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Steven John Lindsey Croft

The Identity of the Individual in the Book of Psalms

The aim of the thesis is to discover the identity of the individual in each of the ninety-three psalms in which an "I" occurs and to assign each of these psalms to a context in the cultic religion of ancient Israel. After the introduction, which explores briefly the current state of the debate and explains the methodology adopted here, the thesis falls into two halves: Part I examines the two questions in psalm studies which are most closely related to the question of the "I" in the psalms namely the identity, or several identities, of the antagonists in the psalms and the meaning of the various terms translated "poor". This lays the foundation for the examination and classification of the psalms of the individual in Part II. These psalms are discussed in the three divisions of royal psalms, psalms of the private person and psalms which are best assigned to the cultic ministers (the cultic prophets, wisdom teachers and temple poets). Within this main division a further classification is attempted on the basis of the situation which appears to underly the use of these psalms in temple worship. In the case of the royal psalms, this leads to an examination of the royal ritual and a new reconstruction of this ritual is put forward. The thesis concludes that just under half of the individual psalms were written for the king's use; about a third of the remainder were intended to be used in the cult by private persons and the remaining psalms are the work of, and intended to be delivered by, the ministers of Israel's cult.

The identity of the individual in the  
Book of Psalms

(2 volumes)

Volume I

by

Steven John Lindsey Croft

Ph.D.

University of Durham

Department of Theology

1984

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21. AUG. 1984

Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTSVolume I

Declaration and statement of copyright	8
Acknowledgements	9
<u>Introduction:</u>	10
1. The aim of the thesis and an outline of the argument	10
a) The complex problem	11
b) The complex solution	13
2. Assumptions and distinctions	15
 PART ONE: QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE IDENTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE PSALMS	 19
 <u>Chapter One: The antagonists in the psalms</u>	 20
1. <u>Introduction</u>	20
2. <u>History of the problem; Birkeland and Rosenbaum</u>	21
a) The background to the problem	21
b) The arguments of Birkeland	22
c) Response to Birkeland	24
d) Two general arguments against Birkeland	28
e) A challenge to Birkeland's theory: the work of Rosenbaum	31
3. <u>The wicked in the psalms</u>	37
a) Didactic poems (Pss. 1, 32, 34, 39, 73, 112 and 11)	39
b) Songs of Yahweh's judgement (Pss. 50, 58, 75, 82, 97, 36, 12 and 94)	46
c) Royal Psalms (Pss. 101, 26, 141, 91 and 28)	56
d) "Incidental" appearances in hymnody (Pss. 104, 145, 146 and 147)	63
e) The prayer of an accused man (Ps. 109)	64
f) Three "nationalistic" psalms (Pss. 140, 125 and 129)	65
4. <u>The enemy in the psalms</u>	66
a) War psalms (Pss. 74, 80, 44, 66, 21, 45, 72, 110, 132, 18, 59, 138, 102, 27, 56, 69, 61, 89, 143 78, 81, 83, 8, 42-3)	68
b) Other situations (Pss. 127, 6, 13, 30, 54, 38, 41, 25 and 35)	79

5.	<u>Psalms referring to both "רָשָׁעִים" and "אֲבִיָּא"</u>	85
	a) Psalms in which the enemies are external and the wicked internal (Ps. 106)	88
	b) Psalms in which the enemies are internal (Pss. 37, 55, 71, 92, 119 and 139)	89
	c) Psalms in which the wicked are external (Pss. 68, 3 and 31)	93
	d) Psalms in which the king opposes internal רָשָׁעִים and external אֲבִיָּא (Pss. 7, 17, 9-10)	94
6.	<u>Conclusion</u>	95
	a) On the antagonists in the psalms	95
	b) On the study of the psalms	96
	 <u>Chapter Two: The poor in the psalms</u>	 98
1.	<u>Introduction</u>	98
2.	<u>The background to the problem: the work of Schultz</u>	99
	a) The questions	99
	b) The background to the study of the problem	100
	c) The work of Carl Schultz	102
3.	<u>The poor in the psalms</u>	109
	a) Psalms of the individual	115
	i) Psalms betraying a wisdom influence: the poor as objects of charity or oppression (Pss. 41, 112, 146, 37, 49)	115
	ii) Psalms of judgement: the salvation of the poor (Pss. 82, 12, 72, 94)	122
	iii) Psalms of lament: the poor man's plea for the defense (Pss. 102, 109, 70, 88, 35, 86)	126
	iv) Other psalms (Pss. 113, 34)	129
	b) Royal psalms	130
	i) Psalms in which the king prays as an individual (Pss. 40, 140, 116)	130
	ii) Psalms in which the king represents the community (Pss. 22, 69, 31)	132
	c) Psalms of the community (Pss. 68, 74, 103, 76, 25, 9-10, 14, 107)	134
4.	<u>Conclusion</u>	140
	 <u>PART TWO: A CLASSIFICATION OF THE PSALMS WHICH CONTAIN A REFERENCE TO AN INDIVIDUAL</u>	 143
	 <u>Chapter Three: The individual in the psalms as the king</u>	 144

1.	<u>Introduction</u>	144
2.	<u>How many psalms are royal?</u>	145
	a) An outline of Eaton's position	145
	b) Predisposing factors for extensive royal identification	148
	c) Arguments for a royal identification of particular psalms	149
	d) Results of the investigation	156
3.	<u>The Royal Psalms and the Ritual</u>	157
	a) An outline of the autumn festival	158
	b) A royal humiliation ritual? The work of Johnson and Eaton	163
	c) An alternative reconstruction of the royal ritual	170
	i) The preparation for the festival (Pss. 26, 17, 7, 5, 139, 94, 101, 41, 91, 27, 132)	172
	ii) Procession and battle (Ps. 118)	193
	iii) The confirmation of kingship (Pss. 2, 144, 92, 40, 110, 72, 21, 61)	194
	iv) Psalm 9-10	199
	d) Conclusion	206
4.	<u>General Historical royal psalms</u>	208
	a) War Psalms	208
	i) Prayers for aid in battle (Pss. 3, 44, 56, 57, 60, 108, 69, 89, 20)	212
	ii) Prayers of thanksgiving (Pss. 18, 66)	224
	iii) Prayers for times of siege (Pss. 22, 59, 31)	229
	iv) Other psalms (Pss. 140, 143, 102, 25, 51)	239
	b) Prayers from other situations of need	243
	i) Prayers against treachery (Pss. 55, 62, 71)	243
	ii) Prayers in sickness (Pss. 38, 116, 28)	246
	c) Psalms of Assurance (Pss. 23, 16, 138, 63)	249
	d) Psalm 45	251
5.	<u>Conclusion</u>	251

Volume II

<u>Chapter Four: The individual as a private person</u>		5
1.	<u>Introduction</u>	5
2.	<u>Exegesis of Psalms</u>	11
	a) General petitions (Pss. 54, 13, 6)	11
	b) Psalms of sickness (Pss. 41, 88, 30)	17
	c) Prayers in time of persecution (Pss. 70, 35, 109, 64, 142, 86)	21
	d) Individual psalms among the Psalms of Ascents (Pss. 120, 121, 122, 123, 130, 131)	32
3.	<u>Conclusion</u>	36

<u>Chapter Five: The individual as a minister of the cult</u>	39
1. <u>Introduction</u>	39
2. <u>The "I" in the psalms as a cultic prophet</u> (Pss. 78, 77, 81, 75, 74, 83, 85, 52, 36, 20, 110)	40
3. <u>The "I" in the psalms as a wisdom teacher</u>	53
a) Didactic psalms containing instruction and/or testimony (Pss. 37, 49, 32, 34, 73, 4)	56
b) Psalms of Praise (Pss. 11, 19, 119)	64
c) A protest poem (Ps. 39)	68
4. <u>The "I" in the psalms as a temple singer</u>	70
a) Incidental appearances by the temple singers (Pss. 8, 145, 146, 104, 103, 106, 135, 45)	72
b) Three testimonies of the temple poets (Pss. 84, 42-3, 137)	76
5. <u>Conclusion</u>	80
 <u>Conclusion</u>	 81
 <u>Appendix I: The background to the study of the poor</u>	 88
1. The ancient Near Eastern background	88
a) Mesopotamian material	89
b) Egypt	92
c) Ugarit	93
d) Conclusions	94
2. The poor in the Old Testament outside the psalms	94
a) "אֲבִי" "אֲבִי"	95
b) "אֲבִי" "אֲבִי"	100
c) "אֲבִי"	104
d) Conclusions	107
 <u>Appendix II: An ideology of kingship</u>	 109
1. Introductory remarks	109
2. The warrior and the judge: the two functions of the king in the ancient Near East and in the Old Testament	111
a) The king as warrior	112
b) The king as judge	118



3.	The king as witness	123
4.	The sacral nature of Israel's kingship	125
<u>Appendix III:</u>	<u>The psalms of the individual as evidence of spirituality and private devotion in Israel</u>	128
<u>Appendix IV:</u>	<u>A summary of the results of the research</u>	136
<u>Notes</u>		142
Introduction		142
Chapter One		144
Chapter Two		149
Chapter Three		152
Chapter Four		163
Chapter Five		167
Appendices		175
<u>Bibliography</u>		183
<u>Index of Psalms</u>		195
<u>Abbreviations</u>		203
<u>Addenda (A)</u>		204
<u>List of Diagrams</u>	<u>Volume I</u>	
Figure 1:	The meaning of the different terms for poor	139
Figure 2:	Distribution of divine epithets with first person singular suffix among royal and non-royal psalms.	154

I certify that the material of this thesis is the product of my own research and that no part of it has been submitted for a degree to this or any other university.

Stam J. L. Craft.

21st March, 1984.

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Steven Croft

Enfield,  
March, 1984.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. THE AIM OF THE THESIS AND AN OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT

The question of the identity of the individual in the psalms has been the subject of intense debate amongst Old Testament scholars ever since the traditional view that the psalms were composed by David began to break down with the advent of biblical criticism. Despite this prolonged debate however, it would be true to say that a satisfactory solution to the problem has not yet been reached. In several recent summaries of the state of psalm studies this area is named as one of the two key controversial issues in the study of the psalter (1). In the course of the discussion of this question several different theories as to the identity of the "I" in the psalms have been proposed (2). The individual in the psalms, it has been claimed, is predominantly one who is unjustly accused, or a sick man, or the king. However, none of these theories can be made to fit all, or even most, of the evidence available, nor has any one theory come to command widespread acceptance. The identity of the individual in the psalms remains an enigma.



Against the background of this debate the central aim of this research has been to investigate the question of the identity of the "I" in the psalms as fully and as widely as possible. At an early stage in the research it became necessary to recognise both that the problem itself is complex and involves a number of separate questions and that this complex problem demands a complex solution. These points must be established with some care because of the bearing they have both on the overall shape of the thesis and upon the results of the research.

a) The complex problem

The problem of the identity of the individual in the psalms is complex because it involves answering several different questions, all of which are inter-related and all of which must be answered in any solution put forward.

i) As a foundation for the study some understanding must be reached of the relationship between the person or group who composed a given psalm and the person or persons by whom the psalm was intended to be delivered in the cult. My own understanding of this relationship, set out below, follows that proposed by Mowinckel in that, for the most part, the psalms are not seen as autobiographical accounts of private experiences but liturgies composed for the use of certain categories of person for certain types of situation in the temple cult. Although the probability of this hypothesis will not be argued at length in a separate chapter, the whole of the thesis, in so far as it gives a satisfactory account of the individual psalms, must be seen to confirm Mowinckel's view.

ii) Any satisfactory solution to the problem of the identity of the individual must also present a satisfactory solution to the problem of the identity of the antagonists in the psalms. In several theories presented, notably in the work of the Scandinavian scholar Harris Birkeland (3) the problem of the identity of the individual is approached exclusively through the problem of the antagonists. Hence the first chapter of the thesis contains a full examination of this problem and attempts to present a solution which will satisfy all of the relevant evidence. The chapter deals, along the way, with an important issue thrown up by the antagonists debate, namely the issue of "standard language" or of the consistent use and meaning of certain words throughout the psalms.

iii) Again in the work of Birkeland (4), but also in the work of other scholars such as Carl Schultz (5), the words translated "poor" or "afflicted", particularly the terms "עֲנִי" and "עָרֵב" have presented a large subsidiary problem in themselves. Are they to be interpreted literally or metaphorically, as referring to the individual or to the nation? Accordingly, Chapter 2 examines the problem of the poor in the psalms in some detail and, in tracing the different use made of these words, also establishes the importance of the understanding of metaphor for a correct understanding of the psalms of the individual.

iv) Finally, although there is comparatively little debate about the cultic setting of the psalms of the private person and those assigned to ministers of the cult, no examination of the royal psalms would be complete without engaging with the theories which have been put forward in recent years, particularly by the British

scholars Johnson and Eaton (6), on the ritual setting of certain of these psalms. Discussion of the problem of royal ritual is set in the context of discussion of the royal psalms in Chapter 3.

b) The complex solution

It is my belief, substantiated in this thesis, that complex problems often demand complex solutions. This conviction accounts for an important difference between my own methodology and that of other scholars who have examined the problem of the individual in the psalms. The approach of very many writers on the subject has been to concentrate on one hypothesis only, arguing that the "I" is always (or mainly) a persecuted individual (7) or the nation personified (8) or else the Davidic king himself (9). The assumption underlying this approach, although this is not overtly stated, would seem to be the assumption that psalms which share the same form of, say, individual lament, must also share the same "sitz im leben" in terms of their context in the cult. This is, of course, not the case, as is argued below, and content can be taken as a reliable guide to cultic context, taking us further than the foundation given by form criticism. The human (rather than logical) consequence of this methodology has been that the hypothesis in question, because it is the only one under discussion, attracts to itself as many psalms as possible and consequently the whole case put forward by a given author is weakened.

In an effort to avoid this dilemma my own method throughout has been to:

- i.) set out the available options as to the solution of a given problem;

- ii) to examine all the psalms relevant to that problem so as to ensure that any theory accounts for all of the evidence;
- iii) to assign each psalm to the likeliest of the available options allowing, where necessary, for exceptions and indicating any areas of uncertainty.

The picture which emerges on the issue of the identity of the individual is less uniform than that proposed by many scholars but seems better to account for the total sum of evidence in the psalter.

Given the complex nature of both problem and solution, the thesis is presented in two parts. Part I attempts to build a secure foundation for the main enquiry in that the two questions which must be answered along with the question of the identity of the individual are examined in some detail. Chapter 1 re-examines the question of the antagonist in the psalms, as was mentioned above, whilst Chapter 2 attempts to discover the meaning of the different terms for "poor". Once this foundation has been laid a full classification and discussion of the 93 psalms which mention an individual in the whole or in part is undertaken in Part II (10). Chapter 3 contains a classification and exegesis of those psalms which are best seen as written for recitation by the king; in the course of this chapter the relationship between the royal psalms and the annual royal ritual is discussed in some detail and a new reconstruction of the festal rites is put forward. Chapter 4 deals with the small group of psalms which have been preserved in the psalter for recitation by the private person in Israel and attempts to classify these psalms in accordance with the danger envisaged in each. Finally, Chapter 5 examines those individual psalms which



appear to have been composed and delivered by the ministers of the cult in Israel: the cult prophets, wisdom teachers and the temple poets.

However, before commencing the main argument, several assumptions which operate throughout the thesis need to be stated and several distinctions drawn.

## 2. ASSUMPTIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

i) It is assumed throughout the thesis that the origin of the psalms is closely connected with ancient Israel's cult and that the majority of psalms were composed for public or private use in the pre-exilic temple, although the psalter does contain exilic and post-exilic compositions and was compiled in the post-exilic period. The evidence for this view is collated by Mowinckel (11) and the position is supported by almost all scholars who have studied the psalms in the modern era.

ii) Accordingly, as was mentioned above, in the majority of cases a distinction needs to be made between the composer of a psalm and the person, or type of person, who was intended to deliver the piece in cultic worship. Despite the arguments laid down by Mowinckel and others, commentators on the psalms of the stature of Weiser and Jacquet still tend to treat many of the individual psalms as the direct testimony of their composers. As will be shown, in certain of the psalms delivered by cultic personnel we may have such a testimony; furthermore the wisdom teachers use an artificial testimony style as a means of educating the people. In the vast majority of instances however the poet is describing not his own experiences

but is projecting himself into the situation for which he writes the psalm (although, as with all writing, his personal experience would doubtless inform his work) (12).

iii) It follows from this that in seeking the context or "sitz im leben" of a psalm we are not enquiring, in most cases, after the particular events which gave rise to its composition but the type of ceremony for which it was composed and the type of distress (in the case of laments) which is envisaged. It would be true to say that a general scepticism is prevalent on the whole issue of our being able to discover what manner of suffering underlies many of the laments. I have not myself been able to share this scepticism but have found that, if one psalm is carefully compared with another, similarities and differences do emerge and metaphor can be untangled leading, in most cases, to a satisfactory exegesis of the situation envisaged by the piece in question. In Chapters 3 and 4 below a classification of royal psalms and private person psalms has been undertaken on the basis of the type of situation envisaged by the psalm. This has been conducted on the methodology described above: by setting out the possible options (which are, after all, quite limited) and assigning each of the psalms in question to the most likely option.

iv) However, any such analysis as this, which seeks to classify the psalms of the individual, must rely upon an analysis of content as much as upon an analysis of form precisely because psalms sharing the same basic form of individual lament may be addressed to different spokesmen in the cult, questions which can only be answered from the content of a psalm. Clearly a balance must be sought

between the one extreme of seeing each psalm as an isolated composition as did the older generation of critics before Gunkel, and the other extreme of interpreting whole groups of psalms in the same way because they share the same form. Although Gunkel's basic fourfold division of the psalms on the basis of tone and the number of speakers is a solid starting point for psalm criticism we must proceed beyond this if we are to understand the psalms in their original setting. One of the main weaknesses of A.A. Anderson's popular commentary on the psalms is that a great deal of energy is expended discussing the "form" of a psalm although this, if and when it is discovered, yields very little information at all about the original context of the piece in question (13). To proceed further we must pay careful attention to content (14).

v) Finally, careful attention must clearly be paid to the wider context of the psalms both in the Old Testament and in the surrounding cultures of the ancient Near East. Some attempt has been made throughout the thesis to link many of the psalms with types of situations described in the narrative books of the Old Testament. An understanding of this immediate context is again particularly helpful in the understanding of particular concepts such as "poor" or "enemies" which is attempted in Part I. The ancient Near Eastern environment is clearly important in this and any theory as to the identity of the individual in the psalms must take into account the evidence of the surrounding cultures as to how psalms and prayers were used outside Israel. Discussion of this background material can be found throughout the thesis but particularly in Appendices I and II, discussing the background to an understanding of the poor and the royal ideology

respectively, and in the discussion of royal ritual in Chapter 3 below.

The enquiry begins then with an examination of the question of the identity of the antagonists in the psalms.

NB. Page numbers in the text distinguished by an asterisk ("\*") refer to pages in Volume II. All other references are to Volume I.

The Psalms are quoted in English in the Revised Standard Version (1952) unless otherwise indicated. The initials "AT" indicate the author's own translation. The numbering of verses follows the English translations, again unless otherwise stated.

PART ONE: QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE  
IDENTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE PSALMS

## CHAPTER ONE: THE ANTAGONISTS IN THE PSALMS

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the question of the antagonists in the psalms by the following stages:

- i) A brief summary of the discussion to date will be given concentrating in particular on the influential work of the Scandinavian scholar Harris Birkeland.
- ii) The results of a semantic field study into the terms for "antagonist" conducted by S.N. Rosenbaum will be presented. These are found to give a convincing challenge to Birkeland's thesis, in particular in the contention that the different terms for antagonist each carry a separate and distinguishable meaning. This is most evident in the case of the two most frequently used words "אֲבִיבִים" and "רְשָׁעִים".
- iii) The exegesis of specific psalms, which takes up the bulk of the chapter sets out to test the results of Rosenbaum's statistical study with an attempt to recover the identity of the אֲבִיבִים or רְשָׁעִים

in each psalm in which the two occur, either individually or together. This enquiry divides the psalms in question into three groups:

- a) psalms in which **רָשָׁעִים** only occur
- b) psalms in which **אֲבֹנִים** only occur and
- c) psalms in which both terms occur together.

It will be discovered that, although Rosenbaum's study has been used as a springboard to the problem my own conclusions differ both from his and from those of Birkeland.

iv) A conclusion will attempt to pick up not only the main results of the investigation but other observations which will throw the work forward, as it were, into more specific study of the individual in the psalms in Part II of the thesis.

## 2. HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM; BIRKELAND AND ROSENBAUM

### a) The background to the problem

Several good and detailed accounts of the problem of the antagonists in the psalms are available and so the general history of the subject will not be discussed in great depth here (1). As long as the question of the date and authorship of the psalms could be answered by the theory of Davidic authorship then the question of the antagonists itself could also be answered in these terms. The enemies were identified with the many enemies we know from accounts of David's life in the biblical narratives. The question was raised in a more acute form however with the rise of the more critical scholarship of the nineteenth century and was linked with the question of the date and origin of the psalms. Broadly speaking, the two groups of **רָשָׁעִים** or **אֲבֹנִים** on the one hand and **צַדִּיקִים** or **יְהוֹדִים** on the other

were initially seen as two groups within Israel, rival sects of Judaism and, partly for this reason, the psalms themselves were assigned to the post-exilic period when such groups are known to have existed during the fragmentation of Judaism under Hellenistic influence. This view in turn was challenged by the work of the early form critics, and Mowinckel in particular, who encouraged an earlier dating of many of the psalms to the pre-exilic period; hence the problem of the antagonists as it is known in its modern form arose.

Not all of the various solutions proposed will be discussed here. Mowinckel's own view, at the time of his publication of the "Psalmenstudien" was that the individual laments were mainly psalms of individuals in sickness or other adversity. Mowinckel thought he perceived a causative link between the affliction of the psalmist and his enemies. Also he argued from a derivation of the compound " **פְּזִי-אֲוִי** " - the third most common designation for the antagonists and one which is found only within the psalter. He claimed that " **אֲוִי** " has as its root meaning "power". Hence the **פְּזִי-אֲוִי** were workers of power, or magicians, who, by their incantations, were believed to cause the psalmists evil (2).

However, Mowinckel himself was subsequently to renounce his theory, at least in part, convinced by the arguments of his own pupil Birkeland.

#### b) The arguments of Birkeland

Whereas Gunkel and Mowinckel both began their investigations from psalms which they held to be indubitable psalms of sickness and proceeded to eliminate those which might otherwise be held to have a national or collective reference, Birkeland began



from the other end, from what he regarded as indubitably national features and proceeded to eliminate suggested references to sickness and private enemies (3). Birkeland discovered in the national psalms of lament and in certain individual lament psalms (9-10, 42-3, 54, 56, 59) that the enemies are explicitly identified as **גוים** or **עַמֵּי** i.e. the gentile nations with whom Israel was continually at war.

This interpretation can be supported with certainty by a further 18 psalms in the three categories of National, Royal and Individual Psalms and is supported in "Die Feinde des Individuums" (1933) with much exegesis. The overall pattern of the argument is, however, quite simple:

- i) the antagonists (4) can clearly be identified as gentiles in 20 plus psalms
- ii) the antagonists in the other psalms are described in exactly the same way
- iii) therefore, unless some substantial evidence can be brought to the contrary the antagonists in these psalms must be gentiles also.

In reviewing the opposition to "Die Feinde" in his later book "The Evildoers in the book of Psalms" Birkeland finds that no adequate evidence has been brought forward to contest his views. He goes on to give a succinct statement of his arguments without the detailed exegesis of the earlier work and, in fact, hardens his line. Whereas in "Die Feinde" he had been prepared to admit that certain psalms were genuinely individual as opposed to Royal or, as Mowinckel calls them, national psalms of lament in the "I" form (5) in "Evildoers" he retracts that concession and argues that all the antagonists are gentiles either outside Israel and in a state of war or within Israel and representatives of the occupying power. He concludes his

later book with the dogmatic statement:

"The evildoers in the book of psalms are gentiles in all cases where a definite collective body or its representatives are meant!"

c) Response to Birkeland

Birkeland's contribution to the debate on the identity of the antagonists in the psalms is powerfully argued and has had a large measure of influence even among those who would not accept this position in its more extreme form. In particular, his study paved the way towards regarding many more of the psalms as royal, or as national psalms in the "I" form, a conclusion which was taken up and undergirded by the arguments of Mowinckel (6) and Eaton (7) and which is generally supported in this study. His arguments do contain fundamental weaknesses however which will be explored below once the general response to Birkeland's position has been outlined.

Mowinckel's own response to Birkeland's work in "Die Feinde" was perhaps the most dramatic and entailed an almost complete reversal of his previous position. Birkeland's main point was that many of the "I" psalms were not psalms of individual piety but, as Mowinckel later called them, national psalms of lamentation in the "I" form. In Birkeland's argument this former point depends upon the identification of the enemies as the foreign nations, a position which Mowinckel was willing to concede in PIW:

"That in these psalms (i.e. national psalms of lament in the "I" form) we are dealing first and foremost with national and political enemies and antagonists has been proved first and foremost by Birkeland (Feinde des Individuums) even if he somewhat exaggerates his position!" (8)

Mowinckel also finds himself able to accept Birkeland's thesis on a common pattern describing the  $\text{עָוֵי}$  and the  $\text{אֵיבִי}$  when he writes:

"As a rule it is not possible to tell which peoples or rulers are intended by the "enemies" in the psalm in question. The reason is that in Ancient Israel, as in Akkadian literature, there existed a traditional pattern according to which the evildoers,  $\text{עָוֵי}$ , - the enemies are always  $\text{אֵיבִי}$  - are described!" (9)

The point at which Mowinckel disputes Birkeland's case is the extension of the argument to cover all the individual psalms and Birkeland's consequent denial that there are no true individual psalms of sickness in the psalter (10). In the case of these individual psalms, Mowinckel still clings to his former conclusion that there is a causative relationship between the antagonists and sickness as in, for example, Psalm 6. Hence the enemies in the psalms may be internal, being personal enemies of the psalmist (11) - although Mowinckel in fact concedes that "several factors indicate that the psalms of illness themselves were originally composed for the use of the king" (12).

The British scholar John Eaton takes a similar view of the individual psalms to that of Mowinckel and so welcomes Birkeland's main conclusion, that most of the psalms are royal, although he considers that "Birkeland's thesis might be improved if it took more account of the influence of the festal rites and their theology of kingship" (13). However, on the question of the identity of the enemies in the psalms, Eaton regards Birkeland's arguments as rather shaky and gives the following comments:

"Less secure is Birkeland's argument that the enemies of the king are more likely to be external than internal; he allows exceptions only where there are positive indications to this effect. But a full appreciation of the role of God's anointed would rather lead to a blurring of the distinction between Israelite and foreign trouble makers ..... Exegesis in terms of foreign armies needs support from the particular context as much as would any other interpretation" (14).

It is hoped that the arguments below will demonstrate that in fact the distinction between internal and external enemies is not blurred as such in the psalms but that opposition to the two is focussed in the person of the king in his dual capacity as warrior and judge. Birkeland has not perceived, as Eaton suggests, that the king can be equally opposed to forces within the nation as to forces outside it.

Eaton's own view of the enemies is that all opposition to Yahweh's anointed is focussed in the powers of chaos whom the king opposes in the cult and the enemies themselves may comprise supernatural powers, foreign nations or internal enemies. He agrees with Birkeland however in so far as he sees no distinction between the different words describing the antagonists in the psalter.

The tendency of Weiser in this discussion (as in most others) is to connect the categories of the righteous and the wicked to the covenant renewal festival to which he links many of the psalms. The views of Birkeland and Mowinckel are both regarded as doing violence to the text:

"The picture of the wicked which can be obtained from the psalms of lamentation shows too many shades to admit of its being pressed into such a narrow conception. The designation of the godly as **P'TY**

and of the wicked as **רָשָׁע** ("one who is decided against") are, on the contrary connected with the idea of judgement peculiar to the cult of the covenant and with the exclusion of the wicked from the covenantal salvation" (15).

Many of Weiser's conclusions, and in particular this connection with judgement will be taken up below. However, although Weiser here points to a basic dissatisfaction with Birkeland's thesis he himself tends to the opposite extreme, seeing all enemies as these **רָשָׁעִים** excluded from the covenant community. His approach, which tends towards the exegesis of each psalm in isolation, leads to vagueness in the commentary itself in, for example, the discussion of Psalms 9-10 where no attempt is made to face the question of whether one or more groups of enemies are being discussed here and what the implications of this might be for the other psalms. To adopt this approach is to divorce each psalm in its turn from its wider context in the psalter and to deny the exegesis any light which the psalms as a whole shed on a particular interpretation.

Rather as Weiser, the British commentator A.A. Anderson can see no one solution to the problem, with his namesake G.W. Anderson (16), but allows each term to stand for enemies inside or outside of Israel (17).

It can be seen from the above that Birkeland's thesis has neither been wholly rejected nor wholly accepted by the scholarly community. There are two groups of scholars emerging here: several commentators have rejected a "pan-psalmic" approach, preferring instead to treat each psalm on its own or within the loose framework provided by Gunkel's original attempts at form criticism. These

scholars have generally rejected Birkeland's views in a passive manner. Secondly, a smaller but influential group comprising Mowinckel and Eaton, taking a more ~~comprehensive~~ approach to the psalter and its problems, have properly engaged with Birkeland and have been heavily influenced by him, particularly by his demonstration that many more of the psalms are royal than Gunkel had thought. However, both of these scholars express a fundamental dissatisfaction with Birkeland's thesis as being over exaggerated or too dogmatically stated. It is a dissatisfaction which stems from the observation that there are several psalms which simply do not fit Birkeland's assertion that all the enemies/wicked are gentiles. However, this vague unease is not pressed forward by those writers into actual argument from the text, a task which the discussion which follows will attempt to undertake. As a first stage two general arguments against Birkeland's case will be explored.

d) Two general arguments against Birkeland

i) Against Birkeland's view of the theology of the psalms

The view Birkeland is forced to take of the theology of the psalms itself speaks against his arguments. The view, found in the section "Evildoers in Israelite Religious History", (18) is that the psalms picture Israel's religion in social and nationalistic terms only. There are no enemies or evildoers within the nation itself. On the other hand all gentiles are evildoers and the only such worth mentioning in the psalms. All higher development in Israel's religion (particularly the notion of individual responsibility) is ascribed to the eighth century prophets. Any indications of either individual or national apostasy in the psalms are ascribed to

prophetic influence upon the psalter.

This view of Israelite religion and its development is untenable, at any rate unless supported by stronger arguments than Birkeland is able to give in this rather slim volume. The lines between prophets and psalmists have been drawn much closer together since Birkeland wrote, in particular in the work of Johnson and Eaton (19). Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that the prophets "invented" the concept of individual (as opposed to collective) responsibility: a highly developed system of law had operated in Israel at least since the inauguration of the monarchy and probably before which implied ethical as well as legal categories and also implied, inevitably, a concept of individual responsibility. The wisdom literature is also operating, as far back as we can tell, with concepts of right and wrong. To say that true revelation comes only with the eighth century prophets is to reject most of the Old Testament and is a statement which says more about the theological principles of its author than it does about the documents themselves.

However it is important to note also that Birkeland is led to this view of a strident nationalism in the psalms because his examination of the text has led him to the view that all the antagonists must be gentile enemies. That such a view can lead, indeed must lead, to such a jarring theological conclusion must lead us to question deeply, almost by an argument of *reductio ad absurdum*, the view of the text which leads to such a conclusion. It is hoped that a more satisfactory statement will be found below.

ii) Word Meaning

To what degree should we expect that a given term will carry a uniform meaning throughout the psalter? If term x can be shown to have a given meaning in, say, half a dozen psalms, to what extent should we be able to infer that it must carry that meaning in all cases? The question is a relevant one for the issue under discussion but one which is never overtly discussed, to my knowledge, by any of the commentators mentioned. There seem to be two extremes to be avoided here. On the one hand several commentators, including Eaton and G.W. Anderson, seem to take the view that a given term's precise meaning must be discovered from its immediate context alone. Thus in the case of the antagonist group of words, the "pattern" describing the antagonist cannot be said a priori to relate to any one group of people. Nor, by inference, can words such as "עָנִי", "עָנָו", "צַדִּיקִים" and "תַּסִּידִים". This approach takes account neither of the inherent conservatism of religious language and poetry generally, nor of the language of the psalms themselves in which stock phrases, metaphors, methods of description and symbols all appear to play a major role. The fact that the identity of the enemies is so rarely specified or expanded is actually evidence for the antagonists being a commonly understood symbol in ancient Israel's religious poetry. As was mentioned above, to reject the evidence of other psalms is to neglect evidence which may be vital to our understanding.

The opposite error is found in the work of Birkeland (and also to some degree in that of Rosenbaum discussed below) who both operate with what may be called a "code" concept of language.



Once a dominant meaning of a term has been discovered no variation is permitted. Hence if "אֲרִי" can be found to have a dominant meaning of "foreign belligerent enemy" it must always mean this in every case. A particular psalm is seen therefore merely as an assembly of words which take their full content of meaning from the tradition. However, this is to neglect the equally important role of an individual author. We must not be blind to the possibility that an individual psalmist could use an old word in a new way and so say something particularly new. For example, Birkeland's assumption that the words "אֲרִי" and "רִשָׁעִים" are synonymous, part of the pattern of words used to describe the enemies, rests very much on the five verses in which the two words are used in parallel (3:4, 17:9, 37:20, 55:2, 89:22) and several other psalms in which the two are linked. Rosenbaum's tactic, in opposing this view, as will be explained below, is to deny that the two words are referring to the same group even within these psalms. This seems possible in some cases but in others gives a very forced interpretation. It seems better to say that in a few psalms the psalmist is juxtaposing the two terms to give each a new meaning. In that case, what are in Birkeland key psalms or verses by which seven times their number of psalms are interpreted, would become on this understanding allowable exceptions to a more general pattern.

e) A challenge to Birkeland's theory: the work of Rosenbaum (20)

The following argument was identified in the discussion of Birkeland's work above:

- i) the antagonists can clearly be identified as gentiles in more than twenty psalms
- ii) the antagonists in the other psalms are described in exactly the same way
- iii) therefore, unless some substantial evidence is brought to the contrary, the antagonists in these psalms must be gentiles also.

It is clear that Birkeland's primary contention that the antagonists can clearly be identified as gentiles in twenty or more psalms is well supported by the evidence (21). What can be questioned however is assumption (ii) that the antagonists in the other psalms are described in exactly the same way. This assumption appears to be unquestioned by Birkeland and by all other scholars who have dealt with the issue. In other words the premiss in question is that all descriptions and references to the antagonists denote the same group or groups of people. Put differently again, this is to say that all the terms used in the semantic field antagonist (22) are synonymous within the psalter and can be used with complete interchangeability.

It is this assumption which Rosenbaum sets out to test, against the background of previous semantic field studies carried out in Old Testament Hebrew (23). For the purposes of this study his argument can be summarised in three stages as follows:

i.) Criticism of the use of poetic parallels for semantic definition:

Rosenbaum argues that the reason why no semantic field study has been done on these words and the reason why they have been regarded as synonymous for so long is because of the undue influence

of the "parallissimus membrorum" feature of Hebrew poetry used in determining the meaning and reference of Hebrew words. With Sawyer he argues that: "poetic parallels are of secondary importance for semantic description, as confirmation not independent description" (24).

As was stated above, under word meaning, to assume that two words have exactly the same meaning because they occur in two different halves of a verse in parallel merely prevents ones perception of any finer nuance of meaning the psalmist is attempting to communicate.

ii) A demonstration that different terms are used with deliberate theological intent

Rosenbaum actually analyses all of the terms in the field antagonist but it is the distinction he draws between "רָשָׁעִים" and "אֱבֹרָתִים" which is of most interest to this study. However an example may be lifted from his prior discussion of the term "פְּעֵלֵי - אֵין" to illustrate how this term was used with great care by the psalmists. He finds, convincingly, that in the psalms the פְּעֵלֵי - אֵין are the counterparts of the cosmic forces of chaos in other religions of the ancient Near East, reduced to human form and hence they are adversaries of Yahweh. That the term has some fairly precise theological meaning is shown by a comparison of Psalm 92:8-10 with what is widely agreed to be its ugaritic forbear. The latter reads:

ht ibk b'in

ht ibk tmhs

ht tsmat srtk (25)

whilst the Hebrew has:

כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבִיךָ יְהוָה  
כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבִיךָ יֵאבְדוּ  
יִתְפָּרְדוּ כָּל-פְּעֵלֵי אָוֶן :

Although the rest of the verse is found in the ugaritic the compound פְּעֵלֵי אָוֶן (not found at all in the cognate languages) is substituted for the otherwise common Hebrew root srtk.

Stylistically the latter would have been better: the second person masculine suffix is used eight times in the psalm. However it appears that here theological considerations have overridden those of style.

iii) A separation between the meaning of "רָשָׁעִים" and "אֵיבִים"

Turning to the analysis of the terms "רָשָׁעִים" and "אֵיבִים" Rosenbaum seeks to show that these two terms are not synonymous but refer to two different groups of antagonists; Israelites who have gone astray and foreign enemies respectively. The term "רָשָׁע" is used 88 times in the psalter and "אֵיב" 74 times - one or both terms is used in nearly half of the psalms. Both words are used outside the psalter and it seems reasonable to infer that the meaning in the psalms is in some degree consonant with the meaning outside. The following arguments can be adduced for separating the meaning of the two terms:

- a. "אֵיב" is used alone in 35 psalms, "רָשָׁע" in 28. The terms occur together in 13 psalms only.
- b. Allegations of synonymity would depend on parallel occurrences, yet the terms are only parallel four times in the psalter. However,

"א'ב" is found often in parallel with other words (27t in parallel, 49t not). At the very least "א'ב" does not seem the most ready choice for such a parallel.

c. The words carry the following distribution in books outside the psalter: (26)

I Books in which "א'ב" is used and "א'ב" is not

	א'ב	א'ב
Lamentations	15	0
Leviticus	14	0
Joshua	11	0
Judges	8	0
Esher	6	0

II Books in which "א'ב" predominates

I & II Kings	10	1
Ezra-Neh. I & II Chron	20	2
Numbers	10	2
I & II Samuel	38	3
Deuteronomy	15	4
Jeremiah	18	6

III Books in which "א'ב" predominates

Proverbs	2	88
Job	3	26
Ezekiel	4	27

It will be seen that the books in which "א'ב" dominates are historical books dealing in the main with non-Israelite enemies, supporting Rosenbaum's thesis that the two terms are different.

d. Outside the psalter the words are only found in parallel or adjacent verses once, in Job 27:7 "Let my enemy be as the wicked, and let him that rises against me be as the unrighteous". This particular verse supports a different meaning for the two terms: if the two were synonyms there would be no point at all in Job's curse.

e. There is no link outside the psalter between "א'ב" and "א'ב"

but plenty of evidence to support a link between "אִיב" and "גִּוִּים". Hence the acceptance of Birkeland's thesis involves positing a separation between language meaning in the psalms and in the rest of the Old Testament.

f. When the more commonly found opposites of the two terms are tabulated with "נָשֵׁעַ" and "אִיב" the following results emerge: (27)

I	צִדִּיק (appears in thirty-two psalms)		
		אִיב	נָשֵׁעַ
a.	No. of Pss. also containing	8	20
b.	Total no. of parallel uses with	0 (?2)	22
c.	Total no. of psalms containing only (i.e. having "נָשֵׁעַ" or "אִיב" but not both)	2	14
d.	No. of parallels in c. above	0	5
II	יִשְׂרָאֵל (appears in seven psalms)		
a.	No. Pss. also containing	2	6
b.	Total no. of parallel uses with	0	6
c.	No. of psalms containing only	1	5
d.	No. of parallels in c. above	0	5
III	גִּוִּים (found in thirty-six psalms)		
a.	No. of Pss. also containing	13	6
b.	Total no. of parallel uses with	8/9	2
c.	No. of psalms containing only	11	4
d.	No. of parallels in c. above	6/7	0
IV	עַמִּים (found in fifty-nine psalms)		
a.	No. of Pss. also containing	21	10
b.	Total no. of parallel uses with	6	1/2
c.	No. of psalms containing only	16	4
d.	No. of parallels in c. above	4	1?
e.	Refers to (a) non-Israelites	1	0

This detailed study of the uses of the terms with the most commonly found opposites provides further proof that the meanings of the two words should be separated in the psalms.

