

DAVID CAMERON RAY

Conflict and Enmity in the Asaph Psalms

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David Cameron Ray

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Asaph Psalms

Mohr Siebeck

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To my family and my forebears

Preface

*[...] aeterna pacta perpetuae salutis neglegant [...] quasi vero quemlibet inimicum hominem perniciosius sentiat quam ipsum odium, quo in eum irritatur, aut vastet quisquam perse-
quendo alium gravius, quam cor suum vastat inimicando.*

(St Augustine of Hippo, Confessiones, Liber 1, Caput 18)

My paraphrase: “[...] neglecting the eternal covenant of everlasting salvation [...] It is as if humanity senses that there is an enemy more destructive than its own hatred, or as if humanity could destroy the enemy even more completely than it destroys itself through that same hatred.”

This publication resulted from the pursuit of an eclectic mix of interests in Biblical Hebrew, Hebrew poetry, German studies, syntax, semantics, discourse analysis and, above all, the notion of the enemy. The enemy in the Psalter is a fascinating yet elusive figure, presented only through the subjective depictions of the psalmists in their contexts. Notwithstanding this limitation, the psalms as poetic texts are rich with semiotic, semantic and syntactic ambiguity and ripe for exploring power relations between the people, their opponents and their God. Having concentrated on Book III of the Psalter during graduate studies, the Asaph Psalms became the natural corpus for research. The dissertation combines a close reading of the Hebrew and Greek texts and a discourse analytical framework built on semantic roles with an eye to the process of conflict and the state of enmity. At examination, it was highlighted that narrativisation is evident in the dissertation. This publication then adds a further sub-chapter on the hermeneutic approach toward the Asaph Psalms as a collection and an Appendix outlining a theory on the possible semantic shift of an oblique yet prominent term, especially in the Asaph Psalms – nšh.

I would like to express my profound thanks to those who directly supported me in completing my doctoral dissertation. First, I am most grateful for the encouragement and gentle steering of my principal supervisor Rev. Dr Lindsay Wilson, who never gave easy answers but with great wisdom teased me into becoming a researcher, and for the constructive and helpful guidance of co-supervisor Rev. Dr Jill Firth and temporary supervisor Dr Andrew Malone. Second, my thanks to the faculty members, Anglican Institute supervisors, librarians, and Registry staff of Ridley College, Melbourne, who were patient with me as I struggled through theological and pastoral studies. Third, *einen ganz herzlichen Dank an meinen deutschen (noch besser, schweizerischen!)*

Doktorvater, Prof. Martin Leuenberger, for graciously facilitating and overseeing my research and involvement with the cohort of Hebrew Bible *Doktoranden* during my time at the University of Tübingen, Germany, in 2016 as well as its *Welcome Center für internationale Forschende* and the librarians at its *Theologicum*. Fourth, thanks to the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Studies (ANZATS) for the award for my first paper delivered at its 2019 Auckland Conference and for publishing it in its journal *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review*. Fifth, many thanks to my pastor and friend Rev. Dr Mark Durie for his frank feedback and lessons on writing with clarity and Lisa Neale for taking on the unenviable role of copy-editor. Sixth, I express great appreciation to my examiners, namely Rev. Dr David John Cohen (Vose Seminary, Perth, Australia), Rev. Dr David Firth (Trinity College, Bristol, UK), and Dr Beat Weber (Basel, Switzerland). In particular, Dr Firth's monograph *Surrendering Retribution* and Dr Weber's dissertation and numerous articles on the Asaph Psalms as well as his post-examination encouragement have inspired my research efforts. Finally, my profound appreciation for all at Mohr Siebeck for considering my dissertation for this series and for their guidance and patience during the editing process.

Many others supported me through this very difficult period in my life. First, my lecturers and tutors in the Department of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash University, Melbourne. Second, *noch einen ganz herzlichen Dank an Elke und Gunter aus dem Kreis Böblingen* for looking after me during my stays in Baden-Württemberg and fostering my understanding of German language and culture. Lastly, I am most grateful for the patient endurance of my family and friends and especially of my immediate family, Rev. Suzie Ray and children Grace and Lydia, who gave up so much family time to enable me to focus on my studies and to whom I firstly dedicate this publication.

