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"YOU ALONE ARE GOD": A CANONICAL READING OF PSALM 86

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To God be the glory.

Psalm 1:2

כִּי אִּמ בְּתֹרַת יְּהוָה חֶפְּצֹו וּבְּתֹרָתֹו יֶהְּגֶה יֹוםָם וָלָיְּלָה

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Abstract

Canonical readings of the biblical psalms have become increasingly popular of late and represent a positive trend away from fragmentation of the Psalter into its "original" and component parts and towards greater recognition of the value of the Psalter's final form and its theology. However, the methods and parameters of a canonical approach to the psalms require further definition. An exegetical methodology incorporating a wide variety of methodological tools alongside a canonical approach was thus proposed and subsequently tested on Psalm 86. The unique features of Psalm 86—its attribution to David (in a book of the Psalter with no other Davidic psalms), its use of language found in many other psalms, and its Exodus-Sinai background—make it a particularly fitting composition to be read in light of other canonical texts. Application of the proposed holistic methodology to the interpretation of Psalm 86 demonstrates that the psalm aims to instruct the reader about the derivative nature of the power of the servant's prayer and of the servant's royal status. God alone makes the psalmist's prayers effective; God alone is the true King. In light of the interpretive process, some of the pitfalls and strengths of the canonical approach were also evaluated.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND STATE OF THE QUESTION

Since James Muilenburg's groundbreaking call for a re-examination of the limits of form-criticism and the potential contributions of other critical methods in his 1969 paper, "Form Criticism and Beyond," Psalms exegesis has taken a sharp turn into new territory. In today's post-critical era, students of the Psalms are faced with a seemingly endless buffet of methodological choices. Gone are the "simpler" days of the early and mid-twentieth century when exegeting a psalm consisted primarily of identifying its Gattung and trying to reconstruct its Sitz im Leben. Today's scholars must consider these things as well as issues of stylistics, rhetoric, semiotics, canonical placement, canonical process, comparative lexicography, kerygmatic function, theological message and much more. In this contemporary atmosphere—-heavy on information, light on criteria and prioritization—can a coherent and holistic methodology be found?

One of the primary goals of this project is to answer that question with a resounding yes, and not only to answer yes, but to propose a way to do it. This certainly will not constitute the first proposal of a holistic exegetical methodology, nor will it be the most detailed. The goal, rather, will be to demonstrate a methodology that attempts to: 1) do justice to the bevy of interpretive issues that deserve consideration, and 2) remains practical, even do-able. To do so, certain constructive decisions will have to be

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the NIV.


made that will assign greater weight to some factors over others. In addition, one of the more recent approaches to Psalms interpretation, the canonical approach, will be given special attention because of its potential contributions to the discernment of a theology of the psalms and because, of all the modern critical approaches to the Psalms, the criteria for the canonical approach appear at this point to be the most inchoate.

**The Question of Canon**

One of the most basic principles of hermeneutics, biblical or otherwise, is the principle that the literary context matters. Attention to the literary context is what prevents exegesis from becoming eisegesis, what settles disputed matters of interpretation, what offers a corrective when errors are made. Context matters and it matters a great deal. Notable biblical exceptions to this rule do exist, however—most famously in the case of the Psalms, along with some sections of the Proverbs. For most readers, the idea that the Old Testament psalms are to be read and interpreted as individual units is almost axiomatic. But is this view the correct view? Do the Psalms have a literary context? In other words, are individual psalms intended to be read within the context of the Psalter as a whole?

The practice of reading or reciting all 150 psalms as a whole, rather than as a collection of disconnected poems and songs, has much historic precedent. In certain medieval monastic orders, the Psalter was recited weekly, even daily.³ For many

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generations, the Church of England had the practice of reciting the 150 psalms consecutively once a month. In fact, this was such a standard practice that it was included in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer under the rubric "The Order How the Psalter is Appointed to be Read." As an expression of Jewish piety, the entire Psalter would often be read on the eve of Yom Kippur.

This dimension of the Psalter's use became increasingly overlooked, however, in the historical-critical era of interpretation. At least two factors can be identified as contributing to this shift away from the Psalter as a whole to the psalms as individual poems. First, as the search for the Geist or religious feelings of the psalmist began increasingly to take center stage (under the influence of Schleiermacher, Herder, and others) and questions of the Psalms' function as divine revelation began to recede further into the background, the natural tendency was to begin to focus on each individual psalm as the subjective expression of the author's piety. Second, with the rise of Hermann Gunkel's *Gattungsgeschichte*, the historical reconstruction of each psalm's original role within the cult became paramount. As a result, the only historical period that really

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5 Hoffman, "Hallels, Midrash, Canon, and Loss," 33-34.

6 Commentaries representative of this trend include W. M. L. de Wette, Commentar über die Psalmen: in Beziehung auf seine Uebersetzung derselben (Heidelberg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1829); Heinrich Ewald, Commentary on the Psalms (TTFL 23-24; London: Williams and Norgate, 1880); Bernhard Duhm, Die Psalmen (KHC; Freiburg: Mohr, 1899); Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms (ICC 14; New York: Scribner, 1907; repr. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1951). Other representative authors include Abraham Kuenen, S. R. Driver, Adolphe Lods, Frants Buhl, and G. F. Moore.

7 It is not too strong a statement to say that the course of Psalms studies was irrevocably altered by the emphasis of Gunkel on each individual psalm's setting in life, followed by the emphasis of his pupil Mowinckel on the religio-cultic function of the psalms for Israel's temple worship. Their representative
seemed to matter any longer was the period of each psalm's composition. The work of later redactors in compiling the psalms into their final order and shape hardly seemed consequential.  

In recent years, however, some Psalms scholars have attempted to re-evaluate the question of the importance of the Psalter's final form for Psalms interpretation. Indeed, in a paper delivered at the 1989 meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature, James L. Mays noted, "It seems an anomaly that the Psalter itself is generally so little considered to be significant as an interpretive context. It represents after all the one given context from which to seek guidance about how the language of particular psalms is to be understood." Why this renewed interest in context in Psalms scholarship now?

