHO PLEASE GOD

The most common words used to describe those pleasing to God are the "saints" (חסידים and לְדוֹשֵׁי), the "poor" (דָּלִים, אֲבִיוֹנִים, עֲנִיִּים and עֲנִי), and the "righteous" and "upright" (צְדִיקִים and יְשָׁרִים). The common concern is whether these terms refer to a particular separate party within the cultic community, or whether they pertain to the whole nation of Israel, or whether they are more simply figurative descriptions of moral qualities relevant in the first instance to the psalmist's own life-experience.

(a) The "saints"

This study will examine in detail the most frequently used word translated as "saint" in the Psalter, and will conclude with a shorter discussion of one other synonym.

(1) חֲסִידִים

There are over twenty references to the חֲסִידִים in the psalms, using both singular and plural forms. The term is used not

only in an active and pragmatic sense, concerning those who show טוב to others in the community, but also in a passive and theological sense, referring to those who know the טוב of God.⁴ The RSV translation reflects the ambiguities of the term. Sometimes the בְּיָדָיו are understood theologically as the "faithful ones" who remain "loyal" to God's covenant-love (e.g. Pss. 12:2; 18:26; 50:5 and 149:1,5,9) and as the "godly " (e.g. Pss. 4:4; 16:10; 32:6; 52:11; and 86:2. Ps. 43:1 uses the term negatively, concerning the $\text{גִּיּוֹרֵי אֱלֹהִים}$). Elsewhere the RSV translation implies more the active connotation of "those who show טוב " in its use of the term "saints" (e.g. Pss. 30:5; 31:24; 37:28; 79:2; 85:9; 97:10; 116:15; 132:9,16; 145:10 and 148:14).⁵

B.D. Eerdmans was among the first to propose that בְּיָדָיו normally referred to one particular party.⁶ He believed that every טָמֵא was a particularly righteous member of the cultic community, although not every righteous man was a טָמֵא .⁷ Eerdmans' list of their characteristics is however surprisingly broad: the בְּיָדָיו were granted successful prayers (Ps. 32:6), were sure that Yahweh would vindicate them (Ps. 16:7-11), were those from whose experience others could learn (Pss. 37:28; 52:11; 86:2; 97:10; 116:14-15) and were ardent defenders of Yawheh (Ps. 79:1-3).

⁴ Cf. 'Communion with God', pp. 215ff. , especially note 16 , on the two different uses of טוב in the psalms.

⁵ The other term translated by the RSV as "saints" is קְדוֹת ; cf. p. 321 following.

⁶ Cf. B.D. Eerdmans, 'Essays on massoretic Psalms', OTS Deel I (1942), pp. 105-286, especially pp. 176-257 on the hasidim.

⁷ Cf. Eerdmans, ibid., p. 177.

Eerdmans never conceded that such characteristics apply not only to those explicitly called חֲסִידִים, but are found in many other psalms which refer more generally to the "righteous". Instead, he used other psalms with the term צַדִּיק, and by arguing the synonymy of both terms, he proposed that these psalms were also composed by the חֲסִידִים. The circular nature of Eerdmans' hypothesis is self-evident.⁸

Eerdmans concluded that this party combined both priestly and prophetic elements, and was established in the eighth century B.C. This is of course pure conjecture. No reference is made to such a party anywhere in the relevant literature outside the psalms.⁹ There is no evidence of a separate party of חֲסִידִים until the Maccabees (cf. 1 Macc 7:13; 2 Macc. 14:6), and even then there was no distinctive cultic difference, for all Israelites attended the same liturgical occasions. It is more probable that those called the חֲסִידִים in Maccabean times found these psalms an inspiration for their own faith: their death was precious in God's eyes (Ps. 116:15), God would not abandon them (Pss. 16:10; 37:28) and indeed God would protect and vindicate them (Pss. 4:4; 31:22; 85:9; 148:14).¹⁰

The view that there were party strifes and private assemblies within the cultic community has little attraction for those who take

⁸ Cf. Eerdmans, art. cit., pp. 201ff.

⁹ Cf. Eerdmans, ibid., p. 254. Criticisms of Eerdmans' views have been offered by J. Coppens, 'Les Psaumes des Ḥasîdîm', Mélanges Bibliques, rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert, Paris, 1957, pp. 214-224, and by H-J. Kraus, Theologie BKAT XV/III, § 6, 'Der Mensch vor Gott', pp. 193ff., especially p. 197.

¹⁰ These views are expressed by Sabourin, op. cit., pp. 100ff, and Coppens, art. cit., pp. 222-24.

a consistent cult-functional interpretation of the psalms. Because of this, an alternative proposal by scholars such as Mowinckel is to see the קִדְשׁוֹן as referring to the whole nation of Israel: this is in spite of the earlier interpretation, expressed in PsSt VI, that because the enemies of the קִדְשׁוֹן were the 'workers of iniquity' or the פְּעֻלֵי אֵון , the קִדְשׁוֹן were the powerless and poor in the pre-exilic community who were oppressed by evil spells.¹¹ Mowinckel's later position was influenced by Birkeland's reading of the enemies as foreign nations: the קִדְשׁוֹן become the whole community of Israel, suffering military and political oppression.¹² For whatever reason, Mowinckel's criticism of the קִדְשׁוֹן as one party is essentially sound: if the psalms were used to serve the needs of the whole cultic community, it was unlikely that those who collected them would have included psalms which were used only by those who believed themselves to be a distinctive separatist party in the cultic community at large.¹³

Nevertheless, to interpret every reference to the קִדְשׁוֹן as referring only to the whole nation Israel is as unyielding to the complex variety of evidence as is the interpretation of Eerdmans. On a form-critical analysis alone, it is apparent that not every reference to the קִדְשׁוֹן can indicate the whole nation of Israel. An examination of the different forms of psalms which use the term will illustrate this point.

¹¹ Cf. Mowinckel in PsSt VI, pp. 13ff., where the argument is developed with particular support for the pre-exilic dating of these psalms.

¹² Cf. Birkeland, Die Feinde des Individuums, pp. 94ff.; also Mowinckel, PIW I, pp. 210ff.

¹³ Cf. Mowinckel, PIW I, p. 50.

In the communal psalms, and in individual psalms which presuppose the existence of the whole cultic community, the **חֲסִידִים** are neither one exclusive party, nor the whole nation, but are the assembled members of the cultic congregation, who chose to worship God alone. In two examples from the communal laments, the parallelism in these verses confirms this reading. Lamenting the destruction of the temple, Ps. 79:2 reads:

"They have given the bodies of thy servants (**עַבְדֶּיךָ**)
to the birds of the air for food,
the flesh of thy saints (**חֲסִידֶיךָ**)
to the beasts of the earth."

The parallel terms **עַבְדֶּיךָ** and **חֲסִידֶיךָ** refer to particular members of the cultic community who had been killed in Jerusalem in their defence of the temple (cf. v.1). This corresponds with Ps. 116:15, another reference to those who have died in defence of the cause of God; in this psalm, the "death of the saints" (**חֲסִידֶיךָ**) is "precious" in God's eyes.¹⁴ In both psalms the reference is to members within the community who have died; it is the death of the "saints" within the congregation which is the cause for lament, not the death of the whole nation.

Ps. 85, lamenting some unknown national crisis, refers to the "saints" in a similar way. In v. 9, **חֲסִידֶיךָ** is used in synonymous terms with God's people, but in the context of the psalm as a whole, these are those in the assembled congregation who fear God (v.10) and who chose to obey the prophetic word (v.9). Ps. 85:9 reads:

¹⁴ Cf. Chapter Five, 'Death, Life and God', p. 186 which also discusses the meaning of this psalm; "saints" (**חֲסִידֶיךָ**) are those within the community who are in special communion with God.

"Let me hear what the LORD will speak,
 for he will speak peace to his people (אֶל-עַמּוֹ)
 to his saints (וְאֶל-חַסִּידָיו)
 to those who turn to him in their hearts."

The RSV prefers the translation "saints" whenever this refers to the present worshipping community. It is used in all but one of the hymns which refer to the חַסִּידִים. Ps. 97:10 testifies that God "preserves the life of his saints (חַסִּידִים)". Ps. 145:10 acknowledges to God that "all thy saints (וְחַסִּידֶיךָ) shall bless thee". Ps. 148:14 uses the word in a similar way to Ps. 85:9:

"He has raised up a horn for his people (לְעַמּוֹ),
 praise for all his saints (לְכָל-חַסִּידָיו)
 for the people of Israel who are near to him."

In the royal psalm 132, the parallelism in vv. 9 and 16 might suggest that "the saints" are priests or Levites (as in Dt. 33:8 and 2 Chron 6:41). More probably, they are the rest of the assembled congregation in Zion (cf. vv. 13ff.) who respond antiphonally to the priests' leading of worship:

"Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
 and her saints (חַסִּידֶיהָ) will shout for joy." (v.16)

In the individual forms of psalms, the חַסִּידִים may be identified as members of the congregation who seek to serve God alone. In Ps. 31, after a long testimony that the suppliant will take refuge in Yahweh (vv.2ff.) and will not worship any other gods (vv. 7ff.), the call at the end of the psalm is to those who have been listening to the thanksgiving:

"Love the LORD,
all you his saints (כל-חסידיו)!" (v.24) ¹⁵

Similarly in the individual thanksgiving in Ps. 30:5, the address can only be to the attendant congregation:

"Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints (חסידיו) ¹⁶

In Ps. 37, an acrostic psalm which in its collection of wise sayings repeatedly refers to the fate of "the righteous" compared with that of "the wicked", it is clear that "the righteous" are any within the attendant congregation who choose to obey God. The חסידיו are those who have chosen to be loyal to God, as seen in v. 28:

"For the LORD loves justice;
he will not forsake his saints (חסידיו).¹⁷

In Ps. 18, the same sapiential overtones in the context of the due rewards for the righteous are evident in vv. 21-25. In v. 26, the psalm uses a theme referred to in Ps. 37:28 , that God will show faithfulness to those who show faithfulness to him:

"With the loyal (עם-חסיד)
thou dost show thyself loyal (תתחסד);..."

The RSV expression "faithful ones" for חסידיו occurs in Pss. 50 and 149. This again refers to those who have chosen to worship one God alone. In Ps. 50:5, they are the

¹⁵ For further reference to this verse, cf. 'Communion with God', pp. 211-12.

¹⁶ Anderson, NCB p. 242, notes that the "saints" in this verse are those who have been loyal to God's covenant love, as stated in Ps. 80:2 and proposes that these are fellow worshippers who would then take part in a sacral meal. Although such a cultic occasion is seen in Ps. 116:14ff., this is not made explicit in Ps. 30.

¹⁷ Verse 28c,d of this psalm is probably a separate strophe, which provides difficulties of translating חסידיו: cf. Gunkel, GHAT p. 158, Oesterley, TP p. 313 and Anderson, NCB, pp. 298-99.

faithful ones who "made a covenant with me by sacrifice"; their commitment is to God alone, through a solemn cultic act. Ps. 149:1 refers to "the assembly of the faithful" (בִּלְחָל חֲסִידִים), a term which hardly implies the nation in general but the assembled congregation in particular. The vindictive response of the חֲסִידִים in this psalm (see also vv. 5,9) is close to the ideas expressed of the death of those defending the cause of Yahweh in Pss. 79 and 116. The fact that the "faithful ones" are those within the congregation, and not the nation overall is precisely why the חֲסִידִים of the Maccabean times found these psalms so appropriate for their own situation.

Four other examples from individual psalms emphasise that to be called a חֲסִיד involves a personal choice. The RSV brings out this meaning by the translation of חֲסִיד as "godly (one)". For example, in Ps. 4, the suppliant wishes to separate himself from those who are going through some empty form of cultic worship (cf. v.6; vv.7-8; also v.3); it is clear that an individual is speaking, and not the nation, from the reference to lying down and sleeping and being kept in safety in v. 9. In v. 4, we read of the suppliant's personal confidence in God alone:

"But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself
 (חֲסִיד לִי)
 The LORD hears when I call to him."¹⁸

¹⁸ Oesterley, TP, p. 130, translates this as "But know that the Lord did wondrously show his mercy to me", emphasising the חֲסִיד of God rather than of man. ודעו כִּי־הִפְלָא יְהוָה חֲסִיד לִי :
 is read as ודעו כִּי־הִפְלָא יְהוָה חֲסִיד לִי :
 Cf. Weiser, DATD 14, p. 80, E Tr OTL, p. 119; Kraus, BKAT, XV/I, p. 30, and Anderson, NCB, p. 78. The alternative reading suggests the personal, active commitment to God by one who knows his חֲסִיד .

A similar theme is evident in Ps. 86. The psalmist here is possibly the king on account of the repeated references to himself as "thy servant" (עֶבֶדךָ) in vv. 2, 4, 16, and to the fate of other nations in v.9. He has chosen to worship God alone (cf. v 8-10) and to obey God alone (cf. vv.11-12). On account of this, he refers to himself as a חֲסִיד in v. 2:

"Preserve my life, for I am godly (כִּי־חֲסִיד אֲנִי)
save thy servant (עֶבֶדךָ) who trusts in thee."

The same motif is found in the lament form of the liturgy in Ps. 12:

"Help, LORD; for there is no longer any that is godly
(כִּי גִמַּל חֲסִיד : "the godly one ceases to be");
for the faithful (אֱמוּנָיִם) have vanished
from among the sons of men." (v.2)

A fourth example using חֲסִיד in this way is Ps. 32:6. The context in vv. 1-5 is the testimony of one who knows an end to his suffering after confession of sins; this act of personal obedience by repentance is what anyone who wishes to be called חֲסִיד should be prepared to do:

"Therefore let everyone who is godly (כָּל־חֲסִיד)
offer prayer to thee." (v. 6)

In conclusion, the חֲסִידִים are not a separate party, for the word describes more simply the moral and religious attributes attainable by any within the cultic congregation. Nor can the חֲסִידִים refer to the whole nation, because the element of moral choice in their worship and behaviour is an important factor. It is impossible to categorise a term with such broad moral and religious connotations as pertaining to one group of people at one historical period.

ii) קְדוֹשִׁים

Brief reference must also be made to the use of קְדוֹשִׁים, also translated "saints", for example in Ps. 16:3. Here the phrase "as for the saints (לְקְדוֹשִׁים) in the land..." could read instead as a second person address to those who attempt to combine worship of Yahweh (v.2) with worship of other deities (v.4) and could mean that the קְדוֹשִׁים here are not "saints" at all, but local idolators, "consecrated" to pagan deities, as in 1 Sam. 2:2. The קְדוֹשִׁים here are to be contrasted to the psalmist's identification of himself with the חֲסִידֵי יְהוָה in 16:10.