As a final note, it is most fitting to also dedicate this thesis to my forebears, for it is about how future generations mirror their foibles. Yet each of my forebears demonstrated strong faith in very different ways as an example to follow: my father Peter and mother Hilary by supporting me as I gave it all up on a whim yet still believing in me; my paternal grandmother Phyllis for praying for me daily and grandfather Fred for his earnest trust in the betterment of things; my maternal grandmother Phyllis for her gentleness and patience and grandfather Teddy, who would have loved the opportunity to undertake study of the Hebrew Bible but instead had to build houses, including the one I sold to pay for my doctoral research. My forebears laid down their tools and left them for me to build a new house. And now I shall "stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools" (Kipling, *If*—).

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Abbreviations

ANES	Ancient Near Eastern Studies
AP	Asaph Psalms
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BDB	Brown, Francis, Samuel R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon. Oxford: Clarendon, 1977.
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
Bib	Biblica
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester
BN	Biblische Notizen
Books I–V	Books I–V of the Psalter
BR	Biblical Research
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
ExtTim	The Expository Times
ETR	Etudes Théologiques et Religieuses
EvT	Evangelische Theologie
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FAT II	Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HALOT	Köhler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner. The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HB	Hebrew Bible
HS	Hebrew Studies
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
HvTSt	Hervormde theologiese studies
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
Joüon	Joüon, Paul and Takamitsu Muraoka. A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew. Subsidia Biblica 27. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006.
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism

LHB	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LXX	The Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
MSA	Meddelanden fran Stiftelsens för Åbo Akademi Forskningsinstitut
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	VanGemenen, Willem A., ed. <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis</i> . 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
ÖBS	Österreichische Biblische Studien
OTE	Old Testament Essays
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studien
P1	Group 1 of the AP-Collection (Psalms 73–76)
P2	Group 2 of the AP-Collection (Psalms 77–81, 50)
P3	Group 3 of the AP-Collection (Psalms 82–83)
PRSt	Perspectives in Religious Studies
PrTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
R&T	Religion & Theology
RB	Revue biblique
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBM	Stuttgarter Biblische Monographien
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
SK	Skrif en kerk
StZ	Stimmen der Zeit
The AP-Collection	The Asaph Psalms treated as a collection of psalms
TynBul	Tyndale Bulletin
TZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
UF	Ugarit-Forschungen
UCOP	University of Cambridge Oriental Publications
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WiBiLex	Das wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to consider how conflict is depicted by the psalmists¹ in the Asaph Psalms, comprising Psalms 50 and 73–83 as a collection of the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. To accomplish this aim, this study focuses on relations between AP’s main characters (God, “the Collective”, and “the Opponent”)² and how those relations change in terms of the level of intensity of enmity. Definitions of key terms are warranted.

First, I define “the Collective” as the contemporary generation of the holy nation of Israel, chosen by God (cf. Exod 19:5; Deut 4:20). This national identity comprises different generations (i.e. ancestors, fathers, sons) across the phases of salvation history, including the exodus, wanderings, conquest, and

¹ I will refer to “psalmist” in the individual psalms and “psalmists” in the communal psalms. The purpose of this distinction is to emphasise the plurality of the voice of the speaker(s), rather than to assert that the respective psalm was actually written by one or multiple persons. I will also refer to both singular and plural psalmists with the pronoun “they” for the purpose of gender inclusivity. For similar reasons, I seek to avoid use of the third-person masculine singular pronoun to refer to God, using the term “his” in inverted commas and sparingly. For transparency, groups typically found in the Psalter such as “the enemy” and “the petitioners” are collectivised and referred to in the third-person singular, where necessary. The purpose of this distinction is solely to seek the avoidance of confusion, particularly when reference is made to, for instance, the psalmist and the persons for which they are purporting to write.

² Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms – Book Two: Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 169. Westermann refers to “the petitioner” as one of the main characters. I argue that the Collective corresponds with the petitioner, given the high concentration of collective psalms in the AP-Collection. See also Klaus Seybold, “Das ‘Wir’ in den Asaph-Psalmen: Spezifische Probleme einer Psalmgruppe” in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*, ed. Klaus Seybold and Erich Zenger, HBS 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1994), 145–147.

monarchies, which is labelled altogether “all-Israel”.³ Importantly, the AP-Collection is read from the standpoint of the Collective, as far as possible.⁴

Second, “Opponent” is defined herein as an entity which by act or attitude opposes the will and purpose of the beholder. This concept is not limited to foreign powers or identities and may include all-Israel or certain generations or sub-groups thereof.⁵

Third, “conflict” is defined as the active process of the power struggle between two entities that are not in right relationship with each other.⁶ “Enmity” is the status of that relationship, being a binary opposition of negation association in a temporal equilibrium. Accordingly, enmity is the state that exists between two entities that are in the process of conflict over a contested domain.⁷

One might briefly summarise AP as a compilation of mainly communal psalms in which the psalmists present conflicts between God, the Opponent, and the Collective in historical, wisdom, judgment, complaint and hymnal

³ An important feature of AP is the revision of the concept of “Israel” by the psalmists, limiting covenant promises to certain generations or regions of the monarchies. In particular, Psalm 78 redefines God’s people as “Judah”. See Kristin Weingart, “Juda als Sachwalter Israels: Geschichtstheologie nach dem Ende des Nordreiches in Hos 13 und Ps 78”, *ZAW* 127 (2015): 456, footnote 63. “The Collective”, constituted by God’s people as a collective noun, will be referred to with pronouns sparingly and, where necessary, with the third-person singular pronoun “it” and solely to avoid confusion with the plural use of the psalmists. In relation to the national identity of AP, see Walter J. Houston, “David, Asaph and the Mighty Works of God: Theme and Genre in the Psalm Collections”, *JSOT* 20 (1995): 111.

⁴ Marco Pavan observes a “*dialogic-choral* physiognomy” in Psalms 73–83. See Marco Pavan, “*He Remembered that They Were But Flesh, a Breath that Passes and Does Not Return*” (*Ps 78,39*): *The Theme of Memory and Forgetting in the Third Book of the Psalter (Pss 73–89)*, ÖBS 44 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 194. We will extend this dialogical concept to all AP. The role of the Collective in the reading of AP-Collection is discussed further in Section 2.4.

⁵ Cf. Karl-Johan Illman, *Thema und Tradition in den Asaf-Psalmen*, MDA 13 (Åbo: Stiftelsens för Åbo Akademi Forskningsinstitut, 1976), 31. The identity and character of the Opponent will be considered further in Section 2.2.2.

⁶ Cf. Thomas Diez, Stephan Stetter and Mathias Albert, “The European Union and Border Conflicts: The Transformative Power of Integration”, *International Organization* 60 (2006): 565.

⁷ Cf. Ioannis D. Evrigenis, *Fear of Enemies and Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 71. The concepts of conflict and enmity are considered further in Section 2.2.

forms.⁸ The origins of AP have been traced to a supposed “Ephraimite” tradition,⁹ which is transformed as the AP-Collection in a “Jerusalemite” context.¹⁰

This study engages with scholars who treat AP as a corpus on the basis that it has been authored, redacted, and compiled as a collection in MT.¹¹ Texts are compared to LXX where relevant. While the final form of the AP-Collection is largely accepted as is, its composition and order are tested through textual analysis of each AP individually, as sub-groups, and as a whole. The corpus of the AP-Collection is limited to specific psalms that have been identified in terms of Asaphite tradition and/or theme/motif within the Psalter.¹² The notion of the AP-Collection presupposes that the authors and redactors of AP played a critical role in a specific collection resulting in a “defacto interpretation” of its constituent psalms.¹³ The broad acceptance of the AP-Collection as a corpus supports this assumption.¹⁴

The main argument of this thesis is that the AP-Collection was carefully compiled with a distinctive shift in the degree of intensity of enmity between God, the Opponent, and the Collective, determined by exploring its different

⁸ Cf. Seybold, “Das ‘Wir’”, 150. Also see Beat Weber, “Der Asaph-Psalter – eine Skizze” in *Prophetie und Psalmen: Festschrift für Klaus Seybold zum 65. Geburtstag* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 119.

