

The Canonical Shape of Psalms 1-14

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to demonstrate the logic of the arrangement of Psalms 1-14. It does so inductively by working through each psalm in sequence in order to identify semantic patterns indicating intentional canonical shaping. It will be argued that Pss 1-2 establish the primary concern of the editors, namely the shape of the divine economy of salvation. The following psalms function to elucidate, develop, and further contextualise the reader’s understanding of that economy. A hermeneutical key is provided by the surprising transition from Ps 2 to 3.

KEYWORDS: Canonical interpretation, Psalter, psalms, Messianism, Psalms 1-14, Psalms 1-2; Psalms 3-14.

A INTRODUCTION

It is an honour to dedicate this article to Phil Botha, a scholar whose contribution to psalms research spans their many aspects – diachronic, synchronic, prosodic and theological. My article here links up with some important observations he made together with Beat Weber concerning the peculiar relationship between Pss 2 and 3 in their canonical context. As they put it, these two psalms are related in terms of prophecy and prayer, with the prophecy of Ps 2 challenged in various ways by the contrary circumstances contained in Ps 3 and its superscription.¹ Though my article is not about the interrelation of Pss 2-3 per se, my interpretation of this relation – which affirms and develops that of Botha and Weber – is key for my understanding of the message of Pss 1-14 as a whole.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate inductively the logic by which the editors of the Psalter arranged Pss 1-14. It does not seek to investigate the full meaning of each psalm when read in that context, nor does it seek to reconstruct the diachronic stages of its composition. Rather, it seeks only to identify the broad semantic framework established by the editors, within which future interpreters were expected to interpret the psalms if they wished to grasp

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¹ For further details, see Phil J. Botha and Beat Weber, “‘Killing Them Softly with This Song...’: The Literary Structure of Psalm 3 and its Psalmic and Davidic Contexts: Part II: A Contextual and Intertextual Interpretation of Psalm 3,” *OTE* 21 (2008): 273-297, especially 278-280.

them in terms of their full theological reality. As will be seen, it was the function of the canonical shaping of the Psalter to render the psalms within that reality.²

B COMMENTARY

1 Psalms 1-2

It has long been noted that Pss 1-2 constitute an editorial unity with some kind of hermeneutical function for the psalms that follow. Despite this, there is little consensus on the nature of the unity or the hermeneutical role these psalms play.³ Correctly answering this question is decisive for the thesis laid out here.

An initial question that needs to be asked is that of interpretive categories. Which categories are most adequate for grasping the kind of literary and canonical coherence that the editors of Pss 1-14 sought to achieve? As has been argued and illustrated elsewhere,⁴ a promising approach to cross-psalmic coherence is to seek meaning in terms of the related concepts of "aspective" rather than "perspective" perception and semantic parallelism. In short, each parallel psalm is a self-contained unit, capable of generating meaning on its own terms. However, the function of its juxtaposition with adjacent psalms is to allow each text to illuminate a different aspect of a single subject matter the editors felt each psalm held in common. The cumulative interplay of the various images makes that one subject matter more "tangible and multidimensional."⁵ Furthermore, the progression of images occurs according to a pattern of "heightening or intensification ... of focusing, specification, concretization, even what could be called dramatization," creating an "incipient narrative."⁶

² Due to limitations of space I have not been able to interact in the footnotes with two other excellent analyses of this collection, namely that provided by Gianni Barbiero, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit: Eine synchrone Analyse von Psalm 1-41* (ÖBS, 16; Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1999), and Friedhelm Hartenstein, "'Schaffe mir Recht, JHWH!' (Psalm 7,9): Zum theologischen und anthropologischen Profil der Teilkomposition Psalm 3-14," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (ed. Erich Zenger; BETL 238; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 229-258. The biggest difference to Hartenstein's approach is that he ignores that which is programmatic to my approach: Pss 1-2 and the Davidic nature of Pss 3-14. I differ from Barbiero in ascribing less significance to lexical repetition and in the way the final form generates a coherent sense. Unfortunately, I was unable to review Andrew Witt's PhD dissertation on David in Pss 1-14 in time for this article ("David without End: The Role of the Figure of David in Psalms 3-14," Doctoral diss., Toronto School of Theology, 2018).

³ A helpful collation of views on this matter is provided by Barbiero, *Psalmenbuch*.

⁴ Philip Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalms 15-24," *Bib.* 94 (2013): 186-219.

⁵ Emma Brunner-Traut, *Frühformen des Erkennens. Am Beispiel Ägyptens* (Darmstadt: WBG, 1992), 124 ("faßbarer und runder," translation mine).

⁶ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1987), 19 and 28 respectively.

When we turn to the first two psalms of the Psalter, we note that it is precisely a concern with a common theological subject matter that unites them. Despite differences in genre and date, both Pss 1 and 2 delineate distinctive means to achieve "happiness" (אשר, Pss 1:1; 2:12; notice the inclusio). They are also united by a similar function, namely instruction in how to achieve that happiness. Though the didactic genre is perhaps clearer in Ps 1, Ps 2 explicitly appeals to its hearers to be "wise" (הַשְׁכִּילִי, 2:10) and follow a course of action that will accord with the reality proclaimed by the psalm. Where Pss 1 and 2 initially differ is in their interpretation of what that course of action ought to be: in Ps 1 it is continuous study of (and no doubt obedience to) God's written revealed will (תּוֹרַת יְהוָה, 1:2), in Ps 2 it is submission to the rule of God mediated through his human and Davidic king on Zion. Neither psalm mentions the other's "means of happiness," but clearly the editors felt that both were indispensable and so joined them together as a unit at the beginning of the Psalter. By juxtaposing the psalms in this way, the editors ensured that this theme becomes programmatic for all that follows, namely the theme of happiness, as acquired by torah⁷-obedience and submission to divine rule through God's adopted "son" (2:7; possibly 2:12).⁸

We will shortly see how this two-fold theme relates to the psalms that follow; for now we must make a number of other observations that will be of hermeneutical significance for the canonical shape of Pss 1-14.

For a start, both psalms divide humanity into those who accept God's means to happiness and those who do not. Those who do not, seek to be "their own gods," as it were (Gen 3:5), submitting to their own law (Ps 1:1, 4-5) and their own sovereignty (Ps 2:1-3; 9-12), and thus make themselves enemies of God and open themselves to his judgement. This line cuts through the heart of all humanity, both Israel (Ps 1) and the Gentiles (Ps 2).⁹

We should also notice the nature of the relationship between the means established and their end of happiness: the latter does not follow automatically from the former as if there is an immediate causal relation between obedience and submission, on the one hand, and happiness, on the other. The effect is mediated by the agency of God, who is free to bring about this effect in his own

⁷ I spell "torah" with a lower-case "t" so as to keep its referent open, i.e., so as not to limit it to the Pentateuch.

⁸ Whether one reads "son" in 2:12 or not, it is clear that God and his Anointed are indissolubly linked (2:2: עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל-מְשִׁיחוֹ ...).

⁹ Given that Ps 1 is directed to an inner-Jewish division, whereas Ps 2 is directed to an inner-Gentile division (i.e., those who submit to Zion's rule and those who don't), one might conclude that the institutions of torah and messianic kingship only apply to each group respectively. In the broader Biblical context, however, this would be absurd, for it is clear that not only must Israel itself submit to its own king, but that the nations will one day come to Zion to learn "torah" (Isa 2).

way and in his own timing. Though the portrayal of the connection between means and end in these psalms is very tight (as is also typically the case in, e.g., the book of Proverbs), the fact that the end is mediated by a divine agent with his own agenda creates space for the possibility that means and end can be separated in time and complexified in realization, as we find in the book of Job or in the tension between v. 1 of Ps 73 and the rest of the psalm. The important implication of this observation is that these psalms have the character of divine promise. God will bring about the promised happiness in response to the required obedience and submission.

Finally, there may be significance to be found in the lack of a superscription to these psalms. Every psalm in Book I of the psalter has a superscription bearing the name "David," at least three of them indicate the historical circumstance in David's life when he composed them (Pss 3; 18 [which is more summary in nature], and 34; it is debatable whether Pss 3 and 9 contain historical information),¹⁰ the others provide musical instructions; one indicates a liturgical use clearly related to a later time (Ps 30: "the dedication of the temple"). Two "Davidic" psalms, Pss 20-21, are about David rather than putatively by him. Only two other psalms have no superscription at all: Pss 10 and 33. It seems that they lack such superscriptions because they were felt to belong closely to the psalm that precedes them.¹¹ If this is the reason why they lack superscriptions, then it may be sufficient to explain why Pss 1-2 lack one: they also belong to each other as a distinct unit. However, they are not preceded by a psalm with a title to which they are joined, as is the case with the other two. Another interpretation suggests itself in light of the function of at least the historical superscriptions (one of which immediately follows Ps 2) of identifying the speaking subject of the psalm with the person of David. Perhaps the editors wanted to purposely withhold such identification for the subject of these two paradigmatic psalms, distinguishing the ideal to be striven for from the historical figure of David? My interpretation of the relation of these two psalms to what follows would support such an interpretation. However, it is difficult to be certain.

In sum, the Psalter opens with a delineation of the two paths to God-granted happiness – obedience to God's torah and submission to God's Davidically mediated rule – and it exhorts humanity as a whole (not just Israel, see Ps 2), to choose life by being wise and following these psalms' guidance by

¹⁰ See Brevard Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (1971): 137-150.

¹¹ Ps(s) 9-10 may originally have constituted one psalm, Pss 32-33 clearly never did, but they do evince lexical and thematic connections. However, Pss 20-21 also belong closely together as the parallel chiasmic pair of Ps 18, and yet they have a superscription each.

believing in their promises. That decision must be made in the face of temptations to tear free and submit to one's own law and rule.