קְדוֹשִׁים is used once in the psalms to describe the whole cultic community. In Ps. 34:10, it is used as a form of address to them:

"O fear the LORD, you his saints (קְדוֹשִׁים)".

The imperative style and thanksgiving theme is like that used to describe the חֲסִידֵי יְהוָה as the cultic community in Pss. 30:5 and 31:24. קְדוֹשִׁים is used elsewhere to describe the assembled congregation in Dt. 33:3.

The only other reference to the קְדוֹשִׁים is found twice in Ps. 89:6-8 and describes mythologically the heavenly beings "consecrated" to the service of Yahweh in a heavenly council; this suggests that קְדוֹשִׁים was used with a broader frame of reference than that of the cultic community alone.

In conclusion, no particular party, and no references to the nation can be implied by this term. Its meaning and usage is much more disparate even than that seen with the חֲסִידֵי יְהוָה.¹⁹

¹⁹ Cf. Sabourin, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-4; also J. Coppens, 'Les Saints (qedôšîm) dans le Psautier', *ETL* 39 (1963), pp. 485-500.

(b) The "poor"

This study will examine four words used to describe those "poor" who deserve God's special care. The purpose is to demonstrate that the terms are usually applied descriptively from the various life-settings of the different psalmists, and do not normally suggest either a religious party or the entire nation.

(1) אֲלֵט

Of the four most common references to "the poor", the אֲלֵט is the most consistent in its usage.²⁰ From the root לָטַט, "to be low, inferior", the term in the psalms refers to those materially impoverished by the wicked rich. לָטַט refers to the physically poor not only in the psalms but also in the law codes seeking to protect their rights, for example in Ex. 23:3 and 30:15, and in the polemic of prophets, for example in Am. 2:7; 4:1; 5:11 and 8:6, and Jer. 5:4. The reference to "the poor people (אֲלֵט הָעָם) who owned nothing" in Jer. 39:10 serves further to illustrate this meaning, as also the expressions אֲלֵט הָאָרֶץ and אֲלֵט הָעָם in Jer. 40:7 and 52:15-16. The parallelism in Prov. 10:15; 19:4, 22:22 also shows the אֲלֵט as the physically poor; this is found also in the contexts of Prov. 14:31; 19:17; 22:9; 28:15; 29:7,14 and Job 5:16, 20:10,19; 31:16 and 34:19. Nowhere is the whole nation suggested, and nor does any

²⁰ Other words describing poverty, such as אֲדָמָה, אֲנִי and אֲדָמָה have been omitted from this study because they are rarely found in the psalms. For a discussion of all these terms, cf. J. van der Ploeg, 'Les Pauvres d'Israël et leur Piété', OTS Deel VII (1950), pp. 236-70, particularly pp. 242ff.; also A. Kuschke, 'Arm und reich im Alten Testament', ZAW 57 (1939), pp. 31-57; also G. Botterweck, אֲדָמָה in TWAT I, cols 28-43, E Tr TDOT I, pp. 27-41.

reference indicate that the עֲנִיִּים were one distinctive party. The consistent meaning concerns all those who are materially poor. Only one reference, from its parallelism, refers as much to a moral quality as to a physical state: in Is. 11:4, the עֲנִיִּים are seen together with "the meek of the earth" (לַעֲנוּיֵי הָאָרֶץ).

The four references in the psalms confirm that the עֲנִיִּים are the physically poor and destitute, who, because of their powerlessness, are due special protection. In Ps. 82:3,4 the word is used twice, once with עֲנִיִּים and also with אֲבִיֹן and with שֹׁד, to indicate by way of a prophetic oracle that those responsible for justice should protect their rights. In Ps. 72:13, the עֲנִיִּים are seen again alongside the אֲבִיֹן as those whose rights are protected by the king who mediates the justice of God (v.1). In Ps. 113:7 the עֲנִיִּים and the אֲבִיֹן are seen to receive special protection by God himself. This is why those who protect the poor receive God's blessing themselves, as seen in Ps. 41:2, which begins with the exhortation: "Blessed is he who wisely acts (לֵשׁ) towards the poor (עֲנִיִּים)!"

In each example from the psalms, the poor are the physically needy found throughout the community of Israel. This is the only word used to describe the poor which consistently refers to the state of being materially poor. Nevertheless, this cannot be the nation itself, for this would make nonsense of the references which challenge those within the community to protect their rights. Nor is there any suggestion of a religious party of poor, which were represented by the suppliant: the עֲנִיִּים are referred to always in the third person, as part of sapiential teaching, showing that that psalmists are not referring to themselves as poor, but as those who

have a responsibility to the poor. Rather, the עֲלֵי are simply those without physical means, who, regardless of any moral qualities, merit God's special protection.

ii) אֲבִיּוֹן

The above conclusions provide a basis for examining two other frequently used terms for the poor. The first, the אֲבִיּוֹן is found three times alongside עֲלֵי (cf. Pss. 72; 82 and 113), and the second, the עָנִי , occurs once in the same context (cf. Ps. 82), and also occurs in another psalm where עֲלֵי was used (cf. Ps. 72:2,4,12).

Most references to the אֲבִיּוֹן suggest that this is used in the same physical way as the עֲלֵי above. Probably from the root אָבָה , "to lack, be in need", the term concerns those who want something they cannot have, and thus the primary meaning is the materially poor.²¹ The occurrences outside the psalms confirm this meaning. The אֲבִיּוֹן , like the עֲלֵי , are protected by sacral law (Ex. 23:6,11; Dt. 15:4,7,9, 11); they are defended by the prophets (Am. 2:6; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4,6; Is. 14:30 and 25:4, used in every case here alongside the עֲלֵי , and also Jer. 5:28). The poetic wisdom passages also indicate the same physical, literal meaning for the poor, as in Job 5:15 and 31:19 and Prov. 14:31 (always with עֲלֵי). The only clear references to the אֲבִיּוֹן as representing a more spiritual type of poverty is found in Is. 29:19, where in the context the אֲבִיּוֹן could be seen as the

²¹ Cf. Botterweck, art. cit., cols. 29-30, E Tr pp. 27-8.

meek in spirit.

Within the psalms, as with the **דלים**, the references to the **אביונים** occur in didactic passages which exhort others to protect the poor and needy. Other than the three psalms referred to previously where the **אביונים** are seen alongside the **דלים** (Pss. 72; 82 and 113), the word is found in fifteen other psalms. Sometimes it is simply a statement that God will protect the **אביונים** in their powerlessness (Pss. 9:19; 12:6; 107:41; 109:31; 112:9; 132:15 and 140:13). In Pss. 49, 107, 112 and 132, **אביון** denotes the physical deprivation of all those who are poor, in contrast to the material wealth of the rich. In two other psalms, the **אביונים** are addressed directly, once to give praise to God on account of his protection for them, and once to attend to the voice of the psalmist. In two other psalms, they are referred to in the third person as those who suffer at the hands of the wicked (Pss. 37:14; 109:16).

Two implications follow from this. First, it is hardly possible to interpret the **אביונים** as the nation itself, for again they are those with particular needs within the nation. Second, nor are they one particular party within the nation. Their needs suggest a complex variety of contexts, some quite general, and others more specific.²² This is particularly evident in the psalms which reflect a more personal appropriations of the term. For example, in Ps. 35:10, the suppliant calls himself **אביון**, not because he is a landless Levite, possessing nothing, but conversely because his goods

²² Mowinckel proposes that in cases where the national interpretation is difficult, the "poor" are the "landless" Levites: cf. Ps.St.VI, § IV, 'Die wirklichen Psalmendichter', pp. 59ff. and PIW², pp. 90-97. This cannot usually be substantiated, as will be seen in the discussion of examples below.

have been plundered by his oppressors:

"All my bones shall say,
'O LORD, who is like thee,
thou who deliverest the weak (עָוֵל)
from him who is too strong for him,
the weak and needy (עָוֵל וְאֲבִיּוֹן)
from him who despoils him?"²³

In a similar motif of confidence at the end of Ps. 40, the psalmist testifies to his release from near-death (v.3) and from those who desired to oppress him (vv. 15-16). This release is adequate testimony that the Lord protects the poor and needy (v.18):

"As for me, I am poor and needy (עָוֵל וְאֲבִיּוֹן);
but the LORD takes thought for me." ²⁴

The suppliant in Ps. 86:1 also refers to himself as אֲבִיּוֹן in the context of near-death at the hands of ruthless men (v. 14). This is found in the opening invocation:

"Incline thy ear, O LORD, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy (עָוֵל וְאֲבִיּוֹן אֲנִי)."

By contrast, the sufferings of the suppliant of Ps. 109 are verbal abuses and curses of the wicked (vv. 2-5), yet he also sees his physical distress as impoverishment and powerlessness (cf. vv.16b and 22):

"For I am poor and needy (עָוֵל וְאֲבִיּוֹן אֲנִי),
and my heart is stricken within me." (v.22)

In Ps. 69, after the suppliant has recounted his own personal

²³ The significance of עָוֵל וְאֲבִיּוֹן will be discussed on pp.329ff. following. Together the terms indicate not only physical but also spiritual desolation.

²⁴ The latter half of this verse records more personal assurance than that found in Ps. 70, which asks twice for God's immediate help in v.5b,d: חֲשֵׁה לִי אֱלֹהִים (cf. v.5b). In Ps. 40:18, God's intimate protection for the one who is אֲבִיּוֹן is found in v. 18a: "As for me (אֲנִי)" and v. 18b: "The Lord takes thought for me (אֲדַנִּי יַחֲשֵׁב לִי)".

distress and isolation (vv. 9, 13, 21-22) on account of standing for the cause of God (vv. 8, 10) he ends with a similar note of confidence to Pss. 31, 40 and 70; because of his impoverishment and physical suffering, God is bound to hear his prayer (v. 34):

"For the LORD hears the needy (אֲבִיּוֹן) and does not despise his own that are in bonds."

In Ps. 140, having recounted his distress as caused by the plotting and scheming of the violent wicked (vv. 5-6), the suppliant ends his prayer with a similar motif of confidence, that because he has been made poor, God is bound to offer him justice (v. 13):

"I know (MT: יָדַעַת) that the LORD maintains the cause of the afflicted (עָנִי) and executes justice for the needy (אֲבִיּוֹן)."25

In each of these more personal examples, the psalmist sees himself as poor on account of a specific, albeit often ambiguously expressed situation of distress; it is not a matter of being called an אֲבִיּוֹן because of having a certain status from being part of a religious party or as a member of the whole nation, but rather because of what he has unavoidably become through the various attacks, both verbal and physical, of the wicked. 26

In the more personal allusions to distress, the references to the אֲבִיּוֹן show that this is more than the state of being physically poor. The psalmists affirm that God will hear and

25 The Qerē יָדַעַת, "I know", is preferable to the Ketib, יָדַעַת, "You know". The Qerē makes more sense in the context of the suppliant's personal testimony of confidence in God's forthcoming help.

26 Cf. Botterweck, art. cit., cols. 37-38, E Tr pp. 35-6 on the converse issue here, that neither the poor (אֲבִיּוֹן) nor the wicked are made up of one particular party, for different aspects of wickedness as also different aspects of suffering pervade the psalms.

vindicate them not only because they have become poor, but also on account of the way they trust in God with a corresponding humility of spirit. ²⁷

This is found in every one of the individual psalms referred to previously. Ps. 35: 12-14 describes the suppliant's humble acts of piety throughout his distress, and the phrase "quiet in the land" (רגעי־ארץ) in v. 20 indicates more than material destitution. ²⁸ Ps. 40 similarly speaks of the suppliant's earlier acts of obedience and integrity (vv. 7-10) and in the lament at the end, it is those who seek (בִּקְשׁוּ) God and those who love (אֲהַבּוּ) his salvation whom God hears (v 17). After the invocation at the beginning of Ps. 86, the suppliant calls himself not only "poor and needy" but also one of the godly (יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה) who trusts (בִּטְחָה) in God alone (vv. 1-2). In Ps. 109: 22, the suppliant qualifies that his physical desolation ("I am poor and needy") is accompanied by spiritual desolation also ("my heart is stricken within me"). The suppliant in Ps. 69 similarly declares his physical sufferings in his experience of near-death (vv. 2-6) and then in v. 7 expresses his desire to encourage all those who "hope" (יִקְוּהוּ) and "seek" (בִּקְשׁוּ) God; as in Pss. 40 and 109, the psalmist appeals to his several acts of contrition (cf. 69:10 "I made my soul

²⁷ Botterweck, *ibid.* cols. 38-40, E Tr pp. 36-7 affirms that spiritual qualities of poverty are implied by יָבֵשׁ; see also van der Ploeg, *art. cit.*, pp. 262ff., and Anderson, NCB, pp. 279-80. This physical and spiritual understanding of poverty is best illustrated in the contrasting use of the beatitudes concerning the poor in Mt. 5:3 ("Blessed are the poor in spirit...") and in Lk. 6:20 ("Blessed are you poor...").

²⁸ In *PIW*² p. 87, Mowinckel's "national" emphasis is illustrated by his interpretation of this phrase רַגְעֵי־אֶרֶץ to mean the nation as a whole. Such a reading cannot be sustained from the context of the psalm overall: it refers only to those physically poor who have no hope but in God alone.

mourn with fasting"). Finally in Ps. 140:13-14, the psalmist understands that prayer is heard not only because he is afflicted and needy but also because of having the qualities of being among the "righteous" (עֲדֵי־יָשָׁר) and the "upright" (יְשׁוּרִים).