Arguably, the biggest factor leading to this shift has been the renewed scholarly interest in the theology of the Psalms. In other words, rather than continuing to ask what the Psalms teach us about the psalmist or the cultic life of Israel, exegetes began once again to ask what it is that the Psalms teach us about God. Norman Whybrey has identified Claus Westermann as one of the earliest advocates of the view that the psalms are a book to be read and meditated upon as God's words to humanity, rather than simply as a collection of cultic songs documenting human authors' words to God.  


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8 See the statement of Claus Westermann, "In laying the foundation for his interpretation of the Psalms, Gunkel above all had no interest in how the collection was handed down to us"; Praise and Lament in the Psalms (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 251.

9 James L. Mays, "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter (ed. J. C. McCann, Jr.; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 14-20; quote from p. 15.
coincidentally, Westermann was also one of the first in the critical era to attempt to tease out some of the issues surrounding the formation and organization of the Psalter.\textsuperscript{11}

One of the first modern scholars to convincingly argue for the connection between theology and the final form of the Psalter was Brevard S. Childs.\textsuperscript{12} Writing in 1976, Childs criticized the ability of form-criticism to help modern readers bridge the gap between the biblical text and its theological message, try as it may.

In my judgment, these theological attempts [by using the method of form-criticism] have been only partially successful. The difficulty of moving from an original cultic setting to the contemporary scene remains enormous. Likewise, the move from a critical reading to a modern, devotional application has generally seemed highly forced and subjective…. I would argue that the need of taking seriously the canonical form of the Psalter would greatly aid in making use of the psalms in the life of the Christian church.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{11} Claus Westermann, "Zur Sammlung des Psalters," \textit{Theologia Viatorum} 8 (1961/2): 278-284; this article was later translated by R. Soulen and appeared as the chapter entitled "The Formation of the Psalter" in \textit{Praise and Lament}, 250-258. Although Westermann acknowledges the scholarly consensus at the time of his writing that "in terms of the present Psalter, we are no longer able to move beyond the formal criteria of classification to a classification arranged according to content" (\textit{Praise and Lament}, 250), he nevertheless attempts to demonstrate the possibility that the redactors kept certain collections of Psalms together precisely because of their content, that is, because they bore "a materially unified character." He goes on to identify seven results of his analysis, many of which are echoed in the more recent treatments of the canonical shape of the Psalter.


\textsuperscript{13} Childs, "Reflections," 385. Although Childs does not specifically identify who he is thinking of here, based on comments elsewhere we may assume that, at the minimum, he has in mind the attempts of those scholars who would favor 'kerygmatic exegesis,' specifically von Rad, Westermann, and Brueggemann. He accuses the methodological presuppositions of these scholars as leading them to use an "extremely subjective, reductionist method in which the form-critical method has been extended beyond its original function to derive a theological message"; B. S. Childs, \textit{Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture} (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 74-75.
Furthermore, Childs is convinced that the standard protocol of critical methodology, that is, "to seek to restore an original historical setting by stripping away those very elements which constitute the canonical shape," only serves to distance the text further from the modern interpreter by "decanonizing" it.  

On the positive side, Childs sees an exegetical approach which takes seriously the canonical form of the Psalter as having the greatest potential for yielding interpretive results. This is true, in his opinion, for several reasons. First, unlike the speculative historical reconstructions that form-critics are forced to propose, what we have in the canon is a concretized statement of the relationship between God and Israel. Second, unlike critical approaches that do not distinguish between the authority of the Psalter's canonical form and earlier forms, a canonical approach recognizes that "the significance of the final form of the biblical text is that it alone bears witness to the full history of revelation." Third, the canonical approach to Old Testament interpretation is accessible to scholars from a variety of traditions, even those whose views on the respective roles of Scripture and tradition are fundamentally dissimilar. Childs writes, "The approach seeks to work descriptively within a broad theological framework that is open to a variety of different theological formulations which remains the responsibility of the systematic theologian to develop."

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15 Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 75-76.

A further reason for the growing interest in the theology of the psalms is the growing recognition of the Psalter's instructional function. Klaus Seybold represents this trend well when he writes:

With the new preface (1) and the weight of the reflexive proverbial poem (119)… the existing Psalter now takes on the character of a documentation of divine revelation, to be used in a way analogous to the Torah, the first part of the canon, and becomes an instruction manual for the theological study of the divine order of salvation, and for meditation.\(^{17}\)

J. Clinton McCann is also highly committed to this rubric of Psalms interpretation, calling his methodological approach "explicitly theological" and titling his 1993 book, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah.*\(^{18}\) Finally, we have the example of James L. Mays, who writes that the study of the theology of the psalms is a "crucial way" to understand their nature. To study Psalms theology is to ask, "Is there a way of thinking about God and God's way with the world and humankind that characterizes the entire Psalter and contributes to the identity of every Psalm?"\(^{19}\) To this question, Mays answers a tentative "yes" and goes on to enumerate a number of the repeated themes in the Psalter (e.g., The Lord reigns, Creation, Salvation, The Warrior, The Judge, The Attributes, The People of God, The City of God, The King of God, etc.) that make up this "way of thinking."\(^{20}\)

That Childs's writings on canon have been widely influential among his colleagues is beyond dispute.\(^{21}\) Among those who have taken up the cause of a canonical


approach to the Psalter, some of the most well-known are Childs's own students, most notably, Gerald H. Wilson. Rather, however, than reviewing the last three decades of scholarship in this area of Psalms study, it will be more beneficial to attempt a constructive analysis of the questions that have been asked, the lines that have been sharpened, and the ways forward that appear the most promising.

**SUBHEADING**

What precisely does a canonical approach to the Psalter entail? There are two different, though related, dimensions to consider. For some, the question of canon is largely a question of *process*: how did the Psalter come to be in the form that it is today? For others, the question of canon is largely a question of *purpose*: is there evidence of editorial purpose in the canonical form of the Psalter, and if so, what were the

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21 One indicator of Childs's influence is the fact that he has had not only one but two Festschriften written in his honor: Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight, eds. *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, Robert R. Wilson, eds. *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). Many other examples of his influence could also be cited.


