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1. SONG, RITUAL, AND WORSHIP

OT PSALMS represent certain types of liturgical literature, the generative matrix of which are various ritual processes (Mowinckel, *W* I/II). That is, psalmic texts and psalmody served the needs of a religious community. The origins of religious ceremonialism certainly lie hidden far back in prehistory. As Paleolithic funeral customs, artifacts, and pictographs reveal, people from the beginning have communicated with the superhuman beings that they have perceived within their own environment. Moreover, from the start of human existence, contacts with the Divine tended to become formalized. This process can still be observed throughout the world, especially among people living in tribal organizations. Superhuman powers, although varying conceptually from culture to culture, are universally part of human society. Because these powers can help or harm, social groups must establish appropriate patterns of behavior for the worshiper.

We may well surmise that human beings have always approached their gods by means of verbal as well as nonverbal communication such as gestures, offerings, and symbolic actions. Words and rites form a close-knit unity, yet language very probably was the decisive element in most ceremonies. The words employed would be carefully measured and guarded. And since the power of the word may be enhanced by intonation, musical elements such as song, instruments, and rhythm came naturally into most rituals. Most so-called primitive peoples sing their prayers (Bowra; Wyman and Kluckhohn).

With due caution, the vast material uncovered by anthropological and sociological research in religious ceremonialism can be used for comparison in psalm interpretation. In many respects, OT ritual procedure converges with general religious ritualistic practice. Anxieties and threats to life and well-being as well as joyful events prompt religious groups into seeking ritual contact with their respective deities. Dangers to the individual and perils to the whole group tend to merge together and are visualized as assaults by evil powers. They can be warded off only by the aid of superhuman allies. On the other hand, exuberant joy spreads whenever health and security seem to be granted or have been recovered, when a good harvest has been reaped, a healthy child born, or a victory won. Gratefulness to the friendly ones above will then be the cause of singing, offering, and feasting (Heiler).

The purpose, then, of most ritual activity is to secure and maintain the means of survival: food, shelter, medicine, rain, etc. On the surface, this definition seems to be purely materialistic. One should not forget, however, the psy-

chological, social, and spiritual dimensions of all worship. They are intricately tied up with material concerns. In all their undertakings human beings feel the need to communicate with those beings and powers that affect daily affairs. Life, in the fullest sense of the word, is thus the goal of all religious ritual.

Such an analysis, however, does not suggest any reduction of Israelite religious practice to a general ritual pattern. Each culture or social group with its respective rituals has a specific profile (Benedict; Turner). Pre-Israelite nomadic or sedentary groups adhered to tribal or clan deities (Alt, *KS;* Albertz; Vorländer). Later, tribal alliances and then the monarchy fostered a state religion (Bernhardt; de Fraine). Yet Israel, once established in the tumultuous age of immigration and settlement (cf. Judges 5), kept to Yahweh, the god of liberation, through her thousand-year history of political, social, and religious disruption. This faith became the very center of her spiritual life, the point around which families, clans, tribes, and the nation as a whole, even in dispersion, formed their institutions and ceremonials. The unique emphasis on Yahweh to the gradual exclusion of all foreign divine images and concepts became characteristic for OT faith. It is no contradiction to this statement to note that a great many Israelite ceremonies and religious rites were in fact adopted from earlier Canaanite beliefs and practices (Dussaud; Gray). The rites of the Yahweh community thus represent an authentic synthesis, forged in centuries of interpenetration, of nomadic Israelite and sedentary Canaanite traditions. The Canaanite elements, for their part, stand in close connection with Mesopotamian and Egyptian culture, to which one may add the influence of occasional Indo-European invasions.

2. ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CEREMONIALISM

The tombs, mounds, and temples of the ancient Near East have yielded a great amount of information concerning a variety of religious rituals and festivities. Priestly scribes committed to writing detailed prescriptions for conducting funerary services and incantations, coronation ceremonies and dedications, divinations and exorcisms, sacrifices and dream interpretations. Besides such primary accounts of ritual activities, there are many casual references in ancient Near Eastern myths and narratives, as well as figurative representations recovered by archaeologists (see Keel, *Bildsymbolik*).

Modern scholarship has paid close attention to state ceremonies centered upon the king. Official religion in Egypt was an exclusive affair of the pharaoh, who claimed to be the very son of god (Frankfort). In Mesopotamia, too, the royal head of state, representative of the highest-ranking god, exercised a central part in cultic practice (Kramer, *Marriage;* van Driel). It is not surprising, then, that OT research has concentrated, for example, on the Babylonian New Year and related festivals that seem to illuminate Israelite cult in general and the Psalms in particular (Mowinckel, *PsSt* II). The Babylonian king, or rather the royal high priest, was the central figure of a dramatic reenactment of creation. The king symbolically defeated the evil powers and, by performing the sacred marriage rite, secured fertility and well-being for the coming year (Thureau-Dangin; Kramer, *Marriage*). Some scholars have interpreted most ritual activities in the ancient Near East as reflecting those New Year rites. Others deny any all-pervasive influence of royal ideology, especially in the OT. (For a discussion of this problem, see Bernhardt; de Fraine; Lipiński, *Royauté*.) In any case, state-centered religion and cult was of great importance all around Israel and partly also within the people of Yahweh.

The theory that the royal cult came first in the ancient Near East, only to be democratized much later, is definitely incorrect, however. The evidence indicates that even the most royalist countries of the ancient Near East had religious rituals that served the daily needs of common people within their respective small social groups (Brunner-Traut, 129-44; Keel, *Bildsymbolik;* Mayer, 7-21). We thus find a good number of authentic lamentations and hymns of the individual all over the ancient Near East, indicating personal distress or joyful exuberance (Assmann; Caplice; Ebeling; Mayer). In this type of religious expression, the ideology of the state or of any other secondary social organization was originally absent (Vorländer; Albertz). Such ideology affected individuals only when personal prayers were linked with official religious institutions. In interpreting OT psalms and looking for analogies from neighboring cultures, then, we must be conscious of the prominence of small-group rituals, even in those highly centralized states.