אֲנִי־בָדֵל occurs alone in describing the poor in only four psalms (Pss. 49; 107; 112; 132). It is found with אֲנִי in Ps. 82:3-4 and with אֲנִי in 82:3. It is used alongside אֲנִי in Pss. 72:13 and 113:7. Most frequently, however, אֲנִי־בָדֵל is coupled with אֲנִי in twelve psalms (Pss. 9:19; 12:6; 35:10; 37:14; 40:18; 70:6; 72:4,12; 74:21; 82:3-4; 86:1; 109:16,22 and 140:13), eight of which may be classified as individual laments.

Even the regular expression אֲנִי־בָדֵל וְאֲנִי is not necessarily a reference to the nation overall or to some specific party of "pious poor".²⁹ As with the question of a party of אֲנִי־בָדֵל, it is unlikely that such parties were prominent, given that so few references to them are found outside the Psalter. The only examples of אֲנִי־בָדֵל וְאֲנִי together are in Am. 8:4; Is. 32:7; Jer. 22:16; Prov. 30:14 and Job 24:4,14. The occurrences in the twelve psalms reveal little uniformity of circumstance as the cause of such poverty and need. In some cases it is seen as due to the oppression of the wicked rich; in others it is because of more particular affliction from illness or near-death,

²⁹ Cf. A. Rahlfs, אֲנִי־בָדֵל und אֲנִי in den Psalmen, Göttingen, 1892; also A. Causse, Les "Pauvres" d'Israël (Prophètes, Psalmistes, Messianistes), Paris-Strasbourg, 1922, concerning a post-exilic party within the psalms; see also Mowinckel, in Psalms VI, pp. 7ff., note 2, which refers to Causse's influence, and Birkeland, אֲנִי und אֲנִי in den Psalmen, Oslo, 1933, where the poor were a particular party suffering acts of maliciousness caused by sorcerers. (Birkeland and Mowinckel revised their positions to see the poor as the nation in The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms, and PIW², pp. 91ff.)

whilst in others it is traced back to the forces of chaos threatening and oppressing the suppliant. Kraus is probably correct in seeing this is a stereotyped phrase to describe the poor and needy, who are without rights, but who wait upon God as their only hope, and who receive the special protection from him alone.³⁰ This accounts for its most frequent use in the various pleas for divine help in the individual laments. To declare oneself "poor and needy" emphasised the outer and inner aspects of distress, and so intensified the appeal to God to hear and protect. ³¹

iii) עָנִי

Outside the psalms, the עָנִי also pertain to the state of being physically poor, as seen in the laws in Ex. 22:25; Dt. 15:11; 24:12,14 and 15, and in the prophetic teaching such as Am. 8:4; Is. 3:14,15; 41:17; Ezek. 16:49 and 18:12, and in the wisdom sayings such as Prov. 14:21; 30:14; 31:9 and Job 24:9, 14; 29:12 and 36:6,15. However, the root עָנָה meaning "to humble" is also used to depict inner humiliation as well as outward deprivation, particularly in the deuteronomic literature (cf. Dt. 8:2,3,16, concerning God to his people, and Dt. 21:14 and 22:24,29, concerning sexual violation).

Within the psalms, עָנִי, like עָנָה, suggests not only the state of poverty but also the attitude of being spiritually humble. It has a broad term of reference, applying to the nation, or to a group of sufferers within the community, or to one suffering

³⁰ Cf. H-J. Kraus, BKAT XV/III, pp. 184ff.

³¹ Cf. van der Ploeg, art. cit., p. 270, on poverty and piety in the prophets and the psalms.

individual. Of the twenty-two occurrences, יָיָו is found predominantly in the personal prayers, occurring in thirteen individual laments (Pss. 9-10; 12; 22; 25; 35; 69; 70; 86; 88; 102; 109; 140), two individual thanksgivings (Pss. 34 and 40), two communal laments (Pss. 74 and 82), and one communal thanksgiving (Ps. 68). It is used only four times in a general didactic sense in two royal psalms (Pss. 18 and 72), one prophetic exhortation (Ps. 14) and one wisdom psalm (Ps. 37).

The plural יָיָוּ serves to describe the plight of the nation in four psalms. Pss. 9-10 presuppose a context of national distress, and the references to the יָיָוּ in Ps. 9:13 (Ketib) and 10:12 suggest the affliction of the nation oppressed by foreign nations. Similarly, in a composite psalm which includes a communal thanksgiving, the reference to God's provision for the needy (יָיָו : singular) is found in the theophanic passage of Ps. 68:8-15 (cf. v.11) and suggests again the whole nation. In Ps. 74, a communal lament at the destruction of the sanctuary, the יָיָוּ (v.19) and the יָיָו (v.21) also suggest the whole nation oppressed by foreign powers.

Other references to the יָיָוּ concern those afflicted and powerless within the nation. Sometimes this is when the יָיָוּ and יָיָוּיָא are referred to together, as in Pss. 12:6; 37:14 (singular); 72:4 (plural), 12 (singular) and 82:3-4 (singular). Other psalms which use יָיָוּ alone with respect to certain sufferers within the nation are Pss. 14:6 (not found in Ps. 53) and 18:28. In all of these examples, the poor are seen as having special protection either from the king, as in Ps. 72, or from God himself, as in the oracular material in Pss. 12 and 82 and in the

didactic passages in Pss. 14; 18 and 37. There is still no reason to suppose that the poor are one particular party at one particular historical period; the forms and the life-settings of these psalms are too diverse to allow any such monochrome classification.

עָנָה is also used, mainly in the singular, to indicate the physical and spiritual "humbling" of the individual. Of the twenty two examples, thirteen are found alongside אֲבִיוֹן to indicate not only the physical and but also the spiritual affliction; seven of these occurrences were discussed earlier with respect to the אֲבִיוֹן.³² A study of the occurrence of עָנָה on its own offers the same conclusions.

In Ps. 22:25, as part of a thanksgiving testimony after a lament on physical suffering and isolation, the psalmist rejoices that God has heard and answered him:

"For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction (עָנָה) of the afflicted (עָנִי)..."³³

In Ps. 25:16, עָנָה is used after a plea for forgiveness of sins. The suppliant is sure that God will hear because of his particular personal need:

"Turn thou to me, and be gracious to me;
For I am lonely and afflicted (עָנִי וְעָנָה אֲנִי)."

In Ps. 34:7, עָנָה occurs in a testimony of individual

³² Cf. pp. 324ff., which referred to Pss. 9; 12; 35; 37; 40; 69; 70; 72; 74; 82; 86; 109 and 140. Pss. 35:10; 40:18; 70:6; 69:30,34; 86:1; 109:16,22 and 140:13 were seen as examples of the personal appropriation of the term.

³³ עָנָה has several different meanings, including "answer", and "sing". Dahood, AB I, p. 142 prefers to see עָנָה is from the root עָנָה, "to sing". "The song of the afflicted" would be like the "song of thanksgiving" which was pleasing to God (cf. Ps 147:7).

thanksgiving, for restitution of material well-being (vv.5-11) and for restoration to the presence of God (v.19):

"This poor man cried (אָרַךְ),
and the LORD heard him,
and saved him out of all his troubles."(v.7)³⁴

In Ps. 88:16, אָרַךְ describes the suppliant's plight in a similar way to Ps. 25:16, referring again to physical loss and spiritual distress:

"Afflicted (אָרַךְ) and close to death from my youth up,
I suffer thy terrors; I am helpless."

אָרַךְ is also used to depict personal desolation in the superscription in Ps. 102:1:

"A prayer of one afflicted (תַּפְּלָה לְעֹנֶה)
when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the LORD."

In all of these examples, the suppliant calls himself אָרַךְ because of his own physical and spiritual needs, whether in pain, illness, personal sin, fear of death or isolation. It is clear that not only his outward state of impoverishment but also his inner poverty of spirit bring God to his aid. He is speaking neither as a representative of a particular religious party, nor he is offering a prayer on behalf of the nation; he is speaking for himself.

We may conclude that when אָרַךְ is used throughout the psalms, it refers sometimes to the nation, sometimes to the poor within the nation, but most frequently to one individual sufferer.

אָרַךְ is a figure of speech used to describe both physical and

³⁴ This testimony is full of figurative expressions to describe not only the suppliant's physical condition but also his inner attitude before God. Verse 3 uses אָרַךְ; vv. 8 and 10 refer to those who fear the Lord; verse 10 uses אֲנִי־דָבָר, and vv. 16, 20 and 22 refer to those who are אֲנִי־דָבָר.

spiritual degradation.

iv) אָנָוִים

Several scholars have made much of the different references to the אָנָוִים in contrast to the אָנָשִׁים in the psalms. The most common proposal has been that the אָנָשִׁים are a particular religious party within the post-exilic community for whom God has a special concern.³⁵ However, any distinction between these two closely related words creates several problems.

Firstly, because both words relate to the same root אָנָה, they are both capable of being used in a spiritual sense as well as pertaining to physical destitution. Secondly, the number of alterations made to both terms in the Ketib and Qere of the MT shows that it was difficult to discern two different meanings from both words.³⁶ Thirdly, references to the אָנָשִׁים are found in the prophets and the wisdom literature and do not necessarily indicate a post-exilic setting. Fourthly, and most importantly, of the nine references to the אָנָוִים in the psalms (in Pss. 10:17; 22:27;

³⁵ Cf. Rahlfs, art.cit., pp. 80-1, emphasising the religious qualities which this term suggests in relation to a party of the poor. W. Baudissin, 'Die alttestamentliche Religion und die Armen', PJ 55 (1912), pp. 209-224 sees the אָנָשִׁים as the party of the poor, and the אָנָוִים as particular spiritual representatives of that party. See also Causse (1922), Birkeland (1933), van der Ploeg, art. cit., pp. 262ff., Kuschke, art. cit., pp. 49ff., and with some modification, R. Martin-Achard, 'Yahwe et les 'Anāwim' ThZ 21 (1965), pp. 349-57, particularly 355ff. For a more general discussion of other views, cf. P. van den Berghe, 'Ani et 'Anaw dans les psaumes', in Le Psautier. Ses origines, ses problèmes littéraires, son influence (ed. R. de Langhe), Paris, 1962, pp. 273-95.

³⁶ Pss. 9:13 and 10:12 read אָנָשִׁים for אָנָוִים, as also in Prov. 3:34; 14:21 and 16:19. Ps. 9:19 reads אָנָוִים for אָנָשִׁים, as also in Is. 32:7; Am.8:4 and Job 24:4.

25:9; 34:3; 37:11; 49:33; 76:10; 147:6 and 149:4), five are found in psalms which also refer to the poor as $\text{ָ} \text{ך} \text{ך}$ (cf. Pss. 9:19 / 10:2,9,12 ; 22:25; 25:9; 34:7 and 37:14) or as $\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$ (cf. Pss. 37:14 and 49:3). It is apparent that $\text{ך} \text{ך}$ is mostly used as a figure of speech to denote in particular a more spiritualised understanding of piety, and need not pertain at all to any distinctive social group any more than to the nation.

That $\text{ך} \text{ך}$ describes those who are spiritually afflicted is most evident in the individual psalms. In a testimony of thanksgiving, Ps. 22:27 reads:

"The afflicted ($\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$) shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him ($\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$) shall praise the LORD!.."

The parallelism of the $\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$ with the $\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$ indicates that the poor are those with a spiritual as well as physical hunger.³⁷ Similarly, in Ps. 25:9, the suppliant confesses the sins which he believed had led to his impoverishment and thus acknowledges his spiritual poverty before God (vv.7ff) and asserts:

"He leads the humble ($\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$) in what is right,
and teaches the humble ($\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$) his way." (v.9)

In the individual thanksgiving in Ps. 34:3, the psalmist identifies himself as one who seeks spiritual as well as physical restoration before God (vv. 5ff.) and encourages others who might also be described as $\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$ to rejoice with him:

"My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the afflicted ($\text{ך} \text{ך} \text{ך}$) hear and be glad."

The same importance of a poverty of spirit which pleases God is found

³⁷ Anderson, NCB p. 193 may well be right in his suggestion that the reference to the poor eating and being satisfied pertains here to their participation in the offerings of a sacrificial meal, as in Dt. 14:29; 16:10ff.

in Ps. 10:17: "Thou wilt hear the desire of the meek ($\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$)" and in Ps 37:11: "But the meek ($\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$) shall possess the land".

However, other references in fact indicate that $\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$ could sometimes be used to refer to the state of material poverty. These occur only in verses with sapiental overtones, where the $\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$ are quite simply the poor, in contrast to the rich. In the context of the physical devastation of the land, Ps. 76:10 speaks of God's justice in freeing the $\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$. Ps. 147:6 contrasts the $\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$ with the wicked ($\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$). In a promise of national victory, Ps. 149:4 proclaims the deliverance of those who are $\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$ within the nation.

In conclusion, of the four terms which denote the "poor", most refer to the physical poverty experienced by a significant proportion of the nation. Others, in spite of their ambiguities, indicate also an inner poverty of spirit which is dependent upon God alone. If we accept the premise that the psalms are personal prayers, their expressions of piety are prompted not only by adherence to particular formulae to claim God's attention, but also in a more involved way, by particular references to an experience of dependence upon God alone. ³⁸

(c) The "upright" and the "righteous"

$\square^{\prime} \}) \square \vee$ is most frequently used to describe the righteous.

³⁸ Cf. Kraus, BKAT XV/III, pp. 189-93; also Butler, 'Piety in the Psalms', pp. 385-94, particularly pp. 392-3.

רָשָׁע is used mostly in parallelism with שֹׁדֵד.³⁹ The affirmation of those who are "righteous" is found mainly in the context of suffering under the wicked. Examples where both שֹׁדֵד and רָשָׁע occur together are in the personal prayers of the laments, and occasionally in the reflections of the didactic psalms.