Rosenbaum's work also brings forward other arguments in support of his theory in particular relating to the types of

crimes the two groups are alleged to have committed and also of the punishment which is wished on each. However, these arguments are exegetical in character rather than deriving from a study of word use and so will be discussed as applicable with the psalm exegesis in the following sections.

It is believed that Rosenbaum's study has produced enough evidence to support the hypothesis that the root meanings of "אֲבִיָּא" and "רָשָׁעִים" can be separated and the two words are not used interchangeably within the psalter. It remains to be seen whether Rosenbaum's own definition of the terms can be substantiated. This result will now be tested out in the exegesis of the psalms in question.

### 3. THE WICKED IN THE PSALMS

The enquiry now turns from an examination of general arguments to exegesis of specific psalms: in the first instance the twenty eight psalms in which the רָשָׁעִים occur with no mention of the אֲבִיָּא. The main point of the enquiry here will be to try to arrive at a satisfactory definition for "רָשָׁעִים" which will be appropriate for most of its occurrences. As already indicated, it seems that the search should be both for a basic meaning for the term and for ways in which this meaning is developed or extended in particular psalms.

Two important points emerge from this study of the רָשָׁעִים psalms. Firstly, in many, but not all, of the psalms discussed the רָשָׁעִים present no threat to the "I" in the psalm (where one occurs), unlike the אֲבִיָּא who always presents such a

threat. Secondly, the **רְשָׁעִים** are more often than not associated with the theme of judgement. The typical cry of the psalmist could be said to be for salvation from his enemies but demanding judgement for the wicked. These two considerations lead one to the view that the **רָשָׁע** should be defined not in relation to the subject of the psalm but in relationship to Yahweh and his judgement: the **רְשָׁעִים** are those who have turned away from the law of God.

For ease of understanding the psalms in which the **רָשָׁע** occurs have been divided into six groups according to the theme of the psalm and the role played by the **רְשָׁעִים** as follows:

- a) Didactic psalms heavily influenced by the wisdom schools in which the **רָשָׁע** is mentioned, predominantly, as an example of what not to be or who not to associate with if one is to be prosperous and godly: Pss. 1, 32, 34, 39, 73, 112 and 11.
- b) Psalms of Yahweh's judgement upon the nations or upon Israel in which the **רְשָׁעִים** fall foul of that judgement: Pss. 50, 58, 75, 82, 97, 94a, 36, 12.
- c) Royal psalms in which either the king is portrayed as a judge (Pss. 94b, 26, 101, 141 and 91) or makes a prayer for Yahweh's protection (Psalm 28).
- d) Hymns in which the **רְשָׁעִים** make an incidental appearance at the end of the psalm: Pss. 104, 145, 146, 147.
- e) A prayer of an accused man: Ps. 109.
- f) Three psalms in which the term "**רָשָׁע**" does appear to refer to foreign nations: Pss. 140, 125 and 129.

The discussion begins with the didactic psalms.



a) Didactic poems (Pss. 1, 32, 34, 39, 73, 112 and 11)

Psalm 1 is generally regarded as a post-exilic composition by virtue of its wisdom themes (28), the high profile given to the study of Torah and a possible reference to eschatological judgement (so Jacquet). It is no accident that the psalm stands at the head of the psalter: the sage presents to his hearers both a description and, implied in this description, a choice between the way of the righteous and that of the **רָשָׁע**. Wherever this choice is presented the **רָשָׁעִים** cannot be taken to be foreign enemies since the possibility of choice and the presentation of a warning implies that it would be possible for God-fearing Israelites to become **רָשָׁעִים**. We are given no indication here of the latter's crimes - only that the righteous ought to separate himself from those who do not walk in Yahweh's way. At the outset of the investigation however there is a clear association between the **רָשָׁע** and judgement (v.5). Jacquet sees an eschatological judgement implied here whilst Eaton (29) would see a judgement coming upon the congregation in the festal rites. Jacquet's view is to be preferred in view of the date of the psalm and the oracle in Malachi 3:13-18, which is couched in similar language, where the reference is clearly to some future purification of the congregation, although this concept doubtless has its roots in the festal cult (30).

Psalm 32 consists of an introductory beatitude, an individual lament or testimony with instruction drawn from this (v.6), what appears at first sight to be an oracle of Yahweh and

a conclusion summing up the lesson of the psalm. Weiser, Jacquet and others see the piece as a psalm of testimony to Yahweh's dealings with the author. According to Weiser, in one of his many memorable phrases, "the psalmist wrote the beatitude with which the psalm opens with his hearts blood" (31). However it seems better to understand the piece, with A.A. Anderson, Eaton and Johnson (32) as an example of didactic psalmody. The whole goal of the psalm is to impart the teaching given in v.6:

"Therefore let everyone who is godly offer  
prayer to ~~thee~~ in <sup>a</sup>times of distress"

and the testimony is subservient to this end. The only question then is whether the psalm has its origins with the cultic prophets, as Johnson thinks, since it contains a supposed oracle, or with the wisdom writers. My own view is that the psalm contains so many wisdom features and elements of wisdom vocabulary that it is best seen as a wisdom psalm. These features are seen in the beatitude (vv. 1f); and the testimony in vv. 3-5 (cf. Ecclesiastes 1 et passim). The supposed oracle, unusual in a wisdom psalm, is perhaps better understood therefore not as spoken by Yahweh but as the manifesto of the wisdom teacher, with its characteristic wisdom vocabulary ( אֲשַׁכֵּלָה , אִוְרָה , קָבִין ) and can be compared to the similar invitation to come and learn in Psalm 34:11-14 (33) which also follows a similar testimony to Yahweh's goodness.

As in Psalm 1, the wicked present no threat to the psalmist. Rather the wisdom teacher is presenting a choice, by inference, to his hearers urging them to follow the way of Yahweh. Again, if the possibility exists that the hearers could become <sup>קָשָׁי</sup> then the <sup>קָשָׁי</sup> must include Israelites. The dynamistic view of

judgement is to the fore, as in several of the wisdom psalms: sin leads of itself to suffering and punishment.

Psalm 34 has broadly the same structure as Psalm 32: a testimony to Yahweh's goodness (v. 6) (in this case embedded in a number of aphorisms drawing the moral from the story) is followed by an invitation to learn, followed by instruction on the blessings enjoyed by the righteous and the unpleasant fate of the wicked. There is no hint that the wicked are anything other than miscreant Israelites. Once again mention of the **רָשָׁע** is accompanied by legal language: it seems they can hardly be mentioned in the psalms without attention being drawn to their fate:

"Evil shall slay the wicked; ~~and~~ those who hate the righteous shall be condemned."

Here for the first time also we receive the impression that the **רָשָׁע** may be involved in the persecution of the righteous although not necessarily of the subject of the psalm himself.

Commentators are unanimous in regarding Psalm 39 as unique in the psalter, a unique dialogue with Yahweh, in Weiser's words in which, in the manner of the protest literature in Job and Koheleth, the psalmist cries out against his own fate. Hence the psalm only fits loosely into the category currently under discussion. The **רָשָׁעִים** occur only as those before whom the psalmist would not voice his doubts - presumably Israelites who have turned from Yahweh. The sufferings of the righteous man, the devotee of Yahweh, would, no doubt, be a source of mockery to the deistic unbeliever: what does it profit a man to believe in Yahweh if suffering results? Little else is learnt of the **רָשָׁעִים** from this psalm.

The genre of Psalm 73 is essentially identical to that of Psalms 32 and 34 though the theology is rather more refined. The purpose of the psalm is without doubt didactic, as Anderson has described, and the form is that of the testimony beloved by the wisdom writers. What is essentially a moral or theological problem is not debated in the abstract in ancient Israel but translated into narrative, in this case a narrative which purports to describe the psalmist's own experience. Here the problem is set forth - the prosperity of the wicked and their apparent impunity - and its severity is enunciated (it calls forth doubt in the psalmist himself) and finally a theological solution is proposed: judgement of the wicked is postponed, meanwhile the psalmist finds his compensation in the praise of Yahweh.

Birkeland is right (Evidloers p. 36ff) in so far as he sees the **רְשָׁעִים** in the psalm as a class of "wealthy and happy lords" (v.3-9). However he is wrong to declare that they must represent the ruling gentile foreign classes within Israel. He invokes v.1 as support for this view but many scholars in fact read "**לְרֵשָׁעִים אֵלֵינוּ**" for "**לְרֵשָׁעִים אֵלֵינוּ**" in v.1 regarding the latter reading as a later nationalistic interpretation of the psalm (34). "**לְרֵשָׁעִים אֵלֵינוּ**" preserves the parallelism much better. Alternatively the second half of the verse may serve to qualify the first: "to those within Israel who are upright in heart". The verse does not justify therefore the reading of the wicked as gentiles. The question has to be asked in this and other **רְשָׁעִים** psalms: if the psalmist meant the gentiles why does he not use the word "**גוֹיִם**", "**עַמִּים**" or even "**ד'גוֹיִם**" as he clearly does elsewhere? Birkeland's

exegesis of the phrase " **לֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶי יִצְחָק** " is similarly weak. He thinks the psalmist is describing an excursion to the ruined sanctuaries of foreign gods which then leads him to see the eventual ruin of their devotees. Yet he rejects the much more obvious explanation that the psalmist has in some way seen the downfall and judgement over the wicked portrayed in the cult at one of the great festivals.

Once again Birkeland misses the connection with judgement, or regards judgement as reserved only for the gentiles. Further the crimes delineated for the wicked are not crimes one would expect from foreign oppressors - mainly ones concerned with attitude and speech. In this psalm, as in others, the **רְשָׁעִים** are the transgressors and among them are the rich, the at-ease and prosperous within Israel who neglect the way of Yahweh, and thus come to oppress the righteous.

Psalm 112 requires a brief note only. An acrostic psalm, most commentators assign it to the post-exilic period and draw attention to the influence of the Yahwistic wisdom writers on the style and theology which is that of "good man prospers, bad man falls". As such, like other wisdom psalms, it is didactic in purpose with the acrostic perhaps acting as a simple mnemonic if the psalm were to be learnt by heart. As in the other psalms in this group, acting rightly is a matter of choice - this is the whole point of a didactic psalm. Hence the **רָשָׁע** is one who has made the wrong choice and is thus an Israelite who has rejected the way of Yahweh.

Finally, in this group of wisdom psalms, there are several ways of interpreting Psalm 11, none of them without their difficulties. In particular recovering the original situation behind the psalm is not easy. According to the Birkeland line, which is also followed here by Eaton, the interpretation centres around vv. 1-2. The statement about the  $\text{יָצַף}$  placing the arrow on the string is to be interpreted literally as giving rise to the psalmist's physical danger. Flight to the hills was, of course, the safest option in the face of a foreign oppressor. However, three arguments can be produced against this interpretation.

i) It is difficult to interpret v.2 in any literal sense - for the simple reason that the  $\text{וְיִצְפּוּ}$  are said to be intending to shoot their arrows  $\text{בְּחֹשֶׁךְ}$ , in the dark! A metaphorical interpretation of some sort does seem necessary therefore and the most appropriate seems to be to see the arrows as evil words, slanders or curses by those who threaten the psalmist. The latter can then be seen to be sensibly rejecting the advice given on the grounds that in the case of this particular danger Yahweh's temple can afford him better protection than any flight.

ii) A more than usual confusion arises in the commentaries on this psalm between the situation of the author and the situation of the person who spoke the psalm in the cult. If the psalm is treated as if it were actually spoken by the author in his situation of need, as it were spontaneously all the emphasis of interpretation is thrown upon the opening lines where the "personal experience" is to be found. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that we are here dealing with a composition designed for the cult, perhaps intended for use in a number of different settings. Therefore the focus of the inter-

pretation, indeed of the psalm, is the confession of faith rather than the description of distress. The defence for the person - king or commoner - who has been slandered is to enter the temple and recite his statement of faith in Yahweh, to open himself to the testing of Yahweh and to his judgement against the accusations he has received.

iii) The third argument builds on the pattern beginning to be established in that the psalmist is here using a wicked/judgement vocabulary as opposed to an enemies/salvation vocabulary found in most of the **יְהוָה** psalms. Against external enemies Yahweh is appealed to as a warrior and saviour. Against the (largely) internal **יְהוָה** he is appealed to as a judge, as here.

It seems therefore that the Birkeland/Eaton position is not without its difficulties. Apart from the alleged identification of the wicked with foreign enemies it is difficult to discover any other evidence for this being a royal psalm. Furthermore, the general statements in the psalm and its didactic element seem out of place in a royal lament. The psalm seems best interpreted therefore as a didactic piece in the same vein as others discussed above, contrasting the fate of the wicked with that of the righteous. The opening verses can be classed as pseudo-testimony to Yahweh's grace. The lament in vv. 1-3 can be compared to the opening words of Ps. 12 (See below p. 54 ) As in other psalms the righteous are beleaguered by the hostile opponents of Yahweh within the nation. This psalm, like others in this group offers an implicit choice: to follow the way of Yahweh or fall prey to his judgement.

Hence in the first seven of the **רָשָׁעִים** psalms to be discussed, all examples of didactic psalmody written in the wisdom style, the **רָשָׁעִים** appear as individual Israelites who have turned from Yahweh's law and are thus subject to his judgement. They are described as scoffers (Pss. 1, 73), false and boastful (32, 34, 73), arrogant and violent (73, 11) and threatening oppression. In addition, Psalm 73 gives a picture of the **צָדִיק** as prosperous and powerful and thus able to oppress those who do follow Yahweh. This would be a picture of the **רָשָׁעִים** confirmed by the different viewpoint given in our second group of psalms, songs of Yahweh's judgement.

b) Songs of Yahweh's judgement (Pss. 50, 58, 75, 82, 97, 36, 12, 94)

These eight psalms form a group within the **רָשָׁעִים** psalms in that they all portray Yahweh as a judge in various contexts: either judging Israel herself (as in Psalm 50) or judging the nations. It will be seen that the connection between the wicked and judgement can now be further established in that the **רָשָׁעִים** can be defined here also as those who fall short in Yahweh's judgement, whether within Israel or outside her.

Psalm 50 itself is shot through with the theme of judgement. In the opening theophany Yahweh calls to the heavens and the earth **יְהוָה יִדְבַר עַמּוֹ**. The last line of the descriptive section ends with the emphatic **כִּי-אֶל־הוֹיָם שָׁפַט הוֹיָא**. It is plain from this section that the judging is of Israel herself and it is a judgement enacted within the covenant of Yahweh.



Two markedly different views are taken of the remainder of the psalm. The view of Birkeland, and also of Kraus and Jacquet, is that the phrase "וְהָיָה כְּמִןּוֹתָיִם" (v. 16) is a later gloss by a secondary redactor to make the text more meaningful to a post-exilic generation (35). The view is shared also by the BH apparatus (with reservations). The only argument in favour of such an emendation, other than those based on a particular view of the development of Israel's religion, is that the offending words are an intrusion into the metre of the psalm. However, the following arguments can be marshalled against the emendation:

i) To deal first with the question of intrusion into the metre: this is not at all unusual in the psalter where prophetic oracles are found. In fact it is more usual than not for these oracles to be preceded by an aside, almost a stage direction, which is always outside the main framework of the psalm viz:

Ps. 81:5 "I heard a voice I had not known"

95:7 "O that you would hear his voice today"

60:6 "God has spoken to me in his sanctuary"

The same practise is also followed in the writings of the canonical prophets. The stage direction serves to the end of one oracle and the beginning of another.

ii) As has already been shown, and will be shown below, the psalm writers quite commonly think in terms of a division in Israel between the righteous and the wicked and the basis of their attitude to Yahweh and to his law. The psalm contains nothing unusual in this respect.

- iii) The words do in fact mark a complete break in sense in the psalm, and this is supported by the Selah after v. 15 in the LXX. Vv. 7-15 are concerned with a right understanding of the cult and of sacrifice in particular, concluding with Yahweh's invitation to the people to call upon him in the day of trouble. Is it likely he would then turn on the same people and denounce them as unfit to recite his statutes? Vv. 16-21 then turns to the moral crimes of the wicked within Israel whilst vv. 22-3 sum up the psalm offering an antithesis reflecting the balance in the psalm as a whole.
- iv) Birkeland has to view the psalm as arising out of a situation of national distress, but there is no reference to such a situation. V. 15 is a general invitation only. Further it is surely right that we should, with Weiser and others, picture this psalm being used annually at some sort of festival not as the once and for all utterance of an inspired prophet at one festival. As such it is best seen with Johnson and Eaton (36) as an example of the work of the cultic prophet in educating the congregation into the right attitude to the sacrifice which is going on before them and, through the charge laid against the wicked, warning them to watch their own moral conduct. The great festivals were occasions of teaching and exhortation as well as of celebration (37). Furthermore, the attitude towards sacrifice attacked in this and other passages in the canonical prophets is surely not the official line of the cult but the mistaken conceptions of the people themselves.
- v) Finally, if the psalm has been subject to redaction, why was the interpolated verse not placed earlier in the psalm so that the whole charge was directed at the wicked?

It can thus be established with reasonable certainty that vv. 16-21 of the psalm refer to, and describe in a certain sense, the **דַּיָּוָה?** in the later pre-exilic period. The psalm is most probably to be assigned to this period because of the high profile of the concept of the covenant it contains which dates it to sometime after the reforms of Hezekiah or Josiah. Mowinckel's assertion that the psalm must be of late date because of its rather weak and vague message of judgement is inadequate. This facet of the psalm is best accounted for by the assertion that the psalm itself was for general and partly didactic use.

The **דַּיָּוָה?** are depicted here as those who commit primarily moral offences - particularly association with other offenders, something which the psalmist regards as particularly serious in Psalms 1 and 26 also, evil words (cf. 28:3, 1:1, 12:2, 36:3) and committing his crimes in the attitude that Yahweh either does not see what goes on or approves of it. The theme of the judgement of Yahweh is, as Weiser has noted (38) a dominant theme in the psalms and, by implication, in the festivals of Israel, primarily in the festival centred around the covenant. The congregation had to be kept pure for the worship of Yahweh although it is not certain how this process of judgement operated. It is apparent from this psalm that the congregation was regarded as a mixture of good and bad - perhaps this rather veiled accusation against the **דַּיָּוָה?** and the veiled threats against him were regarded as sufficient to purge the community itself of guilt and would also serve as a reminder to all the congregation of the right kind of moral conduct required by Yahweh.

Two very different interpretations of Psalm 58 are also possible depending upon how the first two lines are translated. A number of different options present themselves. The translation given by the RSV is preferred by most commentators:

"Do you indeed decree what is right you gods?  
Do you judge the sons of men uprightly?"

On this translation "  $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{b}^{\prime}\text{x}$ " which actually means "silence" in the introduction to Ps. 56, is regarded as being an adaptation of "  $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{b}^{\prime}\text{x}$ " or its abstracted form "  $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{b}^{\prime}\text{x}$ " made by a later Yahwist unwilling to acknowledge the existence of other gods in his religious psalmody. On this understanding the original psalm can be understood almost as a theodicy. Evil in the world is attributed not to Yahweh but to the lower ranks of the gods who are actually responsible for judgement upon the earth. These opening lines can be regarded as spoken by Yahweh, as Weiser suggests (cf. 82:1) or by the complaining psalmist who cries out for justice. In view of the similarities with Psalm 82 this latter suggestion is to be preferred.

The alternative translation followed by RSV margin and favoured by Jacquet is to translate "  $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{b}^{\prime}\text{x}$ " as "mighty men". The whole psalm is then to be seen not as a theodicy but as a prophetic style tirade and sentence of judgement against the corrupt judges within Israel (cf. Amos 5:7, Is. 1:23, 5:23 etc.). It is difficult to choose between the two alternatives. However a compromise might be suggested. It seems that the contrast with Psalm 82 cannot be denied and this alone must favour the translation "gods" rather than "mighty men". The  $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{b}^{\prime}\text{x}$  are also said to judge the whole earth. The scene is therefore of cosmic proportions. However, as this psalm was recited in the cult, probably in the

enthronement festival as Birkeland suggests, the warning sounds loud and strong to those who are judging within Israel. Yahweh's wrath is equally strong against all forms of injustice. Perhaps we might suggest that "אֱלֹהִים" was intended to have this double meaning with the accompanying uncertainty of whether "בְּנֵי-אָדָם" was intended as vocative or accusative. The psalmist cannot but have been aware that both meanings were possible to his audience (if the correct text has been preserved).

Whichever interpretation is adopted it serves the main argument to point out that yet again there is an intimate connection in the psalm between the אֱלֹהִים and the theme of judgement upon which this psalm turns. Birkeland argues that the אֱלֹהִים are gentiles within Israel ("Evildoers", p.34). There seems in fact no reason at all for seeing the אֱלֹהִים as defined by race in this psalm - in fact there are indications to the contrary. The wicked are described as being like the deaf adder which stops its ear - therefore some element of choice is implied in his actions which renders the אֱלֹהִים liable to judgement. However, it does seem apparent from this psalm that the אֱלֹהִים themselves cannot be only within Israel herself - the judges in this psalm and in Psalm 82 are said to judge the whole earth. Therefore the wicked are of the gentiles as well as of Israel but are defined not in relation to race but in relation to the judgement of Yahweh which must ultimately triumph over evil.

Psalm 75 is to be classified with others in this group as a hymn of judgement. The oracle in vv. 2-6 is framed by

a hymn in plural form at the beginning of the psalm and an individual song of praise and affirmation of judgement in vv. 9-10. The oracle itself was, in all probability, uttered by a cultic prophet (39) during the great festival in which, in all probability, these great hymns of judgement should be set. As in the other psalms of judgement there is a close association between these psalms and the appearance of the **רְשָׁעִים** who are seen on a world wide scale, not just within Israel, as those who fall foul of Yahweh's judgement. Their crimes in this case are pride and insolent speech (vv. 4-5). Birkeland's thesis that the **רְשָׁעִים** are identical to the **אֲרִיִּם** becomes most damaging to a theology of the psalms in the case of a psalm such as this. If Yahweh's judgement is equated merely with Israel's victory over the nations how can it be claimed to be right and just? The whole of the psalms must be seen as a distortion of the picture of God given in the rest of the Old Testament.

Psalm 82 is another hymn of judgement in which the themes of justice and the fate of the wicked are inextricably linked. Once again the judgement is on a world-wide scale, but the cultic prophet is surely speaking through his vision of a divine assembly to the judges and nobles of Israel, setting forth Yahweh's standards for judgement. It is to be granted once again (contra Rosenbaum) that many of the **רְשָׁעִים** are to be found outside Israel, but Birkeland's view of the psalm will not bear scrutiny. The categories of those who have a right to protection in vv. 3-4 cannot be taken, surely, as metaphors for the nation but must refer to individuals within Israel and outside (40). Yahweh's standard of justice is for all

the nations, and by it those who judge are to be judged (41). The wicked are defined by vv. 3-4 as those who oppress the weak, the fatherless and the destitute; in other words, they include the class of wealthy noblemen portrayed in Psalm 73 and elsewhere who have all they need but pay no heed to Yahweh.

Psalm 97 is a song of Yahweh's enthronement and, with others, clearly links the judgement of Yahweh, as a festal theme, with that of his kingship. Nothing can be proved about the identity of the wicked in v. 10, who are once again associated with judgement, but there is no need at all to superimpose nationalistic categories on the psalm and make the wicked the foreign nations. It seems perfectly consistent with the psalm to see the righteous as those within Israel who are faithful to Yahweh.

Psalm 36 is grouped with these psalms of judgement as the death of the wicked is portrayed in the closing verse of the psalm which most commentators think refers to a symbolic act performed in the cult. The description of the  $\text{ד'יט?}$  accords with that found elsewhere and there is no indication that any other than those who turn away from Yahweh and his law is described here. As in the other psalms in this section, one of the functions of the piece is to warn those present at the festival of the fate of the wicked and thus discourage them from taking the wrong path. Conversely the psalm acts as a comfort to those oppressed by a  $\text{ט?}$  affirming their doom and the steadfast love of Yahweh.

Although Psalm 12 contains an oracle of judgement this is set in the context of an appeal to Yahweh to intervene, which makes the psalm rather different from those discussed above but similar to Psalm 94 below. The picture of the  $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{y}\text{w}^{\prime}\text{?}$  as persecutors of the helpless, found in Psalm 73 and elsewhere, is more to the fore in this piece also. A picture of foreign domination underlying the psalm has been suggested by Birkeland and tentatively supported by Eaton (TBC ad. loc.). Further, the picture in v. 8a ("On every side the wicked prowl") may be thought to refer to Judah's being surrounded by foreign armies. Three reasons make this unlikely however: the psalm plainly comes from the circles of the cultic prophets, since it contains the oracle in v. 5. This being the case it seems better to see a moral degeneration depicted here along the lines of that depicted in the canonical prophets (cf. Hos. 4:1, Micah 7:11, Jer. 5:1, Isaiah 57:1ff, 59:14ff, etc.). Secondly, Anderson adduces a parallel to this type of lament from an ancient Egyptian discourse on suicide dated c. 2,000 B.C. (ANET p.406) in which the writer laments:

"To whom can I speak today?  
Hearts are rapacious;  
No-one has a heart upon which one may rely  
To whom can I speak today?  
There are no righteous  
The land is left to those who do wrong....."

This piece plainly refers to moral decay. Thirdly the content of the psalm and the description of the wicked (vv. 2ff) accords with the description of the wicked found elsewhere. The meaning of v. 8a quoted above must be seen as amplified by v. 8b which Anderson paraphrases as meaning "when worthlessness is highly exalted among



the sons of man". In other words the verse is criticising the moral decline in the nation in the same way as does Isaiah when he says "Woe to you who call evil good and good evil" (Is. 5:20).

Psalm 94 links the psalms in which Yahweh is portrayed as judge with those in which the king is central for the psalm, as Eaton and Mowinckel have argued, is a royal piece. The reference to "wicked rulers" (literally "thrones of destruction") is an indication of this, as is the royal style found in v. 23 and elsewhere (42). The psalm begins with a prayer to Yahweh to intervene against the oppression by the **רָשָׁעִים**. Birkeland's interpretation of this passage is somewhat strained since he attempts to see the terms used of the socially disadvantaged as metaphors for Israel's place in the Great Society. It suffices to say that the "Great Society" is largely Birkeland's invention and is here imposed upon the text rather than derived from it. Neither is there a need to postulate an alien invasion as the background to this appeal, as some have done, but rather a breakdown in law and order caused by a disregarding of Yahweh's law.

The appeal for intervention in the opening verses of the psalm is followed by an oracle, presumably delivered by a cultic prophet, giving assurance that Yahweh has heard. The second half of the psalm should be seen, as will be argued at length below (p. 184) as the call liturgy of the king in the annual festival. Yahweh asks in v. 16 who will rise up against the **רָשָׁעִים**. The king replies that in his capacity as judge he will, with Yahweh's aid, carry forward the attack against oppression in the land.

The characteristics of the **רָשָׁעִים** denoted by these psalms of Yahweh's judgement accords with that detected in the psalms in the group above: the wicked are deceitful, slanderers (50), forget God (36, 50, 94), keep company with sinners (50), are arrogant and boastful (75, 12, 94) and oppress the weak and helpless (94). No reference is made to their being threatening to the "I" in the psalm specifically (except 94) and for this reason they are not described as **ד'ב'ר'א**. Further evidence has been brought forward against Birkeland's view therefore that the **רָשָׁעִים** are foreign military antagonists. Furthermore, Rosenbaum's conclusion that the **רָשָׁעִים** are antagonists within Israel only has been challenged. Those who commit certain offences in all the nations are **רָשָׁעִים**. Psalms 94 and 82 give the impression of the **רָשָׁעִים** found also in Psalm 73 - that of oppressors of the poor, the ruling classes perverting justice in their favour. Yahweh emerges as a champion of the widow and orphan in these psalms and in 94 the king is identified as his spokesman. This idea will be followed through in the next group of psalms to be discussed.

c) Royal Psalms (Pss. 101, 26, 141, 91, 28)

The interpretation of Psalm 101 and the determination of its original context has often turned around the difficult phrase **מִתִּי הִבֹּא אֵלַי** which seems to imply that the psalmist, who is almost certainly the king, is involved in some sort of cultic encounter with Yahweh. However the nature of the king's oath is often neglected, perhaps in consequence of this. In fact it can be observed that the interpretation of this psalm follows on naturally from that of Psalm 94, which bridged the gap between the two concepts of Yahweh as

judge and the king as judge. Here the king can be envisaged as making a solemn confession before Yahweh of his intent to administer justice in his realm. The song opens with the words:

" חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה אֶשְׁיָרָה "

- "I will sing of thy covenant love and justice" - and the king goes on to affirm his desire to uphold Yahweh's law. He declares he will know nothing of evil (v. 4) and will prosecute both the slanderer and the arrogant of heart - the two chief characteristics of the wicked in other psalms. The threefold statement in vv. 6b-7 declares that the king will choose as his ministers those who are honest and upright (the threefold style resembles that of Ps. 1:1 where the oath is a prohibition not to associate with the **רְשָׁעִים**). The final verse sums up the whole psalm: Yahweh exercises his judgement over the congregation through the king himself.

Birkeland's arguments on this psalm are worth discussing as a demonstration of just how improbable his whole case on the **רְשָׁעִים** is:

"The promise is concluded by the words in v. 8 that he shall destroy all **רְשָׁעִים - אֲדָרְךָ** and eliminate from the city of God all **כִּי יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹהֵינוּ**. Here at least gentiles must be excluded? Certainly not. The king simply promises not to take foreigners into his service and to drive them all out of the city of God since they, just because they are gentiles, lead a life contrary to a recognised ethic!"

This assertion is untenable. Israel, like every other nation in the ancient world and nations today had trading links with other nations which involved merchants being in Jerusalem, and formed alliances with other states. Surely the king could not have promised to

exterminate any of his allies who came near to Jerusalem?

And again:

"That the king should feel himself obliged to promise expressly not to take into his service such (wicked) Israelites seems improbable."

Why so? It has been observed above that the psalms and wisdom writings continually warn against close association with the

ד'י ו'?. The king is confessing his intent not to do this.

Furthermore, one of the greatest dangers to the ordinary Israelite was that the king should appoint corrupt officials to administer the realm. A good and honest civil service was essential for the well being of the people. Why should the king not promise to attempt to achieve this? Birkeland's arguments continually betray an idealistic view of conditions in Israel under the kings.

It is not immediately apparent that Psalm 26 concerns the king's activity and function as a judge. However the following exegesis seeks to make this plain. The psalm clearly belongs to the cult. At its centre (vv. 6-7) are the cultic acts of purification and procession around the altar which cannot be mistaken for anything else. The majority of commentators regard the psalm as one to be spoken by an Israelite who feels himself falsely accused (so Weiser, A.A. Anderson), as is outlined by I Kings 8:31:

"If a man sins against his neighbour and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before thine altar in this house then hear in heaven ....."

A similar situation is not unlikely but this precise context cannot itself be given to the psalm. The crimes which the psalmist is

repudiating are not crimes against the neighbour but association with false men, dissemblers and the wicked. It seems more likely that we have here a more general protestation of innocence, such as that found in Job 31 (which is different in that a self cursing formula is included and the confession is conditional in form) or those from the Egyptian book of the dead - which is much more specific than the present psalm. The form of words is, however, the same.

"I have not committed evil against men,  
I have not mistreated cattle,  
I have not committed sin in the place of truth" etc.  
(ANET. p. 34f.)

The question of who uttered the psalm is also contested. Eaton thinks it likely that the "I" is a priest or the king. Jacquet writes that he is "sans doute un Levite". Certainly the reference to the cultic acts indicate that this may be the case. One can also see more point in either a priest, a levite or a king denying association with false men or with the wicked. On either explanation however, the wicked must surely be in this psalm the Israelites who are unfaithful to Yahweh, who have walked in their own way. If the psalmist is really denying association with the gentiles, why does he not say *so*?

Juridical language occurs in this psalm not so much in connection with the wicked directly but in connection with the psalmist himself who exposes himself to the judgement of Yahweh in the fourfold prayer:

"שָׁפֵט נִי ... בְּחִנֵּי ... נִפְנִי ... צְרוּפָה"

Taking this and other factors into consideration it seems that a not improbable original context for the psalm is to see it as recited by the king in his capacity as judge, affirming his integrity before the congregation and before Yahweh. As the king judges his people so he appears to be judged by Yahweh confident that his conduct has been appropriate:

"וְאֵינִי מְסֻמָּן בְּיַד אֲנִי בְּתַסִּי הַלְכָתִי"

He declares that he is not open to the charge of associating with those who are false or wicked in the land, who may lead him to corrupt the course of justice. Thus he can perform with impunity the cultic activities of purification and declare his allegiance to Yahweh in the temple (v. 8). He prays that he may not be swept away with those whom he condemns as judge - not so much a prayer for himself as such but a statement of warning to those who try to pervert the course of justice. The allusion to bribery is particularly relevant here: a judge/king would be much more susceptible to bribery than a priest or Levite. In the concluding verse the king reaffirms his integrity and asks, using another legal metaphor, that he himself may be "redeemed" and Yahweh may continue to have mercy upon him (43).

Eaton finds Psalm 141 full of references to warfare and battle and sees it as the prayer of a king on a campaign away from Jerusalem. One wonders whether he has the text of the same psalm. There is no reference to warfare in this psalm, to fighting or to military enemies. The only possible reference is to the bones being scattered at the mouth of Sheol, which is scarcely literal description in any case. The psalm is not a prayer before battle

but a psalm or prayer to be kept innocent and on the right path and to be delivered from the snares of the **ד'יָּשָׁר**. As such it may be a didactic poem dating from the post-exilic period, as Anderson suggests. However, Eaton is right in so far as the psalm has "a pronounced royal style" which marks it off from the didactic pieces discussed under (a) above. Furthermore, it appears to contain a genuine, if rather vague, prayer for protection against the wicked and the snares of the evildoers. Hence the psalm is best regarded as written for the lips of the king in the festal cult, perhaps to accompany the evening sacrifice. Hence, on these grounds, the psalm can be grouped with others in which the king sets forth his integrity as a judge before Yahweh.

The wicked, here as elsewhere, are very clearly not gentiles but Israelites. It could be no crime in the ancient world to associate with men of another race, whilst any man, but especially the king, would be endangered if he associated with those who had rejected Yahweh's way. As in the majority of the psalms which mention the **ד'יָּשָׁר** there is once again the concern with the theme of judgement. ("**ד'יָּשָׁר**" v. 6, "Let the wicked fall in their own nets", v. 10).

Psalm 91 is best seen as an oracle delivered to the king either on the eve of battle or in the context of the annual ritual. If the former is the case then the psalm should perhaps be grouped with those few psalms in which the term "**ד'יָּשָׁר**" describes foreign armies, as Birkeland thought. However, the blessing given is more general than a promise of victory in battle: deliverance

is promised from snares, pestilence and the terror of the night as well as from the arrow that flies by day. For this reason I would argue that the psalm has a wider reference than to battle alone and should be seen in the context of the annual ritual. For the same reason therefore the phrase in v. 8: " **אִשְׁמַתְּ אֶת־יְשׁוּעֵי־דָאָר** " is best seen as referring to the triumph of justice in the land (the root **אִשַׁם** seems from its limited useage to be a judicial word) whilst other verses refer to the military security which Yahweh brings through the king.

Psalm 28 is no exception to the general rule established to date that the **אִשְׁמַתְּ** does not present a direct threat to the subject in a psalm. The piece is almost certainly a royal prayer with the king's petition reinforced by a prayer made on his behalf in vv. 8f. The identification is strengthened by the presence of features of the royal style. The precise situation for which the psalm was written is less clear. It may well be a psalm of sickness, as Mowinckel thought. The linking of the recovery of the king from illness and the salvation of the nation is found elsewhere in the Old Testament (II Kings 20:6). Here the king is not threatened by the **אִשְׁמַתְּ** but simply prays not to share their fate, that is, death. In proclaiming the judgement of the wicked the king simultaneously implies that he is not one of their number. Hence in this sense the psalm is just as much a protestation of his innocence as those discussed above. The definition of "**אִשְׁמַתְּ**" as one who has turned away from Yahweh and so deserves judgement is once again confirmed.



This group of royal psalms presents essentially the same group of offences for the **רָשָׁעִים** as listed above: to associate with the **רָשָׁע** is an offence in itself (26, 101); he offers bribes (by inference) (26); he slanders and is arrogant (101); speaks dishonestly and ignores Yahweh (28).

d) "Incidental" appearances in hymnody (Pss. 104, 145, 146, 147)

The next group of psalms can be discussed fairly briefly. It has been noted above that there are a number of psalms in which the **רָשָׁעִים** appear as a category at the end of the psalm to be damned, as it were. They come in such a place in Psalm 104. Birkeland is forced to admit, inconsistently with his own position, that some moral tone is present in the meaning of **רָשָׁעִים** when he writes that "men of this (wicked) quality within Israel are certainly not excluded". It cannot be denied that here, as elsewhere, the **רָשָׁעִים** are envisaged among all the nations, but the **רָשָׁעִים** cannot be all the nations en bloc. Otherwise if Birkeland's hypothesis were pushed to its logical conclusion the suppliant would be wishing for the total depopulation of the world outside Israel.

In Psalms 145-7, the final three **רָשָׁעִים** psalms of the psalter, the wicked make further incidental appearances, part of the universe in which the psalmist finds himself. Psalms 145 and 146 both end with this curse of the **רָשָׁעִים** balanced, in Psalm 145, against those who love Yahweh (and so the wicked are presumably those who hate Yahweh or do not give the love which is his due) and in Psalm 146 against the righteous (cf. below p.118). Here the

ד'יִשָׁר? are clearly those who are powerful enough in the land not to need such protection and here, as elsewhere, Birkeland's position is untenable. How could the same verse be saying that Yahweh will protect the (gentile) sojourner in the land, and bring ruin to the way of the nations? As in many of the other psalms also there is a fundamental concern, even when the wicked only make a brief appearance, with the theme of justice and retribution:

"All the wicked he will destroy" Ps. 145:20

"The way of the wicked he will bring to ruin" Ps. 146:9.

A similar theme can be observed in Psalm 147 where the ד'יִשָׁר? appear earlier in the psalm and are here contrasted with the down-trodden. It is here plainly apparent that this contrast, as others, is meant to be taken literally not metaphorically unless, as in Birkeland's interpretation, all language in the psalms is to be translated into metaphor.

e) The prayer of an accused man (Ps. 109)

There seems no reason why a situation of war should be "discovered" as underlying Psalm 109 (so Birkeland, Eaton), nor is there evidence that the psalmist is the king. Eaton's arguments for this interpretation rest chiefly on the appellations for Yahweh, "my God" and "Yahweh my God", which he regards as part of the royal style, but this is not the case (44). Moreover the terms of the curse in the psalm apply to a civil situation: to the family of those cursed and to their land and produce. It would seem therefore that this is a psalm provided for use by one falsely accused (so Anderson, Weiser et al.) and so fits into the context described in

I Kings 8:31ff. The subject's statement of love for his accusers and prayers for them are best seen as attempts to win Yahweh's favour rather than as literal description.

The opening verse of the curse provides a clear indication of who the **קָשָׁי** is in this case, namely an accuser in a court of law and thus an Israelite not a gentile. The curse which follows this may be an oblique reference to the disasters which have actually befallen the speaker in the psalm, a way of saying: "May what has happened to me happen to him also". The situation envisaged is thus one where a poor man has got himself into debt to the extent that his creditor has siezed his land, goods and family and thereafter threatens his life. The language of salvation is present in the psalm since the primary focus is on the need of the individual. However the psalm does also demand retribution against the **קָשָׁי**.

f) Three "nationalistic" psalms (Pss. 140, 125, 129)

Finally, there are three psalms (only) in this group in which the **שׂוֹנְאֵי** can be identified as foreign military enemies. Psalm 140 seems from the several references to war and to battles to be a prayer written for the king and it is hard to escape the conclusion therefore that "**קָשָׁי**" in v. 8 refers at least in part to the foreign armies. However it is apparent from the rest of the psalm that the king is envisaged as being beset by internal opponents also, stirring up wars and laying snares. Certainly the curse formula in vv. 9ff would seem to be directed at those in the land. Hence "**קָשָׁי**" in Psalm 140 does not have simply nationalistic meaning only: the foreign armies are included in the designation but so also are internal opponents.