To put it more succinctly, we can say that these psalms function to proclaim the "divine economy of salvation."

2 The Transition to Psalm 3

Having established that the economy of salvation is the subject matter of Pss 1-2, we must now ask whether the psalms that follow relate to this particular subject matter in terms of progressively increasing vividness, dimensionality, intensity, even "narrative resolution" (characteristics of semantic parallelism). The answer is "yes, right through to Ps 14 and beyond." In order to grasp how, we first need to look carefully at the dynamics of the "parallelismus psalmoreum" between Pss 1-2 and Ps 3.¹²

The most important clue to the dynamic is the historical superscription: "A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son" (מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲבִישָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ, 3:1). If David son of Jesse's prayers end at Ps 72:20, why should they begin here?

An initial clue is chronology: when compared to the other historical superscriptions (Pss 18; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63; 142), Ps 3 is out of chronological order,¹³ as almost all of the other events occurred before the Absalom incident reported in 2 Sam 15 (they almost all deal with his persecution under Saul; Pss 63 and 142 are hard to pinpoint; Ps 18 has a summary function). The decision, therefore, to open David's prayers with this particular narrative background must have been based on the content of the event rather than its location within an unfolding historical sequence, a content appreciated for its figurative rather than just historical significance.

What elements of the event were considered by the editors to be determinative of its significance? The juxtaposition with Ps 2 helps us identify what these elements are. According to the historical-narrative background of 2 Sam 15, David had by that point already achieved the position of greatness that

¹² For two analyses of Pss 1-3, see Botha and Weber, "Psalm 3," especially 278-280, and Beat Weber, "Die Buchouvertüre Psalm 1-3 und ihre Bedeutung für das Verständnis des Psalters," *OTE* 23 (2010): 834-845. Botha and Weber see many of the same contrasts between Ps 3's superscription and Ps 2 that I do. They also see that Ps 2 can be understood as a "promise" over the troubled David of Ps 3 (Botha & Weber, "Psalm 3," 279). However, they do not develop these insights in the figurative-narrative direction that I do here. Neither do they identify the unifying moment in Pss 1-2 as consisting in the theme of the economy of salvation, a theme that is then further developed in Pss 3-14.

¹³ I follow Childs in rejecting a historical interpretation of Ps 7:1 (and by implication Ps 9:1) on form critical grounds. See his "Psalm Titles."

existed only as promise under the rule of Saul: after his anointing by God under Saul (1 Sam 16), he had now come to be recognized as king by Israel, he had established his throne in Jerusalem/Zion, he had established peace and security over his realm, and he dwelt in the immediate presence of the God that had made all this possible – the "One Who Sits Enthroned on the Cherubim" (2 Sam 6:2). In other words, the background of 2 Sam 15 is analogous to the situation depicted in Ps 2: David at the height of his power successfully fulfilling his anointed role.

Back to Samuel: Given this background, David's abandoning his throne in Jerusalem, and even abandoning the Ark of God's presence with it, in order to flee to the wilderness, amount to a complete undoing of what David had achieved and an apparent negation of his role as anointed king of Israel and victor over its enemies. When departing Jerusalem David clearly believed that God, who remained in Zion, would bring him back (2 Sam 15:24-26), but the journey to realizing his calling was to be painful and convoluted.

It seems to me that it is this element of loss of glory combined with the struggle to regain it by the power of God's faithfulness that is the "typological moment" within the heading of Ps 3 that made it an ideal sequel to Ps 2, ideal for the editors who wished to communicate something by means of this particular sequence. What are they trying to get across? What interpretive trajectory are they trying to establish?

The initial conclusion must be that the editors are further developing the understanding of the divine economy that they first mapped out in general terms in Pss 1-2. To be "happy" humanity must follow the law and submit to the king. However, a new and very surprising twist is added: that very king must first himself be dethroned by his own and succumb to the evil which he is supposed to overcome. For the editors, looking back from beyond the exile, David's experience in 2 Sam 15 was not accidental, it gave expression to a necessary moment in the unfolding of the divine economy. The king through whom God's rule is mediated must go through what David went through.

Having established the figurative-narrative relation of Pss 2-3, we can now look at the significance of the switch in genre. As mentioned above, Pss 1-2 have a paradigmatic, trans-personal and trans-historical quality about them. They represent reality seen from the divine perspective (literally so in Ps 2:4-6); as far as David and Ps 2 are concerned, it is the reality of David's calling. With Ps 3, we suddenly move from divine calling and promise (Ps 2) to the lived experience of the one who has received that calling and promise. That experience consists in David's wrestling with God, with his enemies, his would-be friends, even himself, as he struggles through prayer to attain to the promise and fulfil his calling. It is the canonical function of psalms of petition and praise to portray and theologically explore that struggle.

In the context of Pss 3-14, it is key to notice how David engages in his struggle: by prayer and continued faith in the promise of Pss 1-2. In Ps 3, the actual description of David's situation is brief. The bulk of the psalm is taken up with expressions of confidence that God will remain faithful and grant David victory "from his holy hill" (מִהַר קֹדֶשׁ, 3:5 [4]). David's faith is such that he is able to sleep peacefully at night (3:6 [5]). Rather than trusting in his own power, he calls upon God to exercise his (3:8 [7]). The immediate interpretive significance of this behaviour when read in relation to Ps 2 is that David is doing what those he ought to protect ought to do. In Ps 2, those who would be "happy" must submit to God's rule, finding their "refuge" in him through his king. In Ps 3, the one who would be king is embodying that behaviour through his prayerful trust in God directly. In other words, the refuge must first himself become a refugee (Ps 2:12).

This brings us to another important question: what of the original addressees of Pss 1-2, who are not David but humanity in general? It is a shock when suddenly in Pss 3-14 the fate of the Psalter's readers is eclipsed by that of David. The speaking subject of Pss 3-14 is not a "generic human" but a very specific individual. Nevertheless, Pss 3-14 make clear that the fate of the readers of the Psalter is not lost sight of. David's would-be subjects (when he finally attains his goal) remain on the horizon in various ways as the psalms proceed. In Ps 3 they appear as the beneficiaries of David's intercessory prayer: "Your blessing be on your people!" (עַל-עַמֶּךָ בְּרַכָּתֶךָ, Ps 3:9 [8]). David thus relates to his people and his readers as intercessor.

Finally, we must ask about the relation between Pss 3 and 1. Ps 1 promises success and vindication to those obedient to God's will. Given that Ps 3 follows all the psalms in our sequence (with the important exception of Ps 6, see below) in ascribing no guilt to David, it would seem that, as with Ps 2, so here as well, David's experience challenges the promise while his faith continues to uphold it.¹⁴

To summarize: In Ps 3 the editors continue to develop the theme portrayed in skeletal terms in Pss 1-2, namely the shape of the economy of salvation. Whereas we first learned that torah-obedience and submission to God's rule through his king is the means to "happiness," in Ps 3 we discover a surprising twist: that king himself must first come alongside those he would redeem and embody their drama; having succumbed to the forces of evil he is supposed to

¹⁴ From Ps 32 onwards the element of David's own sinfulness increasingly takes centre stage, with significance for the message of the book as a whole. See my interpretation of Ps 6 below for an anticipation of this later development. It may be that this element is also already anticipated in the historical heading, for the broader context of the Absalom narrative indicates that David's sin with Bathsheba was the ultimate theological cause for the disintegration of his kingship (see 2 Sam 12:10). There is no evidence of sin within the body of Ps 3, however.

conquer, he exemplifies trust in the promises of God by seeking refuge in him alone through prayer – despite the odds and the temptation to do otherwise. In the process, he intercedes for his would-be subjects and exemplifies how they should live.¹⁵

How is this developed in the following psalms?

3 Psalms 3-7

If Ps 3 relates to Pss 1-2 in terms of contrast, it relates to Pss 4-7 in terms of continuity. Right through to Ps 8, which interrupts the sequence by its return to the trans-historical, reflective plane of Pss 1-2, every psalm belongs to the same genre of Davidic petition for help. Yet, as touched upon above regarding aspective and parallelism, the relationship is not just one of mere repetition. A focus is maintained on the editor’s primary theme – the shape of the divine economy –, but that theme is progressively developed through “a succession of perceptions rather than an overall view,”¹⁶ with each perception semantically developing the former in some manner. The pattern can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Variation upon a theme: The four primary actors of Pss 1-2 recur throughout our psalms: God, David, the community of faith, and the evil. In each psalm, these four are profiled in various ways, thus enriching the reader’s grasp of who they are, how they work, and how they relate to each other.
- 2) Progression towards a resolution: Whereas the move from Pss 1-2 to 3 was one of threat to the promise, the move from Ps 3 to 7 and 9:1-13 [1-12] is one of gradual movement towards fulfilment of that promise. This move is rendered by means of the spatial representation of the relationship between David and Zion: with each step David is portrayed as getting ever closer to the place of his redemption (though Zion remains important in Pss 10-14, this sub-section lacks a sense of movement towards it; the movement reappears in Pss 15-24).¹⁷
- 3) Increasing vividness, intensification, and three-dimensionality: As David moves literally and figuratively from the outskirts of God’s presence in Zion to its centre, the conflict in which he is embroiled is

¹⁵ Is this the source of the five-fold division of the Psalter, which seems to implicitly render it a “torah of David”?

¹⁶ Herbert Klement, *II Samuel 21-24. Context, Structure and Meaning in the Samuel Conclusion* (EUS.T 682; Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 2000), 89. An “overview is given of a subject in which its individual parts are grasped and combined into a cumulative structure of these same individual parts” (90). It is fascinating that a compositional principle used for a paratactic collection like the Psalter should also be used in an otherwise “syn-tactical” book such as Samuel.