Of the laments, one is communal (Ps. 68), and one is a royal psalm (Ps. 118) set in a lament form. Three others occur in communal thanksgivings which record earlier troubles (Pss. 75; 107 and 125). Other examples are found in the hymns which celebrate some victory over the wicked (Pss. 94; 97; 111 and 146). The others are all individual laments (Pss. 5; 7; 11; 31; 36; 55; 64; 69; 73; 140 and 141) or individual thanksgivings recording earlier troubles (Pss. 32 and 34). Of the didactic psalms, three references occur in prophetic exhortations (Pss. 14; 52 and 58) and four in the wisdom psalms (Pss. 1; 37; 92 and 106). The only psalm which uses the terms שֹׁדֵד and רָשָׁע without any explicit reference to the oppression of the wicked is a later general hymn (Ps. 33).

These examples show again that those who are שֹׁדֵד and רָשָׁע are not simply a party of sufferers known also as the "poor and needy". Some psalms referred to in the previous section make this connection (Pss. 14; 34; 37; 68; 69 and 140), but the two

³⁹ The word צַדִּיק occurs only rarely, for example in Pss. 18:24 (see also vv. 26 and 31); 37:18; 101:6; 119:1, always concerning the "blameless" who walk in the way of the law. A full discussion of this wisdom-related term has been omitted here.

groups of psalms are by no means the same.⁴⁰ One cannot assume that the righteous are only those who are innocent and oppressed, who, deprived of their rights, appeal in some court of law to claim back their rights by an appeal to God's righteousness.⁴¹ A particular distinction between the needy (עֲנִי) and the upright (יִשְׁרָיִם) is evident in Ps. 107:41-42, where the latter rejoice over the vindication of the former. To be "righteous" is not so much a designation of status as a description of a condition of suffering within various life-settings.

1) יִשְׁרָיִם

The use of יִשְׁרָיִם outside the psalms, particularly in the wisdom literature, indicates that the term describes those who act in a particular way, rather than those who have a particular status within the community. In Prov. 2:7-8, the יִשְׁרָיִם are those who act with integrity and who offer loving-kindness, as do God's saints (v.8: חֲסִידֵי יְהוָה). The same idea that the יִשְׁרָיִם are those in general who walk with integrity and fear God is found in Job 4:7. Elsewhere in Proverbs, the יִשְׁרָיִם are contrasted with various

⁴⁰ The following psalms connect the righteous with terms discussed previously: Ps. 14:5 refers to the צַדִּיק and 14:6 to the עָנִי; Ps. 34:16 and 20 refers to the צַדִּיק, and 34:3 uses נָעַם, and 34:7 uses עָנִי. Ps. 37:16, 17, 21, 25, 29, 30, 32 and 39 use צַדִּיק, and 37:14 also uses יִשְׁרָיִם, whilst v.14 refers to the עָנִי וְאֲבִיּוֹן and v. 11 to the נָעַם. Ps. 68:4 uses צַדִּיק, and 68:11 uses עָנִי. Ps. 69:29 refers to the צַדִּיק, and v. 30 refers to the עָנִי, and v. 34 to the אֲבִיּוֹן. Ps. 140:14 refers to the צַדִּיק and to the יִשְׁרָיִם, and v. 13 to the עָנִי and to the אֲבִיּוֹן. That these are used descriptively rather than to denote status is quite clear.

⁴¹ Cf. Schmidt, art. cit. (1928), pp. 143ff., that such prayers were offered in the temple to test the suppliant's innocence through a divine decision word; see also Delekat, op. cit., 1967, and Beyerlin, op. cit., 1970.

types of the wicked (Prov. 3:32; 14:9; 15:19 and 28:10); there is no hint that as such they form any separate party, or that they are the whole nation against the godless heathen. Only in Job 23:7 is there any suggestion from the context that they have particular juridical rights on account of some status.

When יְשׁוּעַ is referred to on its own in the psalms, no specific party is implied. In two relevant references, the $\text{יְשׁוּעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל}$ are the attendant worshipping community. Ps. 111:1 states most clearly:

"Praise the LORD.

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright (בְּסוּד יְשָׁרִים)
in the congregation (וְעֵדָה)."

Ps. 36:11 equates together the יְשָׁרִים with those who know God; in the context of the preceding verses concerning the joy of temple worship, this again suggests the attendant congregation. Neither the nation overall, nor a specific party within the nation, is intended.

When assessing the references where the יְשָׁרִים and צַדִּיקִים occur in parallelism, seven of the eleven examples again confirm that the יְשָׁרִים are simply the present worshipping congregation. In Ps. 32:11 both are addressed by the suppliant to join him in praising God. The call to praise both to the צַדִּיקִים and to the יְשָׁרִים is repeated in Ps. 33:1. It also occurs with reference to the praises of the assembled congregation in Ps. 64:10. In Ps. 37:14-19, so many terms are used to indicate those who stand apart from the wicked, that one party cannot be inferred (v. 14: עַנִּי and אֲבִיּוֹן and $\text{יִשְׂרָאֵל־דָּרֵךְ}$; v. 16: צַדִּיק ; v. 17: צַדִּיקִים ; v. 18: תַּלְמִידִים). The acrostic form accounts for the juxtaposition of these terms, whereby the "upright" are closely identified with the

whole congregation rather than being just a group within it. In Ps. 94:15, כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל are identified as God's people who act in "righteousness" (צַדִּיק). In Ps. 97:10-12, the צַדִּיקִים (v.12), the יִשְׂרָאֵל (v.11) and the מִיִּדִּי (v.10) together rejoice in God's ultimate vindication for them. In Ps. 125:3-4, the צַדִּיקִים and the יִשְׂרָאֵל can be seen from their context (v.2) to be God's people at worship in Jerusalem.

These examples raise questions concerning Mowinckel's broader national interpretation of the "righteous" as the whole nation of Israel, in contrast to the "wicked" who are the foreign nations. In these psalms, the צַדִּיקִים, along with the יִשְׂרָאֵל, describe the worshipping community's faith and trust in God alone; the "wicked" are therefore more likely to be those close at hand who seek to pervert the integrity of those who choose to worship God in this way. Such a situation is evident as early as the pre-exilic prophets, whose appeal for justice and righteousness assumed the cause lay within the nation itself, rather than outside it.

In the four other psalms where צַדִּיק and יִשְׂרָאֵל occur together, a more personal appropriation of the term is used. Again, this is far from Mowinckel's hypothesis that it is always the "righteous nation" which is depicted. In Ps. 7:10-11, the motif of confidence is in God who tries and establishes all those who are צַדִּיקִים and who saves the יִשְׂרָאֵל: some element of God selecting from his own people is evident here. In Ps 11:1-3 and 7, the psalmist takes upon himself the terms יִשְׂרָאֵל (v. 2) and צַדִּיק (v.3) to indicate his own trust in God during his suffering. In the sapiential teaching of Ps. 112:4,6 the יִשְׂרָאֵל and the צַדִּיק imply anyone who deals justly with their wealth and

privilege (cf. vv. 3; 5; 9), in accordance with the teaching of the law; neither the poor, nor the innocent sufferer, nor the whole nation are implied. By contrast, in Ps. 140:14, the context is precisely that of innocent oppression (vv. 10-12) so that the suppliant sees himself as עֲנִי and אֲבִיוֹן (v.13), and his belief is that God who executes justice (v. 13) will vindicate him to be one of the צְדִיקִים and יְשָׁרִים because his rights have been unjustly taken away.

Three features characterise the צְדִיקִים and the יְשָׁרִים throughout these eleven psalms. The first is the belief that their righteousness will be rewarded, on account of their trusting faith in God alone in adversity (cf. Pss. 11:7; 37:3-4, 5-6, 34, 37, 39-40; 94:12-15; 112:4-9; 125:4). The second is that on account of their promised reward, they have good reason to rejoice in God (cf. Pss. 32:11; 33:1-3). Thirdly, from their context of suffering, several psalmists understand their righteousness to be synonymous with integrity and innocence (cf. Pss. 7:4-6; 11:4-5; 32:2; 37:18-19, 25-26, 37). These are mostly individual psalms. ⁴²

From these examples, it is difficult to accept that the יְשָׁרִים always pertain to the nation, or to a particular pious party within the nation. As with the poor in the psalms, the contexts are too varied and, in most cases, the personal appropriation of the word prevents any rigid classification either way.

⁴² The dramatic impact of Am. 2:6ff. in accusing Israel of her own guilt in oppressing the righteous and needy is a clear example of this. See also Am. 5:10-15 in this respect.

11) צדיק

An assessment of the use of צדיק on its own suggests similar conclusions. Outside the psalms, in the prophets, the righteous are frequently recognised by their deeds (cf. Is. 3:10; Ezek. 3:20,21; 18:20, 24,26 and 33:12,13,18). A similar depiction of the righteous is also found in the wisdom literature; although most of the references in Proverbs imply a more generalised picture of those doing good within the community, several verses depict the righteous in an active sense (cf. Prov. 10:11,21,32; 11:28,30; 12:10,26; 13:5; 21:26 and 29:7).

Mowinckel emphasises that the psalmists use צדיק to refer to their particular status before God as having righteousness accorded to them by virtue of being members of the cultic community.⁴³ Although there is clearly some evidence for such an appropriation, also to be found in the prophets and wisdom, the following assessment will demonstrate how this is again too categorical in assessing the variety of contexts where the צדיק occurs.

Only five psalms use the term to refer more generally to the nation of Israel. In Ps. 14:5, God is seen to be present with "the generation of the righteous" (צדיק דור). In its context as a prophetic exhortation, this refers to the covenant community in contrast to the surrounding heathen nations who do not seek after God (vv. 2, 5). In another prophetic exhortation, Ps. 58:11, the picture

⁴³ Cf. Albertz, op. cit., pp. 38-43, who argues that the motif of innocence and cries for protection are a peculiar feature of the individual laments.

of the righteous rejoicing and bathing in the blood of the wicked indicates a setting where God will judge other nations who show no concern for God nor for his people (vv. 3, 12), whilst the righteous are the vindicated nation of Israel. The same indication is made more explicit in Ps. 68:4, a communal thanksgiving where the righteous are the whole community who rejoice at some victory afforded to the nation (vv. 8-14). Similarly in Ps. 75:11, the promise of protection offered to the righteous is within the context of God's judgement on the wickedness of all nations (vv. 7-9), so that the righteous by contrast are those who praise the God of Jacob (v.10). Finally, in Ps. 118, a royal psalm, the righteous referred to in vv. 15 and 20 are the nation's armies, returning to Jerusalem, and representing the whole nation in their celebration of victory:

"Hark, glad songs of victory
in the tents of the righteous (צדִיקִים בְּאֹהֶלֶי)..." (v.15)

"This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous (צדִיקִים) shall enter through it." (v.20)

In other psalms, the term צִדִּיק is used as in Proverbs and Job, to refer to those who actively show their understanding of "righteousness" within the cultic community. This is made clear in Ps. 1:5, where the "wicked" (רָשָׁעִים) and the "sinners" (חַיִּיִּם) are excluded from the "congregation of the righteous" (צִדִּיקִים בְּעֵדוּת), for the latter alone are known by God (v.6). In Ps. 52:8, the righteous are those who laugh at the downfall of the wicked, who trust their riches rather than make God their refuge (v.9); the "wicked" are those who oppress the poor in the community, and the "righteous" are worshipping members of the congregation, as seen by their expressions of confidence concerning "the house of God" and "the presence of the godly" in vv. 10-11.

This is also apparent in Ps. 92:13-16; in contrast to the wicked who perish (v.8) the righteous are those within "the house of the Lord" and "the courts of our God" (v.14) whose worship and deeds afford the blessing of long life from God (cf. v. 15).

Other psalmists, however, use לִי צְדִיקָה in a more particular, personalised way, similar to the individual use of צְדִיק . In Ps. 5:13, the psalmist believes he is righteous primarily because of his oppression by the lying evildoers; because his rights have been removed, he can only plead for God's righteousness to effect his restoration (vv.5-7). In the same psalm, לִי צְדִיקָה occurs with another meaning. On account of his action in offering prayer and sacrifice to God (vv. 2-4), in fearing God (v.8), and in rejoicing and loving the name of God (v.12), the psalmist also believes he has shown himself to be righteous by his deeds. The same pattern is evident in Ps. 31, where in v. 19 the suppliant identifies himself as one of the righteous on account of his oppression by lying evildoers and of his piety in crying out in trust to God (v. 15). This is also apparent in Ps. 55:23, where the promise that the suppliant is righteous pertains to his permanent status as one who has been denied his rights, due to the lying treachery of a close companion; the active sense of לִי צְדִיקָה is evident in that it is apparent that his pious acts of trust in God will declare him right before God.

In Ps. 69:29, the suppliant refers more generally to "the righteous" who are enrolled in the book of the living; that he hopes that he too may attain to this honour among "the righteous" is evident in the curse against the wicked who are to be "blotted out" of the book ("let them....but let not me", used explicitly in Jer. 17:18 in a similar context). The reasons for assuming this are

again his own need, his deprivation of rights (the terms יָשַׁע and יִשְׁעֵי־יְהוָה occur in vv. 30 and 34 respectively), and his pious trust in God alone (vv.8-9, 10-13, 14).

In Ps. 34, where the term repeatedly occurs within an individual thanksgiving (vv. 16,18,20) the same two reasons for the personal appropriation of the term יָשַׁע are apparent. The earlier affliction of the psalmist is clear (v.3: יָשַׁע ; v.7: יָשַׁע) which rendered him paradoxically suffering yet righteous (v.18).⁴⁴ At the same time, it was the acts of piety in prayer and fear of God (vv. 10,12) and in the brokenhearted spirit to God (v.18) which brought about God's vindication. The same appropriation of the term is also found in a hymnic thanksgiving in Ps. 146, where God is seen to watch over the righteous (v8), for they are in need of justice (vv.7,9) and can only trust God alone (v.3-4).

The three features discussed with respect to the יָשַׁע also characterise the יִשְׁעֵי־יְהוָה. The theme of rejoicing on account of having received the due recompense (seen explicitly only in Pss. 5:12 and 146:1-2) indicates that the psalmists could understand יָשַׁע in a dynamic and personally effective way.