23 One of the first and most prominent scholars to work in this dimension of canon studies is James A. Sanders whose book, *Torah and Canon*, published in 1972—the same year Brevard S. Childs published his *Biblical Theology in Crisis*—first introduced the term "canonical-criticism." Subsequent influential works by Sanders include: *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); and *The Canon Debate* co-edited with Lee Martin McDonald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002). Nancy de-Claiissé Walford, in her book, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), claims to be largely indebted to Sanders for her methodology. It should be noted that Sanders and Childs differ significantly in their understanding of the purpose and scope of the canonical approach.
editors trying to communicate? The former is fundamentally a historical question; the latter, a literary-theological question.\footnote{24}

Of these two questions, Childs maintains that the question of process is by far the more difficult (if not impossible) one to answer. He maintains that although "it should be incontrovertible that there was a genuine historical development involved in the formation of the canon,"\footnote{25} it is also true that "the available historical evidence allows only for a bare skeleton of this development."\footnote{26} This, however, has not stopped some scholars from trying to produce a fleshed-out model, the most notable example being the work of M. Millard in his 1994 monograph, Die Komposition des Psalters.\footnote{27} Millard, a student of Rolf Rendtorff, attempts to take the question of process to its logical extreme by positing how each individual psalm came to be placed in its final position. Beginning with the presupposition that the Psalter provides sufficient internal evidence to allow one to deduce the order and chronology of its compilation, Millard starts with individual pairs of psalms and traces the Psalter's construction all the way to the finished product, duly accounting for all 150 psalms along the way; not one is omitted. Truly a feat, Whybray calls it "the most recent and ambitious contribution to the debate about the composition of the Psalter."\footnote{28}

\footnote{24} These two dimensions are nicely encapsulated in the title of one of the most important works on canon and the Psalms to date: The Shape [purpose] and Shaping [process] of the Psalter, edited by J. C. McCann.

\footnote{25} Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament, 67.

\footnote{26} Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament, 67.

\footnote{27} M. Millard, Die Komposition des Psalters (FAT 9; Tübingen: Mohr, 1994).

\footnote{28} Whybray, Reading the Psalms as a Book, 29.
The sheer complexity of his project, however, has not shielded Millard from criticism. Again, Whybray summarizes the essence of this criticism well:

The main weakness of Millard's argument lies in the fact that the evidences of composition are too sparse and too ambiguous to support his contentions. This is true both of his reconstruction of the process of composition of individual psalms and of his attempts to link the supposed stages in a chronological scheme.29

Less ambitious perhaps than Millard's are the more tentative attempts of scholars like Gerald Wilson to account for the process by which the Psalter reached its final form by comparing the Masoretic Text to the LXX Psalter and the Qumran collections.30 In fact, so aware is Wilson of the potential for missteps that he cautions against even having a working hypothesis before plunging into the detailed work of textual analysis for fear that a hypothesis might color one's objectivity.31 As a result, in part, of his meticulous methods, Wilson's dissertation, later published as The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, is now widely viewed as a watershed contribution to the field of canonical Psalms studies.32

In this volume, Wilson proposes that the Psalter contains certain internal markers that act as indicators of how and why it acquired its final shape. The most significant of these markers are:

- Superscriptions and postscripts which are often used to "soften the transition from one "author" grouping to another",33

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29 Whybray, Reading the Psalms as a Book, 30.


31 In Wilson's opinion, "The only valid and cautious hypothesis with which to begin is that the present arrangement is the result of purposeful editorial activity, and that its purpose can be discerned by careful and exhaustive analysis of the linguistic and thematic relationships between individual psalms and groups of psalms"; "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter (ed. J. C. McCann; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 42-51; see p. 48.

• "Competing editorial frames" which serve to link different groups of psalms together;\(^{34}\)
• The presence of royal psalms at three of the four most critical book junctures (Psalms 2; 72; 89).\(^{35}\)

Wilson also puts great emphasis on the differences between Books I-III (which he calls the "earlier Psalter") and Books IV-V (which he calls the "later Psalter") pointing out that each section follows distinct principles of ordering. In the case of the first three books, genre and author markings (in the form of superscriptions) are common, each of the books ends with a doxology, and the relative uniformity in the manuscript evidence would seem to suggest that these books were compiled from previously established collections of psalms. In the case of the last two books, none of the above is true. Books IV-V are dominated instead by \(hlwyh-hwdw\) psalms and manuscript evidence indicates a much greater flexibility in ordering.

Now that we have briefly overviewed some of the work that has been done to try to get at the question of the process through which the Psalter was formed, we turn to examine the current state of scholarship regarding the purpose of the Psalter's final form, the question that is of greater concern to the goals and purposes of this thesis. On the topic of the purposeful shaping of the Psalter, the existence of an introduction or preface to the collection in Psalm 1 (along, possibly, with Psalm 2) as well as a conclusion in

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\(^{34}\) Gerald H. Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," in \textit{Shape and Shaping of the Psalter} (ed. J. McCann; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 72-82.

Psalms 146-150 has long been recognized. Recently, more scholars have attempted to trace a theological trajectory between these two poles. Among these, the work of Walter Brueggemann is particularly worth noting. In his 1991 article, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon," Brueggemann sets himself the task of probing "the question of theological intentionality by asking how one gets from one end of the Psalter to the other…. While we have learned to pay attention to the beginning and end, we must also ask how the body of material between permits movement from beginning to end." Specifically, Brueggemann proposes that the way Israel moves from "torah obedience" (Psalm 1) to "self-abandoning doxology" (Psalm 150) is "by way of candor about suffering and gratitude about hope." He sees this movement exemplified particularly clearly in the statements of Psalm 73, which incorporate both lament and praise.