3. REGULAR AND SPECIAL SERVICES IN ISRAEL

Israel's cultic history is long and complicated, comparable to that of the Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, or, for that matter, the Christian church. Deep social and cultural disruptions, however, make the cultic history of Israel particularly difficult to reconstruct. Early Israel followed seminomadic customs and traditions. Settlement in Canaan, practice of agriculture, consolidation of tribal organization, and similar factors brought about significant changes also on the level of faith and cult. The monarchy added its own religious weight to existing cultic practices. During exile and restoration Israel had to overcome the shock of national and religious disintegration. It had to find entirely new modes of religious organization. At all stages in its history of faith, Israel developed specific ritual patterns, always in the context of actual social structures and with an appreciation for its rich spiritual heritage. Social and ethnic stratification within Israel, however, complicates the picture. Moreover, OT evidence is fragmentary, which limits our knowledge of Israel's ceremonials and makes it hard to classify their cultic rites adequately. One feasible way of approaching the subject is to distinguish between regular and spontaneous rituals. Another approach is to analyze social structures, which I consider briefly in section 5 below.

Virtually all relevant OT texts presuppose Israel's settlement in Canaan, even those passages that describe the migrations of the patriarchs (cf. Gen

28:10-22, in which Jacob establishes a local sanctuary). Consequently, we are dealing mainly with ceremonials based in an agrarian and later in an urban society. They only occasionally reflect an earlier stage of seminomadic life. The most important feature of Israel's adaptation to Canaan was her adopting the cycle of regular, seasonal festivals with its system of sanctuaries, sacrifices, and rituals that was customary in that sedentary society. Israelite herdsmen did bring along their own traditions, but merged them freely with Canaanite rites. One seminomadic group, for instance, contributed to this composite its tradition of the sojourn in Egypt and the marvelous deliverance from the "house of bondage," with its Passover and blood rites (Exod 12:3-24). All this heritage was placed into the system of Canaanite agricultural feasts. Later OT cultic calendars (Exod 23:14-17; 34:18, 22-23; Deut 16:1-17) thus list three main festivals, all in the line of harvest commemorations, though with mixed seasonal and historical motivations and legends.

We do have some meager evidence of other regular ceremonial events during the course of the year, either of a national or a more regional character. The new moon very early was of particular religious significance (see Hos 2:13 [*RSV* 11]; 2 Kgs 4:23). The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) was apparently an independent festive occasion before it became incorporated into the cluster of autumn ceremonials. If there actually was at any time an annual enthronement festival or a covenant renewal (cf. Psalms 2; 110; Deut 31:10-11) it would also have been located within the seasonal cycle. Apart from these major, national occasions we may assume that local groups or sanctuaries were performing their special rites in accordance with the seasons of the year (see Gen 35:1-7; Judg 11:39-40; 21:19; 1 Sam 9:12). Certainly, however, the traces of many religious customs have been lost entirely.

Around the world, not all religious ceremonies follow the yearly cycle of the seasons. Some are attached to a wider rhythm of time, accompanying, as it were, the human life span. Van Gennep named them "rites of passage" because he considered them fundamentally picturing the spatial notion of crossing invisible borderlines between divine powers. In fact, in the OT as well, the life of the individual and the group was protected, from the cradle to the grave, by appropriate rites. They covered especially such turning points as birth, weaning, initiation, marriage, and death. Birth ceremonies included the act of naming (Gen 35:18; Ruth 4:14-17) and, at some time, redemption of the firstborn (Exod 34:19-20) and circumcision for eight-day-old males (Gen 17:11-12). At the age of three the young boy, just weaned from his mother's breast and on his way into custody of his father, received his first great feast (Gen 21:8; 1 Sam 1:24), presumably to be repeated at the age of initiation. Marriage marked the next great step in life (Judg 14:10-20), and funeral rites, its very end (Gen 50:1-14; 2 Sam 1:17-27; 3:31-35). These occasions included singing and reciting sanctioned poetry, and in some instances we may expect that psalm-type prayers were used.

Other OT rituals were independent of both the seasonal communal feasts

and the life cycle of the individual but yet were bound up with some kind of longer-term development. The anointing or coronation of a king could fall into this category (1 Kgs 1:33; 2 Kgs 11:4-5), as well as the dedication of a temple (1 Kings 8). Regular mourning rites (see Judg 11:39-40; the book of Lamentations) or other days of commemoration (see the superscription to Psalm 30) may also be examples.

Though partly overlapping with the ceremonies just mentioned, "spontaneous" rituals form a special group. Some momentous incident, either personal or community wide, may provoke a sudden desire to approach God in a cultic service. When disaster struck a community in Israel, a public fasting was proclaimed, and people would perform mourning rites, wail, pray, offer sacrifices, and wait for a signal of reassurance (see Jeremiah 14; Joel 1–2; Zech 8:19; 1 Kgs 21:9). Likewise, in cases of personal distress the individual would turn to Yahweh for help (see, e.g., Num 12:13; 2 Sam 12:16). In either case, correct rites had to be performed to ward off impending danger, to stop bad fortune, or to end temporary affliction. On the opposite end of human experience, equally unpredictable occasions led to overflowing exaltation. When victorious troops returned from battle (Exod 15:20-21; 1 Sam 18:7) and rich booty could be distributed (Judg 5:30; 1 Sam 15:9, 15), when a sick man was saved from certain death (Isa 38:9-20), or when someone lost at sea or in the wilderness was rescued (Jonah 2:1-10 [*RSV* 1:17–2:9]; Ps 107:4-9), there had to be a thanksgiving service for Yahweh, the savior of the helpless.

"Spontaneous" ceremony, then, is largely autonomous because it follows neither seasonal patterns nor biological growth. The necessity of the moment governs liturgical procedure. Such rituals, however, would not eliminate traditional elements, and the words spoken and actions performed in this setting would be anything but spontaneous. But the ceremony as a whole has a greater flexibility. Its exact composition very likely is an ad hoc decision of the officiant, who, in most cases, would be a specialist in ritual affairs.

4. THE GENRES OF CULTIC POETRY

We now turn to the main types of Hebrew psalmody as extant in their original environments. Our chief division will be between rituals that are regular or seasonal and those that are special or life spanning, such as those discussed above. Further bases of division, all the more important in the analysis of individual texts, are the group affiliations of the rites concerned and the strongest emotional force behind the cultic ceremonialism, whether joy or grief. It is clear that cultic poetry pervades all layers of OT literature (Albright; Cross and Freedman; Lipiński; Alonso Schökel). Form-critical research thus necessarily transcends literary boundaries.