The theme of the יִשְׁעֵי־יְהוָה being rewarded also suggests the active use of the term. If the יִשְׁעֵי־יְהוָה referred to status alone, be it that of being the nation or a party within the nation, it is difficult to see how God rewarded a quality which is assumed to

⁴⁴ Cf. Mowinckel, *PIW*¹, pp. 103ff. This "righteousness" would be most likely to be expressed during the new year festival, with its motifs concerning the justice and protection of God for his people: cf. *ibid.*, pp. 132-40, and p. 146.

have been imputed. Even in the psalms which suggest the צדיקים are the nation, the theme of being rewarded for being righteous is evident: in Ps. 14:7, the reward is deliverance and restoration for Israel; in Ps. 58:11, the reward is victory over the nation's enemies; in Ps. 68:2-4, the reward is again military victory; so too in Ps. 75:7-9, it is the vindication of the nation through God's judgement on other nations; and in Ps. 118:10-16, the righteous are those who celebrate their vindication by military victory. Similarly, when the righteous are the worshipping congregation, they too receive reward for their piety. In Ps. 1:6, this is implicitly the gift of life with God; in Ps. 52:8-9, it is the downfall of the wicked rich; in Ps. 92:13-16, it is knowing communion with God in the Temple; in Ps. 146:7-9, it is restoration for the oppressed. In the personal appropriations of צדיקים, the rewards for the righteous are again evident. In Ps. 5:12-13, it is special protection by God; in Ps. 34:16-23, it is the deliverance of the righteous and the downfall of the wicked; in Ps. 55:23-24, similar protection and vindication of the righteous is expected; and in Ps. 69:29, the righteous are those who are enrolled in the book of the living.

The third characteristic of the "righteous" referred to previously as their belief in their own integrity and innocence. This is evident in Pss. 146:7-9; 5:5-7; 31:7-9,15-19; 55:3,17-20 and 69:5-6,10-13. Again this does not imply status, by virtue of being part of the covenant community; it is due to a personal integrity which refuses to accept the orthodox theology that

suffering has arisen out of a particular act of sin. ⁴⁵

In conclusion, צדיקים refers to a variety of different situations, and like the terms חסידים and אביונים and עניים and ישרים, it is used by the psalmists both to describe their situation of suffering, and to indicate their special status deserving the protection of God. It is used most to indicate a particular attitude and behaviour before God, especially in the declarations of righteousness, where the suppliant believes that his acts of trust and prayer to God within his affliction will be rewarded.

An assessment of the righteous in the psalms needs to avoid assuming that the psalmists were on the whole influenced by the theology of "imputed righteousness", or a sense of being righteous simply because of God's promises made to the whole covenant community. Lutheran scholars seem to be among those particularly susceptible to this assumption. ⁴⁶ Yet because the psalms are personal prayers, the piety within them is guided as much by the concerns of experience as by dogmatic theology; it is impossible to

⁴⁵ Cf. Chapter Four, 'Penitence before God', pp. 142 ff, concerning forgiveness and individual righteousness; see also Kraus, BKAT XV/III, pp. 195-6.

⁴⁶ Cf. von Rad, ' "Gerechtigkeit" und "Leben" in der Kultsprache der Psalmen ', GSAT, München, 1958, pp. 225-47, who stresses the meaning of righteousness in terms not so much of virtue but of a relationship as a result of being part of the cultic community. Mowinckel develops von Rad's views with respect to the new year festival in PIW ¹, pp. 208-210, particularly p. 209, note 41. Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 31ff., E Tr OTL, pp. 46ff., also affirms this view, seeing instead the locus of covenant renewal festival.

categorise "the righteous" every time in terms of an imputed status, whether of the nation or a party. Again we may conclude that it is important to avoid over-classifying the expressions of personal piety in the psalms.

(II) THE MEANS OF PLEASING GOD

As well as affirming that the general characteristics of those who are faithful, righteous and poor are pleasing to God, several psalms develop other more explicit attitudes which God also expects of his people.

In an earlier chapter, it was seen that the spoken words of the psalmist gave meaning both to the cultic actions and to the accompanying attitude, and that only rarely was reference made to any sacrificial offering alongside, for example, prayers for forgiveness.⁴⁷ The following discussion will illustrate that the psalmists are equally ambivalent with respect to the ways that cultic practices might inspire ethical behaviour.

The relationship between cultic practice and ethical behaviour within the psalms has been misinterpreted in two extreme ways. The first is that the psalmists followed the prophets in considering morality as discontinuous with and even superior to cultic

⁴⁷ Cf. Chapter Five, 'Penitence before God', pp. 155 ff. with particular reference to the discussion and notes on Pss. 51:18-19 and 40:7-9.

practice.⁴⁸ Against this, cultic liturgies such as Pss. 15 and 24 show that ethical behaviour is very much part of cultic teaching. A second assumption is that the psalmists understood cultic worship and sacral law regulated all moral activity.⁴⁹ Against this, the reflections on the law in non-cultic psalms such as Pss. 1, 19B and 119 make it clear that morality was a matter of private contemplation as well as of response to cultic laws taught by the priests.

Because the psalmists are from diverse life-settings, it is important to avoid over-simplifying the relationship between cultic practice and ethical behaviour either positively or negatively.⁵⁰ The following examples will illustrate that a variety of responses are found throughout the Psalter.

Several psalmists understand that the תודה , (or תודה בלב) is a sacrifice of thanksgiving which shows gratitude to God after an answer to a prayer.⁵¹ Ps. 116:12-19 makes this clear. The context is public testimony within cultic worship (c. vv. 13-14). That a sacrifice is being offered is clear in v. 17:

⁴⁸ Cf. Gunkel, Einleitung, § 9, particularly pp. 375ff., and RGG², § 1, cols. 1621-22, on the "Spiritual Songs" of the exilic period. See also Quell, Das kultische Problem der Psalmen, pp. 18ff. and 143ff., on the psalms as compositions independent of cultic practices.

⁴⁹ Cf. Mowinckel, Religion und Kultus, § 18, pp 121ff., on the pan-sacral nature of Israelite religion and the relationship between piety and morality. See also Ringgren, op. cit., pp. 108-112.

⁵⁰ On the relationship of ethics and cultic worship, cf. H.H. Rowley, 'The Good Life' in The Faith of Israel, London, 1956, pp. 124-49, especially pp. 145-6.

⁵¹ For earlier discussions of the meaning of תודה , with respect to penitence, cf. Chapter Four, p. 156 and 159ff., and with respect to praise, cf. Chapter Six, p. 236ff.

"I will offer to thee (לך-אֵזְבִּיחַ)
the sacrifice of thanksgiving (תְּנוּחָה) (זֶבֶח)
and call on the name of the LORD." 52

Similarly in Ps. 66, a communal thanksgiving, the offering of a thanksgiving sacrifice, by either the king or representative leader of the people, is referred to in vv. 13-15:

"I will come into thy house with burnt offerings
(בְּעוֹלוֹת)
I will pay thee my vows,
that which my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
I will offer to thee burnt offerings of fatlings
(עֹלֹת שְׁחִיִּים)
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
(עִם-קֶטֶר אֵילִים)
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.
(בִּיקֹר עִם עֲתוּדִים)" 53

A similar sacrifice of thanksgiving is referred to in an individual context in Pss. 27:6 and 54:8, and in a communal context in Ps. 107:22:

"...and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy (זֶבֶח־תְּרוּעָה)
(27:6)

52 Anderson notes that the זֶבֶח תְּנוּחָה probably refers to some communion sacrifice, where part would be burnt and the rest would be eaten, followed by a public testimony of songs of thanksgiving: cf. NCB, p.795 (on Ps. 116:17) and p. 754 (on Ps. 107:22).

53 The three types of offerings referred to here are synonymous, emphasising overall that deeds of gratitude (in sacrifice) must accompany words of gratitude (in vows): cf. Gunkel, GHAT, pp. 278-9.

"With a freewill offering (בנדבה)
 I will sacrifice to thee (אזכחה לך);
 I will give thanks to thy name (אודה שם),
 O LORD, for it is good." (54:8)⁵⁴

"And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving
 (וזבחו זבחי תודה),
 and tell of his deeds in songs of joy (ברנה)" (107:22)

Another unusual example is found in a prophetic exhortation in Ps. 50:7-15. After a lengthy rebuke on the peoples' dependence on sacrificial offerings alone, and the fact that God does not need to be nourished by sacrificial food like a pagan deity, the cultic prophet declares:

"Make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God
 (זבח לאלהים תודה),
 and pay your vows (נדריך) to the Most High;..." (v.14)

In this context, the תודה is referred to in literal terms, although the attitude behind such a sacrificial offering is the most important element; the attitude is to be one of genuine thanksgiving, rather than any attempt to placate or bribe God by offering it.⁵⁵

Sacrificial offerings were one explicit way of publicly

⁵⁴ The תודה refers to the sacrifice exceeding that of the duty of the thanksgivings offerings (cf. Ex. 35:29; Lev. 7:11ff., 22:17ff.), and thus might be called a sacrifice of the heart: cf. Gunkel, GHAT, p. 236.

⁵⁵ Cf. Hermisson, Sprache und Ritus, pp. 35-7, on Ps. 50:23; also Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 267-8, E Tr OTL, pp. 395-7, and Anderson, NCB, p. 386. By contrast, cf. Gunkel, GHAT, pp. 216-7, and Oesterley, TP, p. 269, who see that this means no sacrifice pleases God, but prayer alone.

testifying to the goodness of God. Within the profusion of psalms of praise and thanksgiving, it is however striking that explicit references to sacrifices accompanying this attitude occur in only the six above psalms. Some psalmists were convinced that the words of their prayer portrayed as much gratitude to God and encouraged a practical response in action as did any number of sacrificial offerings, and question the value of sacrifice as the only way of demonstrating gratitude. Ps. 69:31-32 is one example:

"I will praise the name of God with a song (בְּשִׁיר);
 I will magnify him with thanksgiving (בְּתוֹדָה).
 This will please the LORD more than an ox (אֶשֶׁן)
 or a bull with horns and hoofs." ⁵⁶

Another example is found in Ps. 26:6-7:

"I wash my hands in innocence,
 and go about thy altar, O LORD,
 making heard (שָׁמַע)
 a voice of thanksgiving (בְּלִיָּל תוֹדָה)
 and telling all thy wondrous deeds." ⁵⁷

This attitude to obedience in relation to cultic practices was a pre-exilic theme, developed by the deuteronomist and the prophets (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8 and Is. 1:11-15) and taken up in wisdom teaching (cf. Prov. 21:3). There is no reason to suppose that when the same characteristic occurs in the psalms it

⁵⁶ The word play on שִׁיר (song) and אֶשֶׁן (ox) indicates how the latter cannot achieve an obedient spirit, and the former can do so. Cf. Gunkel, GHAT pp. 296-7 and p. 299, and Hermisson, op. cit., pp. 38-9 on the high value attributed to praise above sacrifice in these verses.

⁵⁷ Ps. 26:7c reads in the RSV: "singing aloud a song of thanksgiving". Some cultic practice is presumed in v. 7a,b by the oath of purification, but this still need not presume that the actual thanksgiving offered was any more than a sung prayer. Gunkel, GHAT pp. 109-110 and Hermisson, ibid., pp. 40-41 again see this verse refers to the high value of the sung thanksgiving over sacrifice.

need not also be from the pre-exilic period.

הודו is also seen as a song of praise in at least three hymns, none of which suggest that sacrifice was part of the worship. In Ps. 95, v. 1 clearly refers to a context of singing rather than sacrificing, and the parallelism of thanksgiving (הודו) and praise (הללו) in v. 2 show that a song is implied here:

"Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving
(הודו)
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
(הללו)" Ps. 95:2

A context of singing in praise is also presumed in Ps. 100:1. The reference to the הודו is in v.4:

Enter his gates with thanksgiving (הודו)
and his courts with praise (הללו)!
Give thanks to him, bless his name!"

Finally, Ps. 147:7 can only be a reference to a sung thanksgiving:

"Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving (הודו)
make melody to our God upon the lyre!" Ps. 147:7

Mowinckel attempts to trace a chronological line of development from the emphasis on the sacrificial offering of thanks to the sung thanksoffering, on the basis that the sung offering would be more appropriate for the exilic period away from temple worship. The psalms cannot be dated in this way when no other external criteria demand it. ⁵⁸ We can only ascertain that several different psalmists saw that God was pleased as much with the song as with the sacrifice of thanksgiving. This ambivalence in the way that the psalmists understood cultic practices inspiring attitudes and behaviour caused Gunkel to observe that the psalms would never have

⁵⁸ Mowinckel, PIW², pp. 90ff. and pp. 104ff. in fact proposes that such psalms have been influenced by wisdom writers and belong to the late exilic period, being composed by professional Levites specifically for Temple singing.

become models for prayer if, like the Babylonian psalms, they were bound into all types of ritual performances. ⁵⁹

Several psalmists are even more explicit that their sung prayers could not please God unless accompanied by an inner integrity of heart. This theme has much in common with the pre-exilic prophetic message, particularly that of Jeremiah, and is found in psalms which display what has been called "an ethic of intention". ⁶⁰ In this respect, the psalms are again very different from their Babylonian counterparts which emphasise external behaviour and cultic ritual as pleasing the gods. ⁶¹

One common example illustrating this more internalised ethic concerns the way that the psalmists repeatedly refer to "the heart" (לֵב), which, as the inner seat of emotions and thought and will, controls those outward actions which are pleasing to God. ⁶² In Ps. 17:3, the suppliant pleads his integrity by claiming that should God test his heart, he would find no wickedness. In Ps. 26, with its Jeremianic correspondences in the protests of innocence, the psalmist asks God to test his heart because he will find integrity there

⁵⁹ Cf. Gunkel, 'Die Religion der Psalmen' DCW xxxvi (1922), pp. 94ff., E Tr A.K. Dallas, What Remains of the Old Testament and Other Essays, p. 96.