⁹ Harry P. Nasuti, *Tradition History and the Psalms of Asaph*, SBLDS 96 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25.

¹⁰ Ivan Engnell, *Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, trans. John T. Willis (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), 79.

¹¹ More broadly referred to by Nasuti, *Tradition History*, 56; Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch: Studies in the Psalter, III*, ed. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies, JSOTSup 233 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 35; David G. Firth, “Asaph and Sons of Korah” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman, III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 24, 26; Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters: Ein formgeschichtlicher Ansatz*, FAT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 90–103. Also as basis for diachronic development, Weber, “Der Asaph-Psalter”, 133–137.

¹² To use Davage’s analogy of the Psalter as a “garden of flowers”, this study considers only one “garden bed” with its own “paratext”. See David (fd Willgren) Davage, *The Formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms: Reconsidering the Transmission and Canonization of Psalmody in Light of Material Culture and the Poetics of Anthologies*, FAT II 88 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 392. The notion of “the AP-Collection” and particularly the approach to reading AP as a collection will be discussed further in Section 2.4.

¹³ Cf. Gregory R. Goswell, “Two Testaments in Parallel: The Influence of the Old Testament on the Structuring of the New Testament Canon”, *JETS* 56 (2013): 459–460.

¹⁴ Recent research on the AP-Collection presumes the existence of a collection. See Nasuti, *Tradition History*; Goulder, *Asaph and the Pentateuch*; Christine Brown Jones, “The Psalms of Asaph: A Study of the Function of a Psalm Collection” (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2009); Karl N. Jacobson, *Memories of Asaph: Mnemohistory and the Psalms of Asaph* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2017); Christian Gers-Uphaus, “Gott als wahrer אלהים und Retter der Armen: Psalm 82 im Korpus der Asafpsalmen”, *BZ* 63 (2019).

types and patterns of conflict. The aim of this study is to analyse the AP-Collection: first theologically through the lens of conflict and enmity at the level of each AP individually; secondly, by grouping AP based on discerned conflict patterns; and thirdly, as a unity by means of a configurative reading. The study shall examine my main proposition:

After attempting to pass blame for its plight onto God as well as vague external Opponents¹⁵ and past internal Opponents¹⁶ (Psalms 77–80), the Collective is confronted with key divine judgment oracles (Psalm 81 cf. Psalm 50),¹⁷ convicting it of its lack of faithfulness and its failure to trust in God’s covenant promises (Psalms 74–76 cf. Psalm 73 of the faithful individual). These oracles make it clear that all-Israel, both past and present and including the contemporary Collective, is complicit in its own suffering. In response to this realisation, the Collective shows true dedication and dependence on God by transferring to God full responsibility for dealing with heavenly and earthly Opponents (Psalms 82–83). The program of collective renewal enables the Collective to place its trust in God. God is expected to defend the Collective.

My research responds to Illman’s thematic and tradition-oriented study of AP. While denying that AP shares a common thematic thread or tradition, the most pertinent outcome of Illman’s study is that conflict is the only motif that pervades all AP.¹⁸ Illman also finds some unusual conflict patterns. First, the foreign nations serve as both an instrument of divine wrath against the people of God and an object of divine retribution for the benefit of the people of God.¹⁹ The distinction between the Opponent and Israel is blurred in the middle of the

¹⁵ By “external Opponent”, I mean an individual or group identified as having no part in covenant relationship with God, including (but not limited to) foreign peoples, nations, and their representatives. This designation is determined based on the absence of any textual evidence to support the deviant’s past or present entitlement to God’s covenant promises. Accordingly, it may include individuals or groups that are not specifically labelled as being “foreign”.

¹⁶ The “internal Opponent” is notionally Israel or part thereof, which is in both covenant relationship and conflict with God such that a state of enmity subsists. An example of both the concept of the internal Opponent and the splitting of Israel into parts occurs in Psalm 78, wherein the fathers of Ephraim are guilty of failing to take the testimony of God’s salvation to heart and pass it onto their sons (vv8–11, 56–58). Another example is the generation of wicked ones in Psalm 50 which is held out to have been subject to God’s ordinances and discipline (vv16–17). The key distinction between the internal and external Opponent then is that there is evidence of a past or present covenant relationship between the Opponent and God, at least in the psalmists’ eyes.