Psalms 125 and 129 are part of the collection of Psalms of Ascents and would seem to be therefore, like most other psalms in the collection, late psalms from the post-exilic period. In both the term "רָשָׁע" is used of foreign enemies. The prayer in Psalm 125 is that "the sceptre of wickedness will not rest on the land allotted to the righteous"; here we can agree with Birkeland that the fear is probably of foreign domination, but this view is tempered by the concluding verses of the psalm in which the fear is expressed that a wicked ruler will lead the people astray. Hence "רָשָׁע" retains its moral meaning as well as this new nationalistic content. In Psalm 129 the wicked are clearly defined as

רְשָׁעֵי צִיּוֹן, haters of Zion. In both of these psalms we can see a development in the use of the term "רָשָׁעִים" which accords with their late date: there is good evidence to show that nationalistic or party interpretations were put onto basically moral terms in apocalyptic literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls whereas there is little evidence for this phenomenon in earlier Old Testament material.

#### 4. THE ENEMY IN THE PSALMS

This investigation into whether it is legitimate to separate the meaning of the two terms "רָשָׁעִים" and "אֲרֵיבִים" in the psalms now turns to an examination of those psalms in which the אֲרֵיבִים occur without any mention of the wicked. Rosenbaum's contention was in agreement with Birkeland's conclusion here - namely that the term denotes foreign enemies predominantly. My own investigation supports these conclusions, at least in part, in that

I can see that in 24 out of the 33 psalms in this group the background to the psalm is war and the **אֹיְבֹתָי** are foreign belligerents. However, in other psalms there appears to be evidence to support the view that **אֹיְבֹתָי** can be within the nation also, primarily as enemies of the individual. Thus more diversity can be found in the use of this term than in that of the term "**רִשְׁעִים**". The latter was found to denote those who are unfaithful to Yahweh's moral law within Israel, with an extension of meaning as Israel's concept of Yahweh increased, to include such persons on a worldwide scale; only in a minority of psalms is "**רִשְׁעִים**" used, by extension, in a nationalistic sense. The two different meanings of "**אֹיְבֹתָי**" however cannot be justified in this way, as a development, but must be two branches of the same root meaning. The word "**אֹיְבֹתָי**" in the psalms is rarely used without some qualification: it is usually "my enemies"; occasionally "his" or "our" enemies etc. Hence the nature of the enemies in these psalms will depend upon who is speaking and naming these enemies as his own. The word can be said to function therefore as the word "enemy" in English, as a general description of hostility without any primary assumptions as to race or status. It so happens that in the majority of the occurrences in the psalms the **אֹיְבֹתָי** appear to be foreign nations and these "war psalms" will be examined first. An interesting and significant factor to note is the way in which the concept of "enemies" is linked strongly with that of salvation, whereas that of the wicked was strongly-linked with the theme of judgement. Many of the psalms discussed below are not dealt with in great detail, simply because the interpretation proposed is not disputed.

a) War Psalms

The twenty-four psalms reflecting a background of war and foreign conflict can be divided into six groups according to the nature of the speaker, or the form of the psalm as follows:

- i) "We" psalms: 74, 80
- ii) Mixed I/We psalms: 44, 66
- iii) Descriptions of the king in the second or third person:  
21, 45, 72, 110, 132
- iv) "I" psalms: 18, 59, 138, 102, 27, 56, 69, 61, 89, 143
- v) Psalms in which the enemies occur in relation to Yahweh:  
78, 81, 83, 8
- vi) Psalms 42-3

i) "We" psalms

A genuine historical event seems to underlie the communal lament in Psalms 74 - most probably the destruction of the sanctuary in 587 BC (so Anderson, Johnson et al.). The enemy are clearly the foreign army who have carried out the sacrilege and their main crime, apart from the physical damage caused is "scoffing thy name" - a charge which is repeated no less than three times (vv. 8, 18, 22). There is a dominant concern with salvation in the psalm (vv. 12-17) - promises of which are based both on Yahweh's past activity in redemption and on his work as creator. As Johnson points out there is a close affinity with the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah (CPIP pp. 131-6) and a concern with prophets in general (v. 9). Hence it seems not unlikely that this particular psalm originated with the cultic prophets.

It is tempting to assign Psalm 80 also to a specific historical occasion. Its allusion to certain tribes but not others and to "the man of thy right hand" would seem to point to this - however nothing would prevent the psalm being used repeatedly in the cult in times of national emergency. Anderson favours the time of Josiah; Weiser the time of Hoshea, assigning the psalm to the northern kingdom and taking note of the LXX addition to the title: "Ὕμνος τῶν Ἀσσυρίων". Johnson, who sees this psalm also as a prophetic piece wishes to ascribe it to the period of Saul's ascendancy. He thinks that v. 18 may contain a pun on Benjamin - an allusion to Saul. However these speculations cannot be confirmed. What is certain is that the **וְיָאֵבִיב** are national enemies and that once again the scorn and mockery of the Israelites is a cause of great offence. Furthermore there are clear appeals for salvation from Yahweh in the refrain (vv. 2, 3, 7, 19).

ii) Mixed I/We psalms

The two **וְיָאֵבִיב** psalms of mixed type form the link between the first category and the two following groups in demonstrating that the enemies of the nation are also enemies of the king. Psalm 44 in particular is very similar to the two psalms already discussed and probably finds its context, with Psalms 74 and 80 in national days of fasting and prayer during particular times of crisis. Once again the enemies here are clearly foreign armies but once again also the bitterness of the psalmist's fate is exacerbated by the mockery and scorn of these armies (vv. 13-4). The verses in the first person singular may be meant for the king's lips. Alternatively

they may be an artistic device for variation in the communal lament. Salvation is once again prominent in the psalm.

Eaton and Mowinckel view the second half of Psalm 66 as a royal song of thanksgiving, set within the praises of the whole nation, and this view seems well founded, particularly in view of the size of the offering which is promised (45). The psalm was probably composed for recital after some great national victory or deliverance: vv. 13-19 indicate that its setting is liturgical, recited before a thank offering of bulls and goats is made and that it forms the second half of a complete sequence, the first being the petition that Yahweh has answered. The situation appears once again to be one of war, though the enemies are here described as Yahweh's not the king's or people's. The imagery and language throughout is that of salvation, as, for example, in the reference to the Exodus (46).

iii) Descriptions of the king in the 2nd/3rd person

This group consists of five of Gunkel's original royal psalms. In Psalm 21 the אֹיְבֵי' (oi'bei) are plainly military enemies, though whether internal strife is excluded is not at all clear. Salvation is a clear element in the psalm:

" וַיִּשְׁׁוּעַ הָיָה - הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי דָוִד "

The two way, almost contractual relationship between Yahweh and the king is emphasised in v. 7 (8 MT):

" כִּי הִשְׁׁלַח בְּאַחַד יְמֵי חַיָּתָיו וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ בְּיַד יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁׁלַח בְּיַד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי דָוִד "

The reason for trust is "הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי דָוִד" Yahweh's faithfulness (cf. 66:20).



The description of the king in the wedding song which forms Psalm 45 is especially interesting in view of the above discussions. The discussion falls into two sections: vv. 3-4 and 5-7, the first of which centres on the theme of the king as a warrior:

"In your majesty ride forth victorious,  
for the cause of truth to defend the right,  
let your right hand teach you dread deeds.  
Your arrows are sharp in the hearts of the  
kings enemies,  
the peoples fall under you".

(Hence the **ג'ב'א** are clearly foreign armies). The second section dwells on the king in his capacity as a just ruler:

"Your divine throne endures for ever and ever  
Your royal sceptre is a sceptre of equity  
You love righteousness and hate wickedness" (**ג'ש'ע**).

This dual picture of the king as warrior on the one hand and just ruler (or judge) on the other recurs in the psalms and evidence will be presented in Chapter Three and Appendix II below for regarding these functions as the focal points of royal ideology within Israel and outside it, and both within and outside the psalms.

For the present though, it is important to note the causative connection between the king's right conduct and attitude and his blessedness:

"You love righteousness and hate wickedness,  
Therefore (**ג'ש'ע**) God your God has  
anointed you with oil of gladness above your fellows". (A)\*

This total picture and ideology derived from Psalm 45 is confirmed in every respect by the most concise statement of a royal ideal in the psalms, Psalm 72. Once again there is a division between the king's two chief functions - as a judge and a warrior:

\* (A) denotes reference to Addenda, p. 206\*

"Give the king thy justice O God,  
 And thy righteousness to the king's son.  
 May he judge thy people with righteousness  
 Thy poor with justice!" (vv. 1-2)

and:

"May he have dominion from sea to sea,  
 And from the river to the ends of the earth.  
 May his foes bow down before him,  
 And his enemies lick the dust!" (vv. 8-9)

The **בְּגוֹיִם** here are clearly the foreign nations.

Once again there is a clear causative relationship between the king's righteousness in judgement and the extension and security of his dominion:

"May all kings fall down before him,  
 all nations serve him,  
 For ( **כִּי** ) he delivers the needy ( **בְּגוֹיִם** )  
 when he calls, the poor ( **אֲנִי** ) and him who  
 has no helper!"

The king's activity in judgement is akin to Yahweh's in that he is portrayed as the helper of those who have no help (47).

The king's righteousness in judgement can be seen to secure in this psalm not only the military security of the nation but also its material prosperity:

"Let the mountains bear prosperity for thy people  
 and the hills in righteousness!" (v. 3 cf. v. 16)

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This idea of the king's just rule bringing prosperity is taken up in several other Psalms, notably Psalm 144:12-14.

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Psalm 110 focusses more clearly on the military function of the king either at his anointing or in the context of the festival. The enemies in v. 1 are clearly the nations of v. 6.

An interesting variation in this psalm is that the king is Yahweh's instrument of judgement among the nations by military might, much as Cyrus, for example, or the Assyrians are portrayed as Yahweh's means of judgement on Israel in the prophetic literature (cf. Isaiah 45:1ff; 10:5ff etc.).

Finally, in Psalm 132, the enemies occur in the context of a general blessing on the Davidic house, which is also an oracle of salvation to the nation (vv. 14-18) and are most naturally taken as being foreign military enemies, though rival claimants to the throne presumably could not be excluded. It should be noted that the promise of continued favour to the Davidic dynasty is conditional:

"If your sons keep my covenant  
and my testimonies which I shall teach them  
Their sons<sup>also</sup> shall sit upon ~~your~~ throne for ever!"

Hence it can be seen that in the psalms in this group the ד'י'ך can be identified as the foreign nations at war with Israel. Following on from the lead established in Psalm 66 a causative connection can be established between the king's righteousness, particularly in judgement, and the military security and material prosperity of the nation. Furthermore the two royal functions of judge and warrior are emerging as dominant ideas in a royal ideology, a theme which will be taken up fully below.

iv) "I" Psalms (48)

Psalm 18 as will be argued more fully below is best

seen as a song of thanksgiving after victory in battle rather than a liturgy for royal humiliation rites, as Johnson and Eaton have contended. The mythical language in the psalm is used in a secondary sense to describe Yahweh's deliverance of the psalmist, acknowledged by all as the king, as is shown by the juxtaposition of vv. 16 and 17. Further it is apparent from the military language used in the rest of the psalm that a situation of battle and war has been envisaged. Once again the language throughout is that of salvation: Yahweh is portrayed as saviour and also as warrior in the great theophany description of vv. 7-15. The reflective passage found in vv. 20-27 makes good sense in view of the connection between Yahweh's deliverance the the king's righteousness described above:

"The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
According to the cleanness of my hands he recom-  
pensed me

For I have kept the ways of the Lord  
And have not wickedly departed from my God"

( וְלֹא רָשָׁעִי דִּבְרָתִי )

"For all his ordinances ( מִשְׁפָּטָיו ) were before me  
And his statutes I did not put away from me"

It is worth noting in passing that the verb "רָשַׁע" is used in relation to behaviour in relation to Yahweh and his judgement, as has been found to be the case elsewhere. The king's reference to Yahweh's judgements and statutes may be taken as an allusion, perhaps, to the activity of right judgement and government in which the king himself is constantly engaged. The connection between the king's righteousness and his salvation is established however.

Psalm 59 takes up many of the same themes. The enemy are identified as **גֹּיִם** (v. 5) and therefore the subject of the

psalm must be the king. The situation envisaged is the opposite to the triumph celebrated in Psalm 18. Here the foreign armies are encamped around Jerusalem:

"Each evening they come back, howling like  
dogs and prowling around the city!" (vv. 6, 14)

Note that the king's prayer is once again for deliverance or salvation from the enemies primarily - though an element of "judgement" is present in the psalm (v. 5b). The mockery of the enemies (v. 7) is a significant factor in their behaviour for the psalmist as are the other "sins of the mouth" - "cursing and lies which they utter" (v. 12). Once again there is a fundamental connection in the psalmist's own mind between the sin of the king and the fate of the nation - as in Psalm 66 there is a protestation of innocence before Yahweh:

"For no transgression or sin of mine O Lord,  
For no fault of mine they run and make ready!"

Psalm 138 is a song of thanksgiving, a song of assurance for answered prayer - probably to be seen as a royal testimony in the cult addressed to the "Kings of the earth" by the Davidic king in Jerusalem. There is no positive indication that the enemies are military but this seems likely, but they may also include, as elsewhere, enemies within the nation.

Despite its unique title it is apparent that Psalm 102 is a psalm in which the suffering of the psalmist and of the community are intertwined. Most commentators suggest that the psalm reflects an exilic background and this may well be correct.

Given the distress of Zion it is apparent that the enemies in v. 8 are foreign belligerents whose mockery is once again a significant factor in the suppliant's distress. That distress is observed to be because of Yahweh's anger and indignation (v. 10) - there is no appeal here to innocence but an implicit confession of guilt. The appeal is directed to Yahweh's constancy manifested in the work of creation and to his grace, as in the theology of Ezekiel. Given that the psalm reflects a background of exile it is unlikely that the "I" here is the king himself but <sup>is more likely to</sup> be some other representative person.

Psalm 27 clearly envisages a military situation (either ritual or actual) as is betrayed by v. 3. The appeal is to Yahweh's salvation from the **D'J'X** - foreign belligerents once again. The psalm is a song of thanksgiving, as is Psalm 56 another psalm where it can be said with reasonable certainty that the psalmist is the king and his rescue is from the peoples. This scenario is less clear for Psalm 69: the opening of the psalm reads like a psalm of lamentation in sickness yet the triumphant ending makes it clear that communal salvation and distress have been envisaged, and therefore the enemies must be foreign armies. Indeed this is hinted at in v. 25. The portrayal of the nation's plight in terms of the suffering of an individual, in this case and others probably the king, is clearly established as a literary genre in Israelite psalmody, as it is in the prophetic writings. It is found in this psalm, in psalms 102 and 22 and in a number of other psalms as well as passages outside the psalter. It is important to recognise

however that, although the sickness here is not real but a figure for the sickness and plight of the nation, in order for this metaphorical usage to have come about there must have been, and must be, real psalms of sickness from which the metaphor could be taken.

The brief Psalm 61 tells us little about the enemies other than that they are opposed to the king and so should probably be assumed to be national. Like Psalm 18, Psalm 89 will be discussed at length below, but a number of features deserve note here: the enemies are foreign nations; the appeal throughout is for salvation rather than judgement. The phrase "בְּיָדָהּ וּבְיָדָהּ" in v. 22 (MT 23) is unusual in that it is associated generally with wickedness within the land. As occasionally with the term "רְשָׁעִים" the foreign enemies are branded as unjust - a ploy perhaps for winning Yahweh's assistance or justifying aggression. In vv. 29ff. the same principles of Yahweh's assistance being conditional upon the king's continued obedience to Yahweh's law is found:

אֵם יַעֲבֹדוּ בְּנֵי אֹרֶתְי וּבְמִשְׁפָּטַי לֹא יִלְכֹּדוּ

Finally, within this group Psalm 143 must be noted.

It may well be, as Anderson has pointed out, that Psalm 143 is a late post-exilic composition which takes into itself a number of other themes and motifs from earlier psalmody. However Eaton's suggestion that the psalmist is the king (and therefore that the enemies are external) is at least a possibility. The phrase in v.2:

"Enter not into judgement with thy servant  
For no man living is righteous before thee"

envisages a rather greater emphasis on the suppliant's own sin than was found in the royal psalms above.

v) Psalms in which appeal is made to Yahweh

Brief mention must be made of four psalms in which the enemies are described in a narrative of Yahweh's activities or in close relation to Yahweh himself. Psalm 78 is an account of Yahweh's activity in salvation history leading up to the election of David and of Jerusalem, a piece which probably stems from the circles of the cultic prophets and reflects what is commonly known as Deuteronomic theology. The enemies in v. 53 are obviously the Egyptians. Yahweh's activity in salvation is linked throughout with the sin of the nation and also, in the concluding verses, with the conduct of the Davidic king:

"With upright heart he tended them  
And guided them with skilful hand!"

In Psalm 81 the reference to the enemies occurs in an oracle of Yahweh again in a piece with a cult prophetic background. The enemies are clearly the nations and the theology is the same as in Psalm 78:

"Oh that my people would listen to me  
That Israel would walk in my ways!"

Salvation from the enemy is related to the moral conduct of the people.

Psalm 83, a curse-type prayer to Yahweh against a foreign alliance against Judah/Israel does not reflect this or any other theology however. It merely appeals to Yahweh to destroy "his enemies" - clearly the foreign nations. The same is apparent in the brief mention of the enemies in Psalm 8.



vi) Psalm 42-3

In form this psalm is an individual lament but it is not discussed under (iii) above because I do not believe that the psalmist is the king (contra Eaton). A far more plausible explanation is that the psalmist is one of the guild of temple singers whose work is reflected in Psalm 137 and elsewhere and the song was composed in exile. The psalmist looks back on the temple worship with longing. He looks forward to being able to praise God with the lyre (43:4). The psalm will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five below. However, for the present it is sufficient to note that, consonant with the other psalms in this group, the enemies are most probably foreigners at war with Israel and mockery forms a significant element in the suppliant's suffering.

Hence it can be shown that in twenty-four out of the thirty-three psalms in this group the D'1'x are foreign belligerent enemies, though in one or two cases the existence of internal enemies could not be precluded. But why should this mean that all the enemies in the psalms are foreign armies? Birkeland's argument was based on a false assumption of homogeneity of language and meaning in the psalms. It is hoped that the following section will substantiate the case to the contrary.

b) Other situationsi) Psalm 127

Although Psalm 127 can be discussed briefly its evidence is central to this examination since it demonstrates that

the word "ד'ג'א" can be used, without any shadow of a doubt, for an individual's enemies within Israel - as Birkeland himself has to concede. (Evildoers p.46). The all important verse is verse 5:

"Happy is the man who has his quiver full of sons  
He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with  
his ד'ג'א in the gate!"

It is widely acknowledged that the gate was the place in the town for the conducting of public business and the hearing of disputations. Ruth 3 gives a clear example of the sort of issue which might be settled there. Here then the type of ד'ג'א envisaged are internal enemies. Are such enemies to be found elsewhere in the "ד'ג'א" psalms? Two possible groups suggest themselves.

ii) Psalms 6, 13, 30, 54

These psalms form a group within the "ד'ג'א" psalms because of their vagueness about the circumstances underlying their composition. The three psalms 6, 13 and 54 are all united in being laments in which the subject is suffering and in distress because of his enemies. This distress has driven him to prayer and to some activity in the cult, to prayer or prayers and sacrifice (Psalm 54). Each lament is followed by a short thanksgiving to Yahweh for having granted the suppliant a favourable hearing, but we receive no hint as to the identity of the suppliant. The only reasonable conjecture seems to be that these prayers were provided in the cult for the use of private persons involved in some kind of dispute such as that envisaged in Psalm 127:5. To further his chances of success the suppliant would take his plea also to Yahweh, either delivering

it himself or through the medium of the cultic prophet. Psalm 30 represents a more elaborate thanksgiving after successful outcome to the appeal.

iii) Psalms of sickness

Two psalms of sickness in the psalter, Psalms 38 and 41, contain references to enemies. Psalm 38 is the most likely of the two to be a royal psalm but even in this case the enemies are those who "meditate treachery" and should be seen as enemies within the nation as well as foreign allies. Psalm 41 bears witness, as do the four psalms in the section above, to the fact that the ordinary person in ancient Israel would undoubtedly have personal enemies, the more so if he was at all eminent (49). The references to desertion by friends and companions in both of these psalms are not so much autobiographical as additional features of distress incorporated into the psalm to increase the picture of the suppliant's plight and to make his case more likely to be answered by Yahweh.

iv) Psalms 25 and 35

Psalms 25 and 35 have been left until last of the "ד'ג'י'א" psalms because of the difficulty of deciding whether the situation envisaged is one of the ordinary Israelite or of the king and hence whether the enemies are private or foreign nations.

In the case of Psalm 25, as the text now stands, it is plainly intended as a national psalm of lament in the "I" form. However v. 22 stands outside the acrostic structure and so

is interpreted by a majority of commentators as a later addition to the psalm, adapting it for a national fast day. Eaton's suggestion, that this verse is meant as a refrain after each line of the acrostic, is at least a possibility though it cannot be proved (50). The only other indication that this may be a national psalm is v. 3 where the psalmist refers to others apart from himself being "shamed" or "confounded" (גִּבְשִׁי). However it is unclear whether this is a general statement in which the psalmist refers to other individuals like himself who come severally to wait on Yahweh or whether it refers to the actual congregation waiting with the psalmist at the present time.

Furthermore, although the psalmist describes his enemies in terms which would apply well to the nation there is a positive indication that the psalmist is not envisaged as the king but as the ordinary Israelite in the promises given in vv. 13-4 which are more applicable to a number of people than to the king only.

In short, a compromise solution seems necessary and, the suggestion that the psalm is post-exilic liturgy is attractive. The worshipper we may envisage as a post-exilic figure whose awareness of the nation's enemies as his own impinges far more upon his consciousness than that of his pre-exilic counterpart. The psalm is of course shot through with the deuteronomic theology that sin will lead to disaster and eviction from the land. The structure of the psalm can be outlined as follows.

In the opening prayer (vv. 1-7) the suppliant asks Yahweh for his continued protection, for his salvation from the

enemies round about. The priest then replies giving a promise of Yahweh's nature:

"Good and upright is the Lord,  
therefore he instructs sinners in the way ...."

The suppliant then repeats the prayer for forgiveness (v. 11) and the priest replies with a word of assurance for the man who has humbled himself before God (v. 12). This oracle continues until v. 14 when the prayer resumes as the worshipper continues to "humble himself before Yahweh".

Hence in Psalm 25 the tentative conclusion is that, although the psalmist is not the king but a representative Israelite of the post-exilic age the enemies are still the foreign nations surrounding the small city state of Judah, evidence for which is provided in the memoirs of Nehemiah.

Psalm 35 is often seen as a psalm of the king invoking Yahweh's aid in a holy war. This is not an impossible view of the psalm. The military imagery in the opening verses would certainly predispose one towards such an interpretation. Furthermore the situation of the psalmist is certainly public in some sense (v. 27). However, as in a number of other psalms, we have here two types of language which can be reconciled in a number of different ways: many sections of the psalm speak in terms of judgement and the legal process (malicious witnesses v. 11, "Judge me" v. 24) - some sort of trial process is clearly envisaged. The problem here, as elsewhere is one of distinguishing between metaphor and actual description. There seem to be two possibilities:

1. That the language about war is concrete and a situation of foreign belligerence is envisaged. In this case two questions must be answered:

a. Who are the "עֲדֵי הַקָּדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-רָדַעְתִּי יִשְׁאַלּוּנִי"?

They cannot be foreign enemies, or at least this is unlikely as the psalmist has been in a position to weep when they were sick, (as above this must be metaphorical not autobiographical language, a way of strengthening the case before Yahweh).

These witnesses are a severe difficulty for this interpretation as invective against them seems to take up the bulk of the psalm - indeed the real threat comes from these people, not foreign armies.

b. Secondly, why is the king to be judged by Yahweh? Why is he on trial? The scenario envisaged by Birkeland in such cases is that the king has somehow committed a breach of covenant with his overlord and has therefore been accused by neighbouring kings or traitors in his own lands. The plea to Yahweh to act as counsel for the defense could then be seen in this way.

2. However, once it has been acknowledged that the language of the psalm is not primarily about war but envisages a trial situation why can this not be seen as the prayer of one on trial who sees himself as unjustly accused. The military language at the beginning of the psalm can then be seen as metaphor - it is used in a secondary sense of Yahweh in any case. The initial cry for help, for Yahweh's aid as counsel for the defense takes us straight into judicial

terminology - this is followed by the metaphorical "לָחֵם אֶת־"

לִּהְיֶי " . The initial vibrant cry for help is followed by a fourfold curse (vv. 4-6) followed in turn by an explanatory section justifying the cursing using the hunting metaphors.

On the individual interpretation v. 10 must be taken literally and reflects the background of the rich despoiling the poor found in many of the "רָשָׁעִים" psalms and in the prophets. A similar situation is depicted in v. 20. The psalm is to be seen therefore, with Psalm 109, as a prayer composed for the use of one who believes himself falsely accused.

The above examinations of the "אִיְגִים" and "רָשָׁעִים" psalms independently of one another have demonstrated conclusively, in my opinion, that the two terms in question have different meanings, the one defined in relation to God's judgement, the other in relation to the threat, or potential threat, posed to the suppliant and set in the framework of Yahweh's salvation. This in turn establishes firmly the fact that the psalmists do not describe the antagonists according to a pre-formed pattern but in fact choose their words with great care. The task that remains is the examination of those psalms in which the two terms "רָשָׁעִים" and "אִיְגִים" occur together. It will be observed that the results of this examination support the conclusions given above.

##### 5. PSALMS REFERRING TO BOTH "רָשָׁעִים" and "אִיְגִים"

There are fourteen psalms only in which the two terms "רָשָׁעִים" and "אִיְגִים" both occur. The chief aim of the two

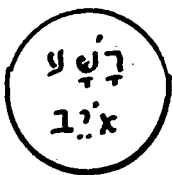
preceding sections has been to attempt to substantiate the theory of Rosenbaum that the meaning of these terms can be separated within the psalter. This hypothesis has been supported, it is clear, from the preceding analysis and exegesis of the terms in context in some sixty psalms. However Rosenbaum's own conclusions, which were based more upon statistical analysis than close examination of the text cannot be upheld in their entirety. Rosenbaum's view, it will be remembered, is that the **ד'יִשְׂרָאֵל** represent individuals within Israel who have turned from Yahweh and **ד'גוֹיִם** are external belligerent armies, as Birkeland thought. In the light of the foregoing examination these definitions must be emended as follows:

i) The **ד'יִשְׂרָאֵל** are defined primarily in relation to God's judgment rather than by race. They are those who offend against Yahweh's laws. As such they are mainly Israelites but the term can extend to include the wicked worldwide. A later development of the word causes it to be used in a nationalistic sense, as in Psalms 125 and 129.

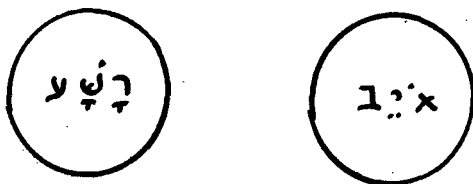
ii) The **ד'גוֹיִם** are defined in relation to the subject to whom they are hostile. In other words the word on its own denotes no particular group of people, inside or outside Israel. In the majority of the psalms in which the word occurs however the **ד'גוֹיִם** are foreign enemies opposed to either the king or the nation. But in other psalms internal enemies of the individual are undoubtedly meant.



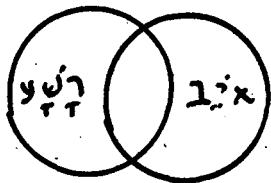
There may be a number of different reasons why the two terms appear together in the one psalm. The fallacy behind Birkeland's argument is that this implies the two words are semantic equivalents and that each carries the full meaning of the other. As a Venn diagram this would appear thus as two circles one superimposed upon the other.



Rosenbaum contests this theory and posits his own separating the two completely.



In the case of the fourteen common psalms he is forced to argue that the two words denote a different group in every case. Although this can be maintained in at least one psalm of the group in others the interpretation appears very awkward and forced. My own theory as to the meaning of the two terms could be represented thus.



The area of overlap of meaning should be assumed to be neither simple nor straightforward, but the psalms in which the two terms occur can be divided into four groups:

a) Psalms in which the enemies are external and the wicked internal (Ps. 106)

b) Psalms in which the enemies are internal (Pss. 37, 55, 71, 92, 119, 139)

c) Psalms in which the wicked are external (Pss. 68, 3, 31)

d) Psalms in which the king is portrayed as opposed to both the **וְיָשָׁרִים** within the nation and the external **בְּגוֹיֵי אֲרָצוֹת**. As the king is opposed to both groups there is the tendency in these psalms to use the same vocabulary to describe each group (Pss. 7, 17, 9-10).

a) Psalms in which the enemies are external and the wicked internal  
(Ps. 106)

Psalm 106 contains a clear demonstration of how the meanings of the two terms must differ despite their being included in the same psalm. The enemies (vv. 10, 42) are clearly the foreign nations and defined in relation to the object of their hostility. The term **וְיָשָׁרִים** is reserved for those Israelites who transgress the law of Yahweh and fall into judgement (v. 18). Birkeland attributes this of course to prophetic influence. It is hoped that sufficient evidence has been gathered above to demonstrate that the difference between the theology of the psalms and that of the prophets is not the chasm he supposed it to be.

b) Psalms in which the enemies are internal

Birkeland's comment on Psalm 37 in "Evildoers" demonstrates his failure to grasp simple logic:

"In Psalm 37 it is clear that the וְעֵשִׂים  
must be gentiles. For the pious are promised  
that they shall take the country in possession  
vv. 9, 11, 22, 24. Consequently the וְעֵשִׂים  
must be the rulers now"

But why does this prove that they are gentiles?

It does not, so far as I can see. Rather, the psalm points to the wealthy classes castigated elsewhere in this type of psalm (as in 73, 34, 36 et al.) which is strongly influenced by the Wisdom tradition. The psalm encourages patience in the face of suffering and adhesion to Yahweh's way despite the apparent advantages of the וְעֵשִׂים - the basic theme of Psalm 73 (see above p. 42). Yet the purpose of the exhortation is to prevent the persons addressed from joining the ranks of the wicked:

"Depart from evil and do good, so you  
shall abide for ever"

The reference to the אֲשֵׁר is incidental. The עֵשִׂים is described as an אֲשֵׁר of Yahweh. The basic theme of the psalm is one of justice: the right reward for both good and evil deeds (the reward being continued possession of the land), but an underlying theme is also, in the present as it were, the theme of salvation with which the psalm closes. If the psalm is post-exilic, as most commentators agree, the likelihood is that a greater self-consciousness would be emerging among Yahweh's faithful as they responded to a greater risk of persecution.

Psalm 55 is an exceptional psalm, peculiar because of its extended testimony to the falsehood of a friend. A number of factors indicate that the psalmist is the king: the worshipper's sufferings merge into those of the community in vv. 9-11; in the suppliant's betrayal the community is betrayed (v. 20); and the plural forms in v. 23 indicate that the individual traitor is head of a group opposed to the Davidic king (51). It is likely that the word "לָעֵץ" in v. 3 (MT v. 4) should be emended to "לְעֵץ" ("cry") as a number of scholars have suggested (Weiser, BDB et al.). This being the case there seems no reason to doubt that the two terms in question denote the same group of people in this psalm who are both transgressors of Yahweh's law and adversaries of the suppliant. The double description is especially applicable in view of the offences which are portrayed which are both moral (v. 11) and military. Some form of civil war is prepared. That the **ל'כ** is internal is in fact confirmed by vv. 12-15, however unusual these may be in themselves (52).

Psalm 71, similarly, would appear to be a royal psalm composed for the king's use when facing treachery or threats from internal enemies and this psalm also would appear to contain specific biographical details. It is likely that here, as elsewhere, the psalmist has the king describe himself as old and frail because of the heightened picture of distress which this creates. Royal features in the psalm include instances of the royal address to Yahweh (vv. 3, 5) and the king having been a portent ("לְיָסוּס") to many. As Eaton aptly remarks: "The psalm appears to be a striking example of how

the king could build a powerful plea on his function as God's witness". Eaton also refers to the instances where, as the king weakened in his old age, enemies would begin to watch for the signs that divine favour had deserted him (I Kings 1, ANET p. 149a) (53). The enemies of the king should be seen as internal therefore and, in the course of his prayer to enlist Yahweh's support, the king, playing the part of the unjustly accused, seeks to brand his opponents as "רְשָׁעִים" and thus secure their punishment at Yahweh's hand.

Psalm 92 v. 9 has been discussed in some detail above as a demonstration of the way in which the psalmist chooses his terms with care in description of the wicked which can only imply that each has a separate and distinguishable meaning. The psalm has a cosmic dimension to it. The reference to the רְשָׁעִים and כְּפָיִץ אֲזַיִן must be taken on a worldwide scale. There seems no reason to exclude evildoers either inside or outside Israel. In v. 9 such men are branded as אֲנִי רָשָׁע of Yahweh: Yahweh is opposed to all such evil conduct. The suppliant's own enemies are described later in the psalm as "רְשָׁעִים" a term which, as Rosenbaum has shown (54) is the approximate semantic equivalent of "אֲנִי רָשָׁע" but which is presumably used here for variety and clarity. It seems that in this particular verse the foreign armies are meant, but this does not mean that the רְשָׁעִים and כְּפָיִץ אֲזַיִן earlier in the psalm are to be identified with this group only. The movement of thought is better seen as the move from a general statement or promise to a particular demonstration in an individual circumstance, that of victory over a military opponent. It should

be noted therefore that Psalm 92 only loosely belongs in this group. The reference is primarily to all evildoers everywhere.

The six references to **רָשָׁעִים** and one to **אֹיְבֵי** in Psalm 119 (vv. 53, 61, 95, 98, 110, 119, 155) confirm what has already been said about the meaning of the two terms. The **רָשָׁעִים** are initially described as those who "forsake thy law" - i.e. Israelites who have strayed from Yahweh (v. 53). However, such men are found not only in Israel but all over the earth (v. 119). They present some threat to the psalmist (vv. 61, 95, 110). The designation "**אֹיְבֵי**", "my enemies", (v. 91) probably does not refer to the same group of people but a smaller unit of men actively hostile to the subject of the psalm. Hence it can be observed yet again that great harm is done to the text and its natural meaning by accepting Birkeland's hypothesis.

Finally, Psalm 139 also supports a differentiation in meaning between the two terms, for the psalmist says of the **רָשָׁעִים** "**לֵאיוֹבֵיִם קִיוּ לִי**" or, as the RSV has it, "I shall count them my enemies". Much as in Psalm 119 this reveals that the **רָשָׁעִים** are not automatically personal enemies of the psalmist. The **רָשָׁע** is defined by his conduct towards God and his law. The **אֹיֵב** is defined by his conduct towards the object of his hostility. The most natural identity for the wicked in this psalm is as evildoers within Israel especially if, as seems to be the case, the psalmist is the king. He would then be seen as crying out against violence in the land, much as in Psalm 101.

c) Psalms in which the wicked are external

In the festal Psalm 68 the designation "רָשָׁעִים" is parallel to that of "אֲבֵי יְהוָה" and the designation similarly appear to refer to foreign armies (v. 21). Yet there seems no reason to suppose that the individual Israelite is excluded and the opening verses particularly do count as an effective warning to the oppressor in Israel:

"A father of the fatherless and a  
judge of the widows  
Is God in his holy habitation!"

In Psalm 3 the enemies mentioned in v. 7 are clearly military antagonists and the subject of the psalm is the king. There is no escaping the fact that the term "רָשָׁעִים" is here used of this group therefore. As in some of the psalms discussed above, the king can be seen as an instrument of Yahweh's judgement against the nations, who can therefore be described as "רָשָׁעִים". Conversely, the king would describe his enemies as such in the hope of invoking Yahweh's wrath against them (55).

Psalm 31 is one of the most difficult prayers in the psalter to interpret and a full discussion is given below (p. 238). It seems for various reasons that the psalm is best seen as a royal prayer to be delivered in a time of siege: continual reference to Yahweh as "rock" and "fortress" would support this view as, of course, does the reference to being besieged found in v. 21. The RSV understands this verse metaphorically translating "בְּעִיר קְצוֹר" as

"as in a besieged city", although there is no hint of this in the Hebrew text. The psalm also is similar in a number of ways to other psalms of siege. This being the case, it follows that the antagonists in the psalm are foreign armies. As in Psalm 3, by reason of their opposition to Yahweh's anointed and his chosen nation they are described as "רְשָׁעִים", as those under judgement, in v. 17 of the psalm.

d) Psalms in which the king opposes internal רְשָׁעִים and external אֲבִיבִים

The opposition to both the military enemies of the nation and the רְשָׁעִים within the nation was focussed in ancient Israel in the person of the king in his twofold function as warrior and judge respectively. It should not be surprising therefore that in certain psalms such as Psalm 3 there is an identification made between the two groups and that in other psalms, particularly Psalms 7, 17 and 9-10 there is an interplay of meaning between references to the רְשָׁעִים and references to the אֲבִיבִים. It seems to me that all three of these psalms are royal and should be given a setting within the royal ritual of Judah. In Psalms 7 and 17 the king gives account to Yahweh of his stewardship for the previous year and seeks vindication against his accusers within the nation. In Psalms 9-10 (56) the king gives thanks for victory over his enemies in the dramatic battle but seeks Yahweh's continued help in the fight against the רְשָׁעִים and against injustice in the land. However, as these psalms, it seems to me, can only be understood



against the background of the royal ritual (and an understanding of Pss. 9-10 requires an investigation of the terms  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{עֲנִי}$ ) full exegesis must wait until a later chapter. It is sufficient to point out here that it seems more sensible to use the sixty psalms already discussed as a guide to understanding these three pieces than to follow Birkeland and utilise the evidence from these three difficult psalms as a foundation for understanding the remainder.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The ultimate worth of any conclusions in an enquiry into the psalms must rest on the amount of light shed on the text of the psalms themselves. Hence to some degree, the exegesis of the psalms given in these chapters must speak for itself. However, the following general conclusions can be drawn from the preceding discussion.

### a) On the antagonists in the psalms

On the main point at issue the enquiry has, I believe, been conclusive. Birkeland's theory, shared by almost all commentators on the psalms, that the antagonists are described according to a stereotyped pattern has been refuted. Rosenbaum's hypothesis that the meanings of " $\text{רָשָׁעִים}$ " and " $\text{אֲרֵי־גִים}$ " can be distinguished in the psalms has been confirmed and his own definition of the two terms has been emended. The  $\text{רָשָׁעִים}$ , as was said above, must now be seen to be those who stand under Yahweh's judgement and are often linked with a vocabulary of judgement in the psalms. The  $\text{רָשָׁע}$  is rarely a threat to the psalmist himself, although the powerful and wealthy in the land who oppress the poor can be described as  $\text{רָשָׁעִים}$ .

He is characterised by arrogance, slander, lying, boastfulness and godlessness and, if circumstances permit, oppression. The **רָשָׁע** occur in many psalms as examples to the congregation of Israel of what not to become; in others as those who are condemned or judged by either Yahweh or the king.

By contrast, the **אֶבְרָתָא** is defined in relation to the subject of his hostilities. The **אֶבְרָתָא** always presents a threat to the "I" in the psalm. In about two thirds of the "**ד' אֶבְרָתָא**" psalms the enemies can be seen to be foreign armies, as Birkeland thought, but in others the term does refer to hostile parties or individuals within Israel. Apart from the threat to the "I" in the psalm, the enemy is characterised by his mockery of the suppliant's condition.