⁶⁰ Cf. B. Gemser, 'Gesinnungsethik im Psalter', OTS Deel XIII (1963), pp. 1-20; also Fohrer, 'The Personal Structure of Biblical Faith', pp. 161-66, especially p. 165.

⁶¹ Cf. Gemser, art. cit., pp. 5-11 and 19-20, using excerpts from A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete, Zürich-Stuttgart, 1953.

⁶² For further discussion of לֵב, cf. Pedersen, Israel, Vol. II, pp. 102-8; Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel, Part III; also Eichrodt, Theologie Band II, pp. 72-3, E Tr Theology Vol Two, pp. 142ff.

(vv.1-3). Conversely in Ps. 66:19, the psalmist knows that his prayer has been heard because he has not "cherished iniquity" in his heart. In the short expression of confidence in Ps. 131, the psalmist knows he can address God because he has stilled his heart humbly before him (v.1: **לֹא־גָבַהּ לִבִּי** , or "my heart is not lifted up"). At the end of Ps. 19 (v.15) the short prayer is also that the inner thoughts of the heart would be as acceptable to God as the spoken words of the mouth. A similar reference is found in Ps. 104:34. At the end of Ps. 139, the suppliant contrasts his innocence with the guilt of the wicked around him; God who knows every detail about him (vv. 2ff.) may search and try his heart, and discover no wickedness there (vv. 23-4). Also in a protest of innocence, this time in Ps. 44:22, the people as a whole plead their integrity before God, "for he knows the secrets of the heart."

When the affairs of the inner heart are offered to God, the rewards in terms of healing are made available. This is made clear in Ps. 51:12-13, in the request for a clean heart and renewed spirit. It is repeated in Ps. 51:19, where the "broken and contrite heart" is like a sacrifice acceptable to God. The same idea is reflected in more sapiential overtones in Pss. 34:19 and 147:3, concerning God's healing of those who are "brokenhearted" (**נִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב**) in Ps.34:19; **נִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב** in Ps.147:3).

Conversely, the inability to obey God with the inner assent of the heart leads to his judgement. This may apply to his own people, as in Ps. 78:36-7, where the peoples' speech contradicts their behaviour, and so reveals what is in all their hearts. Even the nation's enemies are judged not only on account of their external acts of violence but the inner corruption of their hearts, out of

which such wickedness comes (Ps. 58:3). The same idea is evident in Pss. 14:1/53:2 and 64:6,7,8.

The attitude of the heart in rejoicing pleases God as much as the same attitude in repentant prayer. The repeated cry at the beginning of praise in Ps. 57:8 (also in Ps. 108:2) is "My heart is steadfast, O God (נִכּוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹהִים)!". The same idea of rejoicing with integrity of heart is also found in Pss. 9:2 and 13:6.

Occasionally psalmists state that God will reward those who have inner integrity of heart. This is usually found in psalms with wisdom overtones. In Pss. 37:31 and 119:11, it is the law hidden in the heart which produces the outward actions pleasing to God and rewarded by him. In Ps. 73:1, the psalmist expresses this confidence in a similar way:

"Truly God is good to the upright (MT: לִישָׁרִים),
to those who are pure in heart (לִבְרִי)"⁶³

In Ps. 112: ff. , the same theme of reward occurs several times within the acrostic form. Those who show compassion to the "upright" (cf. v. 4: לִישָׁרִים) and also to the "righteous" (cf. vv.4 and 6: צַדִּיק) and to the "poor" (cf. v. 9: לְאֲבִיּוֹנִים) are praised:

"He is not afraid of evil tidings;
his heart is firm (נִכּוֹן לֵב),
trusting in the LORD.
His heart is steady (סֹמֵךְ לֵב),
he will not be afraid,
until he sees his desire on his adversaries...
his horn is exalted in honour." (vv. 7,8,9)

⁶³ The MT in v. 1a reads לִישָׁרִים , or "Truly God is good to Israel". Nevertheless, the parallelism in v. 1b suggests the better reading is לִישָׁרִים , or "Truly God is good to the upright". This accords with other references which affirm similarly that the "upright in heart" will be rewarded (e.g. Pss. 7:9; 36:11; 64:11; 94:15 and 97:11). For a discussion of לִישָׁרִים - צַדִּיק , cf. pp. 340-1 of this chapter.

The chapter concerned with trust in God emphasised how the inner piety of the psalmists was evident in the different expressions they used to depict their trust in God.⁶⁴ The chapter on communion with God also stressed the more internal qualities of piety in connection with the psalmists' longing for God and contemplation upon God.⁶⁵ It is in keeping with this theme that the emphasis noted here is not only on the externals of cultic ritual, but also on the inner attitude of the heart as pleasing to God.

Another way in which the psalmists understand they can please God which also does not necessitate recourse to cultic practices is in their keeping the law. Not all law referred to in the psalms concerns sacral law taught by the priests. Several examples suggest that the "law" pertains to some collection of written laws available for personal reflection. Other psalms indicate more a popular, pragmatic morality which may be termed "natural law". The first of these two groups of examples may be dealt with briefly.

Three wisdom psalms deal with reflections on the law as given by God, drawing one into closer communion with God. Ps. 119 is the most obvious example, although one of the most difficult problems in interpreting this psalm is that of discerning precisely what "law" is being referred to. The fact that eight synonymous terms are used in each eight verses of all the twenty-two strophes makes it no easier to ascertain what the law is: $\overline{\text{ל}} \overline{\text{ל}} \overline{\text{ל}} \overline{\text{ל}}$ is the more general

⁶⁴ Cf. Chapter Three, 'Conclusion', pp. 119ff. , concerning the way the right inner attitude of the heart before God was the common feature of all expressions of trust.

⁶⁵ Cf. Chapter Six, pp 227ff. and 232ff .

term used to refer to the Mosaic collection of laws. Alongside this are the more precise terms such as לִידָוָע , or "testimonies", used for example on the two tablets of stone, in Ex. 31:8, and as לִצְוָה , or "commandments", often referring to decrees put forward by those in authority, as in 1 Kgs 2:43, and as פְּטִיפִימִים , or "ordinances", used with more juridical overtones. The whole corpus of law is less apparent in these expressions. The use of פְּלִינִינִים , or "precepts" is used only in the psalms, with a different meaning in each case. פְּלִינִים , or "statutes" can, by contrast, refer to a decree or oracle from God, as in Ps. 2:7, or more broadly to natural law (Ps. 148:6). The more deuteronomic term דְּרָכִים or "ways", as in the phrase "walking in the way(s)" in Dt. 19:9 and 30:16 and Jer.7:23, together with the term דְּבָרִים , or "words", which may mean anything from uttered oracle, to a creative act of God, to a legal maxim, demonstrate the ambiguity in the references to the law. Clearly the psalmist's delight in the law of God is more than the preached sacral law, including not only the laws of Moses, but the whole teaching associated with "the wise".

The same reflection on keeping the law is evident in Ps. 19B. In vv. 8-10, six synonymous terms occur again. עֲדוּת and תּוֹרָה are found in v. 8; פְּלִינִים and לִצְוָה in v. 9; פְּטִיפִימִים occurs in v. 10, alongside the expression יִרְאַת יְהוָה , which is associated with the law elsewhere (cf. Ps.25:12). The law referred to here pertains to some collection made by the wisdom teachers (assuming the expression יִרְאַת יְהוָה to be associated with the wise, as seen in Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28; Eccles. 12:13 and Ps. 111:10). Like Ps. 119, the suppliant understands the "law" in broader terms than that found within the

teaching of the cult.

Ps. 1 may also be associated with this later type of individual, reflective piety. Although the "law" is referred to only as תורת יהוה (v. 2), the emphasis on the inner meditation (הגהה) again suggests access to a written law. The late dating of the psalm on account of its prosaic style and wisdom language as well as the absence of cultic references would indicate that this also suggests ways of pleasing God which are not dependent on cultic practice alone.

These are the three most obvious examples of the more private, non-cultic morality which has entered the psalms, where the influence upon ethical behaviour is not so much that of Temple worship as that of the home or the synagogue. Even Mowinckel assumed the a more private setting for these particular psalms. ⁶⁶

Another way in which cultic practice is not a prerequisite for morality is found in a few references to a more popular type of morality which might be called "natural ethics." ⁶⁷ The origins of such morality are found in the more popular affairs of life which imply that particular actions have inevitable consequences. Within the psalms, as in the prophets, this is not kept outside the control

⁶⁶ Cf. Mowinckel, PIW², pp. 111ff.

⁶⁷ Cf. Eichrodt, Theologie Band III, § 22, 'Die Auswirkung der Frömmigkeit im Handeln', pp. 44f., E Tr Theology Vol. II, chapter XXII, 'The Effect of Piety on Conduct', pp. 316ff., on the importance of popular morality in this respect. See also J. Barton, The Relation of God to Ethics in the Eighth Century Prophets, Oxford D Phil Thesis 1974, Aslib XXIV (1972-75) No. 21, MS D Phil. d 5957, pp. 25ff., that prophets such as Amos, Isaiah and Micah used as their authority not only the revealed law of Moses, but also a more natural sense of justice which would be understood by the people.

of God, but brought under his own creative ordinances and even used in the teaching in cultic worship.⁶⁸ The following examples illustrate how the psalmists uphold the keeping of a natural sense of justice yet by using it within a prayer or a liturgy give it a more theological emphasis.

Two examples of this are found in two cultic liturgies. In Ps. 15, vv 2-3 and 5 represent a number of ethical admonitions which centre on popular interests of slander and usury. If the psalm is to be understood antiphonally, then the fact that these verses would be spoken by the representatives of the laity (with the question in v.1 and the affirmation in v. 5c being spoken by the priest) further indicates their original context in popular morality. A natural sense of justice lay behind this teaching; by bringing it into the teaching of the cult, one was asserting the authority of the cult also over the aspects of natural law.⁶⁹

In Ps. 24, the teaching pertaining to popular morality is briefly offered in v. 4. The same pattern as in Ps. 15 is evident in 24: 3-6. Verse 3 represents the questions spoken by the priest, and vv. 5-6 the affirming blessing, whilst v. 4 suggests a response by the laity, bringing the teaching on natural justice under the

⁶⁸ Cf. Barton, op. cit., pp. 79ff. (concerning Amos), pp. 232ff. (concerning Isaiah) and pp. 320ff. (concerning Micah).

⁶⁹ Commentators such as Gunkel, GHAT pp. 47-8, Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 112-3, E Tr OTL pp. 167-8 and Anderson, NCB pp. 135-6 prefer to see that the priest, rather than the laity, give the answer in vv. 2-5b to the questions asked by the pilgrims in v. 1. For a lengthier discussion of this issue, cf. Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 112ff.

authority of the cult. ⁷⁰

This more general and pragmatic morality is found elsewhere mainly in the wisdom psalms, with the exception of one individual lament. This is in the protest of innocence in Ps. 101:3-7. The psalmist (possibly the king, from the tenor of authority suggested) is protesting that his actions should have led to the inevitable consequence of blessing, which he did not receive.

The wisdom psalms are the most obvious locus for this sort of didactic teaching, for more profane interests are usually evident here. Two corresponding strophes in Ps. 49 take up the more practical, popular morality as a means of predicting the downfall of the wicked: this is found in vv. 11-12, ending with the refrain in v.13 concerning man's vain pomp which will perish, and in vv. 17-20, which ends with the same refrain in v.21. In Ps. 62, the similar problem of the success of the wicked rich is faced not only by reflection upon an oracle (vv. 12-13) but also by reference to natural consequences of actions expressed in popular morality (vv. 10-11). The same problem of the wicked is addressed by recourse to the more popular sense of justice in Ps. 112:5; the rest of the psalm is an expansion of this theme with respect to God's blessing promised for such behaviour (vv. 2-4) and encouragement

⁷⁰ Again commentators prefer rather to see the questions (v.3) asked by the pilgrims and the answer (v.4ab) offered by the priest; see Gunkel, GHAT, p. 102, Weiser, DATD 14, p. 156, E Tr OTL, p. 232, Kraus, BKAT XV/I, pp. 194-5, and Anderson, NCB, pp. 200-1. This means that the affirmation to the answer (vv.5,6) is also offered by the priest, thus taking away the antiphonal nature of the psalm within liturgy.

offered for those who live by it (vv. 6ff.). ⁷¹

Thus it may be seen how natural law is taken from more popular traditions outside specific cultic teaching, yet is "theologised" through being used in cultic worship. This is to be seen in contrast to the reflections on the law of God which pertain in various ways to the sacral laws associated with cultic worship, and which have been "privatised" by the circles of the wise. Both these ways of encouraging ethical behaviour concern influences independent of direct cultic activity. This again raise questions concerning the cult-functional interpretation which sees that all earlier aspects of popular morality and all later teaching on the law were incorporated and collected by the wise singers, or the Levites, as part of the ongoing cultic process behind all the psalms. ⁷²

In conclusion, the psalms display a complex variety of examples of teaching on morality and its relation to cultic practices. Not only sacrifices, but the songs of the psalmist, in penitence and in praise, were pleasing to God. Both the inward aspects of personal integrity, and the outward visible responses of obedience were considered as pleasing God. The cult was usually upheld as normative in motivating morality, but was sometimes considered secondary to the more popular "natural" teaching on justice, or the private non-cultic teachings on the law. One may again observe the extent to

⁷¹ Other relevant psalms are those which, like Amos' oracles against the foreign nations in the context of God's dealings with Israel, concern God's judgement on other nations on account of their inability to fulfil the demands of their own natural sense of justice. Pss. 58:2ff. and 82:2-4 are examples from prophetic exhortations, and Pss. 7:6-8; 9:15-17 and 59:5 from laments all of which suggest the "wicked" are foreign nations.

⁷² Cf. note 58 above.

which the personal concerns of the psalmists have guided the very different reflections on the ways that ethical behaviour and cultic practices are pleasing to God.

(III) THE REWARDS FOR PLEASING GOD

Three wisdom psalms offer explicit teaching on the rewards for those who please God. In each case these concern material, physical benefits.