¹⁷ On which, see Sumpter, “Psalms 15-24.”

progressively rendered more vivid by the use of increasingly elaborate and intensive imagery, and more three-dimensional through the addition of new generic elements in new combinations.

- 4) Increasing sapiential reflection: Though the didactic function dominates Pss 1-2, it is not completely absent in the more "existential" psalms that follow. As we progress linearly through the collection (from 3-14 and beyond!) there is increasing reflection on the nature of the conflict in which David is involved and the lessons those who are righteous and wise should derive from it.

We will now trace this development within Pss 3-7.¹⁸

a Psalms 3-4

All the elements of Ps 3 are continued in Ps 4: David is personally afflicted by enemies, he turns to God for help, and is confident of God's faithfulness. His enemies also continue to be members of his own people: in Ps 3 this meaning is ensured by the superscription, in Ps 4 it is clear from that fact that the persecution comes in the form of "vain words" (רִיק) and "lies" (כָּזָב) that intend to "shame" him (כְּבוֹדִי לְקַלְמָה; 4:3 [2]). This brings us to the first variation on the theme: whereas Ps 3 raises the issue of military and political threat to David and God's kingdom, Ps 4 makes the threat far more personal: David is falsely accused by members of his community. As with most psalms, the circumstances are now largely lost to us (What was the accusation? Who, exactly, were the accusers? Why were they accusing "David"?). The enactors of the psalmic tradition did not feel it was necessary to preserve this information for they did not identify the truth of the tradition with its historical referentiality. Rather, it is the figurative pattern that matters and that is developed.

The same applies to indications of economic hardship in 4:7-8 [6-7]: What is the relationship of this hardship to the lies of v. 3 [2]? However the question

¹⁸ Throughout this linear development, it is important to remember the nature of the coherence being rendered. Pss 1-7 are not telling a story in the same manner as Ruth or Samuel. The canonical shape of the final form of the Psalter *preserves* the original specificity of some of its historical psalms: the David of Ps 3 *is* the "son of Jesse" (Ps 72:20) and father of Absalom (Ps 3:1), not a paradigmatic type. As such, a canonical interpretation cannot ignore this "historical" dimension. However, at the same time, the editors perceived *within* (and not despite) that specificity a deeper, unifying and trans-historical reality, one of relevance to future generations of the faithful who do not share in the original historical context and yet live within the same divine economy. The function of the canonical shaping is to bring out this other element, not overlaying the original referentiality with something different but *deepening* it, creating a multi-layered effect that preserves historical distinctions yet affirms ontological unity. The focus of this article is on the pattern. A full canonical interpretation must seek to relate the pattern to each psalm's particularity.

is answered, for our purposes what matters is the pattern of David's struggle and interrelation with both his foes and his potential friends. And here we see another thematic development: In Ps 2 David mediates happiness to those who seek refuge in God; in Ps 3 David himself must seek refuge and prays for blessing on God's people; in Ps 4 David confronts the lack of faith on the part of some of God's people (4:7 [6]) by demonstrating to them what faith looks like in such circumstances (4:8-9 [7-8]). David thus goes from mediator to intercessor to role model (see also Ps 11:1).

Faith will continue to be a key theme of our whole collection. One indication of its centrality is its presence in every psalm of petition, a fact long noticed by form critics, and the fact that David's enemies (Ps 3:3 [2]) and many in Israel in general (4:7 [6]) are characterized by their lack of it. Canonically, the content of this faith is the promises of Pss 1-2.

There is also a development in the way David interacts with his enemies, rendering the relationship more three-dimensional. In Ps 3 the enemies talk about David (3:3 [2]) and David turns to God. In Ps 4 David turns to his enemies and responds them directly, exhorting them to cease their lying and do what David does and all should do, namely "put your trust in Yhwh" (בְּטַחֲוֹ אֶל־יְהוָה; 4:5-6 [4-5]). And within this response we find another development that we will see more of as our sequence of psalms progresses, the presence and use of sapiential, theological logic. The rationale by which David seeks to move his enemies to a different mode of living is a theological fact: "God has set apart the godly for himself" (דָּעוּ כִּי־הִפְלָא יְהוָה חֲסִיד לֹ); David confronts them with it and effectively tells them to be wise and draw the logical conclusions (4:4-6 [3-5]). The promises of Pss 1-2 thus not only enable David to endure his circumstances through faith, they function as a grounds for exhortation to his enemies to "wisen up".

Finally, we should notice a subtle shift in the spatial imagery related to "Zion": whereas in Ps 3 David was located in the wilderness, expecting help from Zion, in Ps 4 the conceptual world is located within the precincts of Zion: David advises his opponents to offer "right sacrifices" there (זָבַחוּ זִבְחֵי־צֶדֶק; 4:6 [5]); those suffering economically (whether a sub-section of Israel or David himself) pray that God would "lift up the light of [his] face upon [them]" (נִסְאֵה־יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֶל־אֹר פְּנֵיךָ יְהוָה; 4:7 [6]), a prayer associated with priests in the temple.¹⁹ To be sure, David himself is not the one offering the sacrifices (that happens in the next psalm) and the prayer for God's face to shine remains unanswered within the psalm (we have to wait until Ps 9 for that), but there has been a spatial movement

¹⁹ Hartenstein's analysis helped me fit Ps 4 into this overall movement ("Psalms 3-14," 249).

towards the place David had been driven out of and where he will achieve the telos of his being.²⁰

b *Psalms 4-5*

Psalm 5 brings us even closer to this destination, for its entire perspective is dominated by the theme of access to the temple, the primary institution that makes Zion what it is (5:4-5 [3-4], 8 [7]). Whereas in Ps 4 David had warned his enemies to offer “right sacrifices” (4:6 [5]), we now find him doing the exact same thing (5:4 [3]), waiting with full expectation for God’s vindicating appearance (which happens “in the morning”) and confident that he will achieve his highest good: to enter God’s house and dwell with him (5:8 [7]; which canonically amounts to a return to his prior state in Ps 2).

Psalm 5 adds a new element to this movement, however, which will be of key importance for the following psalms: entry into God’s presence is not unconditional – even for David! First, Ps 5 provides the first theological reflection upon the nature of the wicked in general, adding another layer sapiential reflection (5:11 [10]). As in Ps 4, their primary characteristic is their lying tongue – though the imagery used to describe it is more vivid and intense. More significant for the contribution of Ps 5, however, is the fact that this reflection is offered in terms of the inability of that “wickedness/evil” (רַע/רָשָׁע, 5:5 [4]) to inhabit the same space as God (5:5-7 [4-6]). The refuge that God offers is open to those who are not like the wicked, those who walk in the Lord’s paths (5:8 [7]). That David prays this prayer shows that he, too, is aware that he must submit to the same entry criteria (more fully developed in Pss 15 and 24) that the rest of the world must follow. Read canonically, we can say that for David to become mediator of Ps 2, he must first prove that he is the “man” of Ps 1.

To summarize the “journey” thus far: God has anointed David as king on Zion to mediate salvation to the peoples of the earth (Ps 2); David is conquered by those he should rule and finds himself among those he should provide refuge to. In this surprising situation, David puts his trust in God’s promise and prays for God’s intervention, for both himself and for those seeking refuge (Ps 3); yet he not only practices faith, he exhorts others to do so too, whether his enemies or would-be friends, so that they would be wise (Ps 4). Finally, moving closer to the house of God, we learn that David not only intercedes for Israel and models faith to Israel, he must also fulfil the same standards of righteousness as Israel if he is to succeed in (re-)entering the “house of God” (הַיְכָל־קְדֹשׁ/בְּיַתְהוָה, 5:8 [7]). “Faith without works is dead” (Jam 2:26). Though the main protagonist of Pss 3-5 is David, the would-be mediator of happiness on Zion, “God’s people/the many/the refuge seekers/the lovers of God’s name/the righteous” (חֹסֵי/רַבִּים/עַמְּךָ)

²⁰ Hartenstein correlates this element of spatial movement towards justice in the temple in Pss 3-7 with a temporal development towards the same end (“Psalms 3-14,” 247-252).

צַדִּיק/אֱהָבֵי שְׁמִרָתְךָ) are never lost from view. They continue to be part of the drama as those who share David’s fate, doubt the promises, benefit from his prayers, witness his behaviour, and share his vision. Indeed, Ps 2:10 and 4:4 [3] indicate that with a little wisdom, even God’s and David’s enemies can switch sides and access the happiness promised in Pss 1-2.

c Psalms 5-6

Having brought us to the threshold of the house of God, Ps 5 also establishes a principle for crossing that threshold, one which threatens to undermine David’s own journey into that place: righteousness (as in Ps 1). In Ps 5:11 [10] David uttered his first imprecation: “Make them bear their guilt, O God” (הַאֲשִׁמָּם אֱלֹהִים). In Ps 6, this curse boomerangs back on him, sending to him to the furthest possible extremity from the gates of Zion, namely the gates of death/Sheol (6:5-6 [4-5]; see the juxtaposition in Ps 9:14-15 [13-14]).²¹

It cannot be accidental that right at this climactic juncture, the trajectory from “exile” (Ps 3) to “return” (Ps 5) should be so fundamentally and comprehensively negated by Ps 6. The shock the canonical reader gets when moving from Ps 5:12-13 [11-12] to Ps 6:2-4 [1-3] is analogous to the disjunction between Ps 2 and 3. If up until now David was righteous, struggling with Israelite enemies yet confident of God’s salvific intervention, in Ps 6 we suddenly see that God himself has become David’s enemy and the cause is David’s sin (6:2 [1]). This circumstance explains the nature of the threat which David faces: not, in the first instance, attack or slander from without (the slander of his enemies is still present on the margins [6:9-10 (8-9)]), but life-threatening sickness within his own body (6:3 [2]).