Wilson has also weighed in heavily on the question of the Psalter's theological trajectory, coining five different phrases that might accurately describe its movement: "A matter of life and death"; "from performance to meditation"; "from lament to praise"; "from individual to community"; and "Yahweh enthroned on the praises of his people."

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36 The introductory function of Psalm 1 is noted by Jerome, Origen, Basil of Caesarea, Hippolitus, Calvin, Delitzsch, Briggs and Briggs, Gunkel and many others. For these references, I am indebted to Bosma, "Discerning [Part 2]", 156-157. For a fuller discussion of the shaping function of Psalm 1 specifically, see Patrick D. Miller, "The Beginning of the Psalter," in Shape and Shaping of the Psalter (ed. J. C. McCann; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 83-92. See also John T. Willis, "Psalm 1—An Entity," ZAW 91 (1979): 381-401. On Psalms 146-150 as the Psalter's concluding hallel, see Kilnam Cha and W. H. Bellinger, Psalms 146-150: The Final Hallelujah Psalms As a Fivefold Doxology to the Hebrew Psalter (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2006) <http://hdl.handle.net/2104/5011> ; Wilson, "Structure," 232-233; Mays, Psalms, 15.


38 The importance of this psalm has also been noted by J. Clinton McCann in his doctoral dissertation on Psalm 73; "Psalm 73: An Interpretation Emphasizing Rhetorical and Canonical Criticism," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1985).

While each phrase clearly emphasizes a different quality of the theological movement within the Psalter, in Wilson's view, none excludes any of the others. Rather, they are five different ways of describing one common phenomenon. Not surprisingly, Wilson bases his conclusions about the Psalter's trajectory on much of his work already mentioned above. For example, the fact that Books I-III are largely composed of individual laments of David while Books IV-V are characterized more by songs of communal praise\textsuperscript{40} supports his conclusion that "alone and isolated, Israel (and Israelites) has cause to lament. Human weakness is all too evident…. Yet, within the community of faith Israel is enabled to reexperience the steadfast mercy of Yahweh, which is renewed each morning and endures forever."\textsuperscript{41} One way in which Wilson differs slightly from Brueggemann is in his emphasis on the importance of Psalm 89. For Wilson, this psalm is absolutely crucial because it is the cry of Israel that most clearly expresses their flagging faith in the Davidic covenant and hence their "crisis of identity." As such, it also symbolizes a fault-line dividing a faith that looks eagerly for the restoration of an earthly Davidic king (Books I-III) from a faith that looks to the divine king himself (Books IV-V).\textsuperscript{42}

Others, like James L. Mays, have found it fruitful to try to define the central message of the Psalter, rather than its trajectory. (The questions are certainly related, but not identical.) Mays's own daring answer to the important question of whether there is coherence in the whole consists in his identification of the root metaphor \textit{Yhwh malak},

\textsuperscript{40} This insight is certainly not new, nor would Wilson claim it to be. Already in 1961, Claus Westermann writes, "The first half of the Psalter is comprised predominantly of Psalms of lament, the second predominantly of Psalms of praise," \textit{Praise and Lament}, 257.

\textsuperscript{41} Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," 139.

\textsuperscript{42} Wilson, "Structure," 235-240.
"The Lord reigns." To reach this conclusion, Mays addresses the most important themes in the Psalms and how they fit together with the organizing principle of the reign of Yahweh. Of the psalms that explicitly use this phrase (or close derivatives thereof), Mays relies most heavily on Psalms 47 and 93, claiming that it is psalms like these that most clearly "present the etiology of the psalmic situation" because of their concern with the action of Yahweh in the cosmos and in the world. In other words, Yahweh's sovereign actions as he exercises his dominion over all things are the cause of Israel's prayers and praises. Although Mays does not specifically address the mechanism by which such a theological center came to be put in place, the proposal that such a center exists necessarily implies the presence of editorial intentionality.

The emphasis on the Psalms' central message or common trajectory has not been seen as a welcome development by all scholars, however. In particular, Whybray has objected strongly to the contention that a single theology of the Psalms exists: "There is no evidence of the thorough and systematic changes that would have been necessary if the Psalter were to become the expression of a single theology."


45 Mays is clearly no opponent to the notion of editorial purpose and interpretive function in the Psalter's final form. In the introduction to his Psalms commentary, he demonstrates that certain features of the Psalter (e.g., the presence of an introduction in Psalms 1-2 and conclusion in Psalm 150; the division of the Psalter into five sections, each with a concluding doxology; and a general movement from prayer or supplication to praise) cause its shape to itself be interpretive; *Psalms*, 15-19. Moreover, on a microstructural level, he specifically points out that "the joyous declaration of the reign of the Lord in Psalms 93-99 can be read as an answer to the lament over the messiah's humiliation in Psalm 89": *Psalms*, 19.

46 Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, 124. For another major contribution to the anti-canonical camp, see Günter Stemberger and Ingo Baldermann, eds., *Zum Problem des biblischen Kanons* (JBTh3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988).
Purpose of this Investigation

As stated earlier, the purpose of this investigation will be to develop a holistic methodology that makes discerning use of the wide variety of exegetical methods currently available. In particular, it will attempt to incorporate a canonical approach to Psalms interpretation. Simply proposing a holistic exegetical methodology, however, does not fulfill the whole goal of this project. This thesis will also attempt to test the proposed methodology using Psalm 86 as a test case. Through this process of real life application, we can also expect the method itself to be refined as its limitations and strengths are exposed.

For several reasons, Psalm 86 is a particularly intriguing composition to use as a test case. First, virtually all commentators note its exceptional and therefore (likely) intentional placement as a psalm attributed to David in the middle of a section of Korahite psalms (Psalms 84-85, 87-88), and the only psalm of David to appear in Book III (Psalms 72-89). Many, however, fail to comment on why this might be the case.