There is a certain amount of overlap between the two terms and an interplay between them. Foreign enemies and armies can be described as "**רָשָׁעִים**" by reason of their opposition to Yahweh or his anointed. The king in his role as warrior and judge faces both national enemies and the wicked at home and several psalms, some of which have yet to be fully explored and which seem to have their context in the royal ritual, refer to the king's opposition to both of these groups.

b) On the study of the psalms

It is hoped that the above discussion has also validated several of the principles of enquiry laid down in the introduction to the thesis, that content must be examined as well as form and that complex solutions to the problems associated with

the identity of the individual are both necessary and attainable. Primarily however the chapter has demonstrated that the meaning of a given term cannot be satisfactorily derived from its parallels in Hebrew poetry and that if a word means one thing in one psalm it does not necessarily have exactly the same meaning in all the others. Comparison of the meanings of the words discussed above in different psalms has been helpful in the analysis, but the immediate context in which the word stands must also play a major role in the discovery of its meaning. Allowance must be made both for the tradition and for individual usage within that tradition.

Although this chapter necessarily anticipates some of the conclusions drawn later in the thesis, it is hoped that a satisfactory solution to the problem of the identity of the antagonists has been put forward. The enquiry will now move on to examine the second major problem associated with the individual in the psalms, that of the meaning of the different terms for poor, particularly the terms עֲנִי and עָנִי .

## CHAPTER TWO: THE POOR IN THE PSALMS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of the poor in the psalms is in many ways both similar in form and closely related to the problem of the antagonists and would seem to demand a separate and detailed analysis as a lengthy but necessary prologue to any discussion of the individual in the psalms. The problem enters the scope of this thesis in so far as the individual in the psalms often describes himself as "poor" (1) but in order to understand this self-designation it becomes necessary to examine the semantic field "poor" as a whole and to discuss the term in context in the psalms in which it appears. Like that in the preceding chapter, the present discussion will fall into several sections:

1. A brief summary of the discussion to date will be presented and the main questions outlined. In particular,

the Section will discuss the most recent study of the topic in the work of Carl Schultz (2).

2. As in the preceding chapter, the exegesis of specific psalms will be used in an attempt to catalogue and define the meaning of the terms for poor as used in the psalms.
3. The conclusion will sum up the results of the investigation both for the problem of the identity of the poor and with regard, once again, to the general principles involved in interpreting the psalms.

As was mentioned in the introduction to the thesis the psalms must be seen at all times against the wider background of the Old Testament tradition and of the ancient Near Eastern environment in which they were composed. Accordingly, a study of the understanding of the terms for "poor" in the ancient Near East and in the Old Testament is presented in Appendix I below.

## 2. THE BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM: THE WORK OF SCHULTZ

### a) The questions

Unlike the problem of the antagonists in the psalms, which only began to be raised when Davidic authorship of the psalter began seriously to be questioned, the problem of the poor goes back much further, as the Kethib and Q'ere variants of the terms "עָנִי" and "עָנָו" show. In effect, the question as it is normally raised embraces at least two distinct problems namely:

- i) the problem of the relationship between the two terms "עָנִי" and "עָנָו". Are these two words variants of one root, arising

from a textual confusion, or different words entirely?

ii) the problem of the meaning and referent of all the terms for poor in the psalms. Are they to be taken literally, signifying the economically poor within Israel, or metaphorically as a designation for the nation or a party within the nation? Do they indicate social, economic, religious or psychological poverty? (3)

b) The background to the study of the problem

The opening chapter of the thesis has demonstrated, it is hoped, two fundamental principles of interpretation which will serve to bind together the different problems discussed in each chapter, namely the principle that complex problems, such as those found in the psalms, demand complex solutions and, secondly, that metaphor, its use and interpretation, is of fundamental importance in any attempt to recover the "Sitz im Leben" of the psalms. The history of the present problem under discussion is again very well documented elsewhere (4) and will not be given at length here but the main positions taken, which are sketched below, indicate once again the dangers in assuming uniformity throughout the psalms on any one question. These main positions can be summarised as follows:

i) The Rahlfs position (5). According to Rahlfs the meaning of the two terms "עָנִי" and "עֲנָוִים" can be separated. "עָנִי" is a term used of man's relationship to man and carries no religious meaning. A man is "עָנִי" not from choice but because of circumstances outside his control. The עֲנָוִים by contrast are not a social class but a religious party which came into being after the exile. The term is used to denote man's relationship to God and signifies an

attitude of meekness and humility. The **עֲנִי'וֹת** are such from choice not because of circumstance.

ii) The (later) Birkeland position (6). For the mature thought of Birkeland, expressed in "Die Feinde des Individuums" rather than in the slightly earlier work "'Ani und 'Anaw in den Psalmen", the book of psalms is essentially a book describing the struggles of Israel as a nation and as a religious community. The two terms "**עֲנִי'**" and "**עֲנָו'**" are variants of the same form and denote, in the psalms, the nation of Israel seen in the great commonwealth of nations as the poor and needy one and thus the one to claim Yahweh's attention and help (7).

iii) The position of Schultz can be seen as a compromise between the two views described above: "**עֲנִי'**" and "**עֲנָו'**" are different but related terms. The **עֲנִי'** is always the economically poor and afflicted individual within the nation; the **עֲנָוֹת** represent the community of the faithful among whom the **עֲנִי'** is set.

iv) Finally, a number of scholars including A.R. Johnson, and A.A. Anderson (8) have come down in favour of a complex solution to the problem of the poor, observing correctly that there is a diversity of usage of the terms for poor in the psalms, but thus far, to my knowledge, no attempt has been made to clarify and catalogue this diversity. The approach of A.A. Anderson is fairly typical here. He argues in his commentary correctly that:

".. the various interpretations... become suspect when one proposal is taken as the only explanation of all the afflicted and their enemies. The right solution may be found in a synthesis of the various views because the psalter spans more than one century and the different psalms must have had different backgrounds" (9)



However, Anderson then proceeds to refer back to this discussion at every reference to "עָנִי" in the commentary - a most frustrating device which reveals nothing about the nature of the "עָנִי" in any particular psalm. If the principle that the meaning of a given term is decided, within set boundaries, by the immediate context then that word must be discussed in context each time it occurs. Not to do this is, quite simply, to dodge the issue.

c) The work of Carl Schultz

As mentioned above, Schultz has attempted a re-examination and revision of the question of "עָנִי" and "עָנָו" in the psalms in his unpublished PhD. dissertation bearing that title. He reaches three separate conclusions in his work which will be examined separately below:

i) Like Rahlfs, Schultz concludes that the terms "עָנִי" and "עָנָו" are not the textual variants of one and the same word but different and distinct terms. However, the עֲנִיִּים are not a party or a group but those who ally themselves with Yahweh in the faith and life of Israel.

ii) The term "עָנִי" does not of itself denote material need but should be translated "afflicted" rather than "poor". In order for the word to mean "poor" the additional term "אֶבְיֹן" must be added.

iii) Neither term is ever used of the nation of Israel. Both refer always to the individual (or group) within the nation. The terms are not used metaphorically in any sense, although their meaning is complex and contains development.

It is my view that Schultz' first conclusion is correct and to be upheld but that the second and particularly the third will not stand.



The following detailed review of his work will begin to substantiate this view.

i) The meaning of "עֲנוּיִם"

By an analysis of the ten occurrences of "עֲנוּיִם" in the psalms Schultz shows that the term is clearly distinct from "עָנִי" and not merely a textual corruption of its plural "עֲנִיִּים". His conclusion contains an acknowledged difficulty which, it is believed, the refined understanding of "עָנִי" put forward in this study can overcome. In his summary of the arguments for separating the meaning of the two terms Schultz first draws attention to the long-standing distinction between the two in the Kethib/Q'ere variants, the versions and the Dead Sea Scrolls before he summarises the arguments from the psalms as follows:

- " 1. The psalmist never groups himself with the עֲנוּיִם unless he has first identified himself as an עָנִי.
2. In his affliction and suffering, the psalmist refers to himself as an עָנִי. It is only after his deliverance from trouble that he groups himself with the עֲנוּיִם.
3. The עָנִי is presented as a victim while the עֲנוּיִם are seen as victors.
4. The עָנִי is in bitterness, heaping imprecations upon his tormentors, and even occasionally doubting YHWH while the עֲנוּיִם are seen constantly expressing praise and thanksgiving to YHWH.
5. The עֲנוּיִם are associated with the fulfilment of vows ( נִדְרֵי אֲשֶׁלֶם ) and participation in the sacrificial meal.
6. The עֲנוּיִם - never the עֲנִיִּים - are connected with the congregation in its cultic acts of worship. The עֲנוּיִם are pictured as rejoicing and worshipping with the great congregation. By contrast the עָנִי is painfully aware of being alone and desolate.

7. **עָנִי** bespeaks a forced situation, one that perhaps would not have been chosen. **עֲנִיִּים** reflects a volitional posture which has resulted from that forced situation. There is only one instance (Ps. 88) where the **עָנִי** concludes his cry on a note of complaint and does not move on to join the **עֲנִיִּים** in praise." (10).

**"עֲנִיִּים"** thus emerges as a group term for the faithful in Israel denoting in particular the attitude of humility before God which is also one of the senses of **"עָנִי"** (see below). This meaning is substantiated by most of the other uses of the term outside the psalms, including the only occurrence of its singular in Numbers 12:3:

"Now the man Moses was very **עָנִי**, more than all the men that were on the face of the earth."

Schultz argues correctly that, given the context, it is Moses' humility which is here being contrasted with the self-aggrandisement of Miriam and Aaron (11) and not, as some have thought his "affliction". Hence the term can be no mere variant of **"עָנִי"**. Schultz' opinion that the psalmist never designates himself as **"עָנִי"** (12) because the term had been applied to Moses is, however, rather fanciful. The more likely explanation seems to be that humility in any culture is not a characteristic which it is appropriate to claim for oneself! The distinction between **"עָנִי"** and **"עֲנִי"** does however stand and it would appear that **"עֲנִיִּים"** should be placed with the group of words **"צַדִּיקִים"**, **"חַסִּדִּים"** and **"דַּרְשֵׁי יְהוָה"** as terms denoting mainly the congregation of the faithful in Israel rather than with the terms for poor.

There is, however, strong evidence in the Kethib/Q'ere variants that the similarities between the plural forms of the two words gave rise to some confusion and that the one term was substituted for another during the different stages of the transmission

of the text. The Q'ere editors plainly believed that the distinction between the two terms should be preserved and will not allow "עֲנִיִּים" to parallel "אֲבִיּוֹן" in the four instances where the Kethib has this (13). It may be that in these passages and in four others from the prophets which Schultz acknowledges as difficult on his interpretation (namely Is. 11:4, 29:9, 61:1 and Amos 2:7 where the 'עֲנִיִּים' are linked with other words from the field poor) that here, in the post-exilic transmission of the text, the terms for poor generally were beginning to be used increasingly as terms for the nation itself (as the following arguments demonstrate) and therefore several passages were given a more overtly nationalistic and therefore eschatological explanation by changing "עֲנִיִּים" to "עֲנִיִּים" (eg. Amos 2:7). In other later pieces the term has been used deliberately to give this impression of the nation represented by a humble and suffering individual (so in Is. 61:1, 29:19). The ambiguity and common meaning between the two terms "עֲנִי" and "עֲנִי" can be understood therefore to have increased rather than diminished in time. Schultz has succeeded in maintaining however, as the above arguments show, that the meaning of the two terms should be separated within the psalter.

ii) The meaning of "עֲנִי"

Schultz's second conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the term "עֲנִי" and is to the effect that the word should not be translated "poor" but "afflicted". By itself, he argues, "עֲנִי" never means economically poor but the term "אֲבִיּוֹן" must be appended to "עֲנִי" to give it this meaning (14). By implication

therefore "עָנִי" does not denote an economic class or group but merely describes a person in any kind of affliction. However, this interpretation must be resisted as not doing full justice to the evidence Schultz himself presents. In no fewer than three passages in the Pentateuch, the "עָנִי" is mentioned in the laws of Israel apart from the so-called qualifier "עַבְדֵי יְהוָה":

"If you lend money to any of my people who is עָנִי  
you shall not be to him as a creditor and  
you shall not exact interest from him." Exodus 22:24

"And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither  
shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard;  
you shall leave them for the עָנִי and the sojourner".  
Lev. 19:10

"And when you reap the harvest of your land, you  
shall not reap your field to its very border, nor  
shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest;  
you shall leave them for the עָנִי and the stranger;  
I am the Lord your God". Lev. 23:22

Such laws depend for their operation on the use of fairly precise terms: the Israelites would need to know when an עָנִי was an עָנִי in the sense described by these laws. Hence the term cannot have been a general term for affliction exclusively but could clearly be used to denote the poorest of the poor classes. It is also apparent, as Schultz has shown, that "עָנִי" can be used as a general term for affliction, a meaning derived directly from its root verb "עָנָה" meaning (according to BDB and Schultz) "to be bowed down, afflicted". The use of the term for a particular class or type of affliction, that of poverty, should be regarded as an extension from this root. This seems the only satisfactory way to do justice to the evidence of the text. That a Hebrew word can cover a diversity of related meanings should occasion

no surprise. It is well known that words such as "רִיבֹן" and "רוּחַ" denote one of several different objects depending on the context in which they are used, as indeed does the term "poor" in English. The commentator's task must be, given the possibility of several different meanings, to clarify what would otherwise be a very confusing picture.

iii) "עֲנִי" always refers to an individual and not the nation

An overall weakness of Schultz' argument towards this third and in many ways most important of his conclusions lies in his methodology. In his examination of the different occurrences of the word "עֲנִי" in the psalms he pays too much attention to the word's immediate context, discussing in depth the meaning of terms which are not strictly relevant to his study, and often neglects the wider context of the whole psalm in which it stands. The ensuing discussion of the relevant psalms is an attempt to redress that balance. In particular Schultz all too often neglects the question of whether a psalm is individual, royal or national in character. His work is thus an example of the type of study mentioned above (p. 10 ) in which only one facet of the many sided problem of the individual in the psalms is examined and answers to other facets of the problem are simply taken as unquestioned and unraised assumptions. This methodology leads him to advance the following argument:

"That the heaviest concentration of עֲנִי appearances is in the lament psalms should occasion no surprise since the very condition of the עֲנִי lends itself to complaint. What is significant here is the heavy concentration in individual laments. This, along with the above facts and those which are to follow, indicate that the term is never used to designate the entire nation of Israel" (15).

If some of these "individual laments" are "national songs of lamentation in the I-form" or royal in character, as many eminent scholars have suggested and as this thesis contends, then Schultz' argument falls. He should have at least raised the question.

Passages in the psalms which would seem to indicate that "עָנִי" can be used of the whole nation (for example in Ps. 74) are skated round with dubious exegesis which will be mentioned in the discussion of the relevant psalms below. Although Schultz notes the use of "עָנִי" with "עַם" in Isaiah (16) he avoids confessing that in certain cases here "עָנִי" denotes the nation by appealing to the cumulative evidence of the rest of the Old Testament and also by a rather oblique and misleading reference to the work of E.A. Speiser (17).

"The use of "עַם" with "עָנִי" in Isaiah must be noted. In 3:15, 10:22, 14:32, 49:13 these two words are parallel and in Chapter 51 the עָנִי (vs. 21) are identified as עַם (vs. 22). Clearly in the light of what we have just noted (that in the majority of cases in the O.T. "עָנִי" refers to an individual) "עַם" is not an ethnic term designating all Israel but rather a term designating the oppressed people. This conclusion is further demonstrated by Speiser who shows that "עַם" strongly emphasises the individual" (18).

Both the arguments used here are false. The appeal to other occurrences, or to the majority of occurrences in the Old Testament would be possible only if it were assumed that "עָנִי" could have only one or the other meaning throughout (see below). The work of Speiser mentioned here does not demonstrate that "עַם" is never a term for an ethnic group of people. The burden of his argument is that, although both "עַם" and "גּוֹי" are used of the same referent, they are used differently and the use of either betrays certain sociological trends. In part-

icular, "עַם", although used of the whole people, can also be used of smaller units within a nation, which is essentially the conclusion upheld below where these references in Isaiah are discussed.

Finally, it is apparent that Schultz is working, as are most writers in this field with what has been designated above (p. 30 ) as a code concept of language: either the עַבְדִּי is an individual or he is the nation throughout the psalms and indeed throughout the Old Testament. The starting point for the present thesis is that this assumption is in the first place unjustifiable as an unquestioned assumption and in the second place fails to do justice itself to the Old Testament's rich use of imagery, let alone the flexibilities of its language. The thesis maintained below is that "עַבְדִּי" should in most of its occurrences be taken literally but that this meaning should be determined as much by the context in which a word stands as by its use elsewhere in the Old Testament. This opens the way, as it were, to seeing that "עַבְדִּי" is in fact used of the king and of the nation several times in the psalms, as will be explained below. It also seems false, in the examination of "עַבְדִּי" to separate the term from others in the semantic field poor, particularly "אֶבְיוֹן", "דָּל" and "רֵישׁ". Henceforth therefore this study will not concern itself with "עַבְדִּי" only but will attempt to deal with the whole of the semantic field "poor" in the psalms.

### 3. THE POOR IN THE PSALMS

As has been suggested above, to attempt to catalogue and describe the uses of the terms for "poor" in the psalms is to

attempt, in effect, to chart the different facets of one metaphor or, rather, of one concept used in a number of different metaphors, as well as in its literal sense, within the Book of Psalms. This being the case, it would be well at this point to dwell further on the nature and importance of metaphor in the Old Testament and particularly in the psalms before going on to discuss individual psalms in which the terms for poor occur.

Few commentators or readers of the psalms can doubt the importance of metaphor either in the psalter itself or in religious language generally, but very few, so it seems, actually write on the subject. The exception here is Othmar Keel (19) who has made a splendid attempt to illustrate many of the metaphors in the psalms from the iconographic remains of the ancient Near East. His work is illuminating, but is only a partial attempt to resolve what must be seen eventually as a literary problem. Keel's method is adequate and helpful in so far as the images used by the psalmist can be portrayed visually. But the heat of the sun or the barking of dogs cannot be portrayed in this way; neither can an illness, or the taste of ashes in the mouth. Furthermore Keel has failed to appreciate, or rather to investigate, the complex nature of metaphor in the psalms, both the different uses to which one image can be put and the way the varied comparisons become intertwined, making it difficult for the modern reader to perceive what is meant to be image and what literal description. The psalms would seem to have been composed within a fairly close knit tradition over a period of several hundred years. They contain a limited vocabulary, a fair degree of what Birkeland



called pattern and continually use and re-use the same series of images coming back again and again, as Caird has observed of the Bible generally, to the two metaphors of the law court and the battlefield (20). The nature of the language is such that Culley and others have been able to detect what they see as repeated formulae which has given rise to speculation concerning a stage of oral composition in the handing down of the psalms (21). Within this tradition, as stock images are used and re-used, a certain amount of movement and development can be observed which should lead the commentator away from the simplistic solution and towards the more complex. By way of a preliminary, it seems to me that the following points need to be borne in mind when dealing with metaphor in the psalms:

i) Metaphor is not code (22). In a code a given symbol has only one meaning. With metaphor this is not the case. To quote the examples given by Caird:

"Leaven may be a symbol for good influence or bad (Luke 13:20f., I Cor. 5:6f).... The wilderness may be a symbol of desolation, demonic power, everything that has escaped or is resistant to the sovereignty of God (Is. 13:20-22, 34: 13-15, Luke 11:24, Mark 1:13, Lev. 16:7ff, Deut. 32:10) but, because of its association with the Exodus, it may also be a symbol of innocence, sincerity, liberation and security under the providential care of God (Ex. 5:1, Jer. 2:1-2, 31:2, Rev. 12:6)" (23).

ii) Caird catalogues a number of instances where metaphors and images are piled up on top of one another for cumulative effect (24). He does not mention the possibility of the different meanings of one metaphor being combined to give a richer content of meaning within that given tradition, as can happen in the psalms (25).

iii) Caird also records the different stages in the life of a metaphor (26). When first coined it is alive and sets forth a new way of seeing to those who hear it. After continued use it becomes what Caird calls a "stock metaphor" and then eventually a dead metaphor, a new literalism. Something of this development can be seen in the odyssey of the terms for poor. From having a literal meaning the words come to denote anyone in need, and thence the nation or the king in their need. From here they come to denote merely the nation and become empty code words or symbols for the elect in the intertestamental literature.

iv) The existence of a given metaphor in a tradition does not exclude the possibility that the vehicle cannot be found elsewhere in that tradition in a literal sense (27). Indeed, the fact that a scenario is used in a metaphorical way actually implies that scenario was familiar to the original audience.

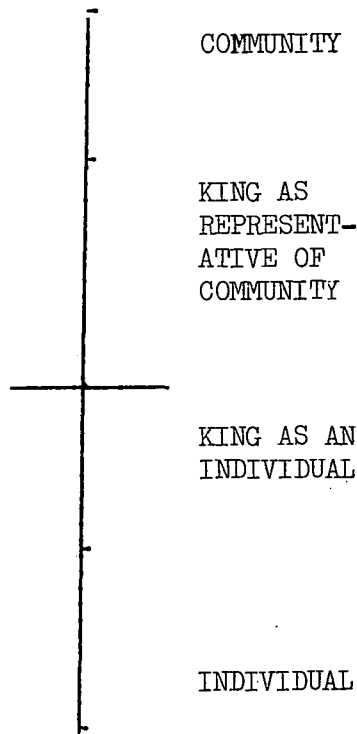
Two observations must be made on the use of the word poor in the psalms before the exegesis is undertaken. The first concerns its different range of meanings: it is confusing to speak simply of literal or metaphorical usage since, as Caird has shown, a metaphor can be many things. Similarly to speak merely of an individual or collective use of a term can also lead to inaccuracies, particularly if the role of the king in a psalm is to be considered. Hence the meaning of the terms for poor in any psalm will be plotted diagrammatically, along two different axes. The horizontal axis will indicate which meaning of the terms is thought to be demanded by the context along the following range:

AFFLICTED DESTITUTE IN NEED =RIGHTEOUS EMPTY METAPHOR

The translations given for the first three categories are those suited for "עָנִי". A psalm will be placed under "AFFLICTED" if it is thought the root meaning of the term is implied; under "DESTITUTE" if the term is used in the sense of economically poor; under "IN NEED" if the term is taken to refer to a more general affliction. If the psalm is placed under "=RIGHTEOUS" then this is because in the text the עָנִי or צַדִּיק is thought to be equated with the righteous. If, in my opinion, any of the terms is used of an individual or group whose need is not genuine the psalm will be placed under the category of "EMPTY METAPHOR".

The second axis of the diagram runs from individual to collective as follows:

The top and bottom registers are self-explanatory. A division is made between the king as an individual and as a representative of his community because this seems to represent a genuine division in the royal psalms, particularly the laments. In certain of these the king appears to be praying on his own behalf as in Hezekiah's prayer of thanksgiving in Is. 38 for example. In others the king's suffering and fate are identified with that of his community, as in Psalms 22 and 69 discussed below.



The reader may be helped in reading the exegesis of the psalms which follows by referring to the diagram on p. 139. The horizontal line used with many psalms indicates a broad base of meaning. Brackets indicate alternative positions for one or two psalms.

In one sense this diagram may seem over complex as a way of discussing the use of the group of words for "poor" in the psalms. It is my view that the complexity reflected in the chart is actually represented in the psalms however and such a diagrammatic representation at least gives some idea of the spread of the different uses of the term. In another sense, in attempting to give expression to the nuances of a once-living language and a text which is ever being interpreted afresh the diagram oversimplifies and is not complex enough. It represents an attempt at compromise between the demands of the text on the one hand and the requirements of the reader of the psalms on the other.

The second general point deals with what I would call "scenario". The complex of ideas surrounding the notion of the poor man must be remembered when dealing with any use of the term and the scenario most aptly pictured in this discussion of the terms for poor is that of the law court or legal hearing, plainly a very familiar scene to the ancient Israelites. Within the law court the poor man is more often than not the defendant and the oppressed party. Often therefore he is called the righteous or the innocent at law. According to the common pattern of belief found throughout the ancient Near East, the god, in this case Yahweh, himself watches

out for the cause of the widow, orphan and poor man (28). The self designation of the psalmist as **עָבִיר** and **עָבִירִי** may therefore be literal and descriptive but it may also be a way of placing oneself under the protection of Yahweh in the "law suit" - so many of the laments are in any case couched in terms of a plea for the defense. Closely connected and bound up with these ideas of Yahweh as a helper and protector of the poor is the prominent strand in Israelite theology of the necessity to humble oneself before God and to acknowledge one's dependance on him: God helps those who have no helper. The phrase **"עָבִירִי וְעָבִירִי"** not only acknowledges this and places the suppliant under the protection of Yahweh but also acts as a term of self-denigration parallel to others in the lament psalms (cf. 51:5).

The different psalms will now be discussed in the categories dictated by the vertical axis, beginning with psalms of the individual and ending with those in which the community is envisaged as "poor".

- a) Psalms of the individual
- i) Psalms betraying a wisdom influence: the poor as objects of charity or oppression. (Pss. 41, 112, 146, 37, 49)

Although the text of Psalm 41:1 is clear and undisputed in the ancient manuscripts (the only variant being the LXX addition of **καὶ πένητα** to the first half of the verse) the verse itself has occasioned some discussion among the modern commentators. At

least three views are proposed. The first is suggested by Jacquet. He notes, as do several scholars, that the theme of the beatitude in this verse is not taken up at all in the main body of the psalm, the lament section. He also finds that the construction of the first half of the verse is awkward and sees these two reasons sufficient to emend the text drastically so as to read:

אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה אִתּוֹ אֱלֹהִים  
הַאֲבִיּוֹן מִסֵּכֵל אֵל

which he renders: "Bienheureux le pauvre qui compte avec Dieu, au jour de malheur Yahweh le delivre". The psalmist would therefore have in mind a reciprocal relationship between Yahweh and an אֲבִיּוֹן. There is quite a lot to commend this reading, particularly as it would bring the psalm more into line with others of its kind (Ps. 32:1-2, 34:9, 40:5, 65:5) which speak only of the psalmist's relationship to God. However, given that the present text makes good sense as it stands and that there is no support in the tradition for such an emendation the suggestion must be regarded as, at best, a sensible speculation. Kraus points out against a similar argument firstly that the construction מִסֵּכֵל אֵל (which some have questioned) is in fact attested in Neh. 8:13 and secondly that the psalmist is best regarded as saying something singular and unique here. It is a strange and restrictive principle for textual criticism to argue that every passage must conform to a preselected norm.

The second suggestion comes from Weiser. He is content to let the text stand but argues that "ל" is not the poor to whom the psalmist is kind but the psalmist himself. In saying

"Blessed is he who attends to the poor" the psalmist is in fact saying "Blessed is he who listens to me"! Weiser's argument is based on the fact that the beatitude, as conventionally understood, is not taken up in the main body of the psalm and on the meaning of the word "שָׁמַע" which he regards as rather weak for the meaning demanded by the conventional translation. The most common meaning for the term is "to pay attention to, consider, ponder" (so Is. 41:20, 44:18, Deut. 32:29, Ps. 64:10, 106:7, Job. 34:27) and, outside this verse, the term is never used in regard to the poor in the sense commonly taken here. However, the verb root "שָׁמַע" can bear a number of different meanings (from "look at" to "cause to prosper", BDB. p. 398) and so it is not unlikely that the meaning normally given here, to consider in a charitable sense, is actually possible but is simply unattested elsewhere.

Both Weiser and Jacquet appear to have missed the crucial point in favour of the conventional rendering - namely that the opening three verses must be seen as one piece forming a wisdom saying which the psalmist quotes in his defence and as the basis of his plea. The remainder of the psalm does refer to this section as a whole if not to the initial half verse. The thought of the psalm as it stands fits well into the scheme of thought found elsewhere in the Old Testament in relation to the poor. Eaton has suggested that this psalm is a royal psalm of sickness (29) and that this would explain the otherwise unique use of "שָׁמַע". The reference would then be to the king giving fair hearing to the poor man in courts of law. The psalm may well be royal, but there are few positive indi-

cations to this effect (see below chapter III) and this understanding of the term, which may well be the right one, could equally well apply to any elder or official who was in a position to hear cases. For the purpose of the present study however, it can be safely maintained that the term "שֹׁפֵט" should be taken in its literal sense here.

The view of the poor found in Psalm 41, as being neither righteous nor wicked but a neutral group, treatment of whom is a measure of a man's righteousness before God, is found again in Psalm 112, again a psalm from the circles of the wisdom writers (30). The psalm portrays the blessedness of the man who fears the Lord. Like the good wife in the acrostic poem at the end of the book of proverbs, one of the signs and causes of his blessing is that:

"He has distributed freely, he has given to the אֲבִיּוֹנִים

It is significant that the psalm is generally regarded as a post-exilic piece since this would exclude any idea that the development of the use of the concept "poor" was chronological along the axes suggested.

Psalm 146 generally seems to be underestimated and wrongly styled by most commentators who place it in the category of a hymn and dismiss the piece in a couple of pages at the end of the commentary. There is little doubt that the psalm is post-exilic: there are a number of allusions to other ideas prominent in the psalter and also several *examples of late Hebrew*, the most prominent being the double occurrence of the particle "וְ" generally thought to signify



a late date. The form of the psalm can be seen to have been more influenced by the wisdom schools than most commentators are willing to admit if the piece is broken down into its component parts. If the hymnic introduction and conclusion are subtracted then there remain three sections each of which is in the form of a classic mode of wisdom teaching: straightforward instruction, a beatitude and a description of Yahweh's acts. This threefold sermon is couched in the language of a hymn and was no doubt, like the other wisdom psalms in the psalter delivered in the cult with the double aim of instruction and praise (see below Chapter V). To turn to the section of the psalm of most interest to the present enquiry (vv. 7c-9) on the conventional interpretation of the psalm the acclamations are normally understood as being in series: the **ד'פ'ת'ג** are one of a list of other oppressed classes and the section culminates in a general cursing of the wicked. In fact the lines seem to be better understood as two sections in parallel, each culminating with either blessing on the righteous or a curse on the wicked:

"Yahweh sets the prisoners free  
 Yahweh opens the eyes of the blind  
 Yahweh lifts up those that are bowed down  
                                   -YAHWEH LOVES THE RIGHTEOUS  
 Yahweh watches over the sojourners  
 He upholds the widow and fatherless  
                                   -BUT THE WAY OF THE WICKED HE  
                                   BRINGS TO RUIN. " (A<sub>T</sub>)

It will be observed that the categories of the oppressed fall into two groups and these same groups occur separately elsewhere in the Old Testament. The group sojourner, widow, orphan is particularly common (Deut. 10:18, 14:29, Ex. 22:22, Mal. 3:5); the former group

occurs most strikingly in the prophecy in Is. 61:1-4 and Is. 42:6 though a different vocabulary is used in part there. This group consists of those whom only Yahweh can help but upon whom the rest of the community can have mercy. The latter group consists of those who, given the diligent protection of the community and its laws should be cared for but who are nevertheless oppressed by the wicked. The two halves of the stanza read almost like a blessing-curse formula: instruction to the righteous and warning to the wicked. There seems therefore no more cause to identify the **רַחֵם** in this instance with the oppressed than there is to identify the wicked with the sojourner. The **רַחֵם** is he who, like Yahweh, pays attention to the prisoner, the blind and the downcast. He has the reward of Yahweh's love. The wicked is warned that oppression of the helpless - the widow, sojourner and orphan - will bring Yahweh's vengeance.

On such an interpretation the psalm would be seen as coming from the same wisdom stable as Ps. 34, 73, 112 and others discussed above. The righteous do not appear in parallel with the oppressed classes as might be thought if vv. 7c-9 were read as one list but the primary contrast is between the righteous and the wicked. The other oppressed classes appear as the recipients of the charity of one group or the oppression of the other, as was seen to be the case in Psalm 112.

Psalm 37 also preserves this attitude to the poor as recipients of the charity of the righteous and the oppression of the wicked though at first sight it may seem as though something

more is meant by "poor" in this case. The psalm is best seen as is argued above (p. 89 ) as a collection of Yahwistic wisdom sayings arranged in an acrostic form on the general theme of reward for the righteous and retribution for the wicked. Weiser puts the tenor of the psalm thus:

"The aim the psalmist pursues is to exhort the godly to cling to their trust in God and to manifold temptations in which they get involved through the existence and behaviour of the wicked, be it anger or envy, poverty or affliction, fear of men, doubt about God's actions and his righteousness or getting weary of obeying moral laws" (Psalms, p. 315)

Throughout the psalm, particularly the latter half, much the same picture can be observed concerning the righteous and the wicked as that discussed above. The righteous does not seem to be particularly poor. All that v. 16 says is that even if he is poor, he is still better off than the wicked. In v. 21 the righteous is generous and gives, in v. 25 he is "ever giving liberally and lending", statements which imply material prosperity for the **צַדִּיק**. On these grounds therefore and on the grounds of internal consistency, it is unlikely that the righteous and the poor are to be identified on the basis of v. 14:

"The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow  
To bring down **צַדִּיק** and **אֲבִיוֹן**  
To slay **יְטַרְי-דָּרָה**"

Even though the expression "**יְטַרְי-דָּרָה**" is often used in parallel to **צַדִּיק**, the psalmist is in fact saying that the wicked man strikes at the poor who is innocent and does not deserve this harsh treatment. Hence the psalmist can assert that the conduct of the **רָשָׁע** will recoil back on his own head. Therefore the poor are not identified with the **יְטַרְי-דָּרָה** but only described as such.

Finally Psalm 49, a late wisdom composition (31) begins with an invitation to listen to the teacher in the psalm comparable to those embedded in Psalms 32 and 34 and found elsewhere in the wisdom writings. The invitation is to "rich and poor together" to listen to the psalmist's wisdom. Here clearly "יְיָ" refers to an economically poor group. Although the poor here are not said to be oppressed directly, the whole psalm does deal with the undeserved prosperity of the rich man and so this could fairly be said to be implied.

ii) Psalms of judgement: the salvation of the poor (Pss. 82, 12, 72, 94)

All five of the psalms discussed above fall into the category of didactic psalms influenced to a great extent by the vocabulary and theology of the wisdom writers. The poor are depicted as objects of charity or oppression. In these poems they are individual Israelites who are genuinely poor. In the following four psalms to be discussed the poor appear, as it were, in a different scene of the drama. The court has been summoned and judgement is given either by Yahweh (in Psalms 82 and 12) or by the king (in Psalms 72 and 94). In each case the judge is portrayed as a protector of the rights of the poor, although the meaning of the latter term can be seen to be taking on new content in at least two of these psalms.

In Psalm 82 (discussed above p. 52 ) the scene depicted is Yahweh's judgement of the whole earth. It has been

argued above that the oppressed classes listed are not representative of the Israel within the great society of nations. This argument can now be further substantiated by the observation that the categories of fatherless ( **אִתָּן** ) and **אִתָּן** (translated by the RSV as "destitute") are never used figuratively for the nation in the Old Testament and "**אִתָּן**" is not used figuratively in the psalms. In accordance with the interpretation given in the previous chapter, the oppressed classes are those within all nations not Israel herself as a nation.

Also, according to the interpretation established above for Psalm 12 (pp. 54f.) the poor and needy here represent the disadvantaged groups within the nation rather than the nation herself. The psalm is a statement of judgement from the circles of the cultic prophets following their ethical norms. Yahweh is at one and the same time both judge and redeemer.

Complications arise however with the other two psalms depicting this scenario. Psalm 72 (discussed above p. 71f.) in particular seems to contain two different but not irreconcilable uses of the term "**אִתָּן**". In v. 4 and vv. 12-14 the poor are clearly the disadvantaged groups within the nation whom the king is obliged to protect by virtue of his office:

"May he defend the cause of the **אִתָּן**  
 Give deliverance to the **אִתָּן**  
 And crush the oppressor". (v. 4)

The phrase "עַנְיֵי-עַם" clearly indicates that the עַנְיֵי is only a part of the whole people here. However, earlier in the psalm the following verse appears:

דָּדִן עֲמִיהַ בְּצִדָּה וְעַנְיֵיהַ בְּיִשְׁרָאֵל :

The question arises, since these two terms are used in parallel, as to just what the psalmist means. Is he saying "May he judge thy people (the nation) with righteousness and thy poor (within the nation) with justice" - i.e. is he referring to two different groups, as A.A. Anderson thinks (32)? Or is he saying "May he judge thy people (the nation) with righteousness and the poor (the nation) with justice" as Weiser and Birkeland would suggest? Or as a third possibility does the verse mean "May he judge thy people (the poor in the nation) with righteousness and the poor (in the nation) with justice" as Schultz would have it? The verse would then be similar in its use of "עַם" to that in Is. 3:14 discussed below (p.97 ). It is rather disappointing to note that Kraus, Jacquet and Eaton ignore this problem of interpretation whilst Anderson and Weiser produce no arguments in favour of their suggestions. On balance the last mentioned suggestion seems the least likely: the parallel from Isaiah is a verse coined for effect and cannot be regarded as typical in its use of "עַם". The first suggestion has the merit of preserving consistency in the text and should perhaps be preferred on these grounds. However, the nation is identified with the poor in other texts which appear to date from the period of the monarchy and it seems that the same ambiguity of meaning which strikes us today would have occurred to the original audience of the psalm. This being the

case vv. 12-14 could also be taken in an ambiguous or quasi-metaphorical sense falling as they do after the king's function as both judge and warrior has been described.

The case in favour of a literal interpretation of Psalm 72 (i.e. the first suggestion above) is further strengthened however by appeal to Psalm 94, also a royal psalm concerned with both Yahweh and the king as protectors of the helpless. As with Psalm 146, the poor as such do not occur in the psalm but the categories of those who may be described as poor are present. It has been argued above (p. 55 ) that the wicked oppressors in the psalm are primarily within the nation. The widow, the sojourner and the orphan whom the wicked oppress are no doubt to be understood literally as elsewhere in the psalms. However, relevant to the discussion of Psalm 72 above, this group is here identified as Yahweh's people, and as such the object of his special concern:

"They crush thy people O Lord and afflict  
thy heritage  
They slay the widow and sojourner  
And murder the fatherless"

Later in the psalm the wicked are said to persecute in law those who are "innocent" and "righteous". It is most probable that these terms are being used as description rather than as labels of groups, as was the case with **יְסֻדֵי-יְהוָה** in Ps. 37 above. Therefore the psalm can be placed with others in this group.

iii) Psalms of lament: the poor man's plea for the defence

(Pss. 102, 109, 70, 88, 35, 86)

Six laments are concerned with the poor man as an individual and can best be seen as cries for help from within an imagined lawcourt situation where God is at one and the same time both judge and counsellor for the defence. In the case of Psalm 102 the main body of the psalm reflects the suffering and affliction of the nation rather than the individual (see above p. 75f). The later editor who inserted the heading, which is unique in the psalter, was plainly convinced by the first eleven verses of the piece that this was in fact the prayer of an individual. The picture of affliction is one of fasting, fever and physical pain: hence "עָנִי" is here given its meaning of affliction rather than poverty.

Psalm 109 (see above p. 64f) is rich in references to the poor and in fact all three scenarios described above are pictured at different stages in the psalm, if the lament is indeed taken as the prayer of an innocent man accused of crimes by a רִשָּׁעִים. In v. 16 one of the crimes of the רִשָּׁעִים, one of the reasons why he is cursed, is because "he did not remember to show kindness but pursued עָנִי and אֲבִיּוֹן". In this case the psalmist identifies himself with עָנִי and אֲבִיּוֹן in appealing to Yahweh as judge (v. 22):

"But thou O God my Lord deal on my behalf  
for thy name's sake,  
Because thy steadfast love is good deliver me,  
For I am עָנִי and אֲבִיּוֹן  
And my heart is stricken within me"

If the curse directed at the accusers actually reflects the fate of the psalmist, as suggested above, then there is no reason why the



terms "עָנִי" and "אֲבִיוֹן" should not be taken literally here to denote material poverty and general wretchedness. Finally, towards the end of the psalm, the psalmist restates the basic theology on which he makes his appeal to Yahweh, counsel for the defense:

"For he stands at the right hand of the עָנִי  
To save him from those who condemn him to death"

- a statement very much in line with the theodicy sayings of proverbs and with the wisdom tradition.