Laments, complaints, and thanksgivings, either of individuals or larger communities, certainly occurred for the most part in special services, called ad

hoc before or after important events. After a full-scale catastrophe had fallen upon a family, city, or the nation, Israelites would sing a DIRGE or LAMENTATION (2 Sam 1:19-27; Lamentations 1–2; 4; Isa 14:4-21; Jer 22:18; Ezek 26:17-18). A type of psalm commonly called COMPLAINT OF THE INDIVIDUAL is also to be included here (see Psalms 3–7; etc.). In addition to those contained in the Psalter, other biblical and apocryphal books include specimens of complaints (Lamentations 3; Jer 15:10-21; 20:7-18; Job 9:25–10:22; 30:9-31; Sir 18:8-14; 22:27–23:6; Pss Sol 5:2-8; 16:6-15). When disaster threatened all the nation, a COMMUNAL COMPLAINT was sung by choirs or large assemblies (Psalms 44; 74; 89; Lamentations 5; Hos 6:1-3; Joel 1:18-20; Isa 59:9-15; 63:7–64:11 [*RSV* 12]; Jer 14:7-22). Complaint rituals in which the king himself took a leading part may be mirrored in Psalms 18 and 144.

THANKSGIVING SONG, on the other hand, was a response to help and salvation received from Yahweh. After God had intervened in one's favor, either by an ORACLE OF SALVATION or by materially changing the situation for the better, the supplicant would offer thanks and praise (see Psalms 30; 32; 40; 107; 116), as would the people after a victorious battle or some other joyful event (see Psalms 68; 124; 129). THANKSGIVING SONG and VICTORY SONG occur outside the Psalter and include Jonah 2:2-10 (*RSV* 1-9); Isa 38:10-20; 1 Sam 2:1-10; Judg 5:2-31; Exod 15:1-19, 21; Isa 12:1-6.

In the following sections I briefly discuss lament, complaint, and thanksgiving. In each case I list elements characteristic of the genre, without suggesting, of course, that all texts of that particular type must include all these items. Each individual composition is a unique liturgical piece. The order of typical components may be changed, even reversed, and some parts may be missing altogether, while others are stressed to such an extent as to modify the overall character of the psalm. Therefore, the lists of elements are general models only. Important variations will be pointed out in this introduction. Analyses and interpretations of individual psalms will show how generic components have been utilized.

A. Dirges, Laments

Israel, like the other nations of the ancient Near East, believed that death was, practically, the realm of no return. Somebody who had passed away, who had been overwhelmed by the shadow of death or swallowed by a greedy *šĕ'ôl*, had a distinctly different and inferior existence in the netherworld. The fate of destroyed cities, communities, and kingdoms was visualized similarly. After a final defeat in war, when everything was burned and the populace driven away into slavery, there was not much hope for reconstruction. These situations are the setting of DIRGE and LAMENTATION. These genres, in fact, are akin to each other. The lamentation over a destroyed city was probably developed from the personal dirge and in analogy to it (see "Introduction to Lamentations," FOTL XV). More important, both genres had a long history, even in pre-Israelite times. To our knowledge the Sumerians first performed mourning rites because of a

fallen city (Kramer, *Lamentation*). They likewise employed *gala* (later *kalû*) priests, specialists in mourning rituals.

In the OT we recognize the following main components of dirge and lamentation:

Expressions of moaning and wailing (usually introduced by exclamations such as "Ah!" "Alas!" "How . . . !"; Jer 22:18; 34:5; 2 Sam 1:25, 27; Lam 2:1; Amos 5:16; Ezek 19:1)

Description of catastrophe (2 Sam 1:19, 25; Lam 1:1-6; Amos 5:2; Isa 14:4-21, an ironic lament!)

Reference to former bliss or strength (2 Sam 1:22-23; Ezek 27:33; Isa 14:13-14)

Call to weep and wail (2 Sam 1:24; Lam 2:18; Isa 14:31)

Subdued plea (Lam 1:20-22; 2:20)

Dirges and lamentations have a characteristic poetic meter. Each line has five stressed syllables. Modern exegetes since Budde therefore call it the *qînâ*, or "dirge," rhythm. Accompanying rites for the most part were of a masochistic type—rending of clothes, putting on sackcloth, self-flagellation, etc. (Kutsch). But the crucial issue concerning these genres is their relationship to the Yahweh cult. Most scholars believe that mourning consisted of totally profane rites only, which may be true with regard to funeral customs in the strict sense. Yahweh, in early Israelite thought and experience, had nothing to do with the netherworld (Pss 6:6 [*RSV* 5]; 88:11-13 [*RSV* 10-12]). But the book of Lamentations clearly shows that laments could be directed toward Yahweh. This focus seems reasonable, because mourning rites nowhere in the world are the exclusive property of the dead. They also tend to speak to the survivors of death and catastrophe. The mood, then, is different from that of complaint psalms (cf. 2 Sam 1:19-27; 3:33-34; Amos 5:1-3; Ezekiel 19; Jahnow). But there can be a tinge of hope notwithstanding, a subdued petition even in mourning songs. These elements enhance the chances of the living. To be sure, in the OT Psalter itself we find neither genuine dirge nor lamentation, but their influence upon the extant texts can be detected (see Pss 35:13-14; 44; 74).

B. Complaints

A COMPLAINT, either individual or collective, was articulated when the final blow had not yet fallen, when there still was time to argue a case before Yahweh. Whether one person was suffering from a severe illness or bad luck or whether the larger community was plagued by enemies, draught, pestilence, or some other dangerous evil, Yahweh had to be consulted and asked for immediate help. We may assume that afflicted people in Israel tried everything in their power to cope with their disastrous situation. As a last resort they came to Yahweh. "Asking" *(š'l)* or "seeking" *(drš)* the Lord for guidance certainly preceded the

actual complaint ritual (see 1 Kgs 14:1-3; Judg 20:23). Afterwards, Yahweh had to be entreated in a manner suggested by a prophet or a singer.