This development seems to reinforce the interpretation of the collection as a whole offered above: the theme of Pss 3-14 is David’s struggle to “get back,” as it were, into the presence of his father on Zion so that he can realize his true identity as that father’s adopted son. However, we interpret the necessity of the struggle itself (test? punishment? something else?), the means of its overcoming is David’s acting out the obedience of Ps 1 so that he can enter the reality of Ps 2 – and do this not only for himself but also for those “who take refuge in” God and him (יְהוָה; Ps 5:21 [11]), for when he sits on the throne, he is the one to mediate that refuge (Ps 2).

In Pss 3-5 we have seen that key to David’s ability to be that man of Ps 1 is his confident faith in the face of the apparent negation of the object of that faith, namely God’s promises. In Ps 6 a new element in his struggle appears on the scene, one that is immediately thematised in the following psalm (7:4-6 [3-

²¹ I am indebted to Hartenstein for pointing out this extreme polarity in canonical context (“Psalm 1-14,” 250).

5]) and which becomes increasingly central in Pss 32ff.,²² namely confession of sin and repentance. As a remedy to disobedience, God will accept this (6:9-11 [8-10]; see also Ps 32:1). Ps 6 thus continues the semantic pattern established so far: with each psalm the content of the “divine economy” is enriched, intensified, and expanded, all within the framework of a move to and from Zion as the place of the fulfilment of Ps 2 – for the sake of the happiness of the world.

d Psalms 6-7

Despite the immense threat to David’s struggle posed by his own sin, God “accepted [his] prayer” (יְהוָה תִּפְלְתֵי יִקְבָּץ; 6:10 [9]) and so in Ps 7 the original trajectory is picked up again: David is under threat by his enemies, he turns to God for help, is confident of his righteousness and thus God’s salvific intervention. Once again, the spatial imagery brings us closer to Zion and thus the resolution of the journey, the description of the wicked is both elaborated further and generalized in a sapiential manner, and David takes on a new role analogous to that of a sage. In addition to this, Ps 7 bundles together themes from the previous psalms and creates out of them a new, synthetic whole.

An initial indication that David’s struggles are approaching a resolution is the introduction of a new generic element at the end of the psalm: the vow to give thanks (7:18 [17]). This element is a promise to God that the psalmist, once God has intervened, will thank him for said intervention. Up until now, our psalms have not witnessed such an intervention; neither does Ps 7.²³ Its vow to thank God when he does, however, tilts the expectation forward, and creates a link with Ps 9, which is the fulfilment of this vow and thus the first – if temporary – resolution to the movement of the Psalter (the “interruption” of Ps 8 will be explained below).

Before turning to examine the unique manner in which Zion itself is presented in this psalm, we first need to notice how it picks up and bundles together one of two themes from the previous psalms: the portrayal of the enemy and the significance of repentance. We start with the former:

In Ps 7, David’s enemies appear to initially be those of Pss 4-6: they attack him with their words (7:4-6 [3-5]), the battle appears to be an inner-Israelite one between the wicked and the righteous of Israel (7:10 [9]), albeit with the imagery

²² For an analysis of Book I of the Psalter in which the theme of David’s sinfulness plays an important role in the final part of the book, see Barbiero, *Psalmenbuch*.

²³ It is important for Hartenstein’s redaction-critical reading that Ps 7 *does* mark the resolution of the movement towards Zion because he sees Pss 9-10 as a later addition. However, as he proceeds he seems to become quite ambivalent about whether Ps 7 is really capable of resolving the movement by itself. Ps 9 *resolves* the vow of Ps 7 according to its genre (*gattungsgemäß einlösen*); in Ps 7 the question of whether God had intervened is actually “open” and is only clarified in Ps 9 (“Psalm 2-14,” 261).

now intensified with a reference to the intimate nature of a relationship betrayed (“my friend,” שׁוֹלְמִי; 7:5 [4]; note the analogy with Ps 3:1); the concluding pedagogical reflection on divine justice has everyday life as its context (7:13-17 [12-16]). Yet, at the same time, this imagery sits alongside a surprising militant dimension that echoes Pss 2 and 3 as well as a universal one not heard since Ps 2. In terms of militancy, the language used to describe God’s response to his enemies’ attacks (which are also described in militant terms in 7:1-2 [2-3]) evokes warfare as God “whets his sword” (חָרְבוּ יִלְטוּשׁ) and “readies his bow” (קָשְׁתוֹ דָּרְךָ וַיְכַוֵּןנָהּ; 7:13 [12]; see also vv. 12 [11] and 15 [14]; 7:7 [6] evokes Num 10:35-36 [cf. Ps 3:8 (7)]) – surprising metaphors if the conflict is about legal defence before God. In terms of scope, in unusual juxtaposition to David’s apparently private conflict with false accusers, David suddenly calls upon God to take up his judgement seat within the “assembly of the peoples” (עֲדַת לְאֻמִּים) (תִּסְוְבָרְךָ; 7:8 [7]; cf. 2:1). The meaning of this juxtaposition within the psalm is not immediately clear; however the question is answered in detail, in terms of conceptual associations across psalmic boundaries – the effect is that David’s personal struggles have (acquired) a global dimension, one they had at the outset if Pss 3-7 have been read with Ps 2 consistently in mind. As we will see, this interweaving of private-political/local-global perspectives is even further developed in Pss 9-10, where the vow to give thanks is fulfilled. For now, the hermeneutical effect is that David’s political conflict in Ps 2 cannot be theologically separated from his personal struggles at home. It seems that to be victorious in one, he must be victorious in the other (note the intriguing juxtaposition in 7:9 [8]: “The Lord judges the peoples; judge me, O Lord ...”; (יהוה יִדִּין עַמִּים שְׁפָטַנִּי יהוה).²⁴

In this connection, we may now note a new development in the representation of the destination of David’s struggle, Zion. Zion now acquires the dimensions it had at the beginning of our sequence in Ps 2, bringing the movement full circle (a dimension retained in the psalm of thanksgiving in Ps 9). The city of hope is no longer simply the source of help (Ps 3), the place of God’s presence (Ps 4), free of sin and full of redemption (Ps 5), it is the site where heaven and earth intersect with global implications. The global horizontal extension of God’s authority to judge (7:8 [7]; cf. Ps 2:1) is grounded in Zion’s vertical connection with the heavenly sphere (7:8 [7]: “over [the assembly] return on high” [עֲלֶיָהּ לְמָרוֹם שׁוּבָה]; cf. Ps 2:4). Again: however we interpret the relationship between David’s private experience and political status, the editors

²⁴ The description of *how* God judges the enemies also seems to combine Pss 1-2: he both wages active war against them, as in Ps 2 (cf. 7:13-14 [12-13]), but then immediately after that we have Ps 1’s “wisdom theology,” according to which the wicked’s “mischief returns on his own head” (יָשׁוּב עֲמָלוֹ בְּרָאשׁוֹ; 7:16-17 [15-16]; cf. Ps 1:6, in which God’s personal agency only determines the fate of the righteous, not the wicked).

of the Psalter saw them as intimately related.²⁵ This aspect is made clearer in Pss 9-10.

Another two themes picked up and bundled together from the previous connection are those of innocence and repentance as one of two conditions for receiving blessing. Though in Ps 7 David has returned to the confidence of Pss 3-5 (“judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness” [שְׁפֹטֵנִי יְהוָה כְּצִדְקָי] 7:9 [8]), the “lesson” learned from God’s personal onslaught in Ps 6 is now integrated into his teachings on the divine economy: “If man does not repent, God will whet his sword” (אִם-לֹא יֵשׁוּב חֲרָבוֹ יִלְטוּשׁ) (7:13 [12]). The threat of personal sin obstructing his “return journey to Zion” is a theme that will appear with greater frequency in Pss 32ff. Of hermeneutic significance is how David implicitly affirms the principle that righteousness is a condition of salvation for all – even himself as the anointed king. Whereas in Ps 5 he could utter an imprecation against his enemies (5:11 [10]), in Ps 7 for the first time he utters a self-imprecation: “if I have done this ... lay my glory in the dust” (אִם-עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת ... כְּבוֹדִי לְעָפָר יִשָּׁן ... 7:4-6 [3-5]).

Finally, we can note the now-expected further enrichment and intensification of the imagery along with an even stronger sapiential element and a new universality of concern. In 7:10 [9] David’s concerns go beyond his own private fate to include that of the righteous in general (תְּכַוֵּן צַדִּיק); again, David as intercessor); his prayer is not only for judgement on his own enemies but that “the evil of the wicked come to an end” (יִגְמַר-נָא רַע רְשָׁעִים) – in general! This development anticipates the perspective of Pss 10; 12; 14, which only deal with universal concerns. There is also a new level of interiority as God is now understood to be the one who can “test the minds and hearts” (בָּחַן לִבּוֹת וּכְלָיוֹת) (7:10 [9]). In 7:13-17 [12-16] we have the most detailed and vivid description of the wicked yet, and this in the tone of a teacher. This is a further development of David’s profile as a sage who speaks from experience to the world to guide it into life. This sapiential element will now come to dominate in the following psalm, which is interposed between the promise to give thanks and the act of thanks giving itself.

4 Psalm 8

For those attuned to form-critical categories, Ps 8 is not the “thanksgiving” promised by Ps 7:17, this comes in the first line of Ps 9 (אוֹדָה יְהוָה בְּכָל-לֵבִי). Yet Ps 8 is also not a typical “hymn,” either, for it lacks the call to others to praise God and is dominated by a sense of awe arising from reflection upon God’s condescension to humanity rather than a description of God’s acts of salvation.

²⁵ As do the books of Samuel, which draw causal connections between the quality of David’s personal life and the fate of the nation.