Psalm 70 is a doublet of Psalm 40 vv. 13-17 although many commentators view the piece as earlier and as an independent lament in its own right (33). Psalm 40 is probably best taken as a Royal Lament (see below p. 130) and Eaton wishes to place this piece also in the mouth of the king on the grounds that it is written in the royal style. In fact this is not the case. There are no indications of a royal style in the psalm (see below Chapter III). Instead, the psalm would seem to be best assigned to the small group of short general laments identified above (p. 80f.) for general use in the temple services. The suggestion made by Mowinckel and followed by Eaton that the heading לַמְנַצֵּחַ (also found over Psalm 38) indicates that the psalm was intended to accompany the cereal offering is attractive. The cereal offering itself appears to have been made for atonement and in penitence and also in times of sickness (Lev. 2:2, 5:12, Num. 5:18, Sir. 38:11, 45:16) (34). The situation envisaged by the psalm may be one of illness but is more likely to have been that of legal persecution with the offering being made to secure Yahweh's favour. The terms "עָנִי" and "אֲבִיוֹן" may well have a quite literal reference but are suited, in this general type of

psalm, to take on a wide range of meanings depending on the nature and trouble of a particular suppliant. By naming himself עֲנִי and אֲבִיוֹן the Israelite both humbles himself before God and claims Yahweh's protection.

Psalm 88, one of the most moving prayers of the psalter, consists of one long lamentation with no glimmer of light or assurance. The psalm is normally felt to reflect some long held sickness or disease and, if this is the case, the translation of עֲנִי must be in the sense of afflicted rather than destitute.

It has been argued above (p.83 ) that Psalm 35, like Psalm 109, represents the prayer of one who has been unjustly accused and that, of the two types of language in the psalm, the military language with which the piece opens can most easily be seen to be metaphorical. This being the case the psalm is to be seen like others in this group, as a plea for the defense and, as part of his plea the psalmist takes a vow of praise to the God who:

"delivers the עֲנִי from him who is too strong for him  
The עֲנִי and אֲבִיוֹן from him who despoils him"

claiming, under the traditional theology, the poor man's right of protection from his God. The precise nature of the affliction is not made clear however and so, like others in this group, the psalm will be represented on the diagram with a line rather than a point.

The view is put forward in Chapter IV below (p. 30) that Psalm 86 is not a royal psalm, as Eaton thinks, since there are no positive indications of this. The psalm contains several late

ideas and appears to be made up, to an unusual degree, of quotations from other psalms. For these reasons it seems best to conclude that the psalm is a late prayer written for the use of private persons within Israel, perhaps as a general formula for asking for a sign of Yahweh's favour. The need of the suppliant is portrayed by the psalm in the most general terms and so the terms **עָנִי** and **אֶבְיוֹן** must be taken as having a general reference.

iv) Other psalms (Pss. 113, 34)

There are two psalms remaining in which the poor are to be seen as individual Israelites but which contain rather different nuances of meaning. In Psalm 113 the language used elsewhere to describe Yahweh's care for the poor is, as it were, turned around and used as a reason and ground for praise. Yahweh is he who raises the **עָנִי** from the dust and the **אֶבְיוֹן** from the ash heap. He is the God who performs the impossible, the unexpected: that this is the primary focus of the verse is shown by the parallel with the situation of the barren woman giving birth (a vivid picture of the reverse of the situation given in vv. 7-8 is depicted in Job. 29). Although the reference here is to the individual **עָנִי** or barren woman primarily the two act here as symbols of Yahweh's power to bring into being that which is not. The two symbols are also found together in Hannah's song of praise, suggesting that this may have been a fairly common form of expression.

Psalm 34 is, as has been shown above, a didactic wisdom poem (p. 41 ). The psalmist gives no indication that he is

in any real distress and lacks conviction when he declares himself an עָנִי (v. 6). There appears to be therefore in this psalm an identification of the cause of the עָנִי with that of the righteous: the latter term is used here to denote a group (though not a party) rather than as a description for a man's innocence in court.

"Righteous" and "עָנִי" are here both being used as stock metaphors:

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous  
But the Lord delivers him out of them all!"  
(v. 19, cf. also vv. 15, 17)

The psalm is therefore placed on the chart under the heading of "RIGHTEOUS", the only psalm so placed in this discussion.

b) Royal Psalms

i) Psalms in which the king prays as an individual (Pss. 40, 140, 116)

This group consists of three psalms which are very probably royal pieces. All of the psalms in this group and under (ii) below are laments and the scenario is in most cases similar to that described in (iii) above.

Psalm 40 provides an excellent illustration of the way in which the terms "עָנִי" and "אֶבְיֹן", initially indicative of the distress of the poor man, came to be used for any man in distress who needed Yahweh's help, including the most powerful and wealthy man in the land, the king. The lament in vv. 13-17 has been preserved elsewhere as Psalm 70 (discussed above p.127) and there forms a general lament to be used by any commoner in distress. Here, however, it forms part of what is clearly a royal psalm. The piece has a pronounced royal style; the "I" is clearly a public figure and

the curious call narrative in vv. 7-8 can hardly refer to anyone but the king. In this context what is, for the oppressed suppliant in Psalm 70, a statement of fact and need becomes for the king a token of his humility and his awareness of his need of help before Yahweh. There is no indication that the king is in genuine economic or physical need, and therefore I conclude that in this psalm, with Psalm 140 in the psalter, "עֲנִי" is used as an empty metaphor.

It has been argued above (p.65 ) that the most likely background for Psalm 140 is that of a king whose allies or advisers are proposing war. The speaker not only identifies himself with the עֲנִי and אֲבִיוֹן (by implication) in v. 12, where there is little evidence that he is suffering other than from slander and possibly false accusation, but he is also, by implication, identifying the righteous and the upright in heart with this group also:

"I know the Lord maintains the cause of the עֲנִי  
 And executes justice for the אֲבִיוֹן  
 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to thy name  
 The upright shall dwell in thy presence"  
 (vv. 12ff)

As in Psalm 40 therefore, "עֲנִי" is here being used as something of an empty metaphor. It should be pointed out that, if these psalms are royal (and hence pre-exilic) their evidence again precludes any suggestion that the development in the use of the terms for poor was unilinear and chronological from the more literary meaning to the empty metaphors contained here. Evidently a number of different meanings for the same term could exist side by side.

Psalm 116 contains one of several occurrences of "עָנִי" in its verbal form and also as a noun where the term seems to have nothing to do with poverty but is wholly concerned with physical affliction (rather as "לַי" can sometimes mean physical weakness rather than poverty). A similar meaning for the term is found at 69:29 (discussed below). As will be argued below, the psalm is best understood as a royal song of thanksgiving after illness, comparable to the song of thanksgiving used by Hezekiah according to Isaiah 38.

ii) Psalms in which the King represents the community (Pss. 22, 69, 31)

A detailed exposition of Psalm 22 is also given below in the context of a discussion of royal ritual, in which it is argued that the psalm does not have its context in such a rite but arises out of a background of national distress, in this case that of starvation and siege. The speaker throughout is the king who identifies his own fate with that of the nation. His affliction therefore is not unreal but very real indeed. The meaning borne by "עָנִי" must once again be "afflicted". As in a number of other lament psalms, once the suppliant's prayer has been answered he is able to identify with the **ד'! עָנִי** (v. 26).

Psalm 69, like Pss. 22 and 102, portrays the plight of the nation in a skilful and moving way employing the metaphor of the sick individual. The concluding verses of the psalm make it clear (cf. above p. 76 ) that it is the nation which is being described

and hence that the speaker, whose plight is closely associated with that of the community, is clearly the king. The prayer towards the end of the psalm:

"For God will save Zion,  
He will rebuild the cities of Judah".

would indicate that the psalm was composed for a situation in which Judah had been invaded but Jerusalem, although besieged, was not actually destroyed. Not only does the psalmist describe himself as **עָנִי** and in pain (cf. 22:24) but in v. 32f. the **אֲבוֹנֵי־סֵל** are identified, seemingly, with the entire congregation:

"Let the **עֲבָדֶיךָ** see it and be glad  
You who seek God, let your hearts revive,  
For the Lord hears the **אֲבוֹנֵי־סֵל**  
And does not despise his own that are in bonds".

Hence for the first time in the psalms so far discussed, the theology of Yahweh's aiding the poor is invoked on behalf of the whole community. However, it should be noted that in this case, as in Psalm 22, the community really does appear to be suffering; the word is not used as an empty cipher for the nation. That "**עָנִי**" is used in parallel with "**פְּוֹאֵב**" here indicates that it again denotes physical distress, here used as a metaphor for the suffering of the land.

Finally, Psalm 31 is the third of the psalms written for situations of siege preserved in the psalter. As is argued above (p.93 ) and below (pp.238f) this seems the only satisfactory setting for the piece. As in Psalms 22 and 69 the metaphor of the persecuted or sick individual is used as a way of describing the city's distress and of appealing to Yahweh for aid. The term "**עָנִי**" (v. 7) is used

of this suffering and can be seen here, once again, in its root meaning of "affliction".

c) Psalms of the community (Pss. 68, 74, 103, 76, 25, 9-10, 14, 107)

In the eight psalms discussed in this group the terms for poor are used in reference to the community of Israel, rather than to the individual within the nation or the king. The three most straightforward examples of such usage appear in Psalms 68, 74 and 103. The theology underlying the use of the terms for poor for the nation is identical with that in the previous two sections. God is the helper and protector of the poor; therefore if anyone in need humbles himself and designates himself as poor he places himself under Yahweh's protection. In Psalm 68 Yahweh's nature as defender of the poor is affirmed in the opening hymn:

"Father of the fatherless, protector of widows  
Is God in his holy habitation  
God gives the desolate a home to dwell in,  
He leads out the prisoners to prosperity  
But the rebellious dwell in a parched land"

However, in this verse, as in v. 10, the psalmist clearly sees this theology worked out in the exodus and conquest in respect of the nation:

"Thy flock found a dwelling in it,  
In thy goodness O Lord thou didst provide  
for the 'עַמִּי".

Schultz comments on the psalm (35) and acknowledges the difficulty of interpretation both in the psalm itself, adopting Albright's theory that the piece is a series of incipits, and the words used in this verse, "עַמִּי", particularly, translated by most versions, ancient and modern, as "flock". However he leaves one uncertain whether or



not "עַנִּי" is used of the nation here, as it surely must be.

In Psalm 74 the same theology is invoked in the context of a national psalm of lament. The psalmist prays:

"Do not deliver the soul of thy dove to the  
wild beasts,  
Do not forget the life of thy עַנִּי" (v. 19)

and again:

"Let not the דָּהָה be put to shame  
Let עַנִּי and אֲבִיוֹן praise thy name" (v. 21)

In a situation of national emergency the whole nation is regarded as עַנִּי and אֲבִיוֹן and needing God's help. As has been noted above (p. 68 ), the psalm provides one of the more obvious objections to Schultz' theory that "עַנִּי" never designates the entire nation. He proposes that vv. 18-21 actually turn from the situation of invasion to the plight of those remaining in the land, which is plainly the case. What is not obvious however is that the terms "עַנִּי" and "אֲבִיוֹן" are here to be taken to refer only to the underprivileged groups within the nation. Surely they must be taken here, if nowhere else, as terms for the whole remnant left after the invasion, all of whom are now destitute and needy and crying out to Yahweh for his aid? In neither of these cases is the metaphor empty: real distress is envisaged.

Similarly, in Psalm 103, the Israelites in captivity are described as oppressed (עֲשׂוּקִים v. 6) a term used elsewhere of the individuals within the nation. In Psalm 76 the very same term is used in the context of what appears to be a song of thanksgiving after victory in war. Although the affirmation in v. 7 must surely have a wider reference to God establishing justice throughout the

earth and hence to the oppressed within nations, in this particular context the verse cannot but refer to the nation of Israel.

As the text stands, as has been argued above, Psalm 25 is a post-exilic liturgy for a fast day in which some representative person, in this case not the king, prays on his own behalf and on behalf of the nation. The term "עָנִי" therefore (vv. 16, 18) must denote a broad range of afflictions, as with the other psalms in this group.

In Psalms 9-10 there is an unusually rich interplay between individual and collective and between internal military enemies and the wicked in the land. The military enemies are described as רְשָׁעִים (9:17) whilst opposition to both groups is focussed in the person of the king. This rich use of imagery is also found in the use of the terms for poor where the duality of reference in Psalm 72 (to both the nation and the individual poor) is heightened and amplified. In the first half of the psalm (Psalm 9) the nation is described in the image of the poor man (9:12, 18) oppressed by the nations, described therefore as רְשָׁעִים. "עָנִי" thus has a collective reference in this part of the psalm. In the first half of Psalm 10, however, the focus turns to the wicked in the land oppressing the actual poor (the reason for the juxtaposition of image and actuality is given in the discussion of the festal context of this psalm below p.199) (10:2, 8ff., 12). There is a parallel drawn in the psalm between Yahweh's power over the wicked outside Israel destroying the oppressors

of the 'יָי in the international context, with the prayer for him to intervene and save the actual 'יָי in the nation from his oppressors. The final verses of the psalm sum up its twofold prayer: that Yahweh would continue to give Israel victory over the nations (v. 16) and that justice may be seen to be done within the land (v. 14ff, 17) (36).

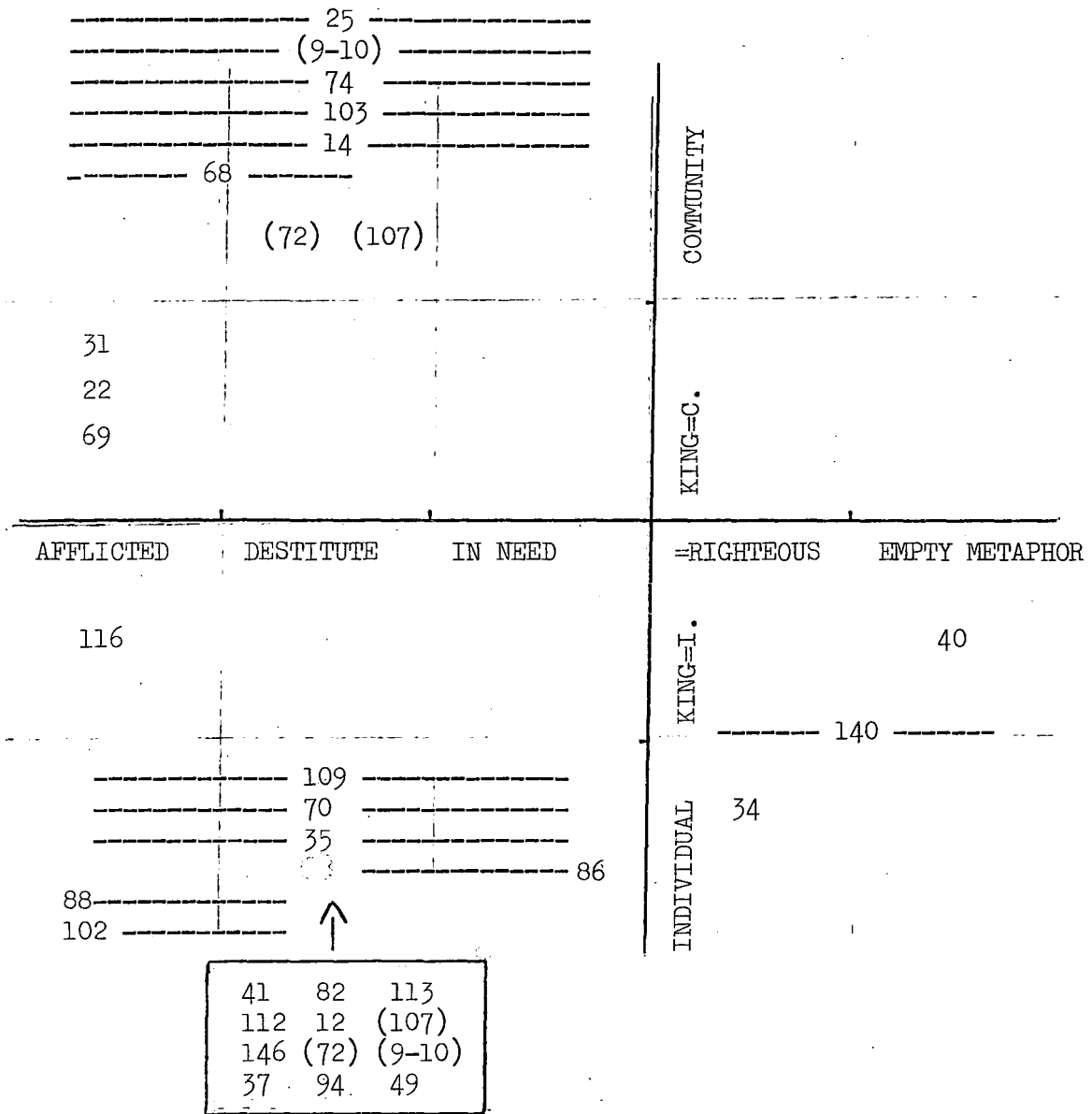
A similar situation to that found in the first half of Pss. 9-10 appears to be envisaged in Psalm 14. The final verse of the psalm shows clearly that a situation of military oppression is envisaged and that the evildoers are once again the nations. Hence the 'יָי in v. 6 is once again the nation appealing, as such, for help and salvation from God. Schultz argues that this concluding verse is in fact a typical example of the convention of adding a verse lamenting the fate of the nation to an individual's lament and identifying the fate of the community with that of its members. He cites as other examples of this phenomenon Ps. 3:9, 25:22, 29:11, 51:20, 69:36, 37, 102:14, 147:2. A more satisfactory explanation for most, if not all, of these verses would seem to be that the psalms in question are not true psalms of the individual but are either national or royal in character, as is indicated by other phenomena, and this would seem to be true of Psalm 14 as well. If the psalmist is identifying his plight with that of the nation, then the nation itself must be suffering some kind of distress. The lament then cannot be seen as the prayer of an individual to be used at any time in the nation's history, but only in times of national distress.

This being the case it seems more straightforward to regard the whole psalm as setting forth the plight of the nation through the metaphor of the oppression of the poor. At the same time it would, no doubt, serve as a warning to oppressors in the land. As in the other psalms in this group, there is every indication that the distress suffered by the nation as '?? is real.

Finally, in Psalm 107, it is not easy to tell whether the terms for poor refer to the nation or to the individual. The psalm is most probably to be seen against the background of the deliverance from exile and is resonant with the language of Deutero-Isaiah. As in Psalm 113 Yahweh's attitude to the poor is seen as a reason for praise in a hymn which concludes the psalm and his treatment of the poor is, as it were, symbolic, a demonstration of the nature of a God who brings into being that which is not, who acts so as to intervene in the creation causing the unexpected to come about: rivers turn into dry ground, springs of water into thirsty land. Similarly in human life Yahweh brings down the princes and exalts the poor. If the content of the symbol is not to be lost the terms must have, primarily, a literal meaning. However, in the context of the psalm and against the background of the exile, the original audience would no doubt be able to apply the image to the fate of the nation in exile and restoration. The affliction envisaged is, of course, genuine.

The results of the foregoing discussions can now be summarised in the following diagram:

FIGURE 1: THE MEANING OF THE TERMS FOR POOR



#### 4. CONCLUSION

The main thrust of this chapter has been to establish and to clarify the usage and meaning of the various terms for poor in the psalms in the light of the conflicting theories concerning the meaning of these terms produced by Old Testament scholars in the last ninety years.

The conclusions for the use of these terms for poor in the psalms are mainly contained in the chart on p. 139 but can be summarised as follows:

- i) Nine of the psalms in which the poor occur are not cast as laments of the poor man. In five of these, from the wisdom tradition, the poor occur as objects of either the charity or the persecution of their neighbours (Pss. 41, 112, 146, 137, 49). In the other four pieces they stand as subjects of the judgement of either Yahweh or the king (Pss. 82, 12, 72, 94).
- ii) In all except three of the remaining psalms the distress envisaged in the psalm is real. Most of these are genuine psalms of the individual (Pss. 102, 109, 70, 35, 88, 86). One, a thanksgiving, is royal (116). There is a spectrum of meaning in the term "עָנִי" particularly. It can mean physical affliction, poverty, or any general need.
- iii) In the three psalms only (Pss. 34, 40, 140) is "עָנִי" used not of real distress but as a stock or empty metaphor, used casually of the suppliant.
- iv) The terms for poor are used metaphorically of the community in five (seven?) psalms. In all of these cases the need is genuine, as it is in the three psalms where the terms are

used to describe the community personified in the king.

- v) The suppliant's purpose in describing himself as is that by so doing he places himself under the protection of God and humbles himself before Yahweh. The term embodies both need and self-abasement.
- vi) The uses of the term found in the book of psalms reflect accurately the uses of the terms found outside the Old Testament and set out in Appendix II.
- vii) The development in the use of these terms is not chronological. Post-exilic psalms describe the poor in a literal sense; pre-exilic royal psalmody contains empty metaphor. Evidently the ancient Hebrews were, unlike certain modern scholars, content to derive meaning from the context of a term.

In the course of this investigation the three principles set out in the conclusion to Chapter I have been further tested and verified. These can now be restated as follows:

- i) The psalms are not written in code, they are written in the Hebrew language. The discovery of the meaning of a term in one or several psalms does not dictate the meaning of that term throughout the psalter.

An understanding of metaphor clearly plays an important part in any general understanding of the psalms. In particular this investigation of the terms for poor has shown how the same word can be used both literally and metaphorically in different psalms and, further, that there is a frequent use

of the imagery whereby the nation is portrayed as a "poor" individual threatened by unjust persecutors in order to secure the favour of Yahweh.

iii) This enquiry has, it is hoped, given further validity to the basic method adopted throughout the thesis that complex problems demand complex solutions and that the psalms of the individual will not conform to pre-set exclusive theories on this or any other issue.

Part I of the thesis has thus attempted to prepare for an examination of the question of the identity of the individual in the psalms by providing a satisfactory solution to the related problems of the identity of the antagonists and of the poor in each of the psalms which refer to these groups. Part II of the thesis contains an examination and classification of each of the psalms in which an "I" occurs. As was mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, the methodology adopted here has been first to set out the available options for the identity of the individual in any one psalm - namely that the suppliant is envisaged as the king, or as an ordinary worshipper, or as a minister of the cult - and, secondly, to assign each psalm to the most likely of these three categories. The investigation begins with an examination of the royal psalms.



PART TWO: A CLASSIFICATION OF THE PSALMS WHICH  
CONTAIN A REFERENCE TO AN INDIVIDUAL

### CHAPTER THREE: THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE PSALMS AS THE KING

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The present Chapter will be taken up with an investigation of those psalms in which the "I" can be identified as the king and, for the sake of completeness, there will be some discussion of royal psalms not composed in the first person (1). The chapter falls into three sections. In the first an attempt is made to answer the question: "How many psalms are royal?". Discussion here will begin with a detailed examination of the most recent attempt to answer this question, that of John Eaton. In the context of a critical examination of Eaton's position an attempt will be made to draw out general arguments which may help in recognising royal psalmody and in particular to investigate whether or not there is such a thing as "royal style".

No investigation of royal psalmody can avoid the question of the king's involvement in the autumn festival in Israel and in particular the question of whether he underwent some form of ritual humiliation in the course of the festival. The central section of the chapter attempts to identify those royal psalms which had their "Sitz im Leben" in this annually repeated ritual and offers a reconstruction of the festal rites themselves which differs significantly from that put forward by Johnson and supported by Eaton.

The final section of the chapter turns to a classification and exegesis of those royal psalms which cannot be assigned to this ritual but which must be seen, for the most part, as psalms written with a particular type of crisis in the life of king or nation in mind.

Finally, the question of the royal ideology which was prevalent in Israel is also very bound up with the question of royal psalmody although the question is not directly relevant to the main line of the argument here. Accordingly a summary of the way in which the role of the king was perceived in the ancient Near East and in ancient Israel, primarily as a mighty warrior and a righteous judge, can be found in Appendix II below (p.109\*).

## 2. HOW MANY PSALMS ARE ROYAL?

### a) An outline of Eaton's position

As with the other problems discussed in this thesis, the history of the discussion of a royal attribution for many of the psalms is comparatively well documented and will only be sketched in

its broadest outlines at this point (2). Gunkel's examination of the psalms revealed only nine as unmistakably royal although he later added two others (3); of these nine only three are actually individual psalms at all, since the other six address the king in the second or third person. As is well known, other individual psalms in the psalter were thought by Gunkel to be the prayerful outpourings of pious individuals within Israel. Mowinckel's early work placed the psalms firmly in a cultic setting, thus raising the problem of the individual in a more acute form. Who could have spoken these pieces in the cult itself? Mowinckel's own answer was to suggest that most of the individual laments were provided for use by ordinary Israelites seeking protection from sorcerers or other enemies but it was left to Mowinckel's pupil Birkeland, whose work has been discussed and, in part, confirmed above, to open the way to the interpretation of more of the psalms as royal. If the enemies of the individual are also the enemies of the nation (as they clearly are in many psalms) then the "I" in the psalm is likely to be the king. Birkeland's arguments were subsequently taken up by Mowinckel in his new, and large, category of psalms "National Psalms of Lamentation in the I-Form". Finally the British scholar, John Eaton, has attempted to re-state the arguments in favour of a royal interpretation in the face of a general scepticism towards the theory in many more recent books. In particular Eaton has attempted to draw out a third major argument in favour of royal interpretation, that of "royal style" in the psalms. The first section of this chapter will attempt to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Eaton's position and re-state in a clear fashion

predisposing factors and arguments which indicate a royal attribution of certain psalms.

Whilst the general position of the present writer is in line with that taken by Eaton, at least three general criticisms of his work may be made:

i) As has already been mentioned, Eaton has fallen into the trap of examining only one possible solution to the problem of the individual. The exaggerated importance which he therefore attaches to that solution diminishes the credibility of his overall position. He is also led to discuss in polemic fashion alternative explanations for the individual psalms (4) when in fact such theories remain necessary to explain the background to the twenty or so psalms which mention an individual but which Eaton does not reckon to be royal.

ii) There is a general confusion both in the opening chapter of his book and in his discussion of the psalms themselves between two different types of argument: there are on the one hand several arguments which predispose the commentator to be more open to the possibility of more royal psalms in general and there are, on the other hand, specific arguments which can be indications of whether or not a particular psalm is royal. The confusion of these two types of argument means that Eaton's case is in danger of becoming circular. The argument from the prolific use of the heading "TIT<sup>5</sup>" is, for example, a "predisposing factor" towards a more extensive royal interpretation and is rightly mentioned as such in the opening chapter, where Eaton admits that the superscription in itself cannot provide firm ground for the interpretation of any psalm.

However, he then goes on to use the heading as an argument for royal identification in his discussion of particular psalms, which seems to me to be quite wrong. Conversely two of the strongest arguments for assigning an individual psalm to the royal group (those of "consistent interpretation" and "royal style") are grouped with the predisposing factors as points (ix) and (x) (5). Where so many arguments have to be used to demonstrate whether or not a psalm is royal some attempt must be made to gauge their relative strengths and the degree of interdependence involved. The justifiable fear is that fifty weak links do not make a strong chain. An attempt is made below to demonstrate that the case for royal interpretation rests upon several independent pillars, with various weaker arguments enlisted in support.

iii) Finally, Eaton has not paid very much attention to the setting in life of those psalms which he does not consider to have been a part of the annual royal ritual. In effect this means he makes no attempt to group or classify over half of the royal psalms. Such an attempt is undertaken below.

b) Predisposing factors

The predisposing factors mentioned by Eaton may be grouped around the whole idea of the centrality of the king in the establishing of the cult in Jerusalem and in its continuing supervision and administration. The "לְמֶלֶךְ" heading over many of the psalms is evidence for this as are the Deuteronomistic and Chronicler's accounts of the building of the temple, the provision

of temple singers by the king himself and the ancient tradition that David is the founder of Israelite psalmody (6). Comparative studies have re-inforced the idea that the king's role in the religions of the ancient Near East was a prominent one and, as Eaton rightly remarks, the situation of the king in prayer is the only one of the suggested interpretations of the individual psalms which is positively attested in the Old Testament. Eaton is also correct in arguing (p.25) that:

"the narrow identification of royal psalms proposed by Gunkel and others leaves an astonishing gap. There would scarcely be any royal petitions or intercessions..... Nor is it likely that all the king's prayers were lost while those of all and sundry were treasured in the official corpus" (7)

c) Arguments for a royal identification of particular psalms

Given that we are to expect that the king played a large part in Israel's cult and should figure prominently in the psalms, how do we tell which psalms are royal and which are not? Three arguments emerge as such a means of identification:

i) The king is mentioned either as **מֶלֶךְ** or as Yahweh's anointed in thirteen psalms. In six of these the king is referred to in the second or third person (Pss. 20, 21, 45, 72, 110 and 132); of the remaining seven the royal interpretation of three pieces (28, 61 and 63) has been disputed and is not clearly demonstrated by the mention of the king. It is possible (but in my view unlikely) that a general prayer for the king has been added to prayers actually meant for private individuals. This issue will be discussed below

in the context of an exegesis of these psalms. As far as the other four psalms in this category (Pss. 2, 18, 89 and 144) are concerned, there can be no reasonable doubt that the psalms are royal, as all acknowledge.

ii) Arguments from situation: in asking the question "Who would have prayed this psalm in the cult?" one is clearly also asking the question "What situation of need (or thanksgiving) is reflected in this psalm?". Despite the scepticism of many commentators who are overly influenced by the pattern model of interpretation it seems to me that this situation of need can, in most cases, be recovered from the psalm (8). In the case of each psalm one is seeking to discover the situation which accounts for most, if not all, of its particular elements or references. Analysis of the situation of need behind the psalm is of use in distinguishing between royal and non-royal psalms in the following way: although there are some situations which king and people would clearly share in common, the most obvious being the situation of sickness, there are other situations more appropriate to the king, and still others more appropriate to an ordinary Israelite. A clear example of the former and one which can be seen in about fifteen psalms is that identified by Birkeland: if the enemies spoken of in the psalms are the enemies of the nation and a situation of war or siege is envisaged then there can be no reasonable doubt that the "I" in the psalm is the king. Other situations which are more likely to be royal are prayers to rule justly, prayers against treachery and prayers to be tested (also set against a background of national distress). Without doubt



this is a strong and independent argument in favour of a royal attribution of many of the psalms: that the spokesman in the psalm, by reason of his situation and the nature of his distress, is more likely to be the king than anyone else. These varying situations of distress will be discussed in some detail below.

iii) Arguments from style: however, arguments based on the situation envisaged behind a given psalm are not, of course, always conclusive in demonstrating whether or not the psalm was intended for use by the king. Psalms in which the suppliant appears to be ill, for example, may have been provided for the common people as well as for the king. Hence a third argument in favour of royal attribution for certain psalms is needed based upon what has become known as royal style.

Gunkel, Birkeland and Eaton have all sought to show that there are general features in Hebrew poetry which appear to form such a style. Eaton's list of possible characteristics is the most complete and need not be re-stated here (9): he delineates no less than twenty-seven features of such a style and this description together with the ideology based upon it in the later chapter is one of the book's most significant contributions to the study of kingship. However, arguments for royal designation based upon style are not as firm as those based on situation for the following reasons:

a) In several instances the psalm in question may be a later piece in which the royal features have been democratized and applied to Israelites other than the king (as possibly in Pss. 42-3 which contain a number of royal features but appear for other reasons to

form a non-royal psalm).

b. Secondly, although in most cases the given term appears a number of times and these occurrences are mainly in the group of psalms which, for other reasons, would be accounted royal, there are a number of instances of this "style" where a term does occur in pieces which would more naturally take a non-royal explanation. One such phrase is "for thy name's sake" which occurs in Psalm 23, which is very probably royal, in Psalms 25, 31 and 143 which may be royal and Psalm 109 which I do not think is a royal psalm. It is possible that the explanation given above is adequate here and that the royal motif has been taken up by non-royal psalmody; but it is equally possible that the term was a general one which any Israelite, king or commoner, could use in prayer. As will be suggested below, there is no need to restrict all piety, all depth of relationship with God, to the king alone. Indeed it seems very probable that the congregation themselves learned to pray in part from the prayers of their spokesman, the king, and took up his manner of addressing God in their own prayers. A similar question could be raised over the inclusion of the term "servant" in royal style - a term which could be surely a general term of self-deprecation before God. In the remainder of the Old Testament the phrase "thy servant" is used by, among others, the patriarchs (Genesis 18:3, 19:19 et. al.), Moses (Exodus 4:10, Samuel (I Sam. 3:10), Nehemiah (Neh. 2:5), the preacher (Ecc. 7:12) and Daniel (9:17).

Other elements included by Birkeland or Eaton in the royal style but which seem more properly to be the common property of Israelite spirituality are the ideas of the suppliant

residing in God's house, the vow of praise, the suppliant speaking of "my people", the suppliant being called by God  $\text{פ'דו}$  or  $\text{ד'בן}$  or covenant partner, God's deliverance coming to the suppliant and finally the grace of answered prayer which is not the exclusive preserve of kings in the Old Testament.

c. It will be apparent also that there is a danger of circularity in this argument from style: certain features in royal psalms are designated as "royal style" and royal psalms are those which contain features from this style. It is clear therefore that a psalm can never be assigned to the royal group on the grounds of style alone but that stylistic features can provide useful supporting arguments. In the case of most of the features in this style the number of examples is too few to enable any systematic analysis but one stylistic feature, that of the numerous epithets for God to which the first person singular suffix is attached is open to such analysis and the following investigation attempts to demonstrate that this aspect of style is certainly royal.

The reader is referred at this point to Figure 2 overleaf which presents a breakdown of the use of these divine epithets. There are twenty-one psalms which, on the basis of the arguments from a mention of the king or from the situation given above can certainly be described as royal (10). Of these fourteen psalms contain one or more of the divine epithets under discussion and these psalms are grouped to the left of the central dividing line on the chart. The other thirty-two psalms containing such an epithet are grouped to the right of the line and are arranged in the

	18	89	118	144	91	28	61	63	3	22	27	44	59	94	40	7	92	23	62	140	143	5	31	86	142	4	70	71	16	51	54	73	25	42	3	109	45	13	30	32	38	67	74	84	88	115							
MY GOD ETC. *	x	x	x		x			x		x		x			x	x				x	x	x	x						x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							
MY ROCK	x	x		x		x	x							x			x		x			x						x																									
MY FORTRESS	x			x	x								x						x			x																															
THE GOD OF MY SALVATION	x										x																			x																							
MY HELP										x						x												x				x																					
MY DELIVERER	x			x											x						x							x																									
MY SHIELD	x			x		x				x																																											
MY KING												x										x																															
MY SALVATION			x								x																																										
MY (STRONG) REFUGE				x	x		x																																														
MY GLORY								x																																													
LIFTER OF MY HEAD								x																																													
GOD OF MY RIGHT																											x																										
HORN OF MY SALVATION	x																																																				
MY SHEPHERD																																																					
MY LIGHT											x																																										
UPHOLDER OF MY LIFE																																																					
MY STRONG TOWER							x																																														
MY HOPE																																																					
MY TRUST																																																					
MY FATHER		x																																																			
GOD OF MY PRAISE																																																					
MY SONG	x																																																				

..... certainly royal ..... probably royal ..... not royal .....

\* includes "Thou art my God/Lord" and "O Lord my God", "O Lord my Lord"

Figure 2

approximate order of the likelihood of their being royal. This group contains psalms which are very probably royal and those which are most probably non-royal. By far the most frequent epithets used are in the group which heads the left hand column: "My God", "O Lord my God", "O Lord my Lord" and "Thou art my God/Lord" which occur thirty times in the psalter - almost three times as frequently as the next most common "My rock" which occurs only eleven times. Furthermore, occurrences of "My God" etc. are spread evenly right across the chart and so it would seem that this group of epithets should be seen separately from the rest and not be distinctive as a mark of the royal style.

Of the other epithets, nine occur with reasonable frequency: my rock (11x), my fortress (7x), the God of my salvation (6x), my help (5x), my deliverer (5x), my shield (5x), my king (5x), my salvation (4x), my (strong) refuge (4x); whilst an additional thirteen titles for God have also survived as a part of the tradition and have only been used the once. The visual impression given by the chart, that royal psalms are *more* likely to contain such epithets than non-royal psalms is confirmed by a statistical analysis. The twenty-four psalms which are most certain to be royal contain thirty-two occurrences of these epithets giving a mean of 1.33 per psalm. The other sixty-five psalms containing some reference to an individual contain only twenty-nine instances of these epithets giving a mean of only 0.46 per psalm. Hence, even if no other psalms than the twenty-four mentioned above are royal there is still evidence of a particularly royal style present here. The fact that there is this

demonstration of an authentic royal style in this one respect must support the wider case for a royal style although, as was mentioned above, not to the extent that royal style alone can demonstrate whether or not a psalm is itself royal. However, in a discipline in which one is constantly dealing with accumulating probabilities rather than clear proof every piece of evidence is of value.

d) Results of the investigation

Eaton applies the above arguments and others to the psalms in search of a more extensive royal interpretation. After a careful discussion of each psalm he concludes that there may be as many as sixty-four royal psalms in the psalter. Of these eleven are Gunkel's original groups of royal psalms, thirty-one are clearly royal while a further twenty-two are less clearly royal but are probably to be seen as such.

My own research, which has been conducted with other possible interpretations of the psalms in view as well, has substantially confirmed Eaton's conclusion that there is a large number of royal psalms in the psalter, but has reduced the number of such psalms by one quarter, finding forty-eight psalms to be royal. Of these forty-one are, properly speaking, psalms of the individual. In addition to Gunkel's eleven royal psalms I find twenty-five of Eaton's more definite group of thirty-one psalms to be royal but only eight of his less definite group of twenty-two psalms to be such. In addition, I have suggested that four psalms not discussed

by Eaton may well be royal (Pss. 26, 38, 44 and 60) although the last two of these only have a partial reference to an individual. The reader is referred to the detailed exegesis of the psalms in this and the following chapters for confirmation of these results. Included in the discussion in this chapter are three psalms in which the "I" appears to be a representative of the community but, by reason of the probable dating of the psalm to the exile or later, cannot be the king.

The exegesis of the royal psalms will begin by examining those pieces which seem to have had their context in an annually repeated royal ritual.

### 3. THE ROYAL PSALMS AND THE RITUAL

The question of the relationship of the psalms to the festivals of ancient Israel has been one of the most fervently debated questions in Old Testament studies over the last sixty years. Whilst most scholars are now prepared to admit that the Davidic king played an important role in the ritual of the major autumn festival there is still widespread disagreement on the issue of whether or not he underwent some sort of ritual humiliation or suffering in the course of this. Hence, before an exegesis of the royal psalms in the ritual is attempted, this issue must be examined in some detail in the following stages:

- i) A brief summary of the scholarly consensus, so far as this has been achieved, on the outline of the main (i.e. non-royal) part of the ritual in the autumn festival will be presented. This will both demonstrate that the king did play a central role and provide the wider context into which any recon-

struction of the royal ritual itself must be set.