Israel's neighbors, especially the Babylonians and Assyrians, also employed the plaintive prayer, and we know well from their ancient records that their prayer songs were connected with all kinds of offerings and magical rituals (Ebeling, "Handerhebung"; Caplice; Jacobsen, "Religious Drama"). For example, the burning of statues or effigies of the enemy or the bewitching of demonic powers by means of a burning light or a green cucumber played an important role in Mesopotamia. Israel's psalms also tell about lustrations and offerings, without giving many details. But apparently no elaborate magical system had been developed to accompany the rites of petition.

In complaint psalms we recognize the following basic elements (cf. Gunkel and Begrich, 212-50; Mowinckel, *W* II, 9-11):

Invocation (appellation and initial plea or petition; Pss 28:1-2; 31:2-5 [*RSV* 1-4]; 54:3-5 [*RSV* 1-3]; 83:2 [*RSV* 1]; 88:2-3 [*RSV* 1-2]; 102:2-3 [*RSV* 1-2])

Complaint (descriptive, reproachful, petitionary; Pss 22:2-3, 7-9, 13-19 [*RSV* 1-2, 6-8, 12-18]; 35:7, 11-16, 20-21; 38:3-15 [*RSV* 2-14]; 102:4-12 [*RSV* 3-11])

Confession of sin or assertion of innocence (Pss 7:4-6 [*RSV* 3-5]; 26:4-6; 38:19 [*RSV* 18]; 51:5-7 [*RSV* 3-5])

Affirmation of confidence (Pss 22:4-6, 10-11 [*RSV* 3-5, 9-10]; 31:7-9 [*RSV* 6-8]; 56:4-5 [*RSV* 3-4]; 71:5-7; and the "Psalms of Confidence," e.g., Psalm 23)

Plea or petition for help (Pss 7:7-10 [*RSV* 6-9]; 17:6-9; 35:1-3, 17, 22-24; 51:9-14 [*RSV* 7-12]; 69:14-19 [*RSV* 13-18]; 143:7-11)

Imprecation against enemies (Pss 5:11 [*RSV* 10]; 35:4-8, 19, 25-26; 69:23-29 [*RSV* 22-28]; 109:6-20, 27-29)

Acknowledgment of divine response (Pss 6:9-11 [*RSV* 8-10]; 22:22 [*RSV* 21; MT = "you answered me"]; 56:10 [*RSV* 9]; 140:13 [*RSV* 12])

Vow or pledge (Pss 7:18 [*RSV* 17]; 56:13 [*RSV* 12]; 109:30)

Hymnic elements, blessings (Pss 5:5-7 [*RSV* 4-6]; 22:4 [*RSV* 3]; 59:6 [*RSV* 5])

Anticipated thanksgiving (Pss 22:23-27 [*RSV* 22-26]; 31:20-25 [*RSV* 19-24]; 69:31-37 [*RSV* 30-36])

For the most part, these elements are highly formalized in their language and are developed at different lengths in the prayer. The INVOCATION usually mentions the name of Yahweh; very often it is expanded to include initial plea, complaint, adoration, or affirmation of confidence. Invocation is thus an overture to establish contact with Yahweh, the savior-god. A COMPLAINT pictures the plight of the supplicant, sometimes in drastic words and metaphors, to remind Yahweh of his responsibilities. Some of the imagery employed may go back to very old, pre-Israelite and mythological conceptions (cf. wild beasts, sorcerers, and evildoers in Psalms 22; 59; and 91).

CONFESSION OF SIN or ASSERTION OF INNOCENCE tries to clear the past in the presence of the just God who sees everything. Occasionally this part becomes the dominant theme of a whole psalm (e.g., Psalms 51 and 26, respectively). Likewise, AFFIRMATION OF CONFIDENCE, designed to recover a beneficial relationship to Yahweh, can prevail in some texts practically to the exclusion of other elements (e.g., Psalms 4; 11; 16; 23; 62; 131). ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF DIVINE RESPONSE, on the other hand, seems to refer back to an ORACLE OF SALVATION, which, as a matter of fact, rarely occurs within the Psalter (cf. Pss 12:6 [*RSV* 5]; 35:3; 91:3-13) but has been recognized principally in Deutero-Isaiah (cf. Begrich; von Waldow; Schoors; FOTL XVII). Likewise, VOW and ANTICIPATED THANKSGIVING are reactions to the assurance of divine help experienced during the worship ceremony. Various hymnic elements and blessings, however, may serve as responses to Yahweh's intervention as well as means to provoke God's action (Gerstenberger, *Mensch*, 128-30).

Most of all it should be plain from our structure analysis that PLEA or PETITION for help, together with its negative counterpart IMPRECATION against enemies, forms the very heart of a complaint song. There is hardly one pertinent psalm (only Psalm 88 comes close) that omits this central element. In fact, all the other elements can be interpreted as preparing and supporting the petition (Gerstenberger, *Mensch*, 119-27). For this reason some scholars want to change the genre label into "prayers of petition" (Beyerlin, 153ff.; Heinen; Kraus, I, 39-40, 49-60). The reasons for suggesting such a change of name are sound. But if we remember that complaints always try to change a situation of injustice and misery for the better and that they normally include petitionary elements, we may well retain the more traditional name. Israel did not rely merely on pleas, nor did it simply lament while in need, but also ventured to remind Yahweh of his divine responsibility with regard to the suffering.

We know little about the exact use of individual complaint psalms, but we do have some evidence from outside the Psalter as to their ritualistic setting. Leviticus 13–14; Num 5:11-31; and Deut 17:8-13 refer to certain rituals before the priest. Such ceremonies possibly included prayers, as they certainly included sacrifice. Prophetic cures (Num 12:9-15; 1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:27-37; 5:1-19; Isaiah 38), on the other hand, definitely included prayer as well as other ritual acts. Only in the case of Isaiah 38, however, do we find a full-fledged psalm quoted in the context, and this psalm, formally speaking, leans more toward thanksgiving (Isa 38:10-20; but cf. Psalms 22; 31; 69). The same is true for Jonah 2, the other psalm quoted in a narrated situation of individual distress. Finally, the book of Job records a sufferer's petition (see Job 5:8; 8:5-6; 11:13-

14) and even hints at a ritual process indicated in case of a god-given disease or misfortune (Job 33:14-30; cf. Ross; Seybold, 60-62, 91-92). Extrabiblical evidence includes, e.g., the practices of the Babylonian incantation priest *(mašmasû)* or, for that matter, the activities of medicine men or priests/pastors in their respective societies, when trying to help individuals. Summing up all this scattered information, we may conclude that individual complaints belonged to the realm of special offices for suffering people who, probably assisted by their kinsfolk, participated in a service of supplication and curing under the guidance of a ritual expert (Gerstenberger, *Mensch,* 134-60). The liturgies of such offices very likely would vary a good deal from place to place and throughout the centuries. It is important to note that individual petition rituals were apparently independent of local shrines.