The overall tone is that of awe-struck “confession” grounded in theological reflection upon humanity’s role in God’s universe.²⁶

However we determine the genre of the psalm, it is clear that we have suddenly and rather surprisingly left – temporarily, given the clear continuation in Ps 9 – the trajectory established from Pss 3-7. As in Pss 1-2, we are dealing, once again, with base realities in terms of which the drama of David, the faithful, God, and the enemies take place. We have left the “fray,” hovering above it in order to gain a better grasp of its nature. That this reflection should take place at this juncture, right between the vow of a praise that would bring the “narrative” of loss and restoration to its conclusion and the fulfilment of that vow in Ps 9, indicates that the function of Ps 8 may be to provide an additional theological interpretation of the meaning of that narrative, and thus a further explication of the divine economy of salvation. We will now explore this possibility.

Psalm 8 presents us with two great challenges: how do we interpret its internal coherence in light of the notoriously difficult v. 3 [2], and how does this psalm function in the context of Pss 1-14? I will provide an interpretation of v. 3 [2] that will try to answer both questions.

In terms of Ps 8 by itself, we must first note the overall theme. David – still understanding himself as part of a broader community and thus speaking on their behalf (note the “our” in vv. 2 [1] and 10 [9]) – notes the enormity of the honour granted to humanity as a whole given its apparent insignificance and weakness within the scheme of God’s cosmos. This “royal” splendour consists in its being given the role of ruler of the animal world (8:8-9 [7-8]), a role it cannot fulfil in or of itself, but only insofar as God’s grants it to it (8:5-6 [4-5]). However we relate this “democratic kingship” to David’s peculiar anointing as king on Zion (on which, see below; see also Pss 2; 18; 20-21, in Book I), he clearly also identifies himself as a “royal human” in this general anthropological sense, thus placing himself on the level of humanity as a whole.

Within this general cosmic and anthropological context, v. 3 [2] sits very awkwardly:

“Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger (ESV translation).”

מפי עוללים וינקים
יִסְדַּתָּ עֹז לְמַעַן צוֹרְרֶיךָ
לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם:

What do babies’ “words” as God’s “weapons” against his enemies have to do with humanity’s God-ordained royal rule over creation? And who are these

²⁶ For genre issues, see, e.g., Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1-50* (NEB 29; Würzburg: Echter, 1993), 77.

enemies of God? For our purposes an exhaustive interpretation of Ps 8 itself is not necessary. The following observations should suffice to limit and guide interpretive possibilities and provide a bridge to the meaning in the context of Pss 1-7:

- 1) A key contrast in the psalm is that between human weakness (8:5-6 [4-5]) and divine power (8:2, 4-10 [1, 3-9]).
- 2) This contrast sets the framework for the awe experienced: despite this contrast, God grants humanity its role as rulers in creation (“you have made [or “caused to lack little”]/crowned/given dominion/put under his feet ...” [וַתַּחַסְרֵהוּ מְעַט/תַּעֲטָרָהוּ/תַמְלִישִׁלְהוּ/שָׂתָה תַחַת־רַגְלָיו]).
- 3) Implicit is a threat: in order to exercise that rule correctly, humans need to have internalized this wisdom theme, namely that they are creatures exercising power delegated by a creator. With “honour and splendour” (כְּבוֹד וְהָדָר) comes the necessity to fully internalize one’s true identity as weak and dependent on one greater than oneself. Failing to do so puts you at odds with your own identity as creature. This is, in fact, the key test failed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they ate from the tree promising wisdom. By taking it, they attempted to reverse the roles of creator-creature by themselves becoming like God rather than living in creaturely dependence (Gen 3:5). The “wisdom” granted them through the forbidden fruit thus turned out to be a false wisdom. Ps 8 is offering true wisdom to help guide humans truly be what they were created to be.

In this context, the “babes and sucklings” (עוֹלָלִים וְיֹנְקִים) of 8:3 [2] seem to be a metaphor for humanity as a whole, representing what they should be in order to fulfil their divinely appointed role. As with humanity, so with the babes, God exercises his power, he “establishes strength/a bulwark” (יִסְדֵּף עֹז), through that which is weak, even as weak as “babes” dependent on their heavenly “father.” As such, v. 3 [2] is an implicit exhortation to all of humanity to become like babes in order to truly realize their royal human identity (Matt 19:14). Within the context of the psalm alone, however, much remains mysterious with this verse. What is it that comes from the mouths of babes by means of which God establishes strength? Is it their cries for help interpreted metaphorically as prayers? And who are God’s enemies? Are they humans trying to be gods? Or are they perhaps angelic beings to whom something must be proven (as in Job, which has a number of connections with this psalm)? Ps 8 by itself seems unable to fully answer these questions. The broader context of Pss 3-7, however, does provide more points of reference.

The immediate literary context of Ps 8 is characterized by the elements of 8:3 [2], namely enemies, conflict, weakness, speech, and victory. If we read Ps 8 in this context, we get the impression that what Ps 8 proclaims to be true of humans in general is embodied in a special way by David in particular. David

acts out his role as “royal baby,” so to speak, and thereby embodies a true human being, a “proper Adam,” as it were. Let us look at the details:

Read in immediate canonical context, who are God’s “enemy and avenger” (אויב ומתנגדם)? These are surely those in Ps 1 who make themselves their “own gods” by following their own council, those in Pss 2 and 3 who make themselves their own gods by wresting the sovereignty from the true God and his human king, those in Pss 4-5 and 7 who attack God’s anointed king without justification, primarily by use of false accusations. However, Ps 6 has also taught us that there is a caveat to this identification of God’s enemies with those of David: David’s enemies are God’s only to the degree that David does in fact enact the dependency of a child. If David acts wickedly, he makes himself one of God’s enemies and is only left with repentance as a way out of judgement (Pss 6; 7:4-6, 12 [3-5, 11]).

How does God overcome his enemies? The answer is by words (Ps 8:3 [2]), namely the various words emanating from the mouth of David in Pss 3-7; 9-14. In these psalms God does not simply overcome the wicked automatically with David as passive onlooker, God waits for prayer – David’s supplication for himself and intercession for others, including the prayer of repentance (“the Lord accepts my prayer” [יהוה תפלהי יקח] 6:10 [9]). In short, Pss 3-7 amount to a realization of the principle of Ps 8:3 [2]: a certain kind of language is the primary means by which God overcomes his enemies.²⁷

Finally, what is the condition of the prayer-language for it to be an effective tool in God’s hands? It must be the prayer of an utterly dependent infant. To phrase it in context, God’s “son” (בני אלה, Ps 2:7), in order to fulfil his role, must become a “suckling babe” (עוללים וינקים, Ps 8:2). Is this not a transformation we see being faithfully enacted by David in the psalms following Ps 2? Is this not the canonical-theological meaning of these psalms’ “pleas for help” and “affirmations of confidence” as they enact in the life of David the kind of dependence that should have characterized Adam and Eve in the Garden?

In sum, I propose that the function of Ps 8 in canonical context is to further deepen the reader’s understanding of God’s economy of salvation. David’s “fall” from Zion and struggle to return is a process that requires him to embody in his life what it means to be a true human according to God’s original design: weak and dependent on God, and thus thereby strong and victorious over whatever threatens God’s design. Only then can David take up his throne as God’s

²⁷ The fact that the enemies of Pss 1-7 are primarily God’s and not David’s is made clear by Ps 2. We must remember that the primary subject matter of Pss 1-14 is the *divine economy of salvation*. As far as the editors of the Psalter are concerned, what happens to David is not accidental but an outworking of this economy.

anointed "son" (Ps 2:7; in Ps 9:20-21 [19-20] David applies this principle to the kings of the nations: if only they would be wise and be like him!).²⁸

My interpretation of the function of Ps 8 in context is buttressed by Ps 19, which plays a similar role in its canonical context.²⁹ Just as Ps 8 picks up the theme of royalty and childhood from Ps 2, Ps 19 picks up the theme of law in Ps 1. Both psalms proceed to embed the meaning of these realities with a cosmic context that exceeds the original frame of reference of these psalms. Both Psalms function to theologially contextualize the nature of the Davidic struggle contained in the psalms surrounding them by grounding that struggle in its ultimate reality. Both Psalms contain promise and the threat of failure (19:13-15 [12-14]), the threat of failure constituting one factor in the cyclical pattern of praise and complaint that characterizes the Psalter as a whole (a factor apparently not present in Pss 9-10, however; see below).

5 Psalms 9-14

With the first thanksgiving in the Psalter (Ps 9:1-13 [1-12]) this section opens with a psalm marking a fulfilment of the vow of Ps 7 and a resolution of the problem raised by Pss 2-3: David is back with his God in Zion; he has been saved and the Lord reigns over the whole world. However, within this same psalm (v. 14 [13] onwards) the complaints and petitions suddenly start again, marking the beginning of the next section of Pss 10-14. This section, in a sense, treads the same old ground as Pss 3-7: David is afflicted by enemies, he cries out to God for help, that help is located in Zion. However, the "parallelism" is not "synonymous," there are differences in composition and content. In terms of the latter, we notice a further intensification and universalization of the imagery found in Pss 3-7. We also have the introduction of two new themes: David as a representative of the "poor"/ "oppressed" and the issue of the hiddenness of God. In terms of the former, the linear composition of Pss 3-7 and 9 is replaced by a non-linear ABA'B'A''B'' pattern in which psalms concerned exclusively with the poor and their oppressors in general (Pss 10; 12; 14) alternate with psalms concerned with David's personal fate (Pss 9; 11; 13).³⁰

²⁸ Whereas, as scholars trained to think in history-of-religions categories, have spoken of Ps 8 as "democratizing kingship," when read canonically (and thus, from the perspective of the editors, ontologically), it is the other way round: humanity from the start was royal, so that royal lineages can at best only be seen as embodiments of a universal principle. The Psalter teaches that in order to be an Israelite king David must first prove himself as a proper human king.