- ii) The arguments of Johnson and Eaton to the effect that the king underwent a ritual of humiliation and suffering in the midst of the ritual battle will be examined and found to be inadequately supported by the evidence from the psalms, the rest of the Old Testament and comparative evidence from Mesopotamia.
- iii) My own reconstruction of the festival, which associates several psalms with the ritual which have not yet been brought into the debate to date will then be offered; general arguments in favour of this interpretation will be advanced and finally this reconstruction of the festival will be expanded by exegesis and discussion of the relevant royal psalms.

a) An outline of the autumn festival

Almost all scholars are now agreed that the main festival in Israel's sacred calendar was the autumn feast, known in the later literature as the Feast of Booths. The festival had a basic agricultural theme: thanksgiving for harvest and prayers for the renewal of the earth with the autumn rains. However, there is also very strong evidence to suggest an association with the celebration of the kingship of Yahweh which would seem to have been affirmed, rather than renewed, each year by a series of ritual acts. The main structure of the feast can be broken down into the following series of six stages.



i) Preparation

It is entirely reasonable to suppose that the great festal epiphany of Yahweh was preceded by a period of preparation, probably accompanied by prayer and fasting. The prophets make oblique references to serious preparation being necessary before the Day of the Lord (cf. Joel 1-2; Hosea 6:1-2; Amos 5:4-6, 18f.); particularly in the Isaianic tradition there are references to the coming of Yahweh being to a parched and thirsty land, suggesting a period of dryness before the festival (Isaiah 35:1ff.; 40-55 passim). Public fasting was frequently proclaimed in Israel in response to a national disaster or to seek Yahweh's aid in a national emergency (e.g. I Kings 21:19; Jeremiah 36; I Chronicles 20:3ff. etc.). Hence, if Yahweh's aid was sought in this way before a real military encounter it is reasonable to suppose a parallel time of fasting before the ritual battle. Moreover, we know from comparative evidence both ancient (as in the account of the Babylonian akitu festival) and modern that fasting and preparation almost always precedes a great festival. In Israel's feast this would take the form, most probably, of repentance by king and people for any sin committed and prayers for Yahweh to arise to face the enemies of the nation in the mock battle.

ii) The ark procession

This "arising" of Yahweh to confront his enemies was symbolised by the procession of the ark, now agreed by almost all

scholars to have been the central act of the festival (11).

The procession was most probably, it seems to me, an "out and back" event: Yahweh arises from his temple, confronts the enemies of Israel outside the city and returns in triumph to be acclaimed king.

Psalm 132 is best seen as a prayer for Yahweh to arise from the temple rather than to return to his resting place (12). There may well be allusions to the victorious return procession of the ark in II Samuel 6, though it seems unlikely that this represents a full "ark liturgy" (13) and also in the account of Solomon's transfer of the ark to the temple in I Kings 8:1-6. A liturgy arising from the procession is more probably to be found in Psalm 68, whilst Psalms 118 and 24 also allude to this part of the ritual.

### iii) The ritual battle

There also seems to be sufficient evidence from the Old Testament texts themselves to deduce that in the course of this procession Yahweh, whose presence is symbolised by the ark, encountered his enemies and vanquished them (14). Psalms 46 and 48 in particular, as Johnson has pointed out (15) tend to this conclusion. Both psalms are most probably to be linked with the festivals by way of their dominant themes: the election of Zion and the kingship of Yahweh celebrated, in this case, by his martial victory over the nations. In Psalm 48 particularly some sort of fight ritual seems to be described:

"For lo the kings assembled, they came together,  
As soon as they saw it they were astounded,  
They were in panic, they took to flight,  
Trembling took hold of them there,  
Anguish, as of a woman in travail!" (Ps. 48:4-7)

This impression is confirmed by the following verses:

"As we have heard, so we have seen  
 In the city of the Lord of Hosts,  
 In the city of our God,  
     which the ~~God~~ Lord establishes for ever and ever.  
 We have portrayed (16) your steadfast love, O God,  
 In the midst of thy temple" (Ps. 48:8-9)

The evidence for the ritual battle is also supported by Psalm 118, a processional psalm containing many festal themes in which the king appears to have taken part in the festal ritual as the representative of Yahweh in the battle (see below). Psalm 68, the other great processional psalm, also contains several references to bloodshed and battle and Yahweh's triumph which are otherwise difficult to explain.

iv) The entry of the ark into the temple is also acknowledged by all to have been a central event and the ritual to which Psalm 24 bears clear witness. Yahweh returns from battle and is proclaimed as king. Psalm 118:26ff. also offers testimony to this part of the ceremony and to the king's involvement in this event also.

v) Yahweh is proclaimed as king as the ark comes to rest once again within the Holy of Holies. The enthronement psalms identified by Mowinckel find their context in this part of the ceremony (Pss. 93, 96, 97, 98, 99). Yahweh's once and for all victory over the forces of chaos is celebrated (Pss. 96:6, 95:4, 93) as is his "vindication" of Israel by his victory over the nations (Ps. 98:1-3).

vi) Yahweh pronounces judgement

As has been explained more fully in Appendix II below, according to the royal ideology of the ancient Near East, kingship consisted of the exercising of the two functions of the warrior and the judge and these two were interconnected: a king validated his right to judge or to govern by victory in battle over the nation's enemies. Conversely righteousness in pronouncing judgement secured victory in battle. In the ritual thus far Yahweh, the divine king, has shown his "strong right arm" by his defeat of the nations. He now takes his throne and pronounces judgement over all **וְיִשְׁפֹּט**. The theme of judgement is extremely prominent in the enthronement psalms themselves (96:10, 13; 97:2, 8, 10f.; 98:9; 99:4ff.). It appears from other psalms which have survived that judgement would be pronounced over the lesser gods (Psalm 82), over the nations (Psalm 58; cf. also the prophetic oracles against the nations which would also have been delivered at this point) and over Israel herself (Psalm 50). This element of the festival is made much of by Weiser who sees here the renewing of the covenant which is, for him, the central event of the festival (17).

Reconstruction of any aspect of the ritual in ancient Israel is, of course, hampered by a lack of direct evidence from sources outside the psalms and so no one version of the festival can ever be validated conclusively. The above structure is however derived from the Old Testament texts themselves and represents a reasonable conjecture, I would contend, as to the focal events of Israel's main annual festival.

It will be observed from this discussion that very many of the psalms and texts which provide evidence for the ritual of the autumn festival also give us strong evidence that the king played a major role (e.g. Pss. 132, 118, I Samuel 6, I Kings 8:1-6 etc.). This observation is also supported by comparative evidence from other ancient Near Eastern cultures where it seems that, as Halpern has argued, the renewal of the earthly kingship was closely connected with the renewal or affirmation of divine kingship in the annual festival. Hence, certain of the royal psalms, usually at least Pss. 2, 110, 72 and 132 have been attached to the autumn festival as part of its liturgy by most scholars. The royal ritual has been very much extended however in the work of the two leading British scholars in the field, Johnson and Eaton, and their theories on the "ritual humiliation" of the king will now be examined.

b) A royal humiliation ritual? The work of Johnson and Eaton

In Johnson's initial programmatic essay on the subject of royal humiliation rites (18) he attempts to link Psalms 89 and 18 to the cultic drama, as well as Psalm 118, and he sees these psalms as the prayers of the king during and after the ritual battle with the kings of the earth. His later work supports the arguments given in "The Labry<sup>6</sup>nth" with more exegesis and includes other psalms, such as Psalm 101, in this ritual drama. Eaton's work in "Kingship and the Psalms" extends the notion of royal ritual still further. He argues that all of Gunkel's original royal psalms should be assigned to the ritual (with the possible exception of Psalm 45) and he adds a further ten which he thinks were created

for the festival (some of which were also used by Johnson) namely Pss. 51, 101, 91, 121, 75, 22, 23, 118, 36 and 92 and a further nine which could possibly be added to this group: Pss. 3, 52, 57, 61, 86, 116, 120 and 129 giving a total of twenty-eight psalms linked with the king's humiliation before Yahweh and his reinstatement. In his later book "Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah" this bold approach is modified somewhat (although no explanation for the change is given) and only Pss. 22, 23, 91, 118 and 121 are added to Gunkel's festal group; Pss. 9-10, 40 and 71 also illustrate the festival directly whilst Psalms 51 and 102 disclose other ceremonies of atonement (19).

Whilst the general notion of kingship renewal has been accepted as part of the autumn feast by a majority of scholars, the royal humiliation rite (so-called) has become a bone of contention and strong objections have been raised by such eminent workers in the field as Mowinckel and Mettinger (20). My own view is that, whilst it is not per se improbable that a proportion of the royal psalms should find their context in the festival, the "humiliation" element which is thought to be present by Eaton and Johnson and which accounts for the inclusion of many of the lament psalms into the ritual rests on very slender evidence indeed, as the following arguments attempt to demonstrate.

Johnson's case for the inclusion of Psalms 18 and 89 in the ritual rests on two arguments, the first being that it is inherently probable that the Israelite ritual contained some form

of humiliation rite in which the king was reminded of his place before the god similar to that contained in the Babylonian akitu liturgy; the second is that Psalm 118, which clearly has its origins in the ritual, alludes to the king being "hard pressed" in the midst of the battle. This leads him to the hypothesis that the "suffering" of the king took place in the midst of the mock battle and that therefore other psalms which appear to contain laments or songs of triumph from the midst of battle also reflect the king's humiliation and re-instatement. Once this has been admitted, of course, the door is open for almost any number of royal psalms reflecting a background of war, particularly any containing references to festal themes, to be given a place in the ritual. This is the reason why Eaton is able to expand the number of psalms placed here in "Kingship and the Psalms".

However, the two arguments which support the overall case are not strong. In particular, Johnson has misunderstood the account of the king's disinvestiture in the akitu liturgy. The "humiliation" of the Babylonian king takes place before the god and consists of the king being stripped of his royal regalia by the priest, being forced to his knees in an act of obeisance, a ritual washing of the hands and a negative confession:

"I did (not) sin, lord of the countries,  
 I was not neglectful of the requirements of your godship  
 (I did not) destroy Babylon  
 I did not command its overthrow  
 (I did not ... the temple Egasil  
 I did not forget its rites  
 (I did not) rain blows on the cheeks of a subordinate  
 I did (not) humiliate them  
 (I watched out) for Babylon  
 I did not smash its walls" (21).

The significance of this prayer is clear: at the end of another year as king the monarch gives account of his stewardship before the god. The place of this ritual in the overall context of the akitu festival should be carefully noted. This "giving of account" by the king takes place in the preparation section of the festival (the equivalent of section (i) above) and before Marduk goes out to do battle. In return for his humble confession before the god the king receives a promise of continued support and in particular victory over his enemies (to be represented dramatically later in the festival):

"The god Bel will bless you for ever  
He will destroy your enemy, fell your adversary"

- after which the king is re-invested and there takes place the ritual of the slapping of the king's cheek, which completes this part of the ceremony.

It is very difficult to see how this account from the akitu liturgy can be made to support Johnson's case for ritual humiliation in the midst of battle. Johnson's "humiliation rite" is set in a military context, in a different place in the festival and contains not one of the elements found in Babylon. Conversely, in the Babylonian account there is no hint of battle or of danger to the king's life. The focus is not upon his suffering but upon the account given of his stewardship. Although the account in the akitu liturgy does seem to have a parallel in the Israelite kingship rites, it gives no support to the Johnson-Eaton position that the king's humiliation took place in the ritual battle.

Once this has been agreed, Johnson's other argument, based on the mention of the king's difficulties in Psalm 118, begins to look extremely shaky. The king is said here to have been in



distress in battle (v. 5), to have been saved by Yahweh and to have been chastened sorely but not given over to death. This does not seem to be evidence sufficient to warrant assigning in Johnson's case three or four and in Eaton's case far more psalms to this place in the ritual in the absence of other supporting arguments. It is, of course, extremely difficult to deny absolutely that a particular psalm had a part in the ritual at this point. However, as will be argued below in the context of the exegesis of psalms not attached to the ritual here, all of the psalms assigned to the ritual by Johnson and Eaton and not assigned to it here can be understood perfectly well against a background of actual war or siege. In other words the proposed ritual humiliation of the king is not the only possible interpretation of these psalms. The most we can infer from the evidence of Psalm 118 is that the king may have uttered a prayer for Yahweh's aid from the midst of the ritual battle, although it seems much more likely to me, given the understanding of the first part of the ritual put forward below, that all of the prayers for aid were actually made before the ritual battle began.

In the light of these arguments, Johnson's position now looks weak whilst Eaton's case can be seen to go way beyond the available evidence. This impression is confirmed when the ideology behind the "humiliation rite" is examined. According to Johnson, the purpose of the rite was to "remind the king that in the ultimate he holds office by will of the divine overlord whose responsible servant he is". This is certainly the idea behind the Babylonian rite and my own understanding of the festival put forward below but

it is not immediately apparent that this end would be accomplished by the ritual suffering of the king in the mock battle.

Eaton seeks, however, to deepen our understanding of the king's suffering in the festival still further both in these rites and in possibly separate rites of atonement (22). The most extreme statement of this hypothesis comes in Eaton's description of Psalm 22 which, on the grounds of the king's suffering described in Psalms 18 and 89, is assigned to the ritual. Psalm 22 is described as:

"The ultimate in humiliation, the cry from the dust and dissolution of death followed by a great scene of restoration where the emphasis is on the enhancement of God's kingship and the access of life in the farthest regions (23). This text thus belongs to the very centre of the sacrament of death and life, covering the moment of transition..... Psalm 22 certainly supports our conclusion from Gunkel's royal psalms that the celebration of God's choice of his king was elaborated with a sequence of affliction and restoration, heavy with significance for all the world (24).

Here there is clearly an extension of the ideology of the humiliation rite so as to see reflected in the sham suffering of the king a quasi-mystical statement about death and life and, clearly, a precursor of Christ. It seems to me that an adequate "general historical" interpretation can be put forward for Psalm 22 (see below). Furthermore, this extended ideology goes beyond that found in the ancient Near Eastern parallel texts. Is it likely that in Israel, where the emphasis upon the king as a quasi divine figure and upon history as a pattern of cyclic renewal were both considerably less than in the surrounding nations, these rites of the king suffering to the point of death (annually) and being raised again would have developed a form

and a significance far beyond that found in these surrounding nations? Such a degree of royal suffering in the ritual would also destroy the pattern of correspondence between the celebration of Yahweh's kingship and the affirming of the Davidic rulers reign which has been established by Halpern (25) and for this reason also must be rejected (26).

As a final point, there is, of course, no direct or circumstantial evidence elsewhere in the Old Testament which could be brought forward to support Eaton and Johnson's arguments that the king suffered to an extensive degree in the context of the ritual battle in the festal cult.

Arguments against this position can therefore be summarised as follows:

- i) The account of the disinvestiture of the Babylonian king in the akitu liturgy differs markedly from Johnson and Eaton's reconstruction of the ritual humiliation of the Israelite king. The former takes place before the mock battle in the context of preparation for the main event of the festival and involves no danger to the king's life. Instead the focus is on the monarch giving an account of his stewardship before the god.
- ii) This leaves as the sole evidence for Johnson's hypothesis the references to the king being hard pressed in Psalm 118 (which are equally well accounted for on my own theory proposed below). These do not give sufficient warrant to incorporate a whole group of psalms into the festival at this point or to invent a new part of the ritual.
- iii) All of the psalms assigned to the festival by Johnson and Eaton and which supposedly indicate the suffering of the king can be

given an adequate alternative "general historical" interpretation.

iv) The ideology of the festal humiliation put forward by Johnson does not seem to match the reconstruction of the ritual which he proposes; that put forward by Eaton imports a whole cluster of mythical ideas about the symbolism of death and life and suffering into the Old Testament environment without support either from the Old Testament itself or from comparative material.

v) No direct or circumstantial evidence can be brought forward to demonstrate that the king underwent ritual humiliation in the mock battle from the remainder of the Old Testament.

Given that Eaton and Johnson's reconstruction of the festival can be shown to be inadequately supported by the evidence, my own reconstruction of the rites will now be put forward.

c) An alternative reconstruction of the royal ritual

According to the analysis of the main ritual events in the autumn festival discussed above, the festival can be seen to have fallen into three parts: a period of preparation; the procession of the ark and the ritual battle; and the enthronement of Yahweh and the pronouncing of judgement. It seems to me that the affirmation of the Davidic king's right to rule for another year should be seen as taking place alongside the affirmation of the kingship of Yahweh (27). Accordingly therefore the royal ritual itself should be divided into the same three parts and the content of each can be summarised as follows:

i) Preparation

As will be argued below, the king is affirmed in the festival in his two functions of mighty warrior and righteous judge (28). These two functions are interconnected in so far as any unrighteousness in the king will affect the support Yahweh gives him in battle (either ritual or actual); conversely the king's continued victory in battle ensures and vindicates his right to continue to judge or govern Israel. In the preparation period for the festival therefore I would suggest that the king gives account to Yahweh for his previous year in office and answers any accusations made against him by the people or their representatives. Along with the people he appeals for Yahweh's help against the wicked within the land and for his military aid against enemies round about. His divine calling is renewed and he is designated king for another year. His prayer throughout is that Yahweh, whose presence is symbolised by the ark, will arise ("אֲרִיב") and confront the enemies of Israel in the ritual battle to come.

ii) Procession and battle

The ark arises and leads the forces of Israel, themselves led by the king, to do battle against the foe in some form of dramatic representation. With the aid of Yahweh the king is victorious and returns in triumph to the temple, leading the ark in procession.

iii) Confirmation of kingship and judgement

The king, vindicated by his victory in battle, is now confirmed in his kingship by the pronouncement of oracles of Yahweh and begins himself to pronounce judgement over the wicked in the land.

The following discussion of these elements of the royal ritual and the exegesis of the royal psalms given below will attempt to demonstrate the probability of this hypothesis.

i) The preparation for the festival

The preparation for the festival, so far as the king was concerned, would be in the context of prayer, fasting and preparation undertaken by the people as a whole and was composed of two elements: his giving of account for his rule over the past year and his designation as Yahweh's representative in the coming battle.

a. The king's confession of innocence (Pss. 26, 17, 7, 5, 139)

As was mentioned above, the central act in the preparation of the king for the akitu festival in Babylon was not his physical suffering or protestation at this but his confession of innocence. The significance of this prayer as the king's giving of account of his reign before the god has also been made clear above. Given the degree of correspondence established by Halpern and others between the Babylonian akitu liturgy and Israel's main festival it is not unlikely that the Israelite kingship ritual would have included some parallel confession of innocence. Moreover the psalter contains several confessions, or negative confessions, similar in form to that given in the akitu liturgy, several of which appear to be royal psalms. It seems very possible therefore that some of these psalms should find their context in the royal

ritual at just this point and the most likely psalms for such a context appear to be the following.

Although Psalm 26 is regarded by the majority of scholars (including Weiser, Anderson and Kraus) as the prayer of an innocent accused finding its context in some situation such as that described in I Kings 8:31f., the psalm is actually far too general in content for such a setting. The "I" in the psalm can clearly be seen to be taking part in public worship (v. 6) and also to have a part in the giving of judgement (hence the mention of bribes in v. 10); moreover he stands in the role of witness to the wonderful deeds of Yahweh (v. 7). The most likely conclusion to be drawn from this evidence is that Psalm 26 is a royal psalm (29).

Once this has been agreed, the psalm must be given a context in some situation in which the king is subjecting himself to the judgement of Yahweh, as is indicated by the fourfold plea to be judged in the opening verses:

...אֲשׁוּבָה... אֲשׁוּבָה... אֲשׁוּבָה... אֲשׁוּבָה

yet no specific crime is envisaged or repudiated by the king. It seems very probable therefore that Psalm 26 should be set in some form of royal ritual in which the king, the judge of Israel, gives an account of himself before Yahweh in the manner of the Babylonian monarch:

"I do not sit with false men  
I do not consort with dissemblers,  
I hate the company of evildoers  
I will not sit with the wicked.... (vv. 4f.).

(association with the  $\text{וְיָשׁוּב}$  is similarly repudiated in Psalm 101) and:

"Redeem me and be gracious to me,  
My foot stands on level ground  
In the great congregation I will bless the Lord.  
(vv. 11f.)

The opening verses of the psalm also contain a prayer for Yahweh to act - to vindicate his judge the king. This vindication, difficult on most interpretations of the psalm, can be seen to refer here to Yahweh's defeat of the nation's enemies and those of the king in the battle to come. By this means Yahweh will declare that the king has been a faithful judge of Israel.

An additional and supporting piece of evidence for this interpretation is that the psalm contains a reference to the king "washing his hands", which is also the accompanying rite in the Babylonian akitu ritual.

Psalm 17 is also commonly regarded as the prayer of an innocent accused within Israel (so Anderson, Kraus, Jaquet) (30). However this psalm, like Psalm 26, is manifestly inappropriate for such a situation in that it contains general, rather than specific, protestations of innocence. In addition the psalm contains a notable feature of the royal style: the special relationship between God and the king demonstrated by the reference to the king as "the apple of the eye" (v. 8) and his appeal to "hide me in the shadow of thy wings". Psalm 17 should accordingly be seen as a royal psalm.



What then of the situation in which the king stands as he recites this piece? Eaton regards this, with Birkeland, as being a situation of military need. This view is made more likely by reading in v. 11 the plural suffixes attached to the verbs:

"They track us down, now they surround us.." etc.

Even if the RSV translation is followed however, some military confrontation is envisaged. However, several considerations would seem to favour a setting in the preparation for ritual rather than actual combat. Clearest among these is the connection made between victory and the vindication of the king, together with the declaration of innocence made by the monarch, comparable with that made in Psalm 26 and in the *akitu* liturgy:

"If thou triest my heart,  
If thou visitest me by night,  
If thou testest me,  
Thou wilt find no wickedness in me;  
My mouth does not transgress.  
With regard to the works of men,  
by the word of thy lips,  
I have avoided the ways of the violent".

Secondly, this interpretation of the psalm would satisfactorily explain the use of the two terms "  $\text{ד'ג'א}$  " and "  $\text{ד'פ'י}$  " in the psalm. The foreign nations and transgressors within Israel are both opposed to Yahweh and his king and the two terms can be used of both groups almost interchangeably in this and in one or two other psalms. Thirdly, the king's cry for Yahweh to arise ("  $\text{קוּמְ יְהוָה}$  ") which is, of course, the technical cultic term used when addressing Yahweh's presence symbolised by the ark, would also support this interpretation. The same cry is found in Psalm 132:8, 68:1 and Numbers 10:35 in a similar cultic situation (but may be used in

Psalm 3 for a situation of actual warfare). As a final strand of evidence for setting Psalm 17 in this ritual context, the psalm is clearly meant to accompany a rite of incubation (vv. 3, 15). We have no evidence that incubation was used as a means of obtaining divine guidance prior to setting out for war but I Kings 3 does record a case where incubation is associated with kingship accession. Solomon's dream at Gibeon, and particularly his prayer, appeal to the righteousness of his father as grounds for Solomon himself being granted the kingdom. As Gray remarks (31) this may be taken from, or have set the pattern for, the accession renewal rites (save only that an already reigning king may have appealed to his own right conduct in the preceding year). Solomon's prayer is followed, as in the Babylonian *akitu* ceremony, by a promise affirming the kingship and by celebration and sacrifice, significantly, before the ark (32).

The fact that the king appeals here and in Psalms 26 and 7 for vindication from Yahweh and refers to the wicked in the land preparing to destroy him leads to the impression that he considers himself unjustly accused. This opens up the possibility that at the annual festival there was an opportunity in the ritual, or perhaps merely in the context of a large public gathering which the festival provided, for open criticism of the monarch. A number of factors suggest that this may have been the case. The direct testimony of Isaiah 8 asserts that in times of distress and darkness the people would not only turn to superstition but:

"They will pass through the land greatly distressed; and when they are hungry they will be enraged and curse their king and their God" (Isaiah 8:23).

Moreover there was in Israel a tradition of the people turning against its leaders from the traditions of the Exodus and the murmurings in the camp to the secession of the ten tribes from David's heirs after the accession of Rehoboam on the grounds of unfair treatment. The care taken by the court chronicles to demonstrate the righteousness of David and Solomon in all matters is evidence that there was a need for such a precaution even under the united monarchy (33). The frequency of coups or attempted coups in both the northern and southern kingdoms, in most cases organised with the aid of priests or prophets, also illustrates how careful the king had to be not to offend those zealous for the cause of Yahweh (34). The prophetic tradition bears witness to an eloquent series of accusers of kings and leaders from Elijah, the "scourge of Israel" and the northern prophets, who were, in a real sense, the makers and breakers of royal houses (35) to Jeremiah himself in the southern kingdom. Jeremiah 36 records how the message of Jeremiah, a severe warning to king and people alike, was proclaimed by Baruch in the temple precincts (since Jeremiah was debarred from the temple) on a public fast day (though admittedly in the ninth month). With such a prominent and vigilant independent tradition in the land every king would need to take care to declare himself righteous before Yahweh and one way of doing this would be to give account each year at the occasion of the renewal of his kingship. A precursor of this ritual from the end of the period

of the judges can be found in the traditions preserved in I Samuel 12 where Samuel actually invites the people to accuse him before Yahweh as a means of declaring himself innocent at a public festival:

"Here I am, testify against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you". (I Samuel 12:3)

Psalm 17 would seem therefore to fit this situation of the king's declaration of his innocence at the autumn festival better than either the situation of the innocent accused or of the king faced by a military crisis.

There would seem also to be a strong case for assigning Psalm 7 to this preparatory stage in the ritual. Again the psalm is often seen as the prayer of an accused innocent but the cosmic scale of the judgement envisaged in vv. 6-8 surely precludes this. The preoccupation of the psalm with judgement and the fate of the wicked would seem to be a barrier to seeing the piece as a prayer before an historical battle. On the other hand there are several indications that the prayer was spoken by the king as part of his giving account and facing any charges of maladministration over the previous year's reign. The opening verses of his prayer describe the situation as desperate; pursuers are on his heels and there is none to stand beside him, a common feature of royal style in the ancient Near East. There then follows a negative confession couched in a formula of

self-cursing which becomes particularly appropriate if set before the mock battle:

"O Lord my God, if I have done this,  
If there is wrong in my hands  
If I have requited my friend with evil  
Or plundered my enemy without cause,  
Let the enemy pursue me and overtake me,  
And let him trample my life to the ground  
And lay my soul to the dust!"

There then follows, as in the other psalms in this group, the cultic cry for the ark to arise:

"Arise, O Lord (  $\text{קִי} \text{ אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$  ) in thy anger,  
Lift thyself up against the fury of my enemies!"

together with a summoning of the cosmic judgement in which the king himself, the judge of Israel, gladly and freely submits himself to the judgement of Yahweh:

"Yahweh judges the peoples;  
Judge me, Yahweh, according to my righteousness  
According to the integrity that is in me".  
(cf. 26:1-2)

The remainder of the psalm takes up the fate of the  $\text{רִשְׁעִים}$ ; by victory in battle both Yahweh and the king will be affirmed in their right to judge and punish the  $\text{רִשְׁעִים}$ . Vv. 12-16 should probably be seen as a salvation oracle against those who have accused the king, with v. 17 as the king's response, addressing Yahweh by his festal name, Elyon. Once again both the enemies of the nation and the wicked within are opposed to the king and this opposition is focussed in the cultic battle to come; this accounts for the use of the two terms in parallel here.

Psalm 5, it seems to me, also fits this context of

the king's declaration of his own innocence extremely well. It is clear that, with Eaton, we should see this piece as a royal psalm. There is reference to public rejoicing (v. 11), to the suppliant's enemies having rebelled against Yahweh (v. 10) and to Yahweh himself as "my king". The opening verses of the psalm, instead of being translated as the beginning of a lament, should be seen as a general plea to Yahweh to hear the prayer which follows:

"Give ear to my words, O Lord,  
And attend to my prayers (36)  
Hearken to the sound of my cry, my king and my God.  
For to thee do I pray.  
O Lord in the morning you hear my voice,  
In the morning I present myself before you and watch!"

The verb "אָעַרָה" has no object supplied in either the Hebrew or the Greek. Some commentators, who see the "I" in the psalm as one falsely accused, supply the object "my cause", drawing attention to the parallel in Job 23:24. Eaton and others, favouring a royal interpretation, supply the object "my sacrifice" (so RSV). However, "✓ עָרַךְ" is used with a wide variety of such objects and any choice seems arbitrary. A not unreasonable conjecture is to follow the Greek rendering (παρουσυστασῶς) and take the verb in a reflexive sense. The original reading may have been the (otherwise unattested) Niphal form "אַעָרַךְ".

According to the interpretation pursued here, vv. 4-6 are not an allusion to the king's enemies but take up the theme of his presenting himself before Yahweh in the early morning to "watch" - part of the vigil of preparation for the feast. In listing the crimes which prevent men from standing before Yahweh and then

saying he himself is fit to worship in effect once again declares the king's own innocence before God and people:

"For you are not a God who delights in wickedness,  
 Evil may not sojourn with thee  
 The boastful may not stand before thy eyes  
 Thou hatest all evildoers,  
 Thou destroyest all those who speak lies  
 Yahweh abhors all bloodthirsty and deceitful men.

But I, through the abundance of thy steadfast love, will enter thy house,  
 I will worship towards thy holy temple in the fear of thee!"

Only at this point does the psalmist ask for Yahweh's aid against his enemies in the forthcoming battle and judgement. The fate of the enemies is balanced in the celebration to come by the rejoicing of the righteous. Here, as in other psalms discussed above, the two hostile groups of foreign enemies and the wicked in the nation are identified almost as one in their opposition to Yahweh and the king.

Finally, a relatively strong case can be established for seeing Psalm 139 against this context of the king's declaration of his innocence before the ritual battle. The psalm is variously interpreted as the thanksgiving of an acquitted man (so A.A. Anderson) or a late and post-exilic expression of personal piety. The former interpretation seems unsatisfactory since it accounts for very few of the elements in the psalm and in particular the prayer to be examined by Yahweh in the concluding verses seems odd on this reading. The latter view would involve seeing Psalm 139 as unique in the psalter as an expression of private devotion and so on these grounds

must be treated with caution.

If the possibility is acknowledged that Psalm 139 may be a pre-exilic piece then there are several indications that the "I" in the psalm is the king: he counts Yahweh's enemies as his own (v. 21f.); he stands in a special relationship with God as is revealed by vv. 14ff.; he is continually led by God's hand and is always in his presence (vv. 1-12). The focus of the psalm, as several scholars have noted, is not in fact the long meditation on the suppliant's closeness to God but his prayer to be searched and tested:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart,  
Try me and know my thoughts,  
And see if there be in any wicked way in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting!"

This plea to be searched by Yahweh is parallel to that found in Psalms 26, 17 and 7 and so it seems reasonable to assume that this piece also belongs to a similar place in the ritual. The cursing of the enemies, which precedes this passage, also points to such an interpretation: the king is beset by accusers within the land and prays that Yahweh might drive them away by vindicating his anointed one. The reference to the "דָּרְךְךָ צִדְקָה" in v. 24 can also be seen in this light as a reference to the sacred way followed by the ark in its procession (cf. the reference to "פְּתֵי צִדְקָה" in the festal Psalm 24). On this reading the long passage of meditation with which the psalm begins is also appropriate: the passage both reminds Yahweh of his duty to protect the king and the king of his obligation to Yahweh and dependance upon him, ideas very much in keeping with this part of the festival.



b. The renewal of the king's vocation (Pss. 94, 101, 141, 91, 27)

Halpern has drawn attention to the fact that a pattern runs through many different manifestations of martial leadership and kingship of "designation - victory in battle - affirmation of kingship". This is the pattern of Marduk's accession to the kingship in the Enuma Elis and although Israel's theology prevents it being traceable at a divine level in Israel (other than in vestigial form) it is observable in Israel's political structures. In particular, Halpern finds this pattern in the meaning of the term "nagid", as one anointed to the kingship but not yet confirmed in it (37); in the pattern which emerges from the accounts of the rise of the judges Jephthah (38) and Gideon (39) and can also be traced in reconstructions of the coronation ritual in the period of the monarchy (40). Given the prevalence of this pattern it seems not unlikely that the king, after his confession of innocence and prayers for vindication, underwent some form of designation ritual before the procession and mock battle.

But what form would this designation take in Israel? Again, Halpern has analysed accounts of the rise to power of various leaders and reaches the conclusion that the divine call was an important element in this. The phenomenon of a divine vocation occurs frequently in Israel's ancient traditions: Abraham, Jacob and Moses were called by Yahweh, as were many of the judges, from Jephthah to Samuel, whilst the divine call to Saul and to David was mediated through a prophet. Solomon was granted an encounter with Yahweh in his dream at Gibeon. Several of the canonical prophets

(most interestingly for our purposes Isaiah) also continue in this tradition. Hence it would not be inherently surprising if Israel's kingship rites contained a call as part of the ritual. As will be argued below, Psalm 94 seems to give direct evidence of this phenomenon and, conversely, the "call" event in the ritual gives a satisfactory setting for an otherwise difficult psalm. Other psalms which may belong in this portion of the ritual are also discussed at this point, namely two pieces which may have formed the king's vow to rule justly (Psalms 101 and 141 and two songs of celebration and assurance which follow this renewal of the king's vocation (Psalms 91 and 27). Finally, to conclude this discussion of the preparation section of the festival, Psalm 132 will be discussed as a psalm which seems to reflect the people's prayer for the king at this stage of the ritual.

#### The call of the king: Psalm 94

Commentators have suggested various dates and opinions to account for the different passages in Psalm 94, including giving the piece a late date (Kraus, for example, dates the piece to the Persian period) and dividing the psalm at v. 11. There can be no reasonable doubt, as was argued above, that the "I" in the latter half of the psalm is the king (so Mowinckel, Eaton). There are also at least two good reasons for connecting the psalm with the Autumn Festival: the psalm is embedded in the psalter among other enthronement psalms and takes up several of their themes (particularly in v. 2) and secondly the psalm, as Eaton mentioned, was used at the

later feasts of booths according to the Talmud Bab. Sukka 53a (41).

It seems to me that the psalm is to be set, unlike the others in this portion of the psalter, before Yahweh's festal epiphany and before his procession to battle. The first section describes a world in need of Yahweh's kingly rule shattered in particular by social injustice (there seems no reason to assign this description to any particular period in Israel's history although echoes from - or to - the prophets are strong). As in Psalm 17 and the others above, and also, although less directly, in Psalm 101, the appeal to Yahweh is to rise up (  $\text{קָוַם}$  ) as judge and king against this injustice:

"O ~~Lord~~ eh, thou God of vengeance,  
 thou God of vengeance, shine forth!  
 Rise up, O judge of the earth,  
 render to the proud their deserts!  
 O Lord how long shall the wicked,  
 how long shall the wicked exalt?  
 They pour out their arrogant words  
 they boast, all the evildoers,  
 They crush thy people O Lord,  
 they afflict thy heritage.  
 They slay the widow and the sojourner  
 and murder the fatherless  
 And they say The Lord does not see,  
 The God of Jacob does not perceive"

This much we may imagine to have been sung by the "full choir", as it were (for a true understanding of the psalm involves seeing the piece, like others from the festival, as a liturgy). At this point Yahweh speaks in the person of a cultic prophet:

"Understand, O dullest of the people!  
 Fools, when will you be wise!  
 He who planted the ear, does he not hear?  
 He who formed the eye, does he not see?  
 He who chastises the nations, does he not chastise?  
 He who teaches men knowledge, Yahweh,  
 knows the thoughts of men,  
 That they are but a breath"

The choir respond to the oracle from Yahweh, their attention focussing now on the king, prepared by prayer and fasting and depicted, according to the ideal, as struggling to see right prevail.

"Blessed is the man whom thou dost chasten, Yahweh,  
and whom thou dost teach out of thy law  
To give him respite from the days of trouble  
until a pit is dug for the wicked  
For Yahweh will not abandon his heritage;  
For justice will return to the righteous  
and the upright in heart will follow it!"

At this point the speaker changes again and, in my judgement, v. 16 is to be put into the mouth of the cultic prophet who spoke vv. 8-11 rather than into the mouth of the "I" in the latter half of the psalm. Yahweh asks the congregation:

מִי קָוָה לִי וְעַם מְרִימִים מִי-יִתְיַצֵּב לִי וְעַם פֹּעֲלֵי אֵין

This interpretation is defended on the grounds that it makes the best sense of the psalm and preserves its essential unity as a liturgy. There seems little sense in the appeal in v. 2 for Yahweh to rise up if the psalmist is to testify in v. 16 that he has already risen up on the king's behalf. The oracle has already spoken once in this piece and there seems no awkwardness in his speaking again. Furthermore, v. 16, on this understanding, would have a close counterpart in the question asked in Isaiah's vision:

אָת-מִי אֶשְׁלַח וְאֵי-יִלְךָ-לְנוֹ.

The latter also takes place in the context of Yahweh's (presumably festal) epiphany in the temple where we assume the call of the king to have been made. It may be that the Isaiah passage borrows this element among others from the festival celebrations. Certainly the

motifs of a deaf and blind people and of the "chastiser of nations" recur there, as well as the ritual question "How long?" (Ps. 94:1, Is. 6:11). The interpretation also solves the small difficulty of the imperfect tenses in vv. 17-21 which otherwise have to be taken as referring to the past by reason of their context (so Dahood ad loc.).

The king's reply to this question falls into the pattern in the call narratives noted by Halpern in which the initial question by the god is met with humility and self deprecation (42). He declares both his dependance upon Yahweh and his confidence that the wicked in the land will be punished and overcome by Yahweh's might. Hence it seems reasonable to argue that in Psalm 94 there is preserved a liturgy for the renewal of the king's vocation in the annual festival.

The promise: Psalm 101, 141.

Following his confession and call it is not unlikely that the king will have made a promise to Yahweh for the coming year, renewing his oath of allegiance. Although there is no direct evidence for this act, Psalms 101 and 141 would fit such a context (and no other) exactly. Psalm 101 is the psalm which Mettinger regards as the surest evidence for an annual festival for kingship renewal (43). The lament metre of the psalm and the otherwise difficult phrase "מִתִּי תְבוֹא אֵלַי" are both adequately explained by the fact that the king, having made his confession, probably in the ritual dress of sackcloth and ashes and with fasting, is now

waiting for his vindication in the festal epiphany of Yahweh. The oath or promise for the future in vv. 2b-8 forms the counterpart to the earlier confession: having given account of his stewardship over the previous year he promises to continue to show righteousness in all his dealings in the year to come. Again the psalm demonstrates the importance of right ruling for the ideal monarch and how this was made one of the two key elements in the kingship ritual.

Psalm 141 is cast, similarly, in a metre and style of lament and would seem to be a prayer for Yahweh's vindication from the accusations of the wicked in the fight which is to come (cf. above p. 60f). At the centre of the psalm lies a prayer for purity very similar to that found in Psalm 101, which is followed by a reference to the coming fate of the wicked in the judgement which will follow Yahweh's being proclaimed king. The prayer in v. 5:

"Let a good man strike or rebuke me in kindness  
but let the oil of the wicked never anoint my head" (A)

may well refer to two of the ritual acts in the preparation rites: the slapping of the king's cheek, which is attested as a part of the akitu liturgy, and the anointing with oil which would be a part of the designation ceremony. The prayer, like Psalm 17, is to be said in the evening, perhaps at the end of the second day of the festival.

#### Celebration and assurance (Pss. 91, 27)

The final part of the preparation for Yahweh's arising would seem to have taken the note of assurance for the king in answer to his prayers and in preparation for the ritual battle to come.

Psalm 91 is a blessing pronounced over the king, presumably though a cultic prophet. The person blessed is clearly the king as one who:

"dwells in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abides in the shadow of the Almighty."

Yahweh is addressed here, as in other ritual psalms, as "Elyon", Most High, a title which, as Johnson has pointed out, is particularly associated with the festival. The blessing pronounced over the king, as was mentioned above, is general in tone, referring to the ritual battle to come, but also to the king's security from sickness and his ability to judge the wicked. The faithfulness of the king in seeking Yahweh by prayer and fasting, by giving faithful account of his rule over the preceding year and by answering Yahweh's call is again answered itself by the promise of Yahweh:

"Because he cleaves to me in love I will deliver him,  
I will protect him because he knows my name,  
When he calls to me I will answer him,  
I will be with him in trouble,  
I will rescue him and honour him,  
With long life I will satisfy him,  
And show him my salvation".

Finally, Psalm 27 could well be the king's response to such a prayer. Indeed, no other explanation has yet accounted for the unusual juxtaposition in the psalm of confidence and assurance followed by lamentation, to the extent that several commentators (including Weiser and Anderson) suggest that two psalms should be seen here, with the division in the text at v. 6. The psalm bears many marks of the royal style, in particular in envisaging a

situation of war and in the epithets for Yahweh (44) and therefore should be attributed to the king and seen as a song of assurance after promises of aid but also as a final prayer for aid before the ritual battle. The opening verses echo the note of assurance found in Psalm 91 and draw attention to the two dangers facing the king: those who accuse him of corruption within the nation and also external enemies:

"Yahweh is my light and my salvation,  
 whom then shall I fear?  
 Yahweh is the stronghold of my life;  
 of whom shall I be afraid?  
 When evildoers assail me,  
 uttering slanders against me,  
 my adversaries and foes,  
 they shall stumble and fall.  
 Though a host encamp against me,  
 my heart shall not fear;  
 though war arise against me,  
 yet I will be confident!"