The INDIVIDUAL COMPLAINT constitutes the category of song used most extensively within the Psalter. I adopt Gunkel and Begrich's list (p. 172) with slight modifications: Psalms 3–7; 11–12; 13; 17; 22; 26–28; 31; 35; 38–39; 42–43; 51; 54–57; 59; 61; 63–70; 71; 86; 88; 102; 109; 120; 130; 140–143. Mowinckel altered his own classifications a good deal between his *PsSt* I of 1921 (pp. 122-23) and his *W* II of 1962 (pp. 1-25; originally published in 1951). The catalogs of Westermann (*Psalter,* 47) and Kraus (I, 56-57) coincide closely with that of Gunkel and Begrich, as do the enumerations of Sabourin (II, 5) and Weiser (p. 66), although they are shorter than Gunkel and Begrich's.

Communal complaint rituals stand out a little more clearly in OT narrative and prophetic contexts. With a grave danger at hand (disease, drought, plague, invasion), a special day of fasting, mourning, sacrificing, and prayer would be called, probably at a sanctuary (Josh 7:6-9; Judg 20:26-28; 1 Kgs 8:33-36, 44-45; Jonah 3:5-10; Hos 6:1-3; Jeremiah 14; Isa 63:7–64:11 [*RSV* 12]; Joel 1–2; etc.). Westermann indicates these pure examples of the genre: Psalms 44; 74; 79–80; 83; 89; Sabourin: Psalms 44; 60; 74; 79–80; 85; 90; 123; 137; Hayes: Psalms 12; 44; 58; 60; 74; 79–80; 83; 90; 137; while Gunkel and Begrich (p. 117) have the following specimens of the category in question: Psalms 44; 74; 79–80; 83; Lamentations 5; with parts of other psalms, including 60; 68; 77; 85; 89–90; 94; 123; 126; 129; Lamentations 1–2, entering into consideration. The lists above are but a small sample of current genre classifications, but they do give a good impression of concordance and divergence among form critics.

C. Thanksgivings

A THANKSGIVING SONG was promised by the suppliant at the height of distress and delivered when salvation had occurred or was in sight. Occasionally this *tôdâ* (originally "sacrifice offered in gratitude" and then "song of praise" that used to accompany such offering; cf. Westermann, *THAT* I, 679-80), or prayer of adoration, praise, and gratitude, is compared favorably to bloody sacrifice (see Ps 51:17-18 [*RSV* 15-16]). The genre breathes joy and exuberance, festive gratitude in the midst of a crowd of invited guests (Ps 22:23, 26

[*RSV* 22, 25]).) The dark background of danger and misery is now left behind. The main elements of the song are the following (cf. Gunkel and Begrich, 265-92; Mowinckel, *W* II, 32-42; Crüsemann, 210-84):

Invitation to give thanks or to praise Yahweh (Pss 30:2, 5 [*RSV* 1, 4]; 34:2-4 [*RSV* 1-3]; 118:1-4)

Account of trouble and salvation (Pss 18:4-20 [*RSV* 3-19]; 32:3-5; 40:2-4 [*RSV* 1-3]; 41:5-10 [*RSV* 4-9]; 116:3-4; 118:10-14)

Praises of Yahweh, acknowledgment of his saving work (Pss 18:47-49 [*RSV* 46-48]; 30:2-4, 12-13 [*RSV* 1-3, 11-12]; 40:6 [*RSV* 5]; 92:5-6 [*RSV* 4-5]; 118:14, 28-29)

Offertory formula at the presentation of sacrifice (Pss 118:21; 130:2; 138:1-2; Isa 12:1)

Blessings over participants in the ceremony (Pss 22:27 [*RSV* 26]; 40:5 [*RSV* 4]; 41:2 [*RSV* 1]; 118:8-9)

Exhortation (Pss 32:8-9; 34:10, 12-15; 40:5; 118:8-9)

After Gunkel, Crüsemann's study most clearly distinguished the linguistic forms and the accompanying rites in individual thanksgivings. The genre employs two basic modes of speech: on the one hand, direct address of Yahweh, that is, prayer language in the strict sense. This type of discourse can be found principally in the components PRAISE OF YAHWEH and OFFERTORY FORMULA. On the other hand, thanksgiving includes a good deal of proclamatory speech directed to bystanders or participants in the ceremony. This type of discourse abounds in the invitation to give thanks, the account of trouble and salvation, and the blessings. Direct praise of Yahweh, the Savior, and offertory formula are the vital center of individual thanksgiving. They possibly are the most ancient kernel of the genre. "I give thee thanks" means exactly "I am handing over to you my thank offering" (see Pss 52:11 [*RSV* 9]; 57:10-11; 86:12; 118:21; 138:1-2). The twofold orientation of the whole psalm corresponds to later liturgical use. The person saved or cured, in fulfillment of vows, was in the midst of the ceremony. That individual gave the feast to friends and neighbors (see 2 Sam 15:7-11; Ps 22:23 [*RSV* 22]; Lev 7:11-21) and, too, had to recite the adequate prayers, the cult expert only playing the role of an advisor and, at certain points, master of ceremonies (1 Sam 9:12-13, 22-24). Even the priest, who took over in later times, was restricted to executing certain blood rites (Lev 7:14).