¹⁷ I present a theory on the displacement of Psalm 50 and, for the purpose of this study of the AP-Collection, reunite the psalm with its paired divine oracle in Psalm 81 in Section 7.4.

¹⁸ Illman, *Thema und Tradition*, 63; cf. Goulder, *Asaph and the Pentateuch*, 34; contra Jacobson, *Memories of Asaph*, 6. Illman refers to a *Streit-Strafe Motiv* (“motif of conflict and retribution”). I argue that the concept of retribution is subsumed by the motif of conflict.

¹⁹ Illman, *Thema und Tradition*, 34–35; cf. Beat Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen: Die Psalmen 73 bis 150 II* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 20–21.

AP-Collection. Second, the people of God themselves or a part thereof become the Opponent of God.²⁰ These insights are particularly interesting and have been broadly accepted.²¹

My approach is essentially a close reading of the text of AP through the lenses of conflict and enmity. Enmity is a state of opposing power relations between any two identities at a particular timepoint. These identities are in the process of resolving that difference by either reconciliation or destruction through conflict. Each psalm represents the perspective of a notional contemporary generation of Israel, the Collective, which shifts across the AP-Collection based on the generational setting of each psalm.

My analysis concentrates on binary oppositions between the main characters.²² The nature of relationships between the main characters of the Psalter are represented in a triangular form, comprising the binary relations between Opponent/Collective, Opponent/God, and Collective/God:²³

²⁰ The idea of Israel as Opponent of God challenges a tendency to limit enmity to internal or external enemies of Israel in psalms scholarship. For example, Alan J. E. Persaud, *Praying the Language of Enmity in the Psalter: A Study of Psalms 110, 119, 129, 137, 139 and 149* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 1–2.

²¹ For instance, Nasuti, *Tradition History*, 44; Goulder, *Asaph and the Pentateuch*, 20; Weber, “Der Asaph-Psalter”, 120; Jones, “The Psalms of Asaph”, 23.

²² Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Monique Layton (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 2:172. According to Lévi-Strauss, binary oppositions are used mythologically to resolve problems in a presented world.

²³ Hugo Goeke, *Das Menschenbild der individuellen Klagelieder: Ein Beitrag zur alttestamentlichen Anthropologie* (Bonn: Universität Bonn, 1971), 50. Goeke presents the idea of the contrasting of the weakness of the psalmist with the strength of the enemy as an expression of the expectation that God will act for the psalmist’s benefit as a classic rhetorical feature of lament.

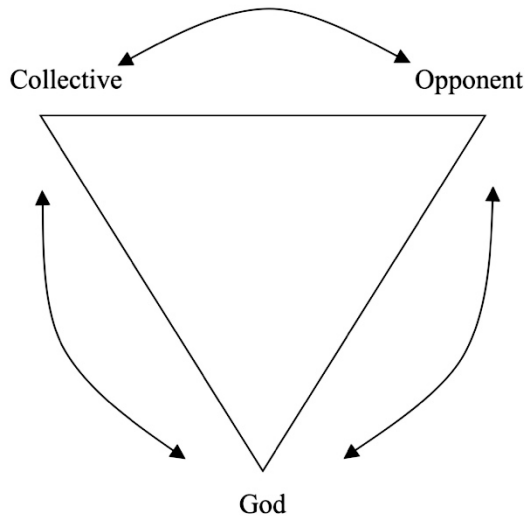


Figure 1: Proposed relational paradigm of binary relations

The text can be divided according to semantic roles of the main characters at discourse level.²⁴ These cognitive discourse roles²⁵ are then categorised based on whom is depicted as deviant or victim and on how God is called upon to wield divine power.²⁶