The following verses refer back to the king's prayers and the answers he has received whilst v. 6, with its emphatic " **יָבִיחַ!** " looks to his coming triumph in battle:

"And now my head shall be lifted up,  
 above my enemies round about me,  
 And I will offer in his tent,  
 sacrifices and shouts of joy,  
 I will sing and make melody to Yahweh". (A)

However, the battle has yet to be joined and so vv. 7-12 return to the note of prayer and supplication. The phrase "Seek ye my face" in v. 8 is very probably another reference to the prayers for the ark to arise: " **יָבִיחַ** " is a usual synonym for the ark elsewhere. (A) V.11 takes up the theme of the king being taught by Yahweh found in Psalm 94 whilst v. 12, difficult on any other interpretation, refers back once



again to the king's accusers in the opening rite. The psalm ends on a note of confidence and an appeal, once again (cf. Psalm 101:2a) to "wait for the Lord", for his festal epiphany (again a reference which cannot easily be explained on any other interpretation):

"I believe that I shall see the goodness of Yahweh  
in the land of the living  
Wait for Yahweh,  
be strong and let your heart take courage, (A)  
you who wait for Yahweh!"

c. The prayer of the people: Psalm 132

Finally it seems to me that Psalm 132 should be discussed in the context of the preparation by king and people for ark procession and ritual battle. All commentators acknowledge that the psalm is to be set in a ritual context and that the piece clearly associates an ark procession with the renewal of Yahweh's promise to David. However, the psalm is generally seen as a song to accompany the return of the ark to Jerusalem in triumph. On this understanding v. 8, which reads in the Hebrew:

" קוּמָה יְהוָה לְמָנוּחַיִךְ יֵרָאֵם "

is translated: "Rise up, Yahweh, go to thy resting place". However, if Yahweh is to return to his resting place, presumably that return must be one of triumph, as reflected in Psalms 118 and 24. Yet this mood of triumph is not reflected in the remainder of the psalm. It seems to me that a better context for the psalm is provided if the piece is seen as the intercession of a cultic prophet for the king in the context of the preparation for the festival. This would best account for the lament and earnest prayer in the opening verses of the psalm:

"Remember, O Lord, in David's favour  
 all the hardships he endured;  
 how he swore to the Lord  
 and vowed to the mighty one of Jacob,  
 "I will not enter my house or get into my bed;  
 I will not give sleep to my eyes  
 or slumber to my eyelids,  
 until I find a place for the Lord,  
 a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

These verses, in this context, would also allude to the vigil of the present king as he beseeches Yahweh to come to his aid. Vv. 6 and 7 are the song of the congregation as they assemble at the outset of the festival whilst v. 8, it seems to me, should be seen as continuing the note of petition found in vv. 1ff. and v. 10 and be translated:

"Rise up, Yahweh, on behalf of your resting place  
 thou and the ark of thy might,  
 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness  
 and let thy servants shout for joy,  
 For thy servant David's sake,  
 do not turn away the face of thy anointed one!"

This translation has the merit of preserving consistency in the lament section of the psalm. Also, as D.R. Hillers has indicated, there is no evidence elsewhere in the Old Testament that the preposition "ל" can be used with "רוּם" to indicate direction (45). Hillers himself argues that "ל" must be used here like the Ugaritic "l" to mean "from". This is a possibility but is not without its difficulties as Johnson has pointed out (46). A more straightforward translation would be to see "ל" here as meaning "on behalf of", a meaning which is well attested in the Old Testament (47) and which is found elsewhere with "רוּם" in Psalm 94:16 cited above:

רוּם לְיְהוָה יִשְׁמַע

This translation would also have the merit of preserving the meaning of "רוּם" found elsewhere in these ritual psalms, that of "Rise up"

or "Rouse thyself" with reference in particular to the forthcoming battle. The meaning is clearly that Yahweh's temple, the symbol of his kingdom and authority (48) is threatened by the forces opposed to the king. This identification between the election of David, the election of Zion and the affirmation of Yahweh's kingship is found in vv. 11-17 of this psalm and elsewhere in pieces from the festival (49).

The subsequent section of Psalm 132 answers this prayer made by the congregation with an oracle from the cultic prophet promising a continuing dynasty in return for faithfulness to Yahweh's testimonies. The reference to Yahweh teaching the king himself takes up a theme also found in Psalms 94 and 27.

The closing verses of the psalm link the continuation of the Davidic dynasty with continued blessing for Zion whilst v. 18 looks forward once again to the coming confrontation:

"His enemies I will clothe with shame,  
but upon himself his crown will shed its lustre."

Hence Psalm 132 is best seen as a festal prayer made before the ark procession in which the conditional promises to David's line are renewed on account of the previous testimonies given by the king to his faithful conduct (Pss. 7, 17, 26) and his promise for the future (Pss. 141, 101) and rites of vigil and fasting which precede the ark procession.

ii) Procession and battle: Psalm 118 (50)

Broadly speaking, the other constituent elements in the festival discussed here are commonly agreed to have been

present and the interpretation of the relevant psalms is not disputed. Discussion can therefore be fairly brief. The tone of the next psalm to be examined is completely different from that of the laments described above. Psalm 118 is throughout a song of rejoicing for victory: the ritual battle has taken place; Yahweh has prevailed and has rescued his king from the onslaught of the nations. In the course of the psalm the returning procession reaches the gates of the temple and passes through into the temple courts. It can now be seen that the references to the prayers which Yahweh has answered (v. 21) need not be to prayers from the midst of battle but prayers delivered in the preparation for the battle. The self deprecation of the king in v. 22 in the light of the foregoing discussion can also now be seen as the appropriate response by the king to his divine calling. The note of prayer continued in v. 25 refers, as do similar prayers in other psalms of triumph, to future battles to be fought in the coming year: Yahweh's victory in the ritual battle guarantees success in these actual encounters.

### iii) The confirmation of kingship

Following his triumphal return to Jerusalem and as Yahweh himself is acclaimed king in the enthronement psalms, the Davidic king himself, vindicated by his victory in the cultic battle, is now affirmed in his kingship in the coming year. Some eight psalms can be assigned to this portion of the festival, four of which are for the king to recite in the first person and four of which are oracles or promises or intercession delivered by a third party, presumably a cultic prophet.

a. Psalms recited by the king (Pss. 2, 144, 92, 40)

Psalm 2 portrays the consternation among the nations now that Yahweh has vindicated his king and come in triumph to Zion. In response to this the king recites Yahweh's promise made at his designation as king and confirmed by victory over the nations in the ritual battle (cf. Pss. 94, 132). In the present, with the emphatic "הִיָּי!" he gives a solemn warning to the nations to beware of Yahweh's judgement which is to follow.

Psalm 144, rather like Psalm 118, is a song of thanksgiving for victory in battle and is probably, in this instance, to be regarded as arising from the royal ritual. Such a setting would explain why the king gives thanks for a battle already over and won, in vv. 1f., yet also appeals for Yahweh's aid in the future from the aliens (vv. 6-8, 11). The most appropriate explanation would seem to be that victory in the sham fight, as in Psalm 110, in some way assures king and people of victory in the actual battles to be fought and other dangers to be encountered. A further indication of a festal setting for the psalm, as Eaton has remarked (KP p. 127-9) is the final prayer linking together the king's victory with the prosperity and fertility of the land. However, Eaton's own understanding of the psalm as the king's prayer from the midst of his "humiliation" in battle does not seem to be justice to the mixture of praise and blessing on the one hand and appeal for protection on the other. Also, Eaton is inclined to see a quasi-mystical connection between the king's "passion rites" and the

fertility of the land. There is a far more natural connection between the kingship rites and the prosperity of the land however. The safety of the land from foreign invaders has been sought from Yahweh and obtained in the royal ritual; the kingship has been renewed and, in an agricultural society, only a strong king could provide the protection necessary for prosperity and well being.

Psalm 92 appears to be another psalm in which the king, as in Psalm 144, rejoices over the victory in the ritual battle which has taken place. It stands in the collection of psalms which clearly come from the festal ritual. Again we see what, on any other interpretation, would be the paradox of thanksgiving for victory and prediction of victory in the same psalm. On the one hand the king, possibly through the medium of a cultic prophet, declares:

"For lo thy enemies O Lord,  
for lo thy enemies shall perish,  
all evildoers shall be scattered"

Yet on the other hand he gives thanks:

"But thou hast exalted my horn like that  
of a wild ox,  
*I am anointed with* fresh oil,  
My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies,  
My ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants" (A)

This verse alone is sufficient to indicate that the "I" in the psalm is the king and he looks back, as do the congregation in Psalm 48, on the ritual battle which has taken place (there is no reference here, it should be noted, to the king suffering in the battle). As was noted above, there is the same identification of the two groups, of evildoers within the land and the foreign antagonists found elsewhere, in those festal psalms in which the king plays a central role.

Psalm 40, as Eaton has noted, again fits this context well. Because of the unusual structure of the psalm in which thanksgiving is followed by lament (cf. Psalm 27) and the fact that vv. 13-17 are found elsewhere in the psalter as a separate psalm for a private person in distress the psalm is often seen as a late and somewhat disjointed composition. In fact, as Eaton remarks, the psalm fits the festal context extremely well. In the first half of the psalm the king proclaims his deliverance from the ritual battle and affirms his vocation in v. 7, the surest indication that the piece is a royal psalm:

"Then I said, "Lo, I come,  
                   in the roll of the book it is written of me  
 I delight to do thy will O God,  
 Thy law is within my heart!"

Again in vv. 9f the king affirms that he has fulfilled his role as witness to Yahweh's saving deeds. In the second half of the psalm, employing the metaphor of a private and poor man in danger (cf. above p. 115) he reminds Yahweh of the real destroyers which still face the nation and asks for his deliverance in the actual situations of need to come.

b. Psalms recited by a third party (Pss. 110, 72, 21, 61)

Psalm 110, like many of these psalms of victory, very much highlights the king's role as warrior winning his victories with Yahweh's aid. The psalm opens with an oracle inviting the king designate to be enthroned at Yahweh's right hand and conferring upon him an everlasting priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek". As Yahweh defeated the nations in the ritual battle so he will march

with the king to battle and the king himself, like Cyrus in Isaiah 45, will be an instrument of Yahweh's judgement (51).

Psalm 72, the psalter's finest prayer of intercession for the king, takes up many of the themes discussed above and in particular the king's twofold function of warrior and judge. As Eaton aptly remarks "peace reigns also among the commentators" (KP p. 120) in that all are convinced of the psalm's origin in the annual celebration of the king's accession. The twofold function of the king is brought out in vv. 1-4, 12-14, on the one hand (the king as judge) and vv. 8-11 on the other hand (the king as warrior). The latter verses also pick up language already familiar from Psalms 2 and 110. Prayers that the king will bring peace and justice are coupled with intercessions for his long life and for the prosperity of the land which, as was remarked above, will follow only from the stable social conditions deriving from a strong leader.

Psalm 21, another of Gunkel's original royal psalms, should also be given a place at this point in the festival. The enthronement has already taken place (v. 3) and prayers have already been answered. The oracle of the worshipper, most probably a cultic prophet, is that the ritual victory will now be translated into actual victories against Israel's enemies. Again the appeal is to Yahweh Elyon (v. 7) and ends with the worship of the God himself, now also enthroned in the festival. The Divine Warrior gives his strength and support to his earthly counterpart.



Finally Psalm 61, which contains an intercession for the king given in the third person and not dissimilar to that found in Psalm 72, is most probably to be seen as a royal psalm throughout. The first section of the psalm contains several examples of the royal style and, this being the case, the psalm can most appropriately be set at this point in the ritual as the king looks back to prayers already answered (v. 5) and forward to new dangers (v. 3). As such it forms the last of the psalms attached to this portion of the festival.

iv) Psalms 9-10

Finally, the reconstruction of the festival offered above, when coupled with what has already been said concerning the royal ideology, the identity of "רָשָׁעִים" and "אֲדָגִים", "עֵל" and "עֵלֵי" can all be used to offer what I believe to be a satisfactory festal interpretation of Psalm 9 and 10. Debate about the unity of these psalms has plainly been longstanding: although the LXX presents the piece as one, guided by its acrostic structure and common themes, the MT in fact separated the two halves of the poem probably on the grounds of the very different situations portrayed in each (52): the situation in Psalm 9 is basically one of national need whilst that in Psalm 10 pictures the persecution, apparently, of individuals within the nation. Modern commentators have, without exception, accepted the unity of the psalm but do not as yet seem to have come up with a context for the piece which accounts for its diverse parts: the balance between praise and lament and the interplay between the enemies of the nation and the wicked in Israel, between the fate of Israel as a nation and of the

poor within the nation.

The key to understanding the piece lies in seeing the psalm both as a royal psalm and as one set in the festival. Birkeland, Eaton and Mowinckel all see the psalm as royal, and indeed it is difficult to avoid this conclusion given the explicit references to victory over the nations, but account, in so far as they mention it, for the picture of the poor in Psalm 10 as metaphor which continues to describe the plight of Israel as a nation. Weiser, by contrast, does set the psalm firmly in the festival but gives more prominence to the individual lament. In the psalm as a whole, he argues, a persecuted individual draws on the great festal themes and applies these to his own situation of need. Birkeland acknowledges that the psalm should have a festal setting but his tunnel-like vision of the problems of the psalter prevents his exploring the richness of the piece.

The psalm is best seen then as a festal piece and the suppliant throughout is the king. The psalm is set at the point in the festival where Yahweh has been enthroned as king (vv. 4, 7), having vanquished the nations in the mock battle, and the second part of the ceremony, the pronouncing of judgement, is now envisaged. The psalm, in fact, links the two concepts together.

The psalm opens (vv. 1-2) with a hymn of thanksgiving for the king's deliverance in battle, which has already taken place. The king in his role as witness now proclaims his salvation to the congregation bearing testimony to the God who saved him:

"I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart  
 I will tell of all thy wonderful deeds,  
 I will be glad and exult in thee,  
 I will sing praise to thy name O Most High"

He goes on to describe the victory over the nations in the mock battle linking this victory, in this case, with the judgement of Yahweh which is now to be proclaimed. As in the other psalms from the festival, the king's deliverance is seen as his vindication before God and the people; conversely therefore the defeat of the nations must be viewed as their condemnation. They have been tried and defeated, found guilty and are now to be sentenced:

"When my enemies turned back,  
 They stumbled and perished before thee ( **מִפְּנֵי** ) (53)  
 Thou hast maintained my just cause  
 ( **כִּי עָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטַי וְדִינִי** ) (54)  
 You have taken your throne to give righteous judgement  
 Thou hast rebuked the **גוֹיִם**  
 Thou hast destroyed the **רָשָׁע**  
 Thou hast blotted out their name for ever and ever  
 The enemy has vanished in everlasting ruins  
 Their cities thou hast rooted out  
 the very memory of them has perished"

The term "**רָשָׁע**" is used here as referring to one convicted under Yahweh's judgement and hence can aptly be applied to the "**גוֹיִם**".

As was mentioned above, its use here does not entitle us to assume a correspondence between the two terms throughout the psalms. The reference to everlasting ruins and the destruction of cities takes up into the festal mock battle the past and therefore guaranteed future triumphs of the Israelites over their warlike neighbours.

The focus of the psalm now turns from the victory which has been celebrated before the eyes of all present (cf. 48:9) to Yahweh who is now enthroned as judge in the second aspect of his divine kingship. In particular, the chief concern of the judge is brought to our attention: his concern for the poor and the needy

(cf. Chapter 2 above):

"But Yahweh sits enthroned for ever  
 He has established his throne for judgement  
 And he judges the world with righteousness  
 He judges the peoples with equity (55)  
 Yahweh is a stronghold for the oppressed (קָדָשׁ)  
 A stronghold in times of trouble  
 And those who know thy name put their trust in thee  
 For thou, O Lord, hast not forsaken those who seek thee" (A)

A connection is begun here which is sustained throughout the psalm between Yahweh's judgement against the nations who oppress on behalf of the afflicted Israel and Yahweh's judgement within the nation, expressed explicitly in Psalm 50, against those who oppress the poor themselves. Vv. 11-12, perhaps sung by a choir, at this point take up more explicitly the notion of prayer and thanksgiving for Yahweh's salvation:

"Sing praises to Yahweh, who dwells in Zion (56)  
 Tell among the people his deeds,  
 For he who avenges blood is mindful of them  
 He does not forget the cry of the עֲבָדָיו"

On this, and indeed any understanding of the psalm which aims to be consistent, the textual emendation which involves a change in the pointing only in v. 14 seems most attractive. Several scholars, including Weiser and Kraus, emend "קִיְיָ" to "קִיָּי" and "קִיָּי" to "קִיָּי", an emendation supported by Agulá and Jerome (57). There is also support for the reading in the triple "י" of the present MT: many mss. have, in fact, altered the imperative to the more normal "קִיָּי" and this would in fact be the only recorded instance of the deviant form of the imperative (58). The verse can therefore be translated (with Weiser):

The Lord was gracious to me,  
 He saw my affliction  
 and lifted me up from the gates of death,  
 that I may recount all thy praises  
 and in the gates of the daughter of Zion may  
 rejoice in thy deliverance.

The king refers here to Yahweh's deliverance in the mock battle when, as is mentioned in Psalm 118, the king is portrayed as being hard pressed and crying out for help. It is significant for the interpretation of the psalm that the warrior king recounts his salvation in the gates of Zion given the prominence of these gates or doors in other festal psalms (so Pss. 118, 24). The four verses which follow again draw the connection between the king's salvation and victory in battle and the judgement of the nations, again described as **רְשָׁעִים**:

"The nations have sunk in the pit which they made  
 In the net which they hid has their own foot been caught  
 Yahweh has made himself known, he has executed judgement  
 The **רְשָׁעִים** are snared in the work of their own hands"

After the pause indicated by "Higgaion Selah" in the Hebrew text the following verses sum up the conclusion to the first half of the psalm - a moral lesson drawing attention, as in so many of the psalms discussed above, to the fate of the wicked and, by contrast, the poor. The moral lesson itself is given in v. 18 and is drawn from the preceding dramatic ritual but is applied to conditions in Israel in both halves of the psalm:

"The **רְשָׁעִים** shall depart to Sheol,  
 All the nations that forget God.  
 For the needy shall not always be forgotten,  
 And the hope of the **עֲנִוִים** shall not perish for ever"

Finally, to close Psalm 9 itself the appeal is made to Yahweh in language familiar already to the festal worshippers from the calling

out of the ark to the mock battle, to rise up and seal the judgement of the nations, to sentence them finally as it were and confirm the judgement implied by their defeat by the king in the cult; the congregation, perhaps, joins at this point in the cry:

"Arise O Lord ( **קוּמ יְהוָה** cf. Psalm 132 etc.)  
 Let not man prevail,  
 Let the nations be judged before thee ( **עַל-פְּנֵיךָ** )  
 Put them in fear O Lord  
 Let the nations know that they are but men"

At this point the attention of the congregation is turned once again by a lament style prayer uttered, possibly, by the king or by a cultic prophet. Given that Yahweh has established **קִשְׁפֵי** among the nations why is there so much confusion and injustice on the home front? This section of the psalm has often been misconceived as a personal lamentation over individual misfortune. In fact this is not the case at all and the appeal is made to Yahweh on behalf of sufferers in general: it is not the "I" in the psalm who is suffering but the poor in the community. The continuation of thought from the first half of the psalm is that since Yahweh has prevailed against the nations and earned the right to sit enthroned as king and judge then he must now set matters to right in Israel herself and it is perhaps fitting therefore to see that the king, as in his warrior capacity he appealed to Yahweh for aid in overcoming the nations, so in his judge capacity he brings the plight of the nation before the divine throne. The prayer in the opening verses is that the **רָשָׁע** in the nation may share the fate of the **סִגִּי**. The rather lengthy description of the plight of the poor (Psalm 10:1-11) is followed by a prayer for Yahweh to arise this time in judgement

over the internal **לְשׁוֹן**, parallel to the prayer for judgement over the nations in 9:19f:

"Arise **אֲרִיב** ( **קוֹמָה יְהוָה** )  
 O God lift up thy hand  
 Forget not the **עֲגִיב**  
 Why does the wicked renounce God  
 and say in his heart "Thou wilt not call to account"  
 ( **ו 12-13** )

which in turn is followed by a couplet of assurance that God hears based on the confidence in God provided through the ritual drama:

"Thou dost see; yea thou dost take note of trouble  
 and vexation  
 That thou mayest take it into thy hands  
 The hapless commits himself to thee  
 Thou hast been the helper of the fatherless"

The concluding verses of the psalm contain another appeal for action from Yahweh and further link together his judgement on the nations with that in Israel herself:

"Break thou the arm of the wicked and evildoer  
 Seek out his wickedness till thou find none  
 Yahweh is king for ever and ever (a recurrence of the  
 festal theme)  
 The nations shall perish from his land"

and the psalm ends on the note of assurance:

"Yahweh, thou wilt hear the desire of the meek,  
 thou wilt strengthen their heart  
 Thou wilt incline thy ear  
 To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed  
 So that the man who is of the earth might strike  
 terror no more"

Psalm 9-10 is best seen then as a liturgy for the festival which links together Yahweh's victory over the nations and salvation of the king in the mock battle firstly with his judgement of the nations themselves and secondly with his setting things to rights within Israel herself. This interpretation of the psalm is built

not only upon the foregoing exegesis but on the festival reconstruction offered here and seems more satisfying than others offered to date.

d) Conclusion

This section of the chapter has attempted to define a context for some twenty-one royal psalms which seem to have been composed for recitation in the royal ritual in ancient Israel. In the course of this discussion the arguments against the position of Johnson and Eaton (that the king underwent "ritual humiliation" in the course of the mock battle) have been assembled and this position has been found to be inadequately supported by the evidence. An alternative reconstruction of the royal rites has been proposed in which the king prepares for the battle by giving an account of his vocation before God. Although this reconstruction must remain a hypothesis for lack of direct evidence in the form of descriptions of the ritual from within the Old Testament many different strands of evidence come together to support this picture of the rites and these can be summarised as follows:

- i) The reconstruction of the royal ritual proposed here fits in well with the pattern of the myth of the Divine Warrior and the link this has with the renewal of kingship which is traced by Halpern through the different civilisations of the ancient Near East and within Israel herself.
- ii) The reconstruction also matches, in the detail of the preparation for the festival, the account of the preparation



of the Babylonian king for the royal ritual in the akitu ceremony in every respect.

- iii) Although there is no direct evidence to support this reconstruction from the Old Testament narratives there is certainly much circumstantial evidence for the view of the festival put forward here in such phenomenon as the use of "אָפִּיִן" in prayer to the ark; the frequent use of fasting and similar rites of preparation before battle; in criticism made of the kings by the prophets and others, sometimes in the context of the festivals and in the link between the king's own sin and his success or failure in battle.
- iv) This reconstruction is well supported by the ideology of kingship outlined in Appendix II in that the king is affirmed in his dual function of warrior and judge and these two features are clearly interlinked as outlined above. He is reminded both that victory comes from Yahweh and that his own faithfulness in giving judgement is related to the help he receives.
- v) Finally, as has been outlined above, this understanding of the festival both enables psalms already established as part of the ritual to be understood more fully and secondly gives a satisfactory interpretation of several psalms not previously included in the ritual and which cannot be satisfactorily assigned to any other situation.

The following section will now turn to examine the remaining twenty-seven royal psalms not assigned to the ritual which may be grouped under the title of general historical pieces (59).

#### 4. GENERAL HISTORICAL ROYAL PSALMS

The psalms discussed above are, it seems to me, the only psalms which can be assigned to the royal ritual with any degree of confidence. Most of the other royal psalms fall into the category of general historical pieces: psalms written with particular types of crises in the life of the king and of the nation in mind to be used as and when these crises occur. Of the thirty psalms discussed below by far the majority reflect, as Birkeland and Eaton have argued, a background of war. Others reflect crises which are more personal to the king: treachery within the nation, or sickness for example. On the positive side the psalter also contains several psalms which can be grouped as psalms of assurance to be pronounced, perhaps, in the cult as appropriate at the overcoming of any particular crisis. Each of these categories will be examined in turn and an attempt will be made to illuminate each context from other accounts of Israel's life under the kings.

##### a) War psalms

An examination of the history of the monarchy in both Israel and Judah reveals an impression of almost continual war. In particular it is safe to say that the king lived under perpetual threat of three things: violent revolt and overthrow from his own compatriots; border wars and skirmishes with neighbouring states and thirdly, less often, clashes with the "super-powers" on the Nile and in Mesopotamia. In the Northern Kingdom the threat of violent revolution was particularly acute: in the

course of the two hundred year life of the northern monarchy the succession was only secured for more than one generation by two families; the degree of political instability and the threat to power, particularly at the beginning of the reign, was very great therefore and no monarch could have felt entirely secure, especially with an almost continually active party of opposition in the prophetic movement. There were no fewer than six military coups in this short period (60) and one extensive period of civil war (61). Although the position in Judah seems more secure from our modern perspective in that David's line continued to hold the throne this seems only to have been possible because of the strong propaganda effect of the royal ideal and the promises to David's line explored above. But even this security, which would have been less apparent to the kings themselves, is limited for there is a record of numerous attempts at revolt from within the Davidic house: David himself gained power over Saul's successors by military means and in turn faced an almost successful coup from his son Absalom followed by a revolt of the northern tribes led by Sheba. Solomon felt it necessary to carry out a political purge on his accession. A hundred years later this undercurrent of political intrigue surfaces again as Athaliah siezes power for herself and a counter-coup led by the priests takes it from her again. Joash himself was killed by his servants, presumably for partisan reasons:

"His servants arose and made a conspiracy and slew Joash in the House of Millo, on the way that goes down to Silla. It was Jozabab the son of Shemiah and Jehozabad the son of Shomer that struck him down so that he died!"

(II Kings 12:20f.)

His successor, Amaziah, was also the victim of a conspiracy:

"And they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and slew him there. And they brought him upon horses....." (II Kings 14:19)

II Chronicles suggests, intriguingly, that the conspiracy was "from the time when he turned away from the Lord", perhaps suggesting the existence of a powerful temple based party which in some way controlled the direction of the monarchy. The later king Amon, Josiah's predecessor, also met his death in a conspiracy (he also had "turned against the Lord") according to II Kings 21:23f. (62). This positive evidence for opposition to the monarchy in Israel points up the need for the renewal and expression of the ideal of kingship by both king and people and also the insecurity of the king illustrated in many of the psalms.

At a local level warfare seems to have been almost continuous: discounting the wars of expansion and consolidation fought by Saul and David there was from the time of Jereboam to that of Omri continual fighting, no doubt often sporadic, between Israel and Judah. From Omri's day until Jehoash's accession the two states were allied but skirmishes broke out again under Jehoash and probably continued thereafter until the end of the northern kingdom. In addition in the time of the Omrides Israel fought what appear to have been quite major battles with the kings of Damascus, often enlisting Judah's help in these, whilst Judah herself was at war with the Ammonites in the reign of Jotham (according to the Chronicler) and with the Philistines under Ahaz. Jerusalem itself was besieged

on various occasions but was actually entered twice by the enemy: by Jehoash of Israel (II Kings 14:11ff.) and in Nebuchadnezzar's invasion; the city was besieged without being taken by at least Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria (II Kings 16:5-8) and by the Assyrians themselves (II Kings 18).

When the local states themselves were at peace this was usually because they were under more immediate threat from the great powers to the north and south. Both Judah and Israel suffered in Shishak's invasion in 917 (I Kings 14:25); Israel is known to have taken part in an alliance against the Assyrians at the battle of Qarqar in 853 BC (63). The eighth century was, of course, a period of continual Assyrian oppression culminating for Israel in the disaster of 722 and for Judah in the siege of Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah. Finally, Judah suffered invasion from Egypt in 609 and her final defeat at the hand of the Babylonians twelve years later (64).

All in all therefore it should not be altogether surprising that most of the psalms of the king preserved in the psalter reflect a background of war or internal treachery. Nor are there lacking enough war situations so that we have to assign many of these psalms to a ritual setting. The history of Israel and Judah under the monarchy is a history of continual war. Against this background an annual celebration of Yahweh's victory over the nations ensuring military triumph in the coming year seems more appropriate.

Turning to a discussion of the psalms themselves, as was said above, once the presence of a battle in the cult is acknowledged it becomes extremely difficult to tell whether or not a psalm arises from the festival or was more properly a general historical psalm. There may also have been an overlap between these two categories. The principle followed here has been to assign to the festival mainly those psalms which contain clear reference to acts which might accompany the royal ritual and which are in harmony with the rites discussed above. Where a psalm discussed below has been given a place in the festival rites by Johnson or Eaton the reasons for the piece being excluded here are given but, in the nature of the argument, it is far easier to prove that a psalm may have been part of the ritual than to show that it was not. The war psalms themselves can conveniently be divided into four groups: prayers before battle, after battle and prayers from a situation of siege form the first three categories; the fourth is made up of two psalms whose royal identification and setting is less certain and three pieces where the "I" is probably not the king but where the danger envisaged is still military in nature.

i) Prayers for aid in battle (Pss. 3, 44, 56, 57, 60, 108, 69  
89, 20)

The psalter's provision of prayers for aid in battle is more plentiful than its provision of songs of victory to be sung afterwards and varies from vaguely expressed prayers for

protection to full blown laments over a defeat which has already taken place. Psalm 3, which appears to be a short prayer for protection in battle to be uttered by the king, falls into the former category. The military metaphor ("shield" v. 3), the reference to foreign armies and the general martial confrontation envisaged by the psalm are sufficient to indicate that the psalm is royal, as most commentators have agreed (65). Jacquet is happier to follow Schmidt's suggestion that the psalmist is an accused individual but evidence for this is slight. Why should an accused be so frightened on account of the number of his enemies? Why should the deliverance brought to the psalmist then affect the nation (v. 8)? Thirdly, why should the psalmist use so many military "metaphors" but give no hint of a judicial situation? Similarly there seems no reason to follow Kraus' suggestion that the psalm is by an individual who "puts himself in the position of the king" - why not simply admit that the psalm is royal? Weiser sees the psalm as stemming from the royal ritual in the cult and this, as Eaton has acknowledged, cannot be ruled out. There is what may be a reference to the cultic act of incubation (v. 5) and the cultic cry for the ark to arise (v. 7) which has been noted in the festal psalms. However v. 5 may well be a simple expression of trust and confidence in God rather than a reference to the incubation rite, as may be the parallel phrase in Psalm 4 (66); other references to the ritual, such as the cry to God to arise may well be examples of festal motifs taken from this context and used in situations of historical need. The

description of the enemies and particularly their mockery in v. 1, which is not recorded elsewhere in a certainly ritual psalm, incline me more to the view that the psalm should be treated more as a general historical piece revealing, as do most of the psalms in this section, the king in his capacity as warrior supported by Yahweh. The festal theology is put into practise here in a situation of real need (67).

By contrast with Psalm 3, Psalm 44 is clearly a cry from a situation of actual distress. Several commentators (Anderson, Weiser et. al.) draw attention to II Chronicles 20:4ff. which describes a prayer offered (significantly) by the king in a situation of national crisis. Although Psalm 44 is mainly a communal piece, vv. 4-8, in the first person singular, are probably best seen as spoken by the king rather than by any other representative individual for these reasons: when compared with Psalm 3 the piece contains the two features noted there namely the mockery by the enemies of the nation as an important factor in the appeal (vv. 13-16) and the cry to Yahweh to "Arise" (vv. 24ff.) here clearly not in a festal setting, is again present. On the latter point Weiser sees the psalm as having a context in the cultic covenant renewal festival taking place after a recitation of the "Heilsgeschichte" but it does seem as if a situation of real national distress is envisaged here. It may be that some such recitation would be built into the other ceremonies which would accompany this psalm. It is worth noting, however, that here and in other psalms where the king appeals on behalf of the nation, appeal is made to



God's activities in the past and to those actions in particular which the suppliant desires to be repeated in the present (68). This point will be made again in the discussion of Psalm 22 below. The king appears again here in his role as warrior acknowledging his dependance upon Yahweh in each battle fought.

Psalm 56 presents an unusually difficult series of textual problems (69) but the royal interpretation of the psalm is clearly indicated by v. 8:

בָּאֵךְ עֵפִים הוֹרֵד אֶל־הַיָּם

As Mowinckel writes (70) the psalm is an example of one of several national or royal laments written in the personal style. This interpretation is followed by Eaton, although he does place this psalm among his less clear cases (71), Kraus, Johnson (72), and Dahood. Anderson, who cannot make his mind up in this as in several other cases, argues that "עֵפִים" is not necessarily an indication that the psalmist is the king but may be part of the cult language the suppliant is using. Such an argument fails to hold water when, in every other respect, there can be no objection to the psalm being royal. The use of military language would thus be appropriate in its literal meaning here (not "military metaphor" as in Weiser). The psalm sounds strong notes of assurance particularly in the suspected refrain (vv. 3-4, 10-11) which are echoes of the songs of assurance also assigned to the king and explored below. The true metaphor in the psalm is that of the king as the persecuted individual standing before Yahweh to plead his case which changes (v. 13) to that of the king as a sick man whom Yahweh has rescued

from death itself. The fact that the metaphors of sickness, rescue from death and persecution can be firmly established here as metaphors which could be used for the trials and tribulations undergone by the king in war will be important for an accurate understanding of such psalms as 22, 18 and 89 to be discussed below. Finally, it is important to note that the psalms vary in the degree to which they stress the king's special relationship to Yahweh: in some pieces (e.g. 2, 110) this is paramount; in others, such as this psalm, the suppliant appears to pray almost as an ordinary individual making no claims upon the special promises given to the king.

The public praise given in Psalm 57 is the most valuable piece of evidence for assuming that the psalm is royal. Who else but the king could claim to give thanks and praise among the nations? Other significant factors are God's special concern for the psalmist manifested in phrases like "In the shadow of thy wings I will take refuge" and "I will cry to God Most High.... who fulfils his purpose for me". The metaphor of the wild beasts is more likely to represent foreign armies than any other kind of persecution and recurs in Psalms 59 and 22. Correspondence can be seen to be made explicit in the spears, arrows and sharp swords mentioned in v. 4. The abrupt change of mood in the psalm is best seen as the result of an oracle of salvation delivered by a cultic prophet (cf. II Chronicles 20:14-17). Eaton's suggestion (which follows Birkeland) that the prayer is one from an incubation rite

with vv. 1-4 being prayed in the evening and vv. 5-11 in the morning is a possible one in view of the cries to "awake the dawn". His suggestion that the psalm may well arise from the ritual seems less likely but cannot be dismissed with any certainty: in the reconstruction of the festival offered above the rites of incubation would take place before the danger became apparent. The frequency of war and battle in ancient society and the general background of war against which the psalms were written inclines me to the view that the piece was intended as a general historical prayer and thanksgiving.

Psalm 60 also clearly pictures a situation of war and great danger although the mention of Edom (v. 9) indicates that this piece may well be a particular historical psalm. The psalm opens on a note of communal lament, prayer for God to intervene. This is followed by the oracle of a cult prophet (vv. 6-8) in which Yahweh's victory is proclaimed. The king, as spokesman for the people in v. 9, then asks for aid once more: if Yahweh will not give this aid then who will? The final verse expresses a renewed confidence that this help will be received.

Psalm 108 is a composite psalm built up from sections of Psalms 57 and 60 and there is no reason to doubt that the speaker is again the king and that a situation of war is envisaged as underlying the psalm.

Psalm 69 begins as if it were an individual lament and is understood to be such by many commentators (so Anderson, Weiser). On this understanding the concluding verses of the psalm, which refer to the salvation of Zion and the rebuilding of the cities of Judah, must be an editorial addition or a post-script which stands outside the main theme of the psalm. There seems no reason, other than a refusal to recognise metaphor as such, why the prayer should be subject to this treatment. In fact Psalm 69, understood in its entirety, is best seen as one of those pieces in the psalter in which the suffering of the community is expressed and focussed in the suffering of one individual who is more than likely to be the king. As Eaton remarks (KP p. 52) the communal aspect of the psalm emerges strongly in the thanksgiving and itself belies an individual interpretation. Birkeland draws attention to the prayers in the Amarna letters and of the prayers of the Egyptian kings (73) in which Pharaoh portrays himself as totally alone and afraid. Elsewhere in Israel this portrayal of the nation in terms of a suffering individual is found in Psalms 22 and 102 in a particularly striking way, as in this psalm and, of course, the metaphor occurs frequently in the prophets. The opening imagery of the psalm where the psalmist sinks into deep mire and is overcome by many waters is not necessarily indicative of personal illness to the point of death but is frequently used in the psalter and elsewhere to denote the effect of a military invasion (74). Other elements in the psalms have occurred in other royal prayers with this background: in particular the suppliant's concern about the number of his enemies (v. 4) is found in Psalm 3. The mockery of the foe is always of concern to the king and is nowhere more

poignantly expressed than in this psalm. In particular the power of the nation and the power of God are closely bound together: "It is for thy sake that I have borne reproach, that shame has covered my face" (v. 7) (75); "For zeal for thy house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me" (v. 9).

An element introduced in this psalm is the psalmist's concern about his own sin. He says in v. 5 "O God thou knowest my folly, the wrongs I have done are not hidden from thee". Apparently therefore the king feels he deserves some punishment but not to the degree with which his enemies are causing him to suffer. As a part of his defence he reasons:

"For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten,  
And him whom thou hast wounded they afflict still more" (v. 26)

A further supporting point for a royal interpretation is that the "honour" of the psalmist's hearers is bound up with the fate of the psalmist. How could this be if the psalm was a prayer of an accused man? Finally, the curse of the psalmist includes the words:

"May their camp be a desolation, let no-one dwell  
in their tents" (v. 25)

- assuming that the psalm does not date back to the nomadic period (by reason of the reference to the rebuilding of cities in vv. 35f.) then the words "טִירָתָם" and "אֶהְלִי יָם" would seem best to refer to the encampments of armies on the move rather than to private individuals.

Psalm 69 therefore seems best understood as the prayer of a king made in the pronounced royal style of the ancient Near East by which the sufferings of the nation are portrayed as the sufferings of the monarch himself (76).

The inclusion of any dramatic rite of suffering on the part of the king during the mock battle in the autumn festival turns on the interpretation of Psalm 89 and whether the piece is to be given a ritual or a general historical interpretation. The chief evidence for a ritual interpretation of the piece lies in the first half of the psalm, the song of praise and thanksgiving which binds together a vivid description of Yahweh's triumph in the creation and the promises to the Davidic line, both of which are central themes of the autumn festival. The whole psalm is generally conceived on such a view as a liturgy with the hymn of praise before the battle and the lament prayer spoken whilst the king is being hard pressed by the enemies of Israel as represented in the cult.

These arguments would be all very well as a possible interpretation of the psalm if there were at least some evidence that the king suffered and was humiliated at this point in the festival but it must be stressed once again that there is no evidence for this either from within the Old Testament or from comparative sources.

<sup>9</sup>  
Ringren's remarks:

"The primary evidence for this (ritual) conclusion is the fact that in Psalm 89 the king is deprived of his crown while his enemies mock him, and his days are cut short. This description is strongly reminiscent of the humiliation of the king in the Babylonian New Year Festival!"