The affinity of the thanksgiving song to the hymn proper is quite obvious. Except for the flashback on trouble and salvation, the elements of thanksgiving can be found in general songs of praise also. No doubt there was a certain interchangeability of these two genres in liturgical use. Clear examples of thanksgiving songs are, according to Crüsemann (p. 216): Psalms 30; 32; 41; 66B; 118; 138; Isa 38:10-20; Jonah 2:3-10 (*RSV* 2-9); Sir 51:1-12. Gunkel and

Begrich (p. 265n.2) would add to this list Psalms 18; 34; 40:2-12 (*RSV* 1-11); 92; 116; Job 33:26-28; Psalms of Solomon 15; 16; Odes of Solomon 25; 29. Other scholars generally agree with the basic group of thanksgiving songs given by Crüsemann (cf. Mand; Sabourin, II, 111; Hayes, 85-95; Westermann, *Psalter,* 61). There was a tendency, however, to include many of the complaint psalms as thanksgivings, under the hypothesis that complaint often served as recapitulation of passed calamity in order to assure restitution into the religious community (cf. Weiser, 84; Seybold, *Gebet,* 95-98). I cannot agree with this interpretation.

The communal variety of thanksgiving is much debated among OT scholars (see Mand; Crüsemann, 155-209). Especially Crüsemann denies the existence of a special thanksgiving genre for the community at large. He claims that form elements are missing that would indicate an ad hoc thanksgiving situation and for him uninterrupted hymn singing was a normal cultic activity in Israel (see von Rad, I, 369-70). We cannot eliminate, however, the fact of special thanksgiving services in the OT on formalistic or dogmatic grounds. Israel's victory celebrations are a point in question (Exod 15:1-19, 21; Judges 5; 1 Sam 18:7; Psalm 68). Furthermore, at least Psalms 66, 67, 124, and 129 show some signs of specific thanksgiving rites of national dimensions (cf. Gunkel and Begrich, 315-23). For these reasons I view communal thanksgiving, too, as a distinct genre in the Psalter.

D. Songs of Praise (Hymns)

Later collectors named the Psalter *sēper tĕhillîm,* "book of hymns," because of the impressive representation of various types of praises. Taken as a whole, these hymns balance complaints and thanksgivings. In discussing Israel's songs of praise, however, we are entering into the field of seasonal and life-span rituals.

Thematically speaking, OT hymns are expressions of praise to Yahweh alone. He has proven himself to be a benevolent Lord to Israelite farmers, citizens, and the state itself. He is therefore extolled in large and festive assemblies (Exod 23:14-17; Amos 5:21-23; 2 Sam 6:1-5; 1 Kgs 3:4; 8:2-11; Isa 26:1-6; Neh 12:27-43). Yahweh, in fact, is the sole and real subject of praise, even if the hymn seems to glorify intermediate things or persons. Manifold are the topics that are taken up in songs of praise. Yahweh is the creator and sustainer of heaven and earth, whose works are wondrous and whose qualities are unsurpassed (Psalms 19A; 104; 139; 147–148). The human race, Yahweh's unique creation, is itself a work of wonder (Psalms 8; 144:3-4). The Lord of Hosts has tended his people, Israel, so his historical deeds call for admiration (Psalms 68; 78; 100; 105; 114; 135–136). His power is superior to all possible potencies (Psalms 29; 113; 145); in fact, Yahweh is celebrated as the universal overlord, the heavenly great king (Psalms 24; 47; 93; 96–99). Yahweh has chosen an outstanding site for his personal residence, Mount Zion, and with it the city of Jerusalem (Psalms 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122; 132). The Davidic dynasty is to represent Yahweh on earth (Psalms 2; 20–21; 45; 72; 89; 110; 132; 144). In later times the Word of God in its written form also became the subject of praise (Psalms 19B and 119; cf. much older Psalm 29).

There is, indeed, a wide spectrum of ideas and themes in OT hymns. Life itself had proven to the Israelites that Yahweh's praiseworthy actions could be discovered in many places and should be responded to in many festive ways. Sumerian, Akkadian, and Egyptian hymns show that Israel took part to a certain extent in a common ancient Near Eastern tradition of hymnic poetry and festive ceremonialism. Even more, the praise of the deity may ultimately be rooted in prehistoric beliefs that held it necessary to strengthen the benevolent gods over against their opponents. Nevertheless, Yahwistic hymnology turned out to be a vigorous vehicle sui generis of Israel's faith. To this day it has not lost its contagious force, provoking ever new songs of praise all over the world (cf. Cardenal; Negro spirituals; Gerstenberger, *New Song*).

The main elements of an OT HYMN are the following (cf. Gunkel and Begrich, 32-116, 140-71; Mowinckel, *W* I, 42-192; Westermann, *Praise,* 116-51; Crüsemann, 19-154, 285-306):

Calling on Yahweh (Pss 8:2 [*RSV* 1]; 65:2-3 [*RSV* 1-2]; 139:1)

Summons to praise, call to worship (Pss 33:1; 34:4 [*RSV* 3]; 47:2 [*RSV* 1]; 95:1-2; 96:1-3; 98:1; 100:1-4; 105:1-3)

Praise of Yahweh because of his works, deeds, and qualities (Pss 8:3-9 [*RSV* 2-8]; 19:8-11 [*RSV* 7-10]; 46:5-8 [*RSV* 4-7]; 47:3-10 [*RSV* 2-9]; 96:4-6; 103:3-19)

Blessings, wishes (Pss 29:11; 65:5 [*RSV* 4]; 67:2, 7-8 [*RSV* 1, 6-7]; 85:5-6, 13 [*RSV* 4-5, 12]; 104:33-35)

As in lament, complaint, and thanksgiving, the elements of a hymn are not uniformly represented in every given text of this genre. The first component, CALLING ON YAHWEH, is very often missing. When it does occur it usually lacks the ornamental epithets so common in Babylonian hymns (but cf. Ps 18:3 [*RSV* 2] for an example of fairly grandiose hymnic language). Most texts, in fact, start out with a SUMMONS TO PRAISE. It very likely was issued by a song leader or choir. Many hymns close with such an element, calling the congregation to join in (more?) singing and playing. The body of the hymn, consisting of praises of Yahweh, contains a glorification of him.