Second, many commentators have also noted its frequent use of phrases from other psalms and texts (i.e., Psalms 25, 27, 40, 54, and Exodus 34:6, to name just a few), a characteristic that has in the past caused Psalm 86 to be regarded by some as “imitative


and inferior,"⁴⁹ though this has been contested more recently.⁵⁰ Precisely because of the way in which it combines phrases from other portions of the canon, Brevard Childs cites Psalm 86 as evidence that "the traditional prayers of Israel have assumed a new role as sacred scripture of the community."⁵¹ As one of the psalm's most obvious and unique characteristics, the anthological style of Psalm 86 promises to make it a useful testing ground for an "inner-biblical" or "inner-psalmic" exegetical methodology, that is, a method that tries to understand how a particular psalm's meaning can be shaped by its relationship with certain other psalms and with other texts outside of the Psalter.⁵² Especially in light of these two unique qualities of Psalm 86, we are compelled to investigate further how its message may be tied to its canonical function.

Third, the psalm appears to be heavily stylized in its repeated use of certain words. The conjunction כִּי, for example, is used a total of nine times and plays a pivotal role in structuring the logic of the psalmist's petitions. As Konrad Schaefer has noted, the psalmist refers to God as his Sovereign (ʾādōnāy) seven times. Perhaps less striking, but nevertheless notable, YHWH and "name" (šēm) also occur a total of seven times. Finally, the second person pronoun 'attāh appears six times in the psalm as well (vv. 2, 5, 10, 15,

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⁴⁹ See, for example, the comments of W. Stewart McCollough: "It is usually said that although the author was morally earnest, he had few literary gifts. Nearly every verse, or part of nearly every verse he wrote, can be paralleled in either the other psalms or elsewhere in the O.T.," McCollough, IB 4:463.

⁵⁰ James L. Mays, Psalms (Interpretation Series; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 278. Also McCann, NIB 4:1019; Tate, Psalms 51-100, 378.

⁵¹ Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament, 514; see also Bosma, "Discerning (Part 2)," 152-153, n. 134.

⁵² On this issue, I have been particularly intrigued by Brevard Childs's call for a standard methodology for inner-biblical exegesis; Childs, "Reflections," 383.
These conspicuous repetitions alert the reader to the fact that at the heart of this psalm lies a conversation between the psalmist and his God. Moreover, an analysis of the compositional structure reveals a calculated progression from "You [imperative], for I [causal]" to "You [imperative], then I [result]" to "You [imperative], then I [result], for you [causal]." This movement should be seen as fundamental to understanding the Psalm's theological claim. Through it the psalmist comes to understand that the legitimacy of his appeal to God is based not on "I" but on "You," not on the Davidic covenant but on an older covenant, the covenant made at Sinai.

Finally, it is interesting to note that outside of Psalms commentaries, Psalm 86 has been written on very infrequently, perhaps because of its perception as unoriginal and therefore, relatively insignificant. This examination will attempt to demonstrate the essential flaws of that viewpoint while building a positive case for the pivotal role that this psalm of David has to play in the transition from the earlier Psalter (Books I-III) to the later Psalter (Books IV-V). To be more specific, this study will show that by incorporating the language of Moses/Sinai, Zion, and Davidic servant-kingship, along with key lexical and thematic ties to Psalms 72, 89, and 90, Psalm 86 offers a strategically-placed reflection on the contingent nature of David's monarchy and the wholly independent, self-actualized quality of Yahweh's kingship.

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In the course of this study, a number of topics related both to the issue of exegetical methodology as well as the canonical function of Psalm 86 will be examined. In the second chapter, the history of the exegesis of Psalm 86 will be reviewed with the secondary purpose of investigating the relative abilities of various methodologies to uncover and illuminate the theological dimension of the psalm. The third chapter will then give a basic outline of the methodology that I intend to follow in my exegesis of Psalm 86. Chapter 4 will enter into the study of Psalm 86 proper and will deal with the issues of the psalm's translation and textual difficulties, genre, compositional structure, use of stylistic devices such as repetition, connections to other canonical texts particularly in the book of Exodus, and basic theological message. In the fifth chapter, the psalm's intertextuality will be considered, specifically its high degree of lexical overlap with three other canonical psalms—Psalms 25, 72, and 116. The sixth chapter will then investigate the canonical function of Psalm 86 in earnest, with particular attention being paid to its relationship to the other psalms within Book III (Psalms 73-89). Finally, the seventh and concluding chapter will return to the broader topic of exegetical methodology and the Psalms in light of this case study as well as review the insights gained in the course of the preceding investigation into the interpretation and canonical function of Psalm 86.

In conclusion, it would be appropriate to say a word about my own methodological and theological presuppositions. Although one of the primary goals of this study will be to approach Psalm 86 on its own terms and with as few preconceived notions about its purpose and thrust as possible, it would be naive to think that this kind of study is ever done in a vacuum. That being said, the presuppositions that are most likely to show themselves at various points along the way are that the Scriptures are
divinely inspired and that the nature of the relationship between biblical interpretation and theology is dialogic and complementary. As Anthony Thiselton, following Francis Watson, writes, "the isolation of 'biblical exegesis' and 'biblical interpretation' from theology is itself arbitrary, reductive, and overshadowed by illusory notions of value-free enquiry."55 To put a finer point on it, insofar as our system of theology (as summarized by the creeds of the church and the Reformed confessions) reflects the Scriptural testimony about God and his relationship with humanity as mediated through the Son, it will be consistent with the biblical theology that emerges from individual texts.56 In this way, the two function as guardrails for one another and are rightly both brought to bear in disputed matters of interpretation.


CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF THE EXEGESIS OF PSALM 86

Introduction

How does methodology affect interpretation? The goal of this chapter will be to explore that important question and offer some tentative conclusions by examining the various exegetical methods applied to the interpretation of Psalm 86 during some of the most significant eras of Psalms study.\(^1\) First and foremost, therefore, this chapter will act as a kind of literature review, thereby helping orient us to the history of this psalm's interpretation. Second, by teasing out the methodological differences, both stated and unstated, of the various commentators examined, this brief survey will draw some tentative conclusions about the differences in interpretation that result.\(^2\)

Yet this chapter has a third goal as well. In addition to examining each commentator in the context of the methodological school within which he or she self-consciously locates himself or herself (being careful, however, to avoid forcing a school upon an interpreter who does not fit neatly into such categories, as in the case of some pre-critical scholars), this chapter will also attempt to ask and answer the question, how conducive is each commentator's method for getting at the theological dimension of the psalm? The reason for the particular interest in the *theological* pay-off of each commentator's method stems from one of the primary concerns of this project, which is to

\(^1\) Most of the commentators examined in this chapter were selected for their influence over the field of Psalms research and for the high degree to which each represents and, in some cases, has set the agenda for his or her own methodological school.