²⁹ See Sumpter, "Psalms 15-24," for details.

³⁰ The linear movement towards Zion takes centre stage once again in Pss 15-24, which have a chiasmic structure. See Sumpter, "Psalms 15-24."

a Psalms 7, 8, 9

The primary transition is from Ps 7, with its promise to give thanks once God has intervened, to Ps 9, which describes God's intervention and thanks him for it. However, as we shall see, Ps 9 also picks up a wisdom element first introduced by Ps 8 and incorporates this into its prayer.

We start with the thanksgiving. Psalm 9:2 [1] picks up the word "thanks" from 7:18 [17] (אֹדָה יְהוָה כְּצִדְקוֹ) in order to announce that that is what the psalmist shall now do ("I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart" [אֹדָה יְהוָה בְּכָל-לִבִּי]), specifically by recounting his "wonderful deeds" (וּפְלֵאוֹתָיו).³¹ If David had been faithfully clinging on to the promises of Pss 1-2 throughout Pss 3-7, from the perspective of Ps 9 those promises have now been fulfilled. Note, too, the way in which they have been fulfilled, namely by bundling together both the personal and the political dimensions of David's conflicts and locating the source of their resolution in God's judging activities in Zion. First, the intersplicing of the national and personal. We had already noticed this tendency in Ps 7; in Pss 9 and 10 (which is closely related to 9) they are juxtaposed without any attempt to co-ordinate them logically (personal: e.g. 9:4-5 [3-4], 10 [11], 14-15 [13-14]; 10:2-11; national: e.g. 9:7-9 [6-8], 12 [11], 20-21 [19-20]; 10:16).³² However this is interpreted within the psalm itself, the effect within the context of Pss 1-9 is that all of David's conflicts from the previous psalms are now bundled together, juxtaposed with each other – perhaps even superimposed upon each other - as necessary elements in his struggle to regain the throne.³³ Furthermore, the place where Ps 9 climaxes this movement is Zion; within it God is presented as both universal king and judge exercising power and rule over all the nations (9:8-9, 12 [7-8, 11]) – a global perspective not heard since Ps 2. Again, this is an indication that his journey has come to an end. David is redeemed, the world at large is set to rights.³⁴

³¹ The pattern of arrangement in which psalms are sequenced according to stages of trust → petition → praise is found in chiastic form in Pss 15-24.

³² Beat Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen I: Die Psalmen 1-72* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), 78. It was Hartenstein who helped me see the bundling function of these elements of Pss 9-10 in relation to the surrounding psalms, even if he goes a different direction in his interpretation.

³³ Hartenstein uses a series of words to try and describe the interrelation of categories: *Überblendung*; *Transformation*; *Angleichung*; *Neuinterpretation* ("Psalm 3-14"). Weber notes: "Zwischen Individual- und Kollektivebene schillernd wird in diesem Psalm die Bezeichnung גִּיּוֹם ... eingesetzt (9,6.16.18.20.21; 10,16)" (78). The word "schillernd" ("shifting") expresses my sense that different dimensions are being conceptually superimposed in order to articulate a deeper, undergirding reality: the ontological unity of David's struggle across various domains.

³⁴ What seems to be missing from this picture is God exercising his rule *through* his warrior king, as in Ps 2. Our psalms here indicate that the *means by which* God brings

How do we interpret then, the sudden and crass switch in fortunes within the psalm itself (9:14-21 [13-20])? The initial imagery used to portray this sudden reversal is that of Ps 6 and seems play a similar role to the one it had there (when read in sequence after Ps 5): having now passed the threshold into Zion, David plummets to the place most distant from it, for he is now back at the "gates of death" (שַׁעַר מוֹת; 9:14 [13]), asking to be restored to "the gates of Daughter Zion" (שַׁעַר בַּת-צִיּוֹן), where he can once again "rejoice in your salvation" (אֶגִּילָה בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ; 9:15 [14]). Note the completeness of the reversal in the continuity of David's new plight with that from which he had been previously saved: he calls on the Lord to save him from both personal and national persecutors (compare 9:14-15 [13-14] with 9:20-21 [19-20]; also 10:12-13 [11-12]).³⁵ Even if we posit that in terms of real time the petitions took place before the praise,³⁶ in literary-canonical time the second half of Ps 9 functions as a bridge to Pss 10-14, all of which are of the same petition genre, indicating that David's victory was temporary (proleptic?) and in need of further resolution (in Pss 18 // 20-21). In the second half of Pss 3-14, therefore, we have a re-iteration of the first.

Read in canonical context, David's renewed petitions factor in the anthropological insights he had gained in Ps 8, an initial indication that the reiteration of his struggles in Ps 9:14 [13]-14:7 contain a development of what had gone before.³⁷ When crying out for the Lord to "arise" (קוּמָה יְהוָה) he interprets the nature of what the wicked are doing as consisting in an inversion of their human identity as dependent creatures: "Let not man prevail ... Let the nations know that they are but man!" (אַל-יָעֵז אָנוּשׁ ... יִדְעוּ גוֹיִם אָנוּשׁ הֵמָּה; 9:20-21 [19-20]; see also 10:18). Apart from Ps 8:5 [4], these are the only places where אָנוּשׁ ("man") occurs in Pss 1-14 (the next 55:14 [13]). In line with the sapiential trajectory identified throughout our collection, this throws the whole conflict in Pss 3-7 / 9-14 in a deeper theological light: the struggle between David and those he represents and belongs to, on the one side, and everyone else, on the other, is a struggle between true and false humanity, between humans who live as they have been designed to live, and those who rebel against that design and try to invert it.

about his rule is through the humiliation, suffering, persistent faith and prayer of his king. However, in the second climax in the cycle of petition to praise, Pss 18 // 20-21, David *is* presented as a victorious warrior fighting *for* his people (see Sumpter, "Psalms 15-24," for the parallelism between these two psalms). The theological challenge is to grasp how these different images interrelate without illegitimately subordinating one to the other. Pss 7; 9-10 indicate that the private and political are intimately connected in David's experience and vocation.

³⁵ Weber, *Psalmen I*, 78.

³⁶ As suggested by Weber, *Psalmen I*, 78, for example.

³⁷ Hartenstein, "Psalm 1-14," 262-263.

This question of the identity of David and his group brings us to a final innovation in Ps 9 that will constitute something of a Leitmotif in one set of the alternating psalms that make up Pss 9-14 (Pss 9-10;³⁸ 12; 14): the identification of the group that David is associated with as the "inhabitants of Zion" (יֹשְׁבֵי צִיּוֹן; 9:12 [11]), on the one hand, and the "afflicted" (עֲנִיִּים; 9:12 [11]), "oppressed" (עֲרִיבִים; 9:10 [9]), "needy" (אֶבְיָוִן), and "poor" (עֲנִוִּים; 9:19 [18]), on the other (and later on the "weak" and "fatherless" (יתום [10:18]; הלכאים [10:10, 14]).³⁹ According to Ps 72:2, 4, 12-13, this is the group that God's anointed king should protect. We thus now see that David not only becomes a refugee alongside those who should seek refuge in God through him, he also becomes one of the oppressed who should find justice from God through him. The motif of David's becoming one of those whom he should save is thus further enriched by socio-economic categories. However, as will become clear in the next psalm, which contains a lengthy exposition of the nature of the "poor" and their "oppressors," this poverty has a religious dimension.⁴⁰

b Psalms 9-10

Many scholars believe that Ps(s) 9-10 constitute an original unity which was only secondarily split in the Masoretic Tradition (cf. LXX). There are certainly many thematic and lexical connections between the two. However we answer the question, when read in sequential canonical context, that Ps 10 also has an integrity of its own. Although it continues Ps 9's "downward spiral," marking a renewal of David's struggles, it does sow two distinct emphases that are characteristic of Pss 10-14 as a whole and which thus distinguish this group from Pss 3-7. Ps 10 introduces two new perspectives: the challenge to faith brought about by God's apparent hiddenness, and the representation of evil in increasingly abstract, universal, and almost apocalyptic turns.

In the opening line of Ps 10 David tackles the theme of absence head on in the form of a question directed to God: "Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (לָמָּה יְהוָה תִּהְיֶה תִּמְצָלֵךְ בְּרָחוֹק תִּעְלִים לְעַתּוֹת) (בְּצָרָה). With the exception of Ps 6:3 [2], where David was the object of God's

³⁸ According to my ABA'B'A''B'' model, Pss 9 and 10 actually belong to two distinct categories: Ps 9 is concerned with David's fate, Ps 10 is exclusively concerned with the fate of the "poor." However, words from the semantic field of the poor occur in both psalms.

³⁹ For the rest of the collection: אֶבְיָוִן (12:6 [5]), עֲנִיִּים (9:13; 10:2, 9, 12, 17; 12:6 [5]; 14:6), דָּד (10:10, 18), יתום (10:18) and הלכאים (10:10, 14) belong to the same semantic field. None of these words occur in Pss 1-8 (Hartenstein, "Psalm 3-14," 260).

⁴⁰ According to Benjamin Ollenburger, the poor find protection in Zion, not because of their social status *per se* but because they have nowhere to turn for help but YHWH alone. See his *Zion the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (JSOTSup 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987).

wrath, this is the first time in the Psalter that David questions God about the apparent mystery of his ways.⁴¹

David then launches into the longest reflection on the nature of the “faithless” and the “faithful” thus far in the Psalter (my choice of these terms will be made clear below). His primary interest here is no longer his own fate per se but rather that of these two conflicting parties in general. Nowhere does he pray for his own salvation (unlike in Ps 9:14-15 [13-14] where he prays, “Be gracious to me ...”), rather he turns to God, asking why he is allowing the conflict to continue, praying for him to intervene for the “afflicted” in general (10:12, אֶל-אֲלֹהִים תִּשְׁכַּח עֲנִיִּים), and concluding with a “nevertheless” expression of hope: “But you do see ...” (רְאֵתָהּ כִּי-אֵתָהּ עֲמַל וְכַעַס תִּבְיֹט; 10:14).