Form critics do overreach themselves if they try to discriminate several types of hymns merely on formal grounds. I thus follow neither Westermann's distinction of declarative and descriptive songs of praise nor Crüsemann's imperative, participle, and direct-address hymns. Rather, classification of hymns should be determined by their respective life situation, that is, by their liturgical and ceremonial framework. It is useful, however, to note the different hymnic styles that, to my mind, never formed distinct genres, in order to learn more about the ritual background of each text. The PRAISE OF YAHWEH, for example,

is often articulated in solemn participles: praiseworthy is Yahweh, he who did . . . , he who made . . . , he who saved . . . (Pss 103:3-5; 136:4-17). This pattern without doubt favors a litany type of presentation of God's greatness to the community. But less refined statements using finite verbs or substantive clauses were also in order (Pss 100:5; 111:2-10). A freer narrative style is recognizable in Psalms 78, 105, and 106. On the other hand, it seems important to recognize the direct-address praise (cf. Psalms 8; 104:1-9), articulated with or without participles, as part of some offertory ritual.

BLESSING and WISH, for their part, play a minor role within OT hymns. Strange to us are those formulas that, according to very ancient custom, call a blessing upon Yahweh himself (e.g., *bārûk yahweh*, "blessed be Yahweh," Pss 68:20; 72:18-19; 106:48; 135:21; 144:1). In OT times there was nothing magical to this formula (Towner); it simply means "hailed be Yahweh." Otherwise, blessings and wishes in hymns aim at sustained and heightened well-being for the community and sometimes correspondingly at the destruction of enemies.

The ritual framework for most hymns seems to have been some regular festival of seasonal or dynastic origin (Exod 34:18, 21-23; Deut 26:1-11; 2 Sam 6:1-5; 1 Chr 16:7-43). The hymns themselves often refer to liturgical details, and the very structure of some hymns suggests a responsive presentation (see Psalm 136). Naturally, instruments provided melody and rhythm for holy dances (e.g., the harp in Pss 57:9 [*RSV* 8]; 92:4 [*RSV* 3]; the timbrel in Exod 15:20; Ps 149:3; and lute, pipe, cymbals, and other instruments in Ps 150:3-5. Choirs sang (Pss 66:1-12; 67; 95:1-7), and the people responded with "Hallelujah" (Pss 105:45; 106:1) or "Amen" (Ps 89:53 [*RSV* 52]) or with a short refrain (Pss 117:2; 118:1-4; 136). First musical notes have recently been unearthed in Ugarit; they give an idea of ancient Near Eastern cult melodies (cf. Draffkorn Kilmer; also in *IDBSup*, 610-12). A joyful service in the ancient world was a noisy affair. The assembly would break out in deafening shouts (Pss 42:5 [*RSV* 4]; 95:1-2; Amos 5:23). Processions moved to and fro around the holy place (Pss 24:7; 48:13-14 [*RSV* 12-13]; 68:25-26 [*RSV* 24-25]). Women musicians sometimes took a leading part (Exod 15:20; Judg 11:34; Ps 68:26 [*RSV* 25]). Tribal leaders and other dignitaries were outstanding figures in the crowd (Pss 68:28 [*RSV* 27]; 87:4-7; 132:1, 11, 17). In short, those festive occasions with their beautiful services to the Lord (Ps 27:4) were colorful events, and everything, including sacrifices, dancing, shouting, and merrymaking, was done in a grand style. Here was a chance for hardworking peasants to forget their sorrows and lift up their spirits to Yahweh (see 1 Samuel 1).

Some of the OT hymns clearly point to worship services that focused attention on individual persons, the way Christian or Jewish offices or any other "Rites of Passage" (van Gennep) do. That is, the individual by no means is pictured as an isolated being, engaged in a sort of divine soliloquy. On the contrary, the person experiences close communion with a fairly large but familiar group, much more so than in complaint ceremonials. Thus Pss 8:2, 10 (*RSV* 1, 9); 103:10; etc. witness to the presence of a community that takes active part in

rejoicing and adoration. Relevant texts of this genre are Psalms 8; 77; 103–104; 111; 139; 145–146 (cf. Crüsemann, 285-304). The identification of a HYMN OF THE INDIVIDUAL will be very important in our discussion below of social setting. I note here that the peculiar style of direct-address praise of Yahweh found frequently (though not exclusively) in this genre permits some conclusion in regard to ritual procedure. The person sponsoring a worship service of pure rejoicing has to communicate directly with Yahweh through recitation of an adequate song of praise, the same basic situation we met in thanksgiving songs. In a hymn of the individual a person praises, as it were, Yahweh's greatness because of some high point of his or her own biography.

E. Royal Psalms

Customarily in psalm research since Gunkel (see Gunkel and Begrich, 140-71) and Mowinckel (see *PsSt* II), the so-called ROYAL PSALM is singled out as a separate genre. The basic assumption, at least with Mowinckel and his followers, is that the state cult in Israel was primary. For these scholars, popular forms of worship derive from royal ritual. In other words, they believe in a slow process of democratization of cult practices (Mowinckel, *W* I, 78ff.). I argue that just the opposite occurred. Prayer rituals were used, long before any kind of kingdom existed, within and for the benefit of small groups. Only much later did developing tribal and state societies formalize their own ritual systems, more often than not on the basis of small-group ceremonies. In this view, royal ceremonialism is ultimately an adaptation of popular rites and prayers to the needs of the court.

The royal psalms, then, fit into the common categories of complaint and thanksgiving (Psalms 18; 89; 144), of which INTERCESSION is an apt modification (Psalms 20 and 21), and of hymns for a number of specific occasions. There are coronation hymns (Psalms 2 and 110, possibly also Psalm 72); a wedding song (Psalm 45); hymns to the royal city, which is at the same time the chosen seat of Yahweh (Psalms 46; 48; 75; 84; 87; 122; 132; 147; examples of the so-called ZION HYMN); and, finally, the YAHWEH-KINGSHIP PSALM, which celebrates the enthronement and government of Yahweh himself, but apparently in conjunction with Davidic dynastic power (Psalms 47; 93; 96–99). In all these instances we can postulate some roots in ordinary human situations and ceremonials. Ancient Near Eastern monarchical tradition without doubt also exercised considerable influence on Israelite royal cult practices. But even this older royalism for its part derives from popular rites.