\(^2\) These conclusions must necessarily remain tentative given that methodology is certainly only one of many factors that determine interpretation. Nevertheless, it is an important one and therefore, a cautious attempt to trace some links between method and interpretation is not without merit.
explore what a canonical approach to Psalms interpretation may have to contribute to our understanding of Psalm 86. More specifically, because one of the first claims of the those advocating a canon-oriented method à la Brevard Childs is its ability to bridge the gap between the technical and the theological,³ it seems natural to investigate the capabilities of other exegetical methods to illuminate the theological dimension as well. Therefore, in the evaluation of each commentator, special attention will be paid to the theological claims made (if at all) by the author(s), including statements about the instructional value of the psalm, the religious claims of the psalmist, and the typological (including christological) significance of the psalm.

Because of space constraints, this survey of the history of the exegesis of Psalm 86 and the conclusions that it attempts to draw will necessarily be far too cursory to establish any sort of definite relationship between the methods of individual interpreters and their exegetical results. Nevertheless, it will be useful to attempt to observe any patterns that may emerge.

**Pre-Critical Era: Augustine, Rashi, John Calvin**

In order to get a sense for the different kinds of methodologies used in the pre-critical era of Psalms scholarship, we will briefly examine three of history's preeminent biblical expositors: Augustine, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (more commonly known as Rashi), and John Calvin. These three were chosen for the significance of their exegetical

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³ The two festschrifths written in Childs's honor consistently demonstrate at least the attempt to connect exegesis and theology: Seitz and Greene-McCreight, *Theological Exegesis*, esp. 52-72; Tucker et al., *Canon, Theology*. 
work in their own time and for the influence they continued to exercise over later exegetes well after their deaths and indeed, into today.

The only extant record of Augustine’s interpretation of Psalm 86 consists of a sermon he delivered on September 13, either in the year 401 or 416, at Mappalia outside of Carthage. Two things in particular stand out about his methodological approach. First, of all the Psalm 86 commentators reviewed, Augustine is by far the most concerned with seeing Christ in the text. In his view, every word of every clause of every verse is either spoken by, to, or through Christ, or some combination thereof. This way of identifying the voices in Psalm 86 is at the same time prosopological in its method and christological in its ideology. Notice, for instance, his discussion of the phrase, "and you have delivered me from a deeper hell" (v. 13, his translation) where he says, "We may therefore take the verse … either as spoken by Christ himself, or as spoken by our own voices through Christ our Lord, because he penetrated even into hell in order that we should not remain there." This kind of reasoning is typical of the early church father, for whom the believer's union with Christ is absolutely basic with the implication that although Christ is the main "pray-er" in the psalm, Christians too can pray the psalms because of their union with their head. Indeed, this theological conviction is one of Augustine's most foundational interpretive presuppositions, as can clearly be seen in his sermon introduction to Psalm 86:

We pray, then, to him, through him and in him; we speak with him and he speaks with us. We utter in him, and he utters in us, the plea made in this psalm, which is entitled, A Prayer of David.

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5 Cf. Bosma, "Discerning (Part 2)," 129-130.

6 Augustine, Expositions, 237.
According to the flesh our Lord is the son of David; but in his godhead he is David's Lord and David's Creator…. Let no one, then, on hearing these words, maintain, "This is not said by Christ," or, on the other hand, "I am not speaking in this text." Rather let each of us who know ourselves to be within Christ's body acknowledge both truths, that "Christ speaks here," and that "I speak here." Say nothing apart from him, as he says nothing apart from you."

A second methodological priority for Augustine is to bring out each verse's practical teaching for his hearers, not surprising given that his comments occur in the context of a sermon (unlike the other scholars surveyed in this chapter who are writing in commentaries). For Augustine, it is a given that every line of the psalm is fundamentally instructive in its purpose. Each verse offers the Christian something to learn, whether it be about the position one should assume in prayer (v. 2), the character of God in receiving prayers (v. 15), or the groaning of Christ in his prayers (v. 3) and suffering (v. 14). Specific examples of Augustine's heavy stress on individual and church-oriented application can be found in his exposition of v. 1 in which he goes into great detail over how the title "poor and destitute" (עָנִּי וְּאֶבְּיוֹן) can also be made to apply to those with great wealth, so long as their wealth does not lead them into pride, or in his comments on v. 2 which explain how the church can claim to be holy, just as the psalmist does.

In the end, where does Augustine's method eventually bring him? On the one hand, we can certainly say that Augustine is a master at applying the instruction of the psalm to his contemporary situation. Additionally, he interprets the psalm in light of Christ and the NT at every turn. And although he does not appear to consider the other psalms to be a particularly important context for the interpretation of Psalm 86, he does

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7 Augustine, *Expositions*, 221.


often bring to bear on his interpretation verses from other parts of the Old and New Testaments.\(^\text{10}\)

On the other hand, Augustine's pre-critical method does lack certain boundaries that would be considered the norm today. Consequently, he can be accused of some of the interpretive excesses in his exposition that later critical approaches tried so diligently to avoid. For example, although in theory it appears that Augustine valued the literal and historical sense of a text as theologically normative, it also appears that he viewed the "spiritual sense" of the text as so vital to the literal sense, especially in the case of OT passages, that in practice the "spiritual sense" would often overtake and dominate his exegesis almost entirely.\(^\text{11}\) In his lengthy sermon on Psalm 86,\(^\text{12}\) for instance, Israel and the ancient context of the psalm are not mentioned at all. Rather, we observe a much heavier emphasis on the psalm's christological meaning than on its "historical" meaning. Also, because of the sermon's unwavering focus on Christ as the subject (and at times object) of the psalm, the historical psalmist's voice quickly becomes buried under other, more important voices. David, listed by the superscription as the "author,"\(^\text{13}\) only has real

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\(^{10}\) Examples of this can be found on virtually every page of the sermon, but as just one example, Augustine alludes to Luke 1:38; John 2:19, 21; Matt 19:28; and 1 Cor 6:3 in his two paragraph discussion of the phrase "save the son of your handmaiden"; *Expositions*, 241-42.