Ps. 37, because of its acrostic form, is a collection of proverbial sayings arranged in alphabetical order repeating the rewards for the righteous (עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה : vv. 16; 17; 21; 25; 28; 29; 30; 39), also called the poor (עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה : v.14) the needy (עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה : v.14) and the meek (עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה : v.11). Their future rewards are found in vv. 21-31: they will receive wealth, posterity and personal restitution in seeing the wicked perish. The repeated theme "those blessed by the Lord will possess the land" (cf. vv. 3, 9, 22, 29, 34, found also in Pss. 25:13 and 140:14) further illustrates the material nature of the blessing, in that claims on tribal territory will be vindicated.

Ps. 112, also partly in acrostic form, has a similar collection of sayings. Those who please God are again seen as the עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה (v. 6) and also the עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה (vv. 2,4). Their reward again is explicitly that of riches (vv.3,9) and future posterity (v.2) and vindication by the destruction of the wicked (v.10). Thirdly, in Ps. 128, the one who fears God (vv. 1,4) is similarly blessed by wealth (v.2) and posterity (vv. 3,6).

The rewards of material blessing and personal vindication are common motifs in Israelite religion.⁷³ Some scholars would maintain that its original locus is in the autumnal festival with its future orientation concerning blessings from the land in the coming year and the successful victories over foreign enemies.⁷⁴ However, the following examples demonstrate that these themes occur in both communal and individual psalms, and are used in a much broader context than this festal cult alone. In addition, material blessings and personal vindication are not found in all of the psalms associated with such a festival. These motifs receive particular attention in psalms which express a belief that God has rewarded, or will reward, their trust in him at their time of need.

The vindication theme, resulting in material well-being, is expressed in the communal psalms in terms of God's judgement on other nations, rather than being more concerned with the wicked oppressors within the community, as was seen in the wisdom psalms. Predictably, this motif is found in some of the enthronement psalms (cf. Pss. 47:4; 96:13; 97:6-7; 98:2 and 99:2). Two of the Zion hymns also deal with this theme (Pss. 48:5-8 and 76:13). It is referred to explicitly in only one general hymn (Ps. 136:10-22). It

⁷³ For a fuller discussion of the relationship between material and religious blessings for obedience before God, cf. Eichrodt, Theologie Band III, 'Die Relativierung der natürlichen Güter zugunsten der religiösen Heilsgüter', pp. 65ff., E Tr Theology, Vol Two, 'The unresolved tension between the natural goods and the religious good of salvation', pp. 360ff.

⁷⁴ Cf. Mowinckel, Ps.St. II, pp. 229ff., and 275ff., and PIW ¹, Chapter V, pp. 108ff. and 149-59, on the locus being the enthronement festival; cf. Weiser, DATD 14, pp. 20-21 and 33-35, E Tr OTL pp. 32-33, 49-52 on the locus as the covenant renewal festival.

is also found in four royal psalms (Pss. 2:11-1; 18:44-46; 102:16 and 110: 5-6). It occurs in one prophetic exhortation, concerning the judgement on the gods of other nations (cf. Ps.58:2,3). It is found in two communal laments, one of which also refers to judgement on foreign gods (Ps. 82:1, 5, 6-7, 8) and in Ps. 137:8-9. By contrast, only two individual laments are concerned with this theme of judgement on the nations (cf. Pss. 7:7-9 and 9:6-7, 16-17, 18, 20-21).

This same vindication motif, resulting in material blessings, is also evident in a number of individual laments, where the context is that of threats of personal malefactors who seek to oppress and persecute the psalmists either verbally or physically.⁷⁵ The language has few of the cosmic and mythological overtones used in the communal psalms of judgement; the motifs of personal restitution and the downfall of the wicked are more like those expressed in the wisdom psalms, indicating that these were hardly the preserve of the festal occasions alone.

In several individual laments, the context is that of suffering under evildoers who utter evil words and curses against the suppliant. The psalmists believe that patient trust in God alone will result in judgement on those within the community who speak and wish ill on those who are defenceless, and restoration of well-being for those who are oppressed. Examples of judgement within the community are found in Pss. 5:5-7, 12-13; 43:1; 71:13, 24; 140:10-12,13-14 and 141:8-10.

⁷⁵ On the various identities of these malefactors, cf. Chapter Seven, 'Suffering before God', pp. 254ff.

In other individual laments, the persecution experienced is not only verbal but also physical, and again the psalmists express their confidence that God will reward trust expressed in the hour of need by judgement on the wicked within the community. Pss. 17:10-12,13; 22:8-9, 17-19, 20-22; 35:1-3, 4-8, 24-26; 40:14-16/ 70:2-4; 41:9-11,12 and 55:10, 16, 17-19 are the most obvious examples of this.

Other individual laments say nothing of verbal reviling, but use figurative expressions to suggest that their oppression is some life-threatening physical abuse. Again the belief is that God will vindicate in material, visible terms. Examples include Pss. 3:8-9; 6:11; 31:20-21; 54:6,8; 139:19-24 and 143:11-12.

Blessing (ברכה) with respect to the vindication of the psalmist is always understood in physical, materialistic terms, whether pertaining to long life, future descendants, success, or restoration of well-being, prosperity and power.⁷⁶ However, such "blessing" does not necessarily involve a promise by the spoken word of an oracle, or any other form of priestly mediation, but is effected through a reversal of the present historical circumstances.⁷⁷ The intense suffering under the oppression of the wicked demands something more visibly convincing than a spoken promise. If the more cult-functional understanding of blessing as

⁷⁶ On ברכה, cf. J. Scharbert, TWAT I, cols. 808-41, especially cols. 835ff., E Tr TDOT II, pp. 279ff, particularly pp. 302ff. See also Kraus, BKAT/XV III, pp. 205ff.

⁷⁷ Mowinckel, PsSt V, pp. 5ff. and 14ff. and 34ff., and PIW ¹, pp. 44-48, 50-52, on blessing as liturgical activity, due to the power of the spoken word. Against this, concerning a concept of blessing beyond that of cultic formulae, cf. Westermann, Der Segen in der Bibel und im Handeln der Kirche, pp 21ff.

offered through the spoken mediation of cultic officials is evident in these psalms, it is the means to an end and not the end itself. Liturgical blessing is of course evident in several psalms (e.g. Pss. 91:3ff.; 115:14-15; 122:6-8; 128:5-6) but the concept of blessing is by no means exhausted by its use in these psalms alone.

A number of psalmists refer to the rewards of pleasing God in less tangible and more spiritual terms. These rewards concern an experience of God's presence, normally found within cultic worship, and are thus inwardly experienced, rather than visibly vindicating the psalmist before others. In each psalm discussed below, the context is that of the psalmist identifying himself as "righteous" (יָשָׁר) or "upright" (יָשׁוּר) or "godly" (יְהוָה), and thus worthy of some blessing from God.

All the examples occur in individual psalms, within the mood of confident trust found usually at the end. Ps. 11:7 ends with a typical motif of confidence in God's reward for the righteous:

"For the LORD is righteous, he loves righteous deeds;
the upright (יָשׁוּר) shall behold his face." ⁷⁸

This hope for the righteous also suggests a context of cultic worship in Ps. 17:15, concerning some experience in the sanctuary after a night of seeking an oracle from God (cf. v.6):

⁷⁸ The second half of the verse could read "his face shall behold he upright", as in v.4c: "his eyes behold, his eyelids test, the children of men". If so, this eliminates the motif of the "reward" of special communion with God for the upright. However, the temple reference in v. 4a suggests that the final motif of confidence in v. 7b is an experience of God within the temple.

"As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness;
when I awake, I shall be satisfied
with beholding thy form." ⁷⁹

Three psalmists understand that because of their righteousness, they are privileged with an experience of the safety of God's presence in the temple. Ps. 36:8-10 speaks of taking refuge "in the shadow of thy wings", and of feasting "on the abundance of thy house" as the reward for one "upright in heart" (v.11). Ps. 52:10-11 speaks similarly of dwelling in safety in the house of God as the reward for those who are "godly" (ג'ד'ן : v.11). Ps. 92:13-16 declares that the righteous (ג'ד'ן : v.13) will be like trees which receive their strength and nourishment by being in "the house of the Lord", "the courts of our God."

Other psalmists affirm their rewards to be those of experiencing the "presence of God", not only within temple worship, but also beyond it. Ps. 16:11 is one example, offered by one who chooses to worship Yahweh as God (cf. vv.5-6) rather than idols of other nations (cf. v4):

"Thou dost show me the path of life;
in thy presence there is fulness of joy,
in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." ⁸⁰

Ps. 41 combines together a sense of reward by physical vindication (v. 12) with an inner experience of communion with God:

⁷⁹ Dahood, AB I, p. 99 believes this refers to awakening ($\sqrt{\text{ג'ד'ן}}$) as in Is. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2 and concerns an experience of God after death. More probably it refers to the presence of God in the sanctuary: cf. Oesterley, TP p. 148 and Weiser, DATD 14, p. 122, ETr OTL p.157.

⁸⁰ This verse may refer to the benefits afforded to the righteous in this life, or could imply life with God forever; cf. Chapter Six, 'Death, Life and God', pp.190ff.

"But thou hast upheld me because of my integrity
 (בְּטָהֳרָא),
 and set me within thy presence for ever." (v.13)

Ps. 140:13 affirms this idea:

"Surely the righteous (צַדִּיקִים)
 shall give thanks to thy name;
 the upright (יְשָׁרִים) shall dwell in thy presence."

In Ps. 73, which begins with a promise that God would reward the upright (v.1), the suppliant ends (vv. 23-8) with the confidence that an ongoing sense of communion with God is sufficient:

"But for me it is good to be near God;
 I have made the LORD God my refuge,
 that I may tell of all thy works." (v.28) 81

We may conclude that usually the psalmists understood God's rewards for endurance and virtue were visible and tangible, resulting in their public vindication. However, in a number of individual psalms, the rewards are not only in terms of a change of outward circumstance but also in an experience of God which is more internal and spiritual, found within cultic worship and even beyond it. Thus as well as general beliefs in material retribution and vindication, which come from a broad spectrum of human experience rather than from the observance of a festal occasion, a refined piety is portrayed, where the favour of God's presence in itself transcends the desire for physical restitution.

81 There is no need to assume that the references to being near to God and making God a refuge only concern communion in the temple. "The sanctuary of God" is important to the psalmist (cf. vv. 16-17) but in the context of vv. 24ff., the emphasis is on communion with God beyond that experienced only in the temple itself: cf. לַעֲוֹלָם in v. 26, referred to earlier in the context of this verse on p. 191.

(IV) CONCLUSION

Within the six chapters assessing examples of personal piety, the most important issue has been the need for discrimination in interpreting the figurative language of the psalmists. This was particularly evident in the chapters concerned with trust in God and penitence before God, where it was seen how frequently scholars have interpreted the various words used for trust and forgiveness in a literal way, with reference to an oracle or to some ritual activity, rather than allowing the psalmist to use such terms figuratively, with reference to his own personal response to God. ⁸²

This chapter has illustrated similar problems in classifying the religious and moral language of the psalmists within a particular social and cultic context. Too often a literal and functional meaning is given to particular expressions which the psalmists apparently intend to use more descriptively and metaphorically. This was seen to be especially true with the terms חֲסִידִים , עֲבָדִים , עֲנָוִים , עֲדִיקִים , and יִשְׂרָאֵל , where a religious party or the nation as a whole were imposed onto a psalm when it used these terms. It was also evident in the way that sacral law within a cultic context was seen as normative for all references to ethical behaviour. It was also evident in the attempts to contextualise the psalmists' references to judgement and vindication within the great annual festivals.

It has been noted several times that Mowinckel is cautious about

⁸² Cf. Chapter Three, 'Trust in God', Conclusion, pp. 119ff.; Chapter Four, 'Penitence before God', Conclusion, pp. 159ff.

the personal and poetically descriptive appropriation of the language in the psalms, preferring to see that a common store of typical liturgical phraseology usually denoted a particular cultic function:

"Imagery and phraseology are often the stereotyped traditional ones...The set formality of the psalms can only be explained on the basis that they are not primarily meant to be personal effusions, but are, in accordance with their type and origin, ritual lyrics...In its original form the cultic psalm springs from set formulas, suiting all occasions." ⁸³

In one respect, Mowinckel is quite right. The psalmists of course drew from a large common store of language, as has been developed in the statistical analysis of the language of the psalms by Tsevat. Over one hundred and fifty examples of words, word forms and word groups are seen to occur within the psalms but nowhere else in the Old Testament. ⁸⁴ However, such an observation needs qualifying, for the psalmists also exercise a large amount of creative freedom in their appropriation of the language. This point was also made by Culley. ⁸⁵ It was also demonstrated in the previous chapter discussing the psalmists' creative adaptation of expressions of piety in their psalms of suffering. ⁸⁶ Mowinckel's weakness is that he pays little attention to the aspect of "creative freedom", to the extent that he minimises any individual adaptation

⁸³ Cf. Mowinckel, PIW¹, pp. 30-31; also PsSt I, pp. 95ff. and Religion und Kultus, § 17, 'Das Gebet und der Psalm', pp. 115ff. A similar quote on Mowinckel's view of psalmic language is used in Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', p. 83, also note 77.

⁸⁴ Cf. Tsevat, A Study of the Language of the Biblical Psalms, pp. 14-23 and endnotes 32-81; also Mowinckel's affirmation of Tsevat in 'Zur Sprache der biblischen Psalmen', TLZ 81 (1956), pp. 199-202.

⁸⁵ Cf. Culley, Oral Formulaic Language, pp. 98ff.