Read canonically, the content of this description of the “faithful” and the “faithless” is developed in terms of the psalms that have preceded. To grasp this, we need to note that undergirding the manifold forms of social and economic oppression described in 10:2-11 is the basic concept of faithfulness or the lack thereof. The oppressors and oppressed are understood in theological and not just socio-economic terms. Who are the wicked? They fulfil their desires and oppress because they think “there is no God” (אֵין אֱלֹהִים; 10:4); he prospers in the present, and so concludes that God’s judgements are nought (10:5-6); “He says in his heart, ‘God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it.’” (אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ אֱלֹהִים נָשָׁח וְנִסְכָּח אֵל הַסֹּתִיר פָּנָיו בְּלִי-רְאָה לְנַצַּח; 10:11). And the wicked can say this because, as David himself noted in v. 1, God is in fact taking his time! Part of the message of the arrangement of Pss 3-14 is that precisely this is the case. And it is this which provides the warrant for the wicked’s “arrogance” (גְּאֻנָּה; 10:2), the grounds for their own perverse “wisdom.” God is taking his time to fulfil his promises of Pss 1-2, hence humanity loses faith, attempts itself to become God, and so becomes wicked.

The same can be said for what I call here the “faithful.” The “innocent” (נָקִי), “helpless” (הֶלֶקָה), “poor” (עָנִי), “fatherless” (יָתוֹם) suffer in various ways at the hand of the wicked, but what puts them on the right side of history is not their suffering or weakness per se but that they “commit themselves” to God (עָלִידָה; 10:14). Unlike the wicked (10:3), they direct their “desire” to God (תַּאֲוָה; 10:17) and so correctly enact their primal creatureliness (Ps 8).

As in Ps 9, this exposition of the faithful/faithless or oppressed/oppressors links up with the sapiential insight of Ps 8. Those from whom God should deliver the earth are those who are “man of the earth” (אֲנוּשׁ מִן-הָאָרֶץ; 10:18; see Ps 8:5 [4]) but who are acting as if they are God.

⁴¹ Similar intense questions reappear in Ps 13:2-3 [1-2], here “how long?” rather than “why?”

We can thus conclude the following: Ps 10 in particular marks (after Ps 9:14-21 [13-20]) the beginning of a renewed struggle on the part of David. However, it does so in light of a question, the question as to why God should allow the struggle to go on. Why does he hide himself? Or, to phrase it in a manner more germane to the concerns of both the rest of the psalm and to Pss 10-14, why does he hide himself in such a way that he provides grounds for evil to become more prolific? As we have seen, the reflection upon the nature of the wicked is connected to the question posed: precisely because God hides himself the wicked feel that they have free reign and so they increase their evildoings.

Despite this, David continues to pray for his people (10:12-15) and exemplify the faith that they need (10:16-18). And that faith is articulated, once again, in terms of God's coming sovereign rule over his special domain ("the nations perish from his land" [אֲבָדוּ גוֹיִם מֵאֶרֶצוֹ]; 10:16).

Ps 10 thus sets the tone for Pss 10-14. We turn to see how Ps 11 develops it.

c Psalms 10-11

As mentioned above, the sequence of Pss 9-10 is characterized by an ABA'B'A'B' pattern. Ps 9 (A) was focused on David's personal fate, although the fate of those like him was also on the horizon. In Ps 10 (B) he focused exclusively on the fate of the oppressed in general. In Ps 11 (A) we leave this level of generality and focus once again on David's fate; David thus makes concrete in his own experience what is true of the oppressed in general.

At first glance, it may not be evident how Ps 11 advances beyond Pss 3-7. It may read like a typical psalm of petition. However, sensitized by the concerns of Ps 10 we can see how the challenge to his faith exceeds all that has preceded, as does the kind of judgement he calls upon to deal with it.

Our psalm opens with an affirmation of the key virtue of all our psalms thus far: "In the Lord I take refuge" (בַּיהוָה חָסִיתִי; 11:1). A first indication of the intensity of the challenge David faces is that it is his own friends who call upon him to give up this confidence and seek refuge elsewhere, namely the mountains ("Flee like a bird to your mountain" [גִּידִי הֲרָקָם צִפּוֹר]; 11:1). Why? In vivid imagery David is described like a vulnerable animal about to be hunted by his enemies; the arrow is already fitted on the string—the situation is urgent. Not only that, it appears that the very foundations (of the cosmos? of life?) are destroyed (11:3) – the situation could hardly be more hopeless for the "righteous one" (צַדִּיק; 11:3).

Corresponding to the intensity of the threat, which goes beyond David's personal experience to undermine the foundations of existence, is the almost apocalyptic nature of the punishment David feels is fitting for such evil: coals,

fire, sulphur, and a scorching wind (פְּחִים/אֵשׁ/וְגַפְרִית/וְרוּחַ זֹלַעְפוֹת; 11:6). Weber links this imagery to the destruction of the Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24) and draws the conclusion that their “evil deeds have attained their full measure and so have now earned the corresponding punishment.”⁴² None of the descriptions of threat and punishment in the psalms so far have achieved this level of universality and intensity.

Precisely in the face of this kind of urgent, immediate and all-encompassing threat, when even David’s own friends have failed the lesson of the Psalter and advise him to seek refuge in the mountains rather than God, David exercises faith – not as a heroic act of inner fortitude or stoic stability in the face of uncertainty but by his simple commitment to the promise of Pss 1-2, which he believes to be true and so lives his life in light of them.⁴³ For example, Zion remains a central element of David’s hope for it is the source of his salvation; furthermore, as in Ps 2, it is portrayed as the place where heaven and earth intersect (11:4). Furthermore, the salvation to come from there is formulated in terms of the judge of Ps 1 who will apply the standards of his will to the wicked. Finally, in line with the trajectory of exile and return, Zion is not only the *source* of the salvation of David and those like him (the “righteous,” “upright” [צַדִּיק, יִשָּׁר]), it is also their *destination*, for their hope is to “behold his face” (יִתְחַזֵּוּ פְּנֵימוֹ; 11:7).

d Psalms 11-12

Continuing the alternating ABA’B’ pattern, Ps 12 leaves David’s personal struggles behind and returns again to the problem of the oppression of the poor in general, albeit with some developments in relation to Ps 10. For start, the increase in wickedness due to God’s silence that had been complained about in Ps 10 is further intensified, for now David can say that “the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man” (הוֹשִׁיעָה יְהוָה כִּי-גִמַּר חֹסֵיד כִּי-פָסוּ אֲמוּנֵימָם מִבְּנֵי אָדָם; Ps 12:2 [1]). The problem is the same as what we have found in Pss 4-6; 11-12, namely lying tongues (only Pss 3; 7; 9-10 integrated the more political imagery one would expect from Ps 2). However, here for the first time this imagery is universalized to include “everyone,” and it is intensified, for the ones being lied to are their “neighbours” (שׁוֹא יִדְבְּרוּ אִישׁ אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ; Ps 12:3 [2]); “On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man” (סָבִיב רְשָׁעִים יִתְהַלְכוּן כָּרָם זְלוֹת לִבְנֵי אָדָם; 12:9 [8]; the wicked are also called “this generation” [הַדּוֹר זֶה; 12:8 [7]).

⁴² Weber, *Werkbuch I*, 81 (translation mine).

⁴³ Weber picks up on the programmatic nature of David’s confession for faith for the psalm as a whole when he states that it “is less a prayer to God than an apologetic witness to God’s being and action that is addressed to those listeners (“you,” 1b) who had advised the oppressed one to flee from the threat (1bc),” *Werkbuch I*, 81 (translation mine).

In the face of continued conflict, the hiddenness of God, and the corresponding multiplication of evildoers, even among one’s own friends, the test to one’s faith is great indeed. In Ps 12, therefore, David and those he belongs to/intercedes for/encourages/represents/embodyes are granted something we have not seen since Ps 2, a direct word of God. It is one thing to cling to a promise spoken long ago; it is easier when the promise is rearticulated afresh by the promise-giver. In the first person God declares that he has heard the cry of the weak and will “now (עַתָּה) arise (אֶקוּם)” and save them (12:6 [5]), using ancient liturgical language that responds to the pleas of Ps 3:8 [7]; 7:7 [6]; 9:20 [19]; and 10:12 (קוּמָה יְהוָה). Read in the context of this long list, the “now” may well evoke a “finally” from those addressed (Note also how the identity of those addressed is the same group of the “poor” (עֲנִיִּים/אֶבְיוֹנִים) in Pss 9-10). A key indication that the function of this oracle is the encouragement of David and his people in the face of the hiddenness of God and the intensity of evil that are characteristic of this sub-section is found in the following line: “The words of the Lord are pure words” (אִמְרוֹת יְהוָה אֲמָרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת) (12:7 [6]), and as such thoroughly reliable – despite appearances to the contrary. Indeed, despite the fact that God himself speaks and his words are described as trustworthy (is this not a redundant description?), David goes on to ask God to actually fulfil what he has just promised: “May you, O Lord, keep them!” (אֲתֵה־יְהוָה תִּשְׁמְרֵם) (12:8 [7]) [most English versions read this as an expression of confidence: “you will ...”]. The conclusion of the psalm indicates why: God’s speech is still that of future promise; the present reality is one of increasingly unparalleled evil (12:9 [8]). This brings us to the next psalm, which seems to open with a confused response to God’s promise of “now” (13:2-3 [1-2]).

e Palms 12-13

With Ps 13 we return to David’s personal struggle. In many respects, the main bulk of Ps 13 is not remarkable – it is considered a “classic example of a psalm of complaint or petition.”⁴⁴ David’s enemies are exalted over him, he calls upon God to help; he exercises faith and vows to praise God when he is saved.⁴⁵ Yet despite the otherwise undistinctive nature of the bulk of the psalm, there are two new and distinctive elements that fit it to its context in Pss 9-14, as I have interpreted it, both of which appear in the opening two verses. The first is the length of time that David has to suffer along with the inner turmoil and questioning that this produces. His “how long” (עַד־אֵנָּה) is emphatically repeated four times; the effect of this prolongation of suffering and hiddenness of God is that he must “take council in [his] soul” (עַד־אֵנָּה אֲשִׁית עֵצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי) (13:3 [2]). Secondly, as far as David is concerned, the ultimate cause of his prolonged misery is not the activity of his enemies but the hiddenness of God, the fact that God seems to have forgotten him (עַד־אֵנָּה יְהוָה תִּשְׁכַּח־נִי נִצַּח עַד־אֵנָּה תִּסְתִּיר אֶת־פְּנֵיךָ)

⁴⁴ Weber, *Werkbuch I*, 87.