- but this is not the case. The only point of similarity is the removal of the king's crown; there is no hint in the Babylonian account that the humiliation takes place in the context of a battle at all (77). The dilemma of evidence within the Old Testament itself is aptly summarised by J.M.Ward:

"Without external controls against which to check the theory of ritual humiliation, either in the narrative portions of the Old Testament or in the royal psalms we are thrown back upon Psalm 89 itself for an answer to the question of its liturgical background. And there is no ground within the psalm for supposing that the crisis is a mere sham, a dramatic device and nothing more" (78)

An additional argument against the ritual interpretation, if one is needed, is provided by the theology of the psalm. In Psalms 118 and 144, the two royal psalms referring to battle most likely to be from a ritual setting, all evil is attributed to the nations, as is appropriate in a cultic scene in which Yahweh is about to fight, or has already fought, for Israel. In Psalm 89 however the evil and misfortune have come from Yahweh, not the nations (vv. 38-45). The doubts expressed in the psalm are real therefore, occasioned by historical circumstances and a wrestling with God. There would be no element of doubt if this were a ritual piece repeated every year. Ward again remarks on this process by which doubt would be occasioned by historical disaster:

"If the socio-political triumphs of the monarchy gave rise to the pretensions of the royal psalms, as they probably did, then the major checks to the fulfilment of these promises... would probably have given rise to a lament such as Psalm 89:39-52" (79)

The alternative to this proposed ritual interpretation is, of course, to give the psalm a general historical setting but before this position is examined an inspection of the arguments brought against such a position by the "pro-ritualists" will further expose the weakness of their case. Johnson limits himself to saying:

"The defeat and humiliation of the Davidic king in these lines is not linked to any specific historical event, for indeed there is none that can be made to fit the scene, but is an important element in the ritual drama" (80).

It hardly needs to be said that we do not need a specific situation to fit the scene in order to see the piece as an historical psalm. Eaton brings forward the equally insecure argument that

"It is difficult to imagine a king in such a desperate and beleaguered situation presenting his prayer in such an extended and stately form as we find in this psalm. Even the lament has a measured, rounded quality contrasting with the alarmed and hasty tone of other royal prayers!" (81)

- but no-one is arguing that the king prayed his prayer extemporarily on the field of battle! No doubt he did pray then, although not in such measured tones; but the psalm itself would be delivered perhaps days after defeat on an appointed fast day giving ample opportunity for the right words to be chosen by the skilled psalm writers (82).

The strongest evidence for the historical interpretation of the piece is to be found in the king's description of his distress, particularly v. 39 (MT 40)

"Thou hast renounced the covenant with thy servant  
 Thou hast defiled his crown in the dust  
 Thou hast breached all his walls, <sup>thou hast</sup> laid his  
 strongholds in ruins  
 All that pass by despoil him"

This description of distress seems much more appropriate to the historical disasters which continually befell Judah, as Ward remarks, and tallies in every way with laments over the nation's plight in other royal psalms: the king's fate is identified with that of the nation; there is concern over the mockery of enemies etc. Particularly significant is the psalm's linking of the promises of kingship to victory in battle: according to the royal ideology described above the king's victory as warrior in battle was



confirmation of his right to the throne. Defeat would presumably make his political position insecure as one who had lost the divine favour of prowess in war.

If the general historical interpretation is adopted on the grounds of the wording and tone of the lament and the absence of any supporting evidence for the ritual position the question of the relationship of the lament to the hymn and promise which form the first half of the piece arises. The most likely explanation is that vv. 1-37 were originally a separate festal hymn celebrating Yahweh's role as Divine Warrior in creation and his election of the Davidic dynasty. Such an explanation would best account for the opening words of the psalm which stand in stark contrast to the lament, and also for v. 15 which does seem to allude to a festal setting:

"Blessed are the people who know the festal shout  
Who walk, O Yahweh, in the light of thy countenance"  
(83)

Such an interpretation could be contested on the grounds that the psalm has an essential unity of theme which has been explored in the two articles by Ward and Clifford. However this unity in phraseology and theme between hymn and lament may be evidence that they were written as one piece; on the other hand it may just as well indicate that the lament was composed as an addition to this hymn in particular and deliberately takes up its themes and promises in the light of recent historical events.

To turn to questions of ideology, as Clifford has noticed, the king's warrior function is paramount here. The

celebration is of Yahweh's victory in battle over the forces of chaos and of his promises to David's line of military success conditional upon their observance of Yahweh's law (vv. 30-31). Similarly the lament focusses upon military defeat and its consequences: the dejection of the warrior king and, presumably, the internal and external threats to his kingship resulting from this disaster.

Psalm 20 provides another example of a prayer composed for the king's use before battle. Unlike the other such intercession preserved in Psalm 21 this piece seems, on balance, to be a prayer for the king before a genuine military encounter rather than before the sham fight in the ritual, although in this particular case there is no way of being certain. Gunkel, Mowinckel, Anderson and Johnson (CPIP pp. 175-185) all support an historical interpretation whilst Duhm, Schmidt, Weiser, Bentzen and Eaton side in favour of the ritual view. Perhaps it would be simplest to say that the psalm could be used on either occasion! The change of mood at v. 6 with the emphatic "אֵלֹהִים יִשְׁעוּ" is correctly attributed by Johnson to the intervention of a cultic prophet with an oracle that all will be well. In regard to ideology, the psalm clearly celebrates once more the warrior ideal: the aid of the Divine Warrior is sought for his earthly counterpart, the king.

ii) Prayers of thanksgiving (Pss. 18, 66)

As with Psalm 20, it is possible that Psalm 18 may have been appropriate either in the festal setting or in the context

of the celebration of an actual military victory. It cannot be claimed however, with Johnson and Eaton, that the former interpretation is self-evident; nor is the interpretation of the psalm as a liturgy given by these scholars at all satisfactory.

Debate has raged as fiercely over Psalm 18 as it has over Psalm 89 since Johnson included the psalm in his reconstruction of the royal rites in "The Labrynth". In that essay he did not trouble to justify his position as he writes: "The general position revealed by the psalm is so clear that comment is almost needless" (84). According to his interpretation the psalm describes the deliverance of the Davidic king from death through the intervention of Yahweh "Most High" and his subsequent justification and consequent vindication and, thirdly, his triumph over the nations (85) described, according to Johnson, in the future tense. Johnson thus interprets the psalm in a liturgical manner in which different sections of the poem relate to different episodes of the drama. This may be an appropriate interpretation for other psalms (e.g. 25, 118) but it does not do justice to this particular piece as Mowinckel and others have noted. A more consistent approach is to see the whole psalm as celebrating one victory only - whether won by the king in battle or through drama in the cult. The enemies of the king are as present in the first half of the psalm (vv. 3, 17) as they are in the second half. The mythical language of vv. 4-15 must therefore be read as describing the same deliverance as that described in the second, more military half of the psalm, as is shown clearly

in the juxtaposition of vv. 16 and 17:

"He reached from on high, he took me,  
 he drew me out of many waters,  
 He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
 and from those who hated me,  
 for they were too mighty for me!"

As in Psalm 69 and elsewhere the metaphor of many waters, being overcome by the forces of chaos, refers to military invasion and possible defeat and not to any encounter with mythical forces as such. This conclusion dismisses Eaton's argument from the use of myth in the psalm (86). He argues that we have "pure myth" in vv. 14-19 which must be given a primary interpretation if possible. As the verses quoted above show however, the myth has already been overlaid with Israel's own adaptation of the cosmic story: the victory won by both Yahweh and the king is primarily against Israel's national enemies although the battle itself can sometimes be depicted in language drawn from the archtypal myth of the Divine Warrior.

In fact, when understood in this way, the psalm underlines the correspondence highlighted above between Yahweh's activity as Divine Warrior and the king's role as his earthly counterpart. Yahweh's own part in the victory is described in terms of the storm god's victory over the powers of chaos at the creation (vv. 4-19); the second section of the psalm reaffirms the promises made to the king and also, by inference, his righteousness is confirmed by his victory in battle. The outcome of the king's ventures as a warrior directly depends upon his activity as judge and his observance of Yahweh's law:

"For I have kept the ways of the Lord  
 and have not wickedly departed from my God,  
 For all his ordinances ( *וְכָל חֻצְוֹתָיו* ) were before me  
 and his statutes ( *וְכָל חֻקֵּי* ) I did not put away  
 from me!"  
 (w 2-2; vv 22-3)

The final section of the psalm commemorates the victory once again, giving the Old Testament's most vigorous picture of the king as a mighty warrior, taught by Yahweh and in the court style of the ancient Near East (vv. 31-42).

Beyond affirming that all sections of the psalm refer to deliverance and victory in battle it is hard to tell whether the psalm describes victory in ritual combat or in actual battles and campaigns. The psalm and its themes would certainly fit the festal ritual well with its celebration of kingship through the warrior motif and the vindication of the king's righteousness by this means and as such it would be best placed within the ritual after the battle itself and before the further celebration in Psalm 118. Even if it arises from the festival however the psalm does not warrant our assuming a prolonged period of distress or humiliation in the middle of the sham fight and certainly not an element of distress such as that contained in Psalms 89 and 22. On the other hand there is nothing whatsoever to prevent the view that Psalm 18 is a psalm intended for general historical use after a military triumph. The psalm has the vigour and pace of the early historical psalm the Song of Deborah which also portrays Yahweh as a storm god and Divine Warrior and describes the divine and human muster for battle separately. It could be argued that the long reflective section in vv. 20-30 favours a ritual interpretation with its moral and didactic tone. This may be so,

but elsewhere the king is called upon to bear witness to Yahweh's salvation and the Old Testament everywhere draws moral and theological lessons from both personal and national history, so it seems that this may not be out of place in a song of victory.

In conclusion therefore it can be said that Psalm 18 may describe the deliverance of the king from a mock battle but is more likely to have been used, or composed, to celebrate actual historical military victories.

The next psalm to be discussed, Psalm 66, which is acknowledged by all to be a general historical psalm, provides a possible context for the psalm of praise and thanksgiving discussed above. As was remarked in Chapter 1 (p. 70 ) the second half of Psalm 66 is rightly regarded as the prayer of the king set in the midst of communal rejoicing over some national victory. Yahweh's victory is in this instance likened not to the creation but to the Exodus (vv. 5-7) although many of the phrases describing salvation echo those in Psalm 18. The closing words of the king's speech describe, in microcosm, the substance of Psalm 18 itself:

"Come and hear all you who fear God,  
And I will tell what he has done for me  
I cried aloud to him and he was extolled with  
my tongue" (A)

One can perhaps imagine the psalm as opening a whole liturgy of celebration and praise for historical deliverance and victories among which Psalm 18 would feature and which would be accompanied by sacrifice and proclamation and other gestures of worship. As in Psalm 18 the king's victory in battle is closely linked to his own righteousness and consequently his righteousness is vindicated by his victory.

iii) Prayers for times of siege (Pss. 22, 59, 31)

In all ancient warfare siege was as frequently used as a means of waging war as was pitched battle. The Old Testament narrative accounts contain references to several such sieges (e.g. Isaiah 36, II Kings 7 etc.) and we know of many more given in the accounts of Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings and exposed by archaeological excavation. It should not be surprising therefore that the psalter should provide prayers to be delivered in times of siege just as it provided songs of lamentation and triumph before or after a pitched battle. The three psalms which seem to reflect this background are discussed below.

It is by no means the consensus of interpretation of Psalm 22 that the psalm reflects a background of siege and starvation for the city and so the psalm must be examined in some detail. In general in any modern discussion of the piece there has been a hesitancy to probe beneath the diverse metaphors used to describe the suppliant's condition, a vagueness which leaves most of the modern interpretations given as unsatisfactory. All commentators will now agree however on the unity of the psalm: the difference in tone between the two halves is usually accounted for in one of two ways. Either it is supposed that a prophetic oracle is uttered at v. 21, or that the distress of the first half of the psalm is seen as being graphically described so the assembled worshippers can participate fully in the psalmist's thanksgiving. The first of these interpretations is the more widely held and will be followed

here. There is also a general agreement that the psalmist is a representative personality of some kind and is most likely to be the Davidic king. Evidence for this can be taken from vv. 27-9 where the salvation of the psalmist is seen in cosmic terms:

"All the ends of the earth shall remember and  
turn to the Lord  
And all the families of nations shall worship  
before him"

Opinions do differ however, as has been expressed, on the nature of the suffering and how the psalm was used: whether it arose out of a general situation of distress or whether its context was originally to express the suffering of the king during the Autumn Festival. Those who support the latter interpretation put forward the following arguments:-

- i) There is a vagueness of language in the metaphors used to describe the psalmist's suffering (vv. 1-2, 6-8, 12-18). No particular suffering can be represented by all these different metaphors. Therefore these are taken to represent the ritual sufferings of the king.
- ii) The suddenness of the suppliant's deliverance and the song of rejoicing after the prophetic sign would, it is argued, accord best with a ritual setting.
- iii) The psalm would fit well into the context given by a reconstruction of the festival based on comparative material from the ancient Near East, particularly the description of the "humiliation" of the king in the Babylonian akitu festival.

However, this interpretation of Psalm 22 seems to me to be profoundly unsatisfactory. Vagueness of language (see below



for whether this is vagueness or not) could indicate any number of things: for example, that the psalm was intended to be used in several different, but related, situations of need. The "suddenness of deliverance" argument will not stand either. The song of praise can be conceived of as an anticipatory response to Yahweh's promise of salvation, much as the congregation of Israel "praise the Lord" after the oracle of salvation in II Chronicles 20:19. Thirdly, as was mentioned above in regard to the proposed context for the humiliation rite, the degree of suffering on the part of the king in the Babylonian akitu ceremonies is limited to his being divested of his regalia and slapped on the cheek. He is not mocked by the Gentiles or by the nations. There is no element of ordeal in the rites, nothing to suggest that he is abandoned by God. He appears to be in no danger of his life. In short, the Babylonian rites do not seem to be an appropriate setting for Psalm 22, leaving aside all other questions of comparison.

Interpretations of the psalm in terms of individual suffering, and particularly the personal suffering of the king are more satisfying but are not without their problems. The difficulty of interpreting the nature of the suffering arises and the commentators seek refuge in seeing the psalm as a general description of distress. It is difficult, even if the sufferer is the king, to see how the fate of the individual and his personal pain can be so bound up with the fate of the community. On this reading also the king's accusers must be those within the nation and we have to picture a king so debilitated to the extent that his subjects see him as unfit

to rule, which does not seem the most plausible interpretation of the psalm.

Hence the following understanding seems to me to be a more satisfying interpretation and to give a better exegesis throughout. Psalm 22 is to be seen, as explained above, as one written for a context of starvation and siege. From the midst of this situation the king cries out to God for aid. A verse by verse commentary will shed light on this understanding of the piece.

In structure the first half of the psalm consists of three sections each containing a lament and a prayer viz: vv. 1-5, 6-11 and 12-21.

Vv. 1-2 - the first cry of suffering; v. 1 could refer to any type of suffering, including the one under discussion here. The idea of unanswered prayer in v. 1 ("Why hast thou forsaken me?") and the wording of v. 2, suggesting that prayer has been offered day and night for some time with no result, indicate that, whether the calamity is individual or national in scope, it has been going on for some time. This would count heavily against a ritual interpretation. The community's fate is here personified in, focussed in, the fate of the king. Conversely, through the psalm, the king feels the suffering of the community as his own before Yahweh.

Vv. 3-5 - the first two reasons for being heard are advanced. God is enthroned on the praises of Israel, he bears some responsibility therefore to those who worship him. Further (vv. 4-5) "in thee our fathers trusted" - he has answered the prayers of the nation in the

past, presumably in the same kind of calamity from which the psalmist prays now. Again this points away from both the ritual and the individual interpretation since, presumably, the ancestors are seen as praying collectively. Having said this, the verses may have a general reference but, in the present proposed context, the verse may refer back not only to previous occasions on which God has saved the nation from famine but it may also be a veiled allusion to the desert period and in particular to God's provision and answer to prayer in manna and the quails.

Vv. 6-8 - those who mock. V.6 refers back to the "reason for hearing".

Whatever hints he has advanced the psalmist now makes it clear that here he relies solely on God's grace: "But I am a worm and no man". On my interpretation, those who mock must be the foreign nations round about. As was said above, mockery was the appropriate response in the Old Testament both on the part of Israel to disaster overtaking her neighbours and vice versa. The narrative of Isaiah 36 (par. II Kings 19) which describes a situation of starvation and siege similar to that envisaged here makes it clear that the gods were brought into this mockery:

"Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad?  
Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they  
delivered Samaria out of my hand?"

Vv. 9-12 - The speaker in the lament here may be the king or a prophet. The language is certainly very reminiscent of that of a prophet but, in view of the latter half of the psalm, it seems wiser to think of the king praying, perhaps, through a prophetic intermediary. In the prophetic vein the verses perhaps carry a

double meaning referring not only to the individual king but to the nation herself in this dangerous situation. Is God to cast her off? The suppliant here portrays the nation in individualistic and personal terms in the manner of the canonical prophets (cf. Hosea 1-3, Ezekiel 16, 23 etc.) (87).

Vv. 12-13 - refer not to the mockers but to the besieging armies ready to trample the people underfoot.

Vv. 14-21 - The suffering of the psalmist is at last described in more detail. It is an evasion of the issue not to attempt to discover the situation behind the metaphor and the conditions described seem accurately to reflect the conditions of starvation and siege. All of the psalmist's strength is gone. The words "my tongue cleaves to my jaws" reflects the situation of water shortage - the principle cause of the capitulation of the besieged city. Because of his hunger the suppliant is brought very close to death and the city to surrender. V. 16 refers again to the besieging armies and the evildoers here represent the nations as Birkeland suggested. For the difficult line "they have pierced my hands and my feet" we can render with Johnson "my hands and my feet make one think of a lion," again describing emaciation (88). V. 18 is obscure on any interpretation but it could be that here, as elsewhere, the king speaks in the person of the besieged city depicting a situation where the siege draws near its end and the besiegers begin to gamble for the spoil to be had on capture.

Vv. 19-21 - The final appeal again refers to the enemies, the besiegers, and uses the three metaphors so far used of cattle, lions and hungry dogs to sum up the prayer.

At verse 21, as most commentators think, an oracle of salvation is delivered (cf. II Chronicles 20:15-17, II Kings 7:1-2 and II Kings 19:20-34 - all three of which are oracles spoken to the king; the last two of which are uttered in answer to a king's prayer during a siege. In the case of the encounter between Hezekiah and Isaiah the whole thing takes place "in the house of the Lord" (II Kings 19:34)).

The congregation then responds in prayer and thanksgiving (II Chronicles 20) in anticipation of God's salvation and what the king has vowed to the Lord in anticipation of the victory he now pays. V. 26 "עֲנֵי אִם יֵאָכְלוּ וְיִשְׂבְּעוּ." is best translated "the humble ones shall eat and be satisfied" preserving the meaning of "עֲנֵי אִם" found elsewhere in the psalms and contrasting with the proud in v. 29. On the "ritual" or "individual psalm of sickness" interpretations this verse is understood as referring to the poor sharing in the king's sacrifices after his health has been restored. It seems better to regard it as looking back to, and summing up perhaps, the now lost oracle of salvation that the starving yet faithful people in the city will soon have enough to eat. The words "יְחִי לְבַבְכֶם לְעֹד" - "May your hearts live for ever" - surely imply that the distress has been a shared one and the people faced death no less than the king.

Vv. 27-8 - refer to the cosmic nature of the deliverance, more readily appreciated if the disaster in question is perceived as similar to that described in II Kings 7-8 or II Kings 19. Also, it must be remembered, that the mockery of the enemies is seen as a

mocking of Yahweh's power, as with Rabshakeh. Therefore a miraculous defeat of the enemy must be seen as Yahweh's vindication of his own name and an affirmation to the Israelites themselves of Yahweh's own might and strength.

The text of the last few verses of the psalm is notoriously difficult. The conventional reading for v. 31 is to read " **אֵיךְ לוֹ** " for " **אָכְלוּ** " and translate: "Surely to him shall all the fat ones of the earth bow down, all those who go down to the dust shall prostrate themselves" (so RSV, Johnson). "The fat ones of the earth" is here understood as a random synonym for the rich and the verse is thus regarded as a continuation of v. 28 in sense, describing how the nations of the earth shall acknowledge God's majesty. Weiser (POTL p. 218) follows the BH suggestion and reads " **יִשְׁגִּי** " for " **דִּשְׁגִּי** " giving "Those who sleep shall bow down to him and all those who go down to the dust shall prostrate themselves". However, this reading involves Weiser in much dubious and difficult theological conjecture on the concept of death in the psalm. The suggestion of such an alternative does, however, indicate dissatisfaction with the conventional reading of the verse. A further difficulty with the latter is imagining how the perfectly sensible reading " **אֵיךְ לוֹ** " became transliterated into the nonsense " **אָכְלוּ** ". The following might be considered as an alternative reading and continuing the interpretation of the psalm put forward above. The last few verses are to be understood as summing up the theme of the second half of the psalm so the psalmist gives the imperative " **אָכְלוּ וּשְׂתוּ** ", "Eat and Drink", and in the next line pronounces judgement upon the nations who are besieging Jerusalem:

כָּל-דֹּשְׁמֵי-אָרֶץ לִפְנֵי יְכַרְעוּ

כָּל-יֹרְדֵי עֶפְרַיִם וְנִפְשׁוּ לֹא חִיָּה:

"All the fat ones of the earth (in contrast to those in the city who are starving) shall prostrate themselves before him, even those who are going down to the dust, and his soul shall not live (in contrast to the life of Jerusalem which shall continue)"

It is easy to imagine how this reading became confused as the original significance of the psalm was forgotten in its adaptation to general usage. As a first stage the short line "אֶכְלוּ אֶת־וְיָ" *have been* would be transposed and read as the first part of the long line following. The imperative "אֶכְלוּ" would then be changed into an indicative and "וְיָ" receives an additional "ח" to bring the first half of the new line into parallel with the second - giving the confusion of the present Hebrew text (which dates from before the compilation of the LXX). The final lines sum up the theme of passing on the news of salvation to the coming generation.

Hence Psalm 22 is best seen neither as the prayer of an individual, however exalted, in the midst of personal suffering nor of the king undergoing ritual distress but the psalm puts us directly in touch with the suffering of a besieged and beleaguered community. This interpretation finds a ready made Old Testament context in such accounts as II Kings 7 and 19 (though there is no need to say that the psalm comes from this precise situation, rather that it was provided for use in any such siege). Parallel psalms in a situation of siege are Psalms 59 and 31 explored below. The role of the king within the psalm is that of

an intercessor not one who makes atonement. Hence Psalm 22 is best seen as a general historical rather than as a ritual psalm.

It is difficult to see how Psalm 59 can continue to be read as an individual lament (so Weiser, Kraus) in the face of so much evidence to the contrary - particularly the situation which underlies the psalm, the special relationship between God and the suppliant and the supporting evidence of royal style. As Birkeland recognised the piece is a national song of lament. The repeated refrain that the enemies prowl round the city like dogs by night similarly takes one directly to the situation of siege which is envisaged by the prayer. This interpretation is also supported by the repeated references to mockery (cf. on Psalm 22 above) and to the repeated designation of God as "my fortress" ("צִיּוֹן") in vv. 9, 16 and 17. Eaton (KP p. 47f) records still other royal motifs in the psalm. An individual interpretation, by contrast, requires a secondary interpretation of many concepts in the psalm, particularly the references to the nations and to the nation of Israel herself that it seems a curious and obstinate interpretation to maintain.

Psalm 31, like Psalm 22, is a difficult psalm to interpret, primarily in this case because of the pattern of lament-thanksgiving-lament-thanksgiving which runs through the psalm. Many have accordingly suggested that the psalm be divided at v. 8



and treated as two, or even three, separate compositions. A more satisfying interpretation however is to see the "I" in the psalm as the king and his prayer as one from a besieged city (so Eaton, Birkeland, Mowinckel). That the psalm is royal is demonstrated by the royal designations for God, the public nature of the praise in the psalm and the nature of the suppliant's enemies. That the situation is one of siege is shown by the structure of the psalm mentioned above (the king rejoices that he has survived the invasion of his land but prays for Yahweh's complete deliverance); the phrase in v. 21 (MT 22) " **יְהוָה יִצְרָח** "

**יְהוָה יִצְרָח** " which should thus be taken literally, not metaphorically as in most translations; the numerous references in the prayer to Yahweh being a rock of refuge or a fortress (vv. 2-3) which cause one to think of a siege situation and the similarities to Psalm 22 which include the description of distress and the fact that the suppliant is surrounded by enemies (vv. 9-13 cf. 22:14-18) and the message to hold strong and take courage which concludes the psalm (vv. 23f, cf. 22:26, 29f).

iv) Other psalms (Pss. 140, 143, 102, 25, 51)

Finally, it seems appropriate to discuss at this point five psalms which seem to a greater or lesser degree to reflect the nation at war or faced by foreign enemies. However in the first two of this group a royal interpretation is possible, though not certain. In the case of the other three psalms (Pss. 102, 25 and 51) although the distress envisaged is that of the nation

under threat or at war, by their apparent date these pieces belong to the exile or later and so the suppliant in the psalm must be some representative person other than the king.

It has been argued above (p. 65 ) that in Psalm 140 the suppliant is most probably the king by virtue of the references to battle and to war which the piece contains although several scholars would give late dates and this is not impossible. The situation of a king fits the psalm well however but his adversaries seem to be as much within the land as outside it goading an unwilling ruler into a war he does not want.

A similar confusion about the date of the piece prevents a sure decision about whether or not Psalm 143 is a royal prayer for Yahweh's aid against the foe or a late and general prayer that any man may make against his personal opponents. Eaton's arguments that the psalm is royal (89), supported now in Johnson's work (90), are generally more convincing than, for example, Anderson's contention that the psalm is late by reason of its allusions to other psalms and its innate concept of universal sinfulness. It has to be admitted however that the interpretation is less certain here than in many other cases.

Psalm 102, like psalms 69 and 22 forms a valuable example of a psalm in which the suffering of the community is taken up and represented in the image of the physical affliction of the

psalmist. As Eaton remarks, the piece draws on the festal traditions of God's kingship (v. 13), creation (v. 26) and a new era of salvation to come from Yahweh's epiphany (91) but the psalm cannot be given a place in the regular ritual. Rather this particular piece, like Psalm 137, would seem to reflect the distress and conditions of the Babylonian exile and hence would be more accurately described as a particular historical psalm. The evidence for this is clear: Zion is in distress (v. 13); there is reference to her stones and dust, the point being that the inhabitants bear a great love even for Zion's ruins; this, together with v. 16, "The Lord will build up Zion" implies a situation where Jerusalem has been destroyed. Although Eaton draws a comparison with a Babylonian festal prayer which asks god to restore the brick of the temple (92) the exilic interpretation seems more likely here. Further, in v. 24 the suppliant utters the words: "take me not hence in the midst of my days". This is generally regarded as a prayer against premature death (93) but this understanding is difficult. On the general Hebrew understanding of death put forward by Johnson, Wolff and others (94) it would not be appropriate to see Yahweh as taking one to death. It seems more likely that, given the references to prisoners, the phrase is a prayer not to be taken into exile. The psalm can therefore be set, according to Mowinckel's suggestion, in a specially appointed day of fasting and repentance perhaps in the years 597-587 BC.

Psalm 25 has been discussed at length above (p. 81f)

and the thesis proposed that the piece does reflect a background of national danger but that the spokesman is more likely to be a post-exilic leader than the king himself. Because of the danger envisaged however the psalm is grouped with others reflecting a background of war.

Finally, any interpretation of Psalm 51 is dependant upon whether verses 18 and 19 are considered to be part of the original psalm or are read as a later addition to it, to adapt the piece to liturgical usage during the period of the exile. The traditional view has been to favour the latter alternative, on the grounds that the view of sacrifice contained in these verses contradicts the low estimate of sacrifice in vv. 16-17 of the psalm. However, several scholars, among them Jones (95) and Eaton (96) have pointed out that in fact there is no contradiction between the views of sacrifice expressed here. The view put forward is that sacrifice is ineffective as a plea for forgiveness, or a means of earning forgiveness in acts of atonement: here the appropriate response is a broken and contrite heart. However, sacrifice is an appropriate response to Yahweh's act of salvation in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Once this has been resolved there is no other reason which supports the separation of vv. 18-19 from the rest of the psalm: no other psalm, so far as we can tell, has had such a liturgical addition appended to it. Moreover, as the above exegesis has demonstrated, there was a continual interplay between the sin and suffering of the individual in Israel and that of the community. If, as seems to be the case, vv. 18 and 19 are part of the original

psalm then the psalm itself would appear to have been composed in the period of the exile, after the walls of Jerusalem had been destroyed. Eaton's view that the psalm comes from a ritual in which the king suffered on behalf of the community has been examined above and rejected (97). This being the case, the speaker in the psalm, although a representative person, cannot have been the king (and indeed there is no evidence of the royal style). However, as there is clearly a strong association between the sin of the community, or of the individuals within the community, and the disaster which has befallen the nation the psalm is grouped here with others which reflect a background of war. The psalm should be seen as forming part of a liturgy for a day of penitence either amongst the exiles or, more probably, in Jerusalem. As an additional confirmation of all these arguments it should be noted that the concept of repentance and of the grace of God, the creation of a new heart and the gift of a new spirit and even the desire to teach sinners are all concepts which became prominent in Israel's theology either before or during the exile in the work of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah.

- b) Prayers from other situations of need
- i) Prayers against treachery (Pss. 55, 62, 71)

As was remarked above in the historical survey of the political situation in Judah and Israel during the monarchy, the threat to the king from internal dissent and treachery was considerable. Three psalms from the individual laments would seem to reflect such a

situation and would seem to be prayers provided for use at such a time. It must be remembered however that once the discussion has moved away from psalms which envisage a situation of war the royal identity of the speaker must be less sure in many cases. Situations of threat from enemies within the nation and also of sickness may be shared by king and commoner alike.

Psalm 55 is however acknowledged to be royal by both Eaton and Mowinckel (98) despite its unusual reference to what appears to be a particular event of betrayal by an intimate personal friend. In the first half of the psalm the king portrays himself as beset by trouble from inside and outside the nation following the convention of painting the picture as darkly as possible to make his appeal more effective. Both the **אִיָּא** and the **רָשָׁע** create trouble in different ways. Violence and strife are within the city itself and also round about its walls. Against this background of danger, confusion and oppression the psalm writer has given us the lasting image of the king portrayed as a dove flying away from the city to be at rest in the wilderness. From the general picture of strife and distress portrayed in the first eleven verses the description focusses on the particular need, which is plainly one of betrayal. One of the king's counsellors or advisers has betrayed him, presumably either by an accusation or a military betrayal to a foreign power. There seems no reason to regard the piece as a particular historical psalm or to see the description as depicting the genuine emotional turmoil of the psalm writer (so Weiser ad. loc.). The friendship

between king and betrayer is drawn in as intimate terms as possible so as to make the appeal for Yahweh's aid the more poignant and moving. The psalm need not refer to any particular broken relationship therefore. That the king's position could be so endangered by such a betrayal highlights his precarious political position within the land which is attested in the historical accounts. His appeal to his God is founded on his enemy's lack of respect for Yahweh and his law contrasted, by inference, with the king's own attitude. The images of battle and salvation are used to describe the coming confrontation. These may be meant literally, if a civil war is envisaged, or metaphorically to describe the political encounter which must now take place. V.17 of the psalm gives a further valuable hint about the way in which these complaints would be made: frequently repeated prayers would be offered at set times of day during periods of real crisis, presumably over several days:

"Evening and morning and noon  
I will utter my complaint and moan  
And he will hear my voice"

Two considerations make it more likely than not that Psalm 62 is to be read as a royal psalm: the danger is envisaged as affecting primarily an individual in vv. 1-7 yet in v. 8 it is the people who are instructed to trust in God at all times - the situation therefore seems suitable for a royal psalm. Secondly the psalm is rich in royal style, particularly the royal epithet's for God (vv. 2, 6) (99). This being the case it seems wise to see the piece as a prayer again designed to be used when the king is

politically weak and men plan to "cast him down from his eminence", a circumstance which would, of course, affect the stability of the nation as well as the life of the king. Vv. 8-10 with their distinct style akin to that of some of the wisdom psalms are probably to be seen as an oracle of salvation delivered after the prayer (v. 22 in Psalm 55 may likewise be such an oracle). The king responds to this in the final two verses of the psalm. As Eaton notes the psalm is trustful in tone rather than a direct supplication.

As was argued above (p. 90), the indications are clear that Psalm 71 is a royal psalm. The danger envisaged by the king appears to be from internal enemies watching for signs that Yahweh has forsaken the king and so the psalm can be grouped here along with other psalms written for situations of treachery and internal dissent.

ii) Prayers in sickness (Pss. 38, 116, 28)

It hardly needs to be said that in the days before modern medicine illness of any kind was a much more serious and life threatening disorder than it is today and prayer was correspondingly a more appropriate response to sickness. The historical writings record the leprosy of Uzziah (II Kings 15:5 cf. II Chronicles 23:16-21) and, more significantly, the sickness, prayer and subsequent recovery of Hezekiah (II Kings 20:1-11 and parallels). Of particular interest in this passage is the fact that the king's deliverance from illness is associated with the political deliverance of the nation from Assyria.



"And I will add fifteen years to your life.  
I will deliver you and this city out of the  
hand of the king of Assyria and I will  
defend this city for my own sake and for  
the sake of my servant David!" (II Kings 20:6)

Again it is not unlikely therefore that the psalter would provide prayers for the king's use in such situations of sickness although the identification of the psalm as royal is more than usually difficult. Psalm 38 is a psalm in which the vivid description of illness is not used, as often, as a metaphor for the affliction which has befallen Judah or Jerusalem but, so it seems, is used here literally to describe actual sickness. The psalm is not included by Eaton among his royal psalms but may nevertheless be royal. In particular the suppliant's description of his enemies would seem to indicate that the psalm was composed for use by the king:

"Those who seek my life lay their snares  
Those who seek my hurt speak of ruin  
and meditate treachery all the day long"

"Those who are my foes without cause are mighty,  
and many are those who hate me wrongfully."

There are in addition several indications of the suppliant's close relationship to God (vv. 9, 15, 22) and one example of the royal attribution. This cannot be maintained with certainty however. The sickness in the psalm is clearly attributed to the suppliant's own sin in this particular piece: there is no protestation of innocence (vv. 3, 4, 18).

Psalm 116 would seem to be a fitting response to Yahweh's granting of the prayer made in Psalm 38. The latter,

like Hezekiah's psalm of sickness, may well have been delivered outside of the temple, possibly in the king's own house, but Psalm 116, the prayer of thanksgiving, is uttered publicly "in the courts of the house of the Lord". The thanksgiving itself is accompanied by various ritual acts: the lifting of the cup of salvation (v. 13), the payment of vows (v. 14) and the offering of a sacrifice of thanksgiving (v. 17). The public nature of the thanksgiving inclines one to the view that the psalm is royal as does the declaration in v. 16:

"O Lord I am thy servant,  
I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid,  
Thou hast loosed my bonds!"

But this identification cannot be certain. There are no indications whatsoever that the psalm may have belonged to a festal ritual (100). The interpretation of the piece as a psalm of recovery after sickness is supported by Job 33:26ff:

"Then a man prays to God and he accepts him,  
he comes into his presence with joy,  
He recounts to men his salvation,  
and he sings before men and says  
"I sinned and perverted what was right  
And it was not requited to me  
He has redeemed my soul from going down into the pit  
And my life shall see the light!"

The view has been put forward above that Psalm 28 (p. 62) represents the prayer of a king from a situation of illness as he prays that he might not have to suffer the fate of the נָפֵץ i.e. death. The concluding verses of the psalm may be an addition to adapt the piece for congregational use (so Anderson ad. loc.) but other individual psalms have not had this addition made. Also

there are other signs of royal psalmody in the prayer, namely the suppliant's concern that the wicked receive their just reward (vv. 3-5) and the features of the royal style (v. 7f). The concluding lines of the psalm, presumably uttered by a cultic prophet (101) associate, with Isaiah in I Kings 20, the recovery of the king with the salvation of the nation.

c) Psalms of assurance (Pss. 23, 16, 138, 63)

Five royal psalms remain to be discussed, four of which can be grouped together because their dominant theme could fairly be said to be the assurance of Yahweh's protection of the king through danger and difficulty rather than the difficulty itself. Psalm 23 is, of course, the best known of these and there are several signs that the piece is a royal psalm: there is evidence of royal style ("my shepherd" v. 1); of a special relationship between Yahweh and the psalmist; of a banquet for the king in the presence of his enemies, signifying victory and, most significantly, an anointing with oil. As with the other psalms in this group it is impossible to tell whether or not Psalm 23 was intended to be used in the royal ritual. The reference to danger (v. 4) is so vague that we cannot tell. All we are able to say is that both a ritual and a general historical usage would be possible with all of these four psalms. All four pieces take up most markedly the theme of the king as a witness to Yahweh's salvation and his constant watchfulness.

Psalm 16, the second of the group, begins as more of a lament; however the focus is upon Yahweh and his protection of the psalmist rather than upon any immediate danger. Again there is evidence of a royal style: "my chosen portion and my cup"(v. 5) and of the special relationship between the king and Yahweh (vv. 7, 11). As in Psalm 23, the dangerous forces within and without the nation which threaten the life of the king are symbolised by the "death motifs" - in this case Sheol and the Pit. The King's function as witness is again demonstrated particularly in his declaration of allegiance to Yahweh alone (v. 4):

"Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their libations of blood I will not pour out, or take their names on my lips".

It is the reference to the kings of the earth praising Yahweh which makes it more likely than not that Psalm 138 is also a royal psalm, together with its similarity in phraseology and thought to the two pieces discussed above. The psalm could easily have been used as a song of thanksgiving and praise after a successful outcome to any of the laments discussed above or in the festal liturgy itself.

Finally, Psalm 63 reveals the depths of the psalmists' spirituality again in a prayer written, most probably, for the king's lips. It seems most unlikely that the final verse is some kind of liturgical addition but the psalm as a whole makes an interesting blend between the expression of the spirituality of the psalm composers and the thanksgiving of a king. The psalm therefore throws up an issue explored further in Appendix III, that of the relationship

between the piety of the men who composed the psalms and of those who delivered the prayers in worship.

d) Psalm 45

Although Psalm 45 is unique in the psalter as a psalm written for the wedding (or a wedding) of the king (which under Solomon at least must have been a fairly frequent occurrence) in several respects it is a suitable piece with which to conclude this discussion of the royal psalms of the psalter. The poem contains one of the highest estimates of the relationship between the king and God found in the Old Testament and the king is actually addressed as "D'p' b x" if the MT reading is followed. <sup>(A)</sup> Furthermore, in the context of this high estimate of the king's divinity and the statement of the royal ideal the ideology to emerge, as was pointed out above (p. 71 ) is that of the twofold function of the king and warrior; a final confirmation, if one is needed of the prominence of these two ideas in Israel's concept of ideal kingship.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined those psalms of the individual which seem most likely to have been recited by the king in the cult and which can therefore be given the title of royal psalms. It has been shown, it is hoped, that by the aid of the arguments for identifying royal psalms developed in section 2 that some forty-one of the ninety-six psalms which mention an individual are very probably royal psalms. In addition the

psalter contains seven pieces which address or refer to the king in the second or third person. To this extent the thesis advanced by Birkeland and Eaton that the psalter is to a considerable degree a royal book has been confirmed.

However, in the course of the examination of the setting of some of these royal psalms in an annually repeated royal ritual the theories of Eaton and Johnson that the king underwent "ritual humiliation" in the midst of the mock battle has been decisively rejected. An alternative reconstruction has been proposed whereby king and people kept a period of preparation before the central events of the festival. In the course of this preparation the Israelite king, like his Babylonian counterpart, gave account to God of his year in office and received a renewal of his divine vocation before going on to take part in the ritual battle and be acclaimed king once again. Some twenty-one of the royal psalms have been assigned to this royal ritual.

The remaining twenty-seven royal psalms are most helpfully seen as having been composed, for the most part, with a general type of situation in mind such as defeat in battle, treachery within the nation or sickness befalling the king. These psalms have been classified according to the situation envisaged by the psalm, in so far as this can be recovered, and these differing situations in the life of king and nation have been illustrated by reference to the historical narratives in the Old Testament.

Three psalms which are not royal but which reflect a background of national danger or distress have also been discussed in this

section. By far the majority of the general historical royal psalms refer, as might be expected, to situations of war, battle or siege. An attempt has also been made to trace the ideology of kingship based around the king's two functions as warrior and judge, developed in Appendix II, through the different royal psalms.

However, disposing of the royal psalms satisfactorily, as was mentioned above, by no means completes the discussion of the individual in the psalms since there are a further fifty-two psalms which mention an "I" of some kind or another and which do not appear to be royal. The final two chapters of the thesis will attempt to complete this picture by examining psalms composed to be delivered by the private person in Israel and, finally, psalms assigned to the ministers of the cult.