F. Wisdom Psalms

Since the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel, form critics have favored the hypothesis that not all the poems in the Psalter originated as a function of cultic ceremonies. Rather, they have argued, some psalmists must have been working in the sapiential tradition, primarily for educational or private use (see Mowinckel, "Wisdom"; Jansen, Perdue). The arguments in support of this view

point out sapiential language and form elements and, with equal emphasis, characteristic theological and ethical concepts of wisdom circles. For example, the ACROSTIC PSALMS (Psalms 9/10; 25; 34; 37; 111–112; 119; 145; Lamentations 1–4), which begin each line or couple of lines with successive letters of the alphabet, obviously no longer reflect vividly a complaint or thanksgiving worship, even when discussing danger and salvation. Rather, they are fairly artificial poetry that tries to please the eye of the reader or the ear of sophisticated intellectuals. Furthermore, language in all wisdom psalms seems to be much more didactic and meditative than in earlier cultic songs (besides acrostics, cf. Psalms 1; 39; 90; 139). In contents, the authors of late wisdom psalms often reflect on the fate of the just and the wicked (Psalms 1; 37; 49; 73), a problem discussed preferably in the context of education, among the wise and in their schools. Also, the praise of the Law (see Psalms 1; 19B; 119) derives from the theologizing wisdom of early Jewish tradition.

Closer scrutiny of alleged wisdom influence on the psalms cited (and many others as well) will undoubtedly reinforce the observations made up to this point. Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn seem to be wrong. Wisdom psalms, in my opinion, were not composed and used strictly in a private or educational setting that was foreign to the cult. Following the lead of earlier suggestions by Mowinckel, Jansen, Kuntz, Perdue, et al., I maintain that all these so-called wisdom psalms in reality were liturgical pieces from the very beginning. Their changed appearance and their different message are due solely to the changed conditions of worship during and after the Exile. Israel's social and political structure had changed. We have to visualize communities of Jews scattered all over the world, no longer enjoying the protection of their native state. Instead, the leaders—mostly scribes and Levites—tried to gather members and proselytes around the written Word of God. These early Jewish communities fought against religious extermination, insisting on the one, exclusive, and invisible God, on his *tôrâ*, on his Sabbath, and on his stipulations concerning food, marriage, and all the other matters of daily life. They hoped for the restitution of the Davidic empire and God's revenge upon all oppressors. To maintain such a dynamic tradition the Jews studied the written heritage of their ancestors. Teaching this revealed will of God became the very backbone of communal and individual existence. At this point wisdom influence entered Jewish life and, most of all, Jewish cult.

How were wisdom psalms used in worship services of early Judaism? The original wisdom elements, e.g., PROVERB, SAYING, ADMONITION, PROHIBITION, PARADIGM, BEATITUDE (FOTL XIII and Psalms 1, 37, 111, as well as the other specimens of the category), can still be recognized in many psalms. They are characteristically molded, however, into larger patterns of speech that clearly show an instructional and exhortative intention. The psalm no longer records the personal expression of an individual supplicant. Even in those texts that complain about afflictions, the problems are generalized. The fate of all people is at stake, at least that of all the faithful and all the wicked within the

Jewish community. A well-informed, theologically versed leader presents the psalm to a listening congregation. The general tone of wisdom psalms is that of pastoral counseling (see Psalms 1; 34; 37; 39; 49; 119; etc.). We may assume, therefore, that such psalms to a large extent grew out of communal, liturgical instruction, which must have constituted a vital part of early Jewish worship (cf. Neh 8:7). The obvious aim was the edification and orientation of the members of the synagogal community. Whenever wisdom psalms address the larger horizon of Israel or her people (Psalms 19; 33; 78), their leaders also seem to presuppose a basic structure of voluntary ecclesiastical groups as they in fact existed in Persian and Hellenistic times.

Unfortunately, we have only limited information about early Jewish synagogue services (see Elbogen; Hruby; Schafer). Judging from scant evidence and on the basis of the wisdom psalms themselves, however, we may surmise that psalm texts were used as lessons to be read in conjunction with the *tôrâ*. Furthermore, many of these psalms likely had the quality of prayer; that is, they were spoken to God. Very probably the learned officiant of the service composed the psalms and recited them in the name of his congregation, as had been done earlier, in a different way, by the "man of God" for and with family and neighborhood groups.

5. CULT AND SOCIAL HISTORY

Cultic poetry extant in the OT leads us to infer a variety of rites and worship services, for which the contemporary social structures provided important conditioning. As the "trajectory of Israel's faith" (Brueggemann) moved through stages of seminomadic, agrarian, and urban life, or else through clan, tribal, monarchical, imperial, and foreign-dominated organization, it is quite difficult to account adequately for all these widely diverging social situations. To my mind, the most important line of social development begins with early clan structures of seminomadic and agrarian groups (Thiel). These groups were autonomous even in their religious practices; they certainly possessed a great deal of ritual knowledge for emergencies and celebrations. The employment of an outside seer, or "man of God" (1 Samuel 9; 2 Kings 4), at special occasions did not restrict the general autonomy of the family in religious matters. The small-group structure with its rites in fact persisted through all social upheavals even to our own time. Jewish Passover festivities and Christian religious offices for families and individuals are but a few examples.

In the course of human history everywhere, secondary organizations very early began to impose themselves upon small-group, or personal, religion. Quite often the result was an antagonistic collision (Albertz), as illustrated by Deut 18:9-13 and Ezek 13:18. These larger, anonymous, centrally administered organizations, whether tribal, monarchical, or temple authorities, were, to a certain degree, self-legitimating; they provided horizons of faith that were more and more universal and demanded allegiance even in the personal sphere. The

secondary and higher-level, or "official," cult used sophisticated symbols of ethnic, national, and ecclesiastical extraction. Among them Zion theology (see Psalms 46; 48; Isa 2:2-5; 62:1-5) became prominent, particularly in postexilic times. Strangely enough, exactly at that time, under the umbrella of a universal religion symbolized by national emblems, the smaller-group religion returned in the form of local community worship. Many psalms in fact must have been formulated in this final phase of the OT history. The development of OT cultic poetry, therefore, has to no little degree been a result of the perennial tension between familial and official religious institutions.