⁴⁵ This vow will not be fulfilled until Ps 18.

מִמָּוֶן; 13:2 [1]). With the exception of the unique Ps 6:4 [3] (one brief “how long” [עַד-מָתַי]) nothing like this is found in Pss 3-7 (even in Ps 6, God himself is not being questioned for the psalmist knows why he is suffering: it is because of his sin). It fits very well, however, the context of Pss 9-14, with its focus on the painful mystery of God’s inaction. The tension between promise and fulfilment is particularly heightened when we read Ps 13’s list of “how long” questions right after God’s promise in Ps 12 that he will act “now”!

f Psalm 14

Whereas the linear trajectory in Pss 3-7 was upwards, starting outside of Zion and concluding on a positive note in Ps 9 within it, the movement from Ps 9 onwards has been the opposite: a downward spiral of an increasingly desperate situation coupled with and even caused by God’s apparent inactivity. (This latter development may explain the switch from a linear to an alternating ABA’B’ pattern of arrangement). In this final psalm, God himself speaks once again, and once again a promise is uttered (14:5-6).⁴⁶ But this time the primary focus is on God’s sentence of judgement upon the whole human race. Thus the negative assessment of David’s context articulated “from below” in Pss 10-13 is now affirmed and sealed by divine pronouncement “from above” (יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם הַשִּׁקִּיף) (עַל-כַּנְיִי-אָדָם; 14:2). What God sees and his evaluation of why it is the way it is reads like a divine summary of the general thrust of Pss 3-14 as a whole and 9-14 in particular. It thus serves as a fitting conclusion to sub-section and, arguably, a bridge to the next (note how the description of the wicked is paralleled by the description of the righteous in Pss 15/24).

In terms of what God sees, it is the seemingly universal extent of human corruption: “They have all turned aside; ... there is none who does good, not even one.” (אֵין עֹשֶׂה-טוֹב אֵין גַּם-אֶחָד) (הַכֹּל סָר; 14:3; despite this emphatic language, I still write “seemingly” because v. 5 goes on to assert that there is a “generation of the righteous” [דֹּר צַדִּיק]). Scholars have noted here allusions to the situation before Noah’s Flood (Gen 6:5-7:13). This observation goes beyond Ps 12 in explicitness and summarizes the general trajectory from Pss 3-14, in which David and his people are seen to be in conflict with an evil of ever more intensive and universal proportions.

Also linking up with our analysis of Pss 3-14 is the central role of wisdom, understood as insight into the nature of things and the behaviour that results from that. The wicked do “abominable deeds” (הִתְעִיבוּ עֲלֵיָהּ) precisely because of their practical atheism (14:1) – the affirmation which opens the entire psalm. They do not turn to God for their needs by “seeking him” (דָּרַשׁ אֶת-אֱלֹהִים) (14:2) and so depend instead on their “corrupt” ways (הַשְּׁחִיתוּ; 14:1) to get what they want. Despite God’s apparent tardiness in fulfilling his promises in Pss 1-2, namely

⁴⁶ For arguments in favour of God speaking until v. 6, see Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen*, 100.

that he would be “refuge” (מחסה) to the poor (עָנִי) (an interpretation of these promises in light of Pss 9-10; 12; and 13), the certainty that he will do is grounds enough for the wicked to be considered “fools” (נְבָלִים), without “understanding” (מִשְׂכִּילִים), and “without knowledge” (לֹא יָדְעוּ).

Finally, our psalm returns to another key theme from our collection: salvation from Zion (14:7). Zion, of course, is an important theme in the Bible as a whole. The context determines the nuances it has. If we want to assume that those who put our psalms in order intended us to read them through the lens of Pss 1-2, then Zion is the city of Messianic hope, the city where the promises of happiness will finally come to fruition when humanity is obedient to God’s revealed will and God’s king rules supreme. It is also the city from which the one who should be king has been driven out – out into the realm of darkness and evil, to identify with those who suffer from evil and to embody the correct response of faith, obedience, repentance, and prayer. Only so can he ascend the throne so that salvation will come out of Zion for all; only then can Israel truly rejoice (14:7).

C SUMMARY

I have sought to demonstrate that Pss 3-14 can and should be read from the hermeneutical perspective established by Pss 1-2, read as a two-fold unit, particularly in terms of the peculiar way in which Ps 2 transitions to Ps 3.

- The Psalter’s two opening psalms are concerned with a single subject matter, namely how to be happy; the following psalms portray a struggle for that happiness.
- The opening psalms are a promise that God will grant this happiness; the struggle for happiness in the following psalms is sustained by faith in that promise.
- Pss 1-2 make obedience to God’s revealed will and submission to his Davidically mediated rule the prescribe means of gaining that happiness; in the following psalms the individual figure struggling for happiness demonstrates his faith through his righteous demeanour and submission to God’s rule (because it is David who does so, that divine rule is not mediated). On the one occasion where he fails to do so (Ps 6), he demonstrates his faith through repentance. The condition for doing all of this is faith.⁴⁷
- Pss 1-2 are an exhortation to all humanity; in Pss 3-14 that exhortation is heard and responded to by one individual who stands in a

⁴⁷ Note how three of the four other “O how happy is ...” clauses in Book I are concerned with repentance (Ps 32:1: אֲשֶׁרִי נְשׁוּי־פֶשַׁע כְּסוּי תִּטָּאָה; v. 2: אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יִחַשֵׁב) and faith (Ps 40:5: אֲשֶׁרִי הִגֵּבֶר אֶשְׂרֵי־שָׁם יְהוָה מִבְּטַח־וֹ (יהוה לוֹ עֶז וְאֵין בְּרוּחֹוֹ רָמְיָהּ)). The fourth is for those who consider the “poor” (Ps 41:2 [1]: אֲשֶׁרִי מִשְׂכִּילִים אֶל־דָּל), the group that were of concern to David in Pss 9-10; 12; and 14.

multifaceted relationship to the rest of humanity: to those on the losing side of history he is a fellow human, betrayed kinsman, vanquished (foreign) king, socio-economic weakling; to the future recipients of the promise he is a fellow human, co-sufferer, intercessor, role model and teacher.

- Pss 1-2 set their promises against a backdrop of rebellion against them; the following psalms illustrate that rebellion on various levels: on the level of inner-Israelite kinship (the overwhelmingly predominant one: Pss 3-5; 7; 9; 10; 11; 13); on the level of international politics (Pss 7; 9-10); on the level of the human constitution per se (Pss 12; 14); on the level of David's struggle with himself (Ps 6).
- Pss 1-2 lack historical instantiation and personal identification – they are paradigmatic and attendant upon realization; the following psalms instantiate the paradigm "historically-figuratively" in the person of David himself, the root and measure of the lineage (see Kgs and Chron).
- The paradigms presented in Pss 1-2 are twofold: happiness attendant upon both obedience and submission; these paradigms are united in the historical-figurative David of the following psalms.

The great surprise is that the historical-figurative individual enacting the divinely instituted means for happiness is himself supposed to be part of that means. The subject of Pss 3-14 is the one anointed to mediate happiness in Ps 2. Furthermore, the one anointed to mediate happiness becomes like those he is supposed to mediate it to. How do we interpret that connection? The interpretation followed here is that David's experiences seem to fit him for the role: his persevering faith with its concomitant exemplary conduct, enacted in solidarity with those he is anointed to rule and protect, itself a process that amounts to enactment of his true human identity (Ps 8), are – from the perspective of the divine economy – necessary for him to become the divine son capable of mediating divine rule from Zion.⁴⁸ This calling for which David is being shaped is the theological horizon within which his experiences in Pss 3-14 should be interpreted. It also gives a particular perspective on the relationship of David and those suffers with, prays for, exhorts, and encourages: they will be his subjects when he experiences his final victory (cf. Pss 20-21). It also puts Zion into a particular perspective: it is the final destination of David and his people, the place of his future rule and centre of his kingdom. Finally, I have sought to demonstrate that the function of the linear (ABCDEF) and alternating

⁴⁸ Here, too, I believe we can find an analogy in the books of Samuel. There is a gap between David's anointing and the realization of that anointing in his ascension of the throne. Why? From the perspective of the editors of both Samuel and the Psalter, are all the events under Saul and Absalom historical accidents, archival material containing edificatory stories, or are they the culminative result of a divine plan?

(ABA'B'A''B'') arrangement of psalms either side of Ps 8 is to elaborate upon the nature and dimensions of the ordeal that David has to go through with and for the sake of his people.

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