This process highlights both predictable and unusual patterns of conflict. For example, the contrast between the poor-weak Collective and the rich-strong Opponent or the subjugated Opponent and the retributory acts of God are conventional forms of conflict, which are prominent in what I define as the first group of the AP-Collection (Psalms 73–76). However, there is a notable change in the depiction of Israel in what I call the second group of the AP-Collection (Psalms 77–81 and 50), when the conflict between the “fathers” and “sons” of Israel becomes a key feature (e.g. Ps 78:8, 56 cf. Pss 78:9–11, 57–58; 79:8–9; 80:15–17). In contrast, Israel is less prominent in what I call the third group of the AP-Collection (Psalms 82–83), which concentrates on the ingathered heavenly and earthly Opponents of God. I argue that there is an overall conflict pattern in the AP-Collection that bears a striking resemblance to Ringgren’s characterisation of enemies in the Psalter:

²⁴ Cf. Teun A. van Dijk, “Semantic Discourse Analysis” in *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. Teun A. van Dijk (Cambridge: Academic Press, 1985), 115.

²⁵ Cf. Ray Jackendoff, *Foundations of Language: Brain, Meaning, Grammar, Evolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 420.

²⁶ Cf. Judith Krawelitzki, *Gottes Macht im Psalter*, FAT II 97 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

the opposition between the righteous and their enemies – whether they are called the wicked or something else – is lifted to a higher or metaphysical level related to the opposition between cosmos and chaos, or life and death, which [...] is so typical of the ancient Israelite view of life.²⁷

Ultimately, this study seeks to determine how the variegated forms of conflict and power relations deliver a sapiential collection for the Collective *ex post facto*.²⁸

1.2 Literature Survey

Much AP scholarship concentrates on areas other than conflict, particularly the nature of the Asaphite tradition and the function of the collection for a supposed postexilic community. This literature survey aims to demonstrate that the study of the different forms of conflict and the nature of enmity in the AP-Collection remains a gap in the literature.

1.2.1 *Composition, Traditions, and Collectivisation of AP*

Earlier AP literature is concerned principally with composition, form and dating of the psalms. Delitzsch finds a series of common characteristics in AP: the fact that constituent psalms are all found in the so-called Elohist Psalter; the use of prophetic judgments; primeval history and northern tribe (Joseph) references as synecdoche for the people of God. He also refers to the postexilic interest in a Davidic-appointed Levitical psalm tradition based on the Asaph-figure presented by the Chronicler.²⁹

Gunkel observes that AP shares a core of communal laments (Psalms 74, 79, 80 and 83).³⁰ However, Gunkel finds little purpose in the common AP titles given that all collections are canonically separated and manifest a range of different genres and mixed forms, mostly from the postexilic era.³¹

Schelling later observes a reliance on the Moses-Joshua tradition in AP including representations of key biblical events of the exodus, wanderings, and

²⁷ Helmer Ringgren, *The Faith of the Psalmists* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 46; cited in George W. Anderson, "Enemies and Evildoers in the Book of Psalms", *BJRL* 48 (1965): 29.

²⁸ Cf. Manfred Oeming, "Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Key to the Book of Psalms" in *Scribes, Sages, and Seers*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 161.

²⁹ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1888), 140–143; cf. Pavan, *Memory and Forgetting in Book 3*, 196–198.

³⁰ Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels zu Ende geführt von J. Begrich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933), 117.

³¹ Gunkel, *Einleitung*, 434–435.

conquest. He draws attention to the significant reliance on Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32, and texts relating to the dual character of God (Exod 34:6–7).³²

In more recent times, Pavan's study of Psalms 73–83 as part of broader research into the motifs of memory and forgetting in Book III of the Psalter confirms many of these common features. Pavan finds that Psalms 73–83 operate as a collection with a national interest in their own right "with a sequence generated by a fairly recognisable logic of reciprocal relations, capable of weaving a discourse of complete sense".³³ However, according to Pavan, this collection continues beyond AP to encompass the whole of Book III of the Psalter with the addition of the supposed voice of the משיח.³⁴

Another area of early interest in AP scholarship is the cultic provenance and Sitz im Leben of the collection. Mowinckel perceives a largely communal role for the Psalter in general and discerns a role for a supposed king-orator bearing divine and prophetic voices on behalf of the Collective.³⁵