\(^{11}\) In contrast to the hermeneutical method of Origen who consistently valued the spiritual and allegorical senses of the text over the literal, Childs sees Augustine as representing a very different method in the doctrinal value he assigned to the literal sense. Nevertheless, Augustine seems rarely to have been satisfied with the literal sense alone in his OT exegesis but often spoke about a spiritual sense as well, prompting Childs to write: "The effect is to see the literal sense of the OT as always needing a spiritual sense"; "The Sensus Literalis of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem," in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie Festschrift für Walther Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag* (eds. H. Donner, R. Hanhart, R. Smend; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977), 80-93; quote from p. 82.

\(^{12}\) The sermon takes up twenty-five pages in the English translation; *Expositions*, 220-45.

\(^{13}\) Currently, there is debate over whether or not superscriptions were really intended to denote authorship, especially those superscriptions that assign authorship to David after Ps 72; see Wilson,
significance as a type of Christ, not as a historical figure, nor even as a dynastic representative. One negative consequence of this neglect is that the psalm's own compositional structure and flow is compromised. Because it is interpretively awkward to see Christ as the speaker of every verse (e.g. does God praise God for his incomparability in vv. 8-10), Augustine is forced to construe speaker changes where none actually exist. After v. 3, for example, he no longer refers to Christ as the primary speaker even though the text would seem to indicate no substantive break in voice or theme between vv. 3 and 4.

For these reasons, Augustine's method has both its advantages and disadvantages. As far as warming its hearers' (and readers') hearts to the longsuffering and gracious character of God and to their own obligation to come to him in thanksgiving, it does far more than most. Moreover, Augustine's interest in reading the psalm christologically and with an eye to its instructions for his contemporary listeners enables him to expand at great length upon the psalm's theological dimension. At the same time, modern readers, attune to the currently accepted methodological boundaries that were not a priority for Augustine, may be skeptical about many of the sermon's theological claims precisely because of questions about his methodology. Thus we see how essential a sound methodology is to the establishment of a theologically-oriented interpretation.

In contrast to Augustine's exposition, Rashi's exegetical comments on Psalm 86 are far more concerned with the technical aspects of interpretation and less so with the

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14 See the quote above taken from the sermon introduction.

application of the psalm's meaning to contemporary life. In fact, Rashi comments almost entirely on individual phrases alone, offering no interpretation or analysis of the psalm as a whole. About Rashi's method, Mayer Gruber writes,

Rashi's Commentary on the Book of Psalms... contain[s] a sampling of most of the various concerns typical of Rashi's commentaries on the books of Hebrew Scripture: midrash aggadah, midrash halakah, lexicography, grammar, syntax, source criticism, and attention to literary devices such as virtual quotations and change of speakers, metaphors, and synonymous parallelism.

Rashi's attention to the midrashic tradition and especially to the literary features of the text is not atypical of the approach to poetry taken by many medieval Jewish exegetes. Indeed, Adele Berlin points out that "the literary study of the Bible is one of the most ancient methods of understanding the biblical text" and one that lends itself particularly well to the study of the poetry contained in the Psalms.

This is not to imply, however, that reading Rashi on the Psalms is an experience equivalent to reading any modern commentator concerned with literary analysis. His semiotic analysis of the phrase "the son of your maidservant" (v. 16c), for example, is much more attune to the interpretation given by Midrash Tehillim than to the phrase's use in other ancient near eastern poetry, as modern scholars like F. C. Fensham

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16 Again, at least part of the difference between the two approaches can be explained by the difference in the genre of their comments: Augustine's explanation of the psalm comes in the form of a sermon; Rashi's comments are made in the context of an exegetical commentary.


18 Adele Berlin, Biblical Poetry through Medieval Jewish Eyes (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1. Berlin's particular focus in this book is on Jewish exegetes during the 12th-17th centuries, yet many of her general observations, such as this one, apply to the method used by Rashi in the 11th century as well.

19 In Rashi's commentary, Midrash Tehillim is referred to as Aggadat Tehillim; Gruber, Rashi's Commentary, 399, n. 1.
demonstrate. Indeed, in this case, as in many others, Rashi's interpretation follows the midrashic tradition so precisely that he clearly echoes *Midrash Tehillim* when he says, concerning the significance of this phrase, "the son of a maidservant debases himself before his master more than does a purchased slave, because the son of a maidservant is a homeborn slave, who has grown up in the lap of his master." When compared with other contemporary commentaries, this interpretation appears to be unique to Rashi and the midrash, although elements of it are reiterated by some later studies.

In his brief comments on Psalm 86, Rashi can also be seen bringing to bear on his interpretation the theological beliefs of his interpretive community. Specifically, he treats vv. 8b ("no deeds can compare with yours") and 10b ("and perform wonders, you alone") together as allusions to the power of God as displayed in creation. Furthermore, only after discussing vv. 8b and 10b does he go on to explain that 9a ("all the nations you have made") and 9c ("will bring glory to your name") are a direct result of this display of power: the nations see God's work in creation and honor him accordingly. Commenting on the wonders (נִּפְּלָאוֹת) God alone performs, Rashi writes "Before the angels were created the heavens and the earth were created. Therefore, all the nations you have made will pay honor to your name." It is interesting to note that in this case, Rashi

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21 Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary*, 399; this is the exact interpretation given by *Midrash Tehillim* of Ps 116:16, the only other place in the Psalter where this title occurs. For other examples of Rashi's agreement with *Midrash Tehillim*, see his comments on Ps 86:2, 3, 8b, 13, 14a.