⁸⁶ See Chapter Seven, 'Suffering before God', pp. 284ff. and 291ff.

of conventional expressions, as seen in the following observation:

"What strikes us in the biblical psalms is the uniformity and formality which characterize most of them. One is so often like another that they are difficult to differentiate. The personal, individual element is pushed into the background."⁸⁷

The issue of the relationship between language used for personal prayer and in cultic liturgy is closely related to the relationship between "personality" and "traditionalism". This issue was discussed in some detail with respect to Jeremiah's confessions and the implications of these observations for the psalms. It was seen there that Mowinckel's understanding of the relationship between the two was that, with very few exceptions, the psalmists subordinate "personality" to "traditionalism".⁸⁸ With respect to this chapter, this is seen in the way that Mowinckel consistently interprets the סִיְדִיר and the עֲנִיִּים and the צִדִּיקִים as referring to the whole nation, giving no explicit attention to the way these terms describe more personal qualities of piety; minimal attention is paid to "personality", whilst the maximum attention is paid to "traditionalism".⁸⁹

Mowinckel sees that liturgy in Israel owed its primary influence to groups of cultic professionals who created various cultic formulae to serve the needs of "everyman". He is reluctant to discuss how liturgy might evolve more organically from exceptional

⁸⁷ Cf. Mowinckel, PIW¹, p. 30.

⁸⁸ Cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 84-5, on Mowinckel's view of traditionalism and personality in PIW², pp. 126ff.

⁸⁹ On Mowinckel's interpretation of the סִיְדִיר , cf. PIW¹, p. 210ff., and PIW², pp. 86ff.; on the עֲנִיִּים , cf. PIW¹, pp. 30ff., and on the צִדִּיקִים , cf. PIW², pp. 91ff.; on the צִדִּיקִים , cf. PIW¹, pp. 103ff.

individuals skilled in formulating their experiences of life into expressions of prayer. This reluctance perhaps explains the greatest difference between Gunkel and Mowinckel in the ways they each understand the psalms as personal prayers.⁹⁰ By taking the form-critical analysis of Gunkel to its extreme conclusion, that particular forms illustrate particular cultic settings, Mowinckel is apt to ignore all too easily that which is the most obvious feature of psalmody. This concerns the one psalmist composing a basic, original prayer, using both the language of cultic liturgy and personal expressions of piety to suit his concerns within the context of his community. With respect to the subject of this chapter, the cult-functional limitations are exemplified in the way that the psalmists' understanding of moral qualities pleasing to God have become an analytical study of the classification of the forms and language into particular social and cultic settings. Little regard is given to any descriptive study of the way that the psalmists' personal insights influenced their many different perceptions of the behaviour and attitudes which pleased God.

⁹⁰ Compare Mowinckel's assumptions that the forms and language suggest cultic compositions in PIW¹, Chapter II, with Gunkel's observations that the psalm-types do not of themselves suggest cultic settings, in Einleitung, § 1, pp. 1ff., and § 12, pp. 415ff.

PERSONAL PIETY IN THE STUDY OF THE PSALMS:

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The first chapter demonstrated that personal piety in the Psalter has been a feature largely neglected by scholars. G.W. Anderson's explanation of this oversight, noted earlier, is most apt:

"To look in the Psalter for evidence of private devotion in ancient Israel may seem like plunging into the ocean in search of water."¹

In spite of this, the thesis has attempted to show that such piety does have distinctive characteristics, and that these can be found throughout the Psalter.²

This study has frequently noted that scholars who have paid inordinate attention to the cultic settings of the psalms have often substantiated this by less than convincing evidence from outside the Psalter. By contrast, because this assessment has focussed upon the life-experiences of the psalmists, the examples which have been used to illustrate this have invariably been found within the psalms themselves. Some might argue that this results in a restatement of the obvious. The following quotation is most pertinent by way of defence, for although it is concerned more with the conjectural tendencies of New Testament studies, it still highlights the differences between the interpretative method used here and the more hypothetical tendencies in the cult-functional approach:

¹ Cf. G W Anderson, ' "Sicut Cervus" ', p. 388, quoted in the Introduction to this thesis, p. 4.

² Cf. pp. iii-ix for the list of psalms used to illustrate the characteristics of personal piety throughout this thesis. The majority of examples are found in the psalms of the individual; the communal psalms have far fewer entries.

"...These men ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence is their obvious inability to read....the lines themselves. They claim to see fern-seed and can't see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight." ³

An interpretation of the psalms by way of reading "the lines themselves" before reading "between the lines" gives rise to several implications which impinge directly upon contemporary psalmic studies using the cult-functional analysis.

First, the primary interest in the life-experiences of the psalmists reveals that a tremendous variety of personal insights is represented within the Psalter. The chapter on the psalmists' different responses to death and life is one example of this diversity. ⁴ Another is in a later chapter which shows how the psalmists experienced their communion with God in many different ways. ⁵

Too often studies on the psalms have over-classified them by using one predominant interpretative method. This was referred to several times in the first chapter on the history of the problem. ⁶ The most obvious example is the way that the cult-functional interpretation has proposed one major festival as explaining why most of the collections of psalms were preserved. Given the evidence of the diversity of personal experiences and insights throughout all

³ Cf. C.S. Lewis, 'Fern-seed and Elephants' in Christian Reflections, Glasgow, 1967, 1981 ⁵, pp. 191-208, here, p. 197.

⁴ Cf. Chapter Five, 'Death, Life and God', pp. 182-3 and pp. 203-4, on the variety of responses to death and life.

⁵ Cf. Chapter Six, 'Communion with God', pp. 231-2 and p. 235.

⁶ Cf. Chapter One, 'A History of the Problem', pp. 15-16, pp. 20-21, pp. 24ff. and pp. 31ff. for examples of this approach.

psalm types, it is difficult to presume that the majority of psalms can be fixed upon one axiomatic point. There are sufficient problems in finding any cohesive theme for a theology of the Old Testament overall, and it is even more doubtful that the psalms should be made to cohere together in this way. G.W. Anderson rightly observes that within the Psalter there is only an "organic unity", and this arises from different types of worship and prayer:

"Its unity is not the formal unity of a carefully articulated statement, but the organic unity which is given to it by a worshipping community."

We can only conclude that a study of the diverse personal experiences of the psalmists results in recognising the need for caution regarding those interpretations which seek to reorganize most of the psalms around one dominant theme.

Second, this study has also resulted in an awareness of the anonymity and ambiguity of the poetry of the psalmists. The cult-functional explanation of this "anonymity" and "ambiguity" is to assume the psalmists are not concerned with one specific experience at all. Against this, an assessment of the personal piety of the psalmists has shown that although the precise details of a life-experience are usually enigmatically expressed, this need not eliminate all possibility of a genuine personal experience giving rise to the composition of a psalm. The universal validity of the psalms need not be explained by proposing they pertain to nothing in particular; instead, their reusable nature could point to a

⁷ Cf. G.W. Anderson, 'Israel's Creed: Sung, not Signed', in SJTh 16 (1963), pp. 277-85; here, p. 284. See also pp. 280 and 285.

remarkable combination of a particular personal focus alongside the ambiguity often found in poetry, which together enables them to be appropriated personally by anyone sharing a similar life-experience.

Although the cult-functional interpretation is cautious in its affirmation that once-for-all specific life-experiences prompted the composition of a psalm, a paradox noted earlier is that it also assumes that the psalm was integrally related to a particular cultic setting within a particular period of the history of the religion of Israel. However, if one applies the implications of the ambiguous and anonymous nature of the psalms, this kind of interpretation is inconsistent and as subjective as that which seeks to "historicise" the psalms in terms of personal biographies of the psalmists. Caution is required in assuming too much from what the psalmists leave unsaid about historical details of date, place, and authorship, but equally caution is necessary in assuming too much about any particular cultic setting. One illustration of this was in the chapter on the psalmists' expressions of trust in God, which showed how the primary interest should be in the content of expressions of trust, rather than the hypothetical religio-cultural context behind them.⁸ Similarly, the chapter on penitence illustrated that although the psalmists were speaking out of particular life-experiences, explicit details could not be ascertained either about their personal biographies, or about any supposed cultic setting.⁹

T.C. Butler summarises this tension between the genuinely personal nature of the psalms and their historical ambiguity in the

⁸ Cf. Chapter Three, 'Trust in God', pp. 120-23.

⁹ Cf. Chapter Four, 'Penitence before God', pp. 159-61.

following way:

"In the Psalms, piety deals with the emotional level more than the objective-event level of human existence. Modern interest in determining the exact situation in which psalms were originally used is thwarted by the very nature of the piety which lies behind them. The Psalms use language directed to God expressing the state of the relationship with God at the present moment. Such language does not pause to describe the events which led to the present situation within the relationship."¹⁰

The ambiguity in the expressions of personal piety in the psalms should result in an attitude of caution when assuming exactly how much can be known of their original religio-historical context. The psalms paradoxically suggest profoundly personal life-settings which are referred to in ambiguous terms. Whether the psalmists sometimes wrote entirely for themselves, or with an eye to others using their prayers, is thus a secondary issue. The primary issue is that because the psalmists integrate the whole spectrum of human experience within their psalms, they have such a universal appeal, regardless of what can be known of their original cultural setting.

Third, this assessment has frequently referred to the creative tension that exists between traditionalism and personality in the psalms. The cult-functional emphasis on the primary role of traditionalism has been critically discussed at various points in this thesis.¹¹ The main concern was that there was a need to balance "traditionalism" with an equal emphasis on "personality", by taking more seriously the individual and creative contributions of those composing the prayers. For example, the confessions of

¹⁰ Cf. Butler, 'Piety in the Psalms', pp. 391-2.

¹¹ For critical assessments of Mowinckel's interpretation, see the Introduction to this thesis, pp. 2ff.; Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 84-85; Chapter Seven, 'Suffering before God', pp. 309ff.; Chapter Eight, 'Pleasing God', pp. 370-73.

Jeremiah could only be adequately understood by giving due consideration to the influence of the prophetic personality found within these complaints.¹² So too within the psalms, the chapter on suffering showed how the personality of the psalmists, when occupied with critical issues of pain and fear, also broke through the traditional forms and formulae of their day.¹³ Similarly the discussion of the psalmists' perceptions of what pleased God concluded that the particular personal emphases of the composers often resulted in them adapting conventional cultic language and theology in creative and independent ways.¹⁴

Although he never intended it, the consequence of Mowinckel's cult-functional method has been to polarise traditionalism and personality in the psalms, by being over-critical of the role of personal effusion, and by being excessively concerned with their cultic function. Such a dichotomy is clearly most unhelpful. Ringgren's discussion of this issue is but one example of how the freedom and spontaneity of personality and the structure and formality of liturgical function need one another, as seen in the following extract:

¹² Cf. Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', Section III, 'The Confessions and the Psalms: A Balance of "Traditionalism" and "Personality"', pp. 71ff.

¹³ Cf. Chapter Seven, 'Suffering before God', pp. 286ff.

¹⁴ Cf. Chapter Eight, 'Pleasing God', pp. 347-8, pp. 362-3 and p. 369.

"Il ne faut pas exag rer la r action et... tablir une opposition fondamentale entre "culte" et "pi t "...en disant que le culte est un obstacle pour la vraie pi t , qui se d veloppe mieux sans les formes ext rieures du culte. En r alite il y a une r ciprocit  parfaite entre le culte et la pi t : le culte est une mode d'expression de la pi t , et la pi t  d rive et se nourrit du culte." ¹⁵

This thesis has been a similar attempt to bring together these two aspects as complementary parts of the same whole. The means of doing so has been by repeatedly stressing the "life-centredness" of the psalms, whereby both the personal and traditional elements in a psalm are given equal consideration, so that both their particularity and their universal validity are properly emphasised.

The first chapter showed that, since the contributions of Gunkel, psalmic studies have increasingly fallen into a state of impasse, which is mainly due to the predominant cult-functional emphasis. The same chapter also illustrated how Gunkel's own works on the Psalter avoided these later excesses, in that he was able to hold together both the traditional and personal aspects of psalmody. ¹⁶ This balance in his writing is striking, in that his

¹⁵ Cf. Ringgren, 'Quelques traits essentiels de la pi t  des Psaumes' (1957), p. 205; also The Faith of the Psalmists, pp. x and pp. xix-xxii.

¹⁶ See Chapter One, 'A History of the Problem', pp. 18-19 and p. 41. See also Chapter Two, 'The Confessions of Jeremiah', pp. 46ff. and pp. 78ff. Comments from GHAT and the Einleitung in the footnotes of later chapters in this thesis have also shown the seriousness with which Gunkel understood the individual creativity and genuinely experienced piety of the psalmists.

untimely death in 1932 was before the real impact of cult-functional studies occurred. It is to the detriment of psalmic studies that comparatively few of Gunkel's works have been published in English, and that so much of his own form-critical analysis has been taken to extremes which he himself clearly never intended. The following extract is a good example of Gunkel's sensitive approach to the piety of the psalmists:

"Die Psalmen sind ein Höhepunkt der religiösen Dichtung: die Hymnen reden in unvergänglicher Sprache von der einzigen Majestät der religion Israels; in den Klageliedern ertönen Naturlaute der Frömmigkeit. Freilich ist das Individuum auch hier nur relativ frei: eng begrenzt ist der Umkreis der Gedanken, die ihm auszusprechen erlaubt ist; das Konkrete, nur diesem Einen Geschehene, tritt in diesen Liedern zurück; nicht sowohl grosse Dichter haben sie gebildet, sondern einfache Männer aus dem Volke haben in ihnen ihr Herz ergossen. Trotzdem bleiben diese Psalmen ein köstlicher Schatz, den Frommen aller Zeiten wohl bekannt."¹⁷

This thesis has been unashamedly influenced by Gunkel's insights into the nature and purpose of the psalms. The above quotation, selected from Gunkel's many observations on the piety of the psalmists, is a fitting acknowledgement of an indebtedness to the most prolific psalmic scholar this century. It is also a way of indicating that it is necessary to look back into the history of psalmic scholarship some fifty years earlier, in order to regain confidence about a different direction for psalmic studies in the future. A renewed interest in scholars such as Gunkel will serve to give the complex issue of personal piety in the psalms the balanced perspective it needs.

¹⁷ Cf. 'Ältere Psalmendichtung' in 'Die israelitische Literatur', Die Kultur der Gegenwart, (herausg. P. Hinneberg), p. 89.