Leveraging the idea that the Psalter has a communal role, Goulder attributes a cultic order to AP, seeking to establish a relationship between a hypothetical cultic setting and the Pentateuch. This nexus is based on his claim that a largely communal AP bears a "Deuteronomistic Vergeltungsdogma" of judgment in a preexilic northern setting.³⁶ Goulder claims that AP should be considered with a unified message:

God will judge the enemy for their iniquity and overthrow them; he will judge their gods for putting them up to it; and he will judge us if we do not obey his ordinances.³⁷

Goulder considers the image of Israel as the poor-needy followers of God. This image binds the collection together through "appeals to the divine covenant, in the face of a dire threat or series of threats."³⁸

Cultic approaches to AP have not been widely accepted. However, the search for a tradition behind AP has fostered some attention. Buss explores the composite role within the temple of prophet-singer-Levite. He finds that the Asaph-figure of the AP-Collection takes on the Deuteronomistic-informed role towards the "religious education of the people".³⁹ Buss does not refer directly

³² Pieter Schelling, *De Asafpsalmen: Hun samenhang en achtergrond* (Kampen: Kok, 1985), 52–87; cited in Weber, "Der Asaph-Psalter", 125. For a more recent study of the analogical reliance on the Song of Moses in AP in terms of its authority, liturgical form, and textual function, see Beat Weber, "Mose-Lied (Dtn 32,1–43) und Asaph-Psalmen (Ps 50; 73–83) Untersuchungen zu ihrem Verhältnis", *ZAR* 27 (2021): 45–47.

³³ Pavan, *Memory and Forgetting in Book 3*, 127–128.

³⁴ Pavan, *Memory and Forgetting in Book 3*, 186–188, 219.

³⁵ Sigmund Olaf Plytt Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship: Volume I*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 42–61.

³⁶ Goulder, *Asaph and the Pentateuch*, 31–32.

³⁷ Goulder, *Asaph and the Pentateuch*, 22.

³⁸ Goulder, *Asaph and the Pentateuch*, 22.

³⁹ Martin J. Buss, "Psalms of Asaph and Korah", *JBL* 82 (1963): 386.

to the works of the Chronicler.⁴⁰ However, Mitchell later extends this explanation to conflate the supposed Asaphite-Levite with the clan of Korah (1 Chr 25:9; 26:1), providing the basis for Mitchell's argument that postexilic Asaphite prophet-musicians played the role of "remembrancer".⁴¹

Illman refutes Buss' claim of a composite Asaph-figure. He also argues that there is no basis for a logical connection between the prophetic-judgment and lament psalms of AP and the praise hymnody of the Asaphite tradition in the works of the Chronicler.⁴² Illman defines a tradition as the combination of both *themes* as abstractions and *motifs* as concretions within the text.⁴³ Accordingly, he argues that AP are only connected by their common title as a loose collection of psalms of various forms.

Nasuti responds to Illman, leveraging the work of Engnell,⁴⁴ who claims that AP bears distinctive northern Israelite language and names with a "Jerusalemite spirit".⁴⁵ He critiques Illman's presumption of an absence of a socio-historical context in AP. Nasuti demonstrates idiosyncratic lexical links between most of AP and a distinctive "Ephraimite" tradition of the northern kingdom (including proto-Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea). This squares with Rendsburg's "northern dialect", including the use of Aramaisms in AP (e.g. Pss 73:8, 12; 76:3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13).⁴⁶ However, lexical links fall short of providing a convincing connection between the Asaph-figure/traditions in AP (mainly complaints and judgments) and the Chronicler (descriptive praise). The content of AP centres on the calling of Israel to covenant obedience and is presented from the Collective's (pre)exilic lament mindset. In contrast, the supposed inclusion of the Chronicler's work in "deutero-Asaph" (Psalms 96, 105 and 106 cf. 1 Chr 16:8–36) reflects only the praise of the Collective.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Buss, "Asaph and Korah", 385.

⁴¹ David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 91–93, 107.

⁴² Illman, *Thema und Tradition*, 25–29, 55, 64; cf. Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, WBC 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 2004), 363.

⁴³ Illman, *Thema und Tradition*, 15.

⁴⁴ Engnell, *Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, 79.

⁴⁵ Nasuti, *Tradition History*, 25, 50–51. Nasuti relies on his presumed conception of "Ephraimite" tradition throughout his monograph, however he does not clearly define the extent of this tradition from a biblical perspective (cf. Goulder, *Asaph and the Pentateuch*, 16).

⁴⁶ Gary A. Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms*, SBLMS 43 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 73–81; John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 2: Psalms 42–89*, ed. Tremper Longman III, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 401; cf. Weber, *Psalmen II*, 17. Rendsburg assumes that rare uses of certain terms in certain texts and the presumption of a geographic provenance of those same texts provides strong evidence for an idiolect. Davage challenges this assumption, noting that the use of textual patterns is typical of poetic texts (Davage, *Formation of the 'Book' of Psalms*, 15).

⁴⁷ Cf. Nasuti, *Tradition History*, 175.

Exploring the tradition behind AP opens the further question as to what the Collective represents. The identity of the original Collective of AP is one that arguably shifts in each individual psalm. Westermann observes that the Asaph and Korah collections are on the whole either laments or descriptive praise of the people, in contrast to Davidic collections of the individual.⁴⁸

Seybold demonstrates that AP are writings with an observable number of characteristics⁴⁹ that demonstrate the texts are written of the Collective in an exilic time yet contain a preconceived preexilic form.⁵⁰ He supports the view that the origins of AP stem from preexilic Judah, based on disparate internal evidence of God's dwelling in the temple.⁵¹

Seybold adds that AP is principally concerned with the interests of the Collective through what are mainly communal psalms. This claim is based on AP's overall theo-political interest in prophetic judgments, particularly through the flock-shepherd motif (Pss 74:1; 77:21; 79:9, 13; 80:2, 14; 83:13).⁵²

Weber extends the collective interest of AP to all of its psalms (cf. Pss 73:1; 77:21).⁵³ He advances a diachronic theory on the formation of AP as a collection, in which the dating of certain psalms and fragments result in a theoretical phasing of the forming of AP as canon. The key diachronic shifts of AP are: first, the insertion of Psalm 79 into AP, which is argued to be an exilic update of the original preexilic *Vorbild* Psalm 74;⁵⁴ and second, the displacement of Psalm 50 from its counterpart judgment Psalm 81 to straddle Korah and Davidic collections upon AP's incorporation into the Elohist Psalter.⁵⁵ This pre/postexilic understanding is underpinned by some assumptions about the original and later settings which contribute to the compilation of AP.⁵⁶

Weber also contributes other significant insights in his extensive writings about AP. For instance, he advocates for the notion that the original historical setting was a response to the fall of the northern kingdom.⁵⁷ Weber proposes

⁴⁸ Westermann, *Psalms* 2, 257–258.

⁴⁹ Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen*, HAT 15 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 8.

⁵⁰ Seybold, "Das 'Wir'", 145.

⁵¹ Seybold, *Die Psalmen*, 8.

⁵² Seybold, "Das 'Wir'", 145–147.

⁵³ Weber, "Der Asaph-Psalter", 119.

⁵⁴ Beat Weber, "Zur Datierung der Asaph-Psalmen 74 und 79", *Bib* 81 (2000): 523; cf. Millard, *Komposition des Psalters*, 91–92.

⁵⁵ Beat Weber, "Asaf / Asafiten / Asafpsalmen", in *Das wissenschaftliche Bibelllexikon im Internet* (Stuttgart: WiBiLex, 2008), 4; cf. Joel S. Burnett, "A Plea for David and Zion: The Elohist Psalter as Psalm Collection for the Temple's Restoration" in *Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Psalms in Real Time – Proceedings of the Baylor Symposium on the Book of Psalms*, ed. Joel S. Burnett, et al. (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 112. Burnett argues that the Elohist Psalter is analogous to Mesopotamian collections of laments over destroyed sanctuaries and anticipation of their rebuilding.

⁵⁶ Weber, "Der Asaph-Psalter", 127–139.

⁵⁷ Weber, "Der Asaph-Psalter", 131.

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