22 The notion that the phrase denotes the servant's particularly humble position is affirmed in Fensham, "Son of a Handmaid," 320.

23 Gruber believes the implication of this to be that there was a period when God was literally alone, citing Rashi's comments on Gen 1:5; Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary*, 399, n. 6.

orders his remarks not according to the actual compositional structure of the text, but according to the logic of his theological interpretation.

One area in which Rashi strongly differs from Augustine is in the heavy interpretive significance he places on the psalm's assumed Davidic authorship. In three separate places, he attempts to fit a particular phrase into the timeline of David's life. On the phrase, "the deepest parts of Sheol" (v. 13b), Rashi concurs with Midrash Tehillim that David is probably referring to the fact that he, like all adulterers, belongs in the deepest part of Sheol. Furthermore, he takes the "arrogant men" of v. 14a as referring to Doeg the Edomite and Ahithophel, both of whom showed by their actions their disregard for Samuel's anointing of David as king. Finally, Rashi comments that David's request for a sign of God's goodness in v. 17a is finally fulfilled during the reign of Solomon his son, citing 2 Chronicles 6:42.

Although Rashi's comments on Psalm 86 are comparatively brief, especially when set next to the extended exposition offered by Augustine, certain tentative observations can nevertheless be made about the effect of his methodology on his overall interpretation. First, it is clear that Rashi is eminently committed to explaining the text in its elemental parts. At no point does he attempt to comment on the application of the text to life, nor on its instruction for the reader of faith. Nor does he venture far into exploring the theological message or movement within the psalm. Even where he does draw theological connections to the other mighty acts of God in history (e.g., the creation of the world in vv. 8-10), it is difficult to determine if this is primarily by his own initiative or simply out of respect for the midrashic tradition. For Rashi, the text is clearly the point. His attention to the psalm's Davidic authorship should also be seen in
light of this priority. Evaluating the psalm from the perspective and experience of David is useful and necessary for Rashi insofar as such an evaluation leads to a fuller understanding of the meaning behind the individual phrases of the text.

Because of this all-important concern with the text and, seemingly, the text alone, Rashi's comments on Psalm 86 may appear almost austere, devoid of the flare and inspiration that so richly characterized Augustine's sermon. Nevertheless, this disciplined approach would prove to be of great use to later Christian exegetes who, concerned with getting back to the single literal sense of a text, depended heavily upon scholars like Rashi and his Jewish colleagues. Because the work of Jewish biblical scholars during the medieval period was often so much more exegetical than that of their Christian counterparts, commentaries like Rashi's became invaluable for helping to establish an exegetical method for biblical interpreters during the period of the Reformation.

On that note, John Calvin should certainly be counted as one of these beneficiaries. The similarity between the two authors' comments on Psalm 86 can be seen in more than one place. Like Rashi and according to his habit, Calvin chooses to deal with the text on the level of its individual phrases, although his exposition of each phrase does frequently extend into more wide-ranging topics than does Rashi's. Also like Rashi, Calvin stresses the importance of the psalm's Davidic authorship, as demonstrated

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26 Childs, "*Sensus Literalis,"* 84.
by the fact that he begins his comments by attempting to pinpoint when during his lifetime David may have composed this psalm.\textsuperscript{27}

Calvin also resembles Rashi in his awareness of the wider community of Psalms interpreters, a community that for both scholars spanned several centuries.\textsuperscript{28} Although Calvin does not often cite his specific dialogue partners, in at least a couple of different places he makes clear that he has tried to evaluate his interpretation in light of the wider scholarly consensus. So, for example, on the disputed word זִדִּים in v. 14, he justifies retaining the MT's "the strangers" rather than "the proud" (רָאוֹן) in part by asserting that he is "following the generally received reading."\textsuperscript{29} Similarly, in his comments on v. 8, Calvin mentions the opinion held by some that אֱלֹהִים should be translated as "angels" rather than "gods," possibly to avoid the appearance of affirming the existence of deities other than the one true God. (Calvin himself vehemently disagrees with this view, however, pointing out that a translation of "angels" causes problems of its own because it would be utterly inappropriate to compare God, who created angels for his own glory, with his own inferior creatures.)

Also like Rashi, Calvin does not shy away from using his own theological grid to help interpret the psalm. In fact, Calvin's fundamental beliefs about the nature of God as expressed in his interaction with his creatures appear to influence many different facets of his interpretation. Just a few examples will suffice to make the point. In his opening

\begin{footnotes}
\item[27] He hypothesizes that David may be reflecting on the period of his persecution by Saul; John Calvin, \textit{Commentary on the Book of Psalms} (trans. James Anderson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 2:380.
\item[28] For Rashi, on the other hand, this community was largely represented in the midrashic tradition; see comments above.
\item[29] Calvin, \textit{Psalms}, 2:390.
\end{footnotes}
comments on the appropriateness of the psalmist's plea that God should answer him because he is poor and needy (v. 1), Calvin writes, "for nothing is more suitable to the nature of God than to succour the afflicted: and the more severely any one is oppressed and the more destitute he is of the resources of human aid, the more inclined is God graciously to help him." Based on his use of the word "for," Calvin appears to be working from the basic theological assumption that God is more ready to help the needy than those who are less needy. As another example, in his discussion of the difficult phrase יַחֵד לְּבָבִּי (v. 11), Calvin explains that this "beautiful metaphor" points both to the instability and fickleness of the human heart and to the power of the Holy Spirit to hold that heart fast to God. Taking the occasion to elaborate on the abilities, or lack thereof, of the human will to remain faithful to its Maker, he goes on: "From this also, it is manifest what free will is able to do of itself. Two powers are ascribed to it; but David confesses that he is destitute of both; setting the light of the Holy Spirit in opposition to the blindness of his own mind… is entirely the gift of God." Unlike Rashi, however, and like Augustine, Calvin spends a great deal more time exploring the more general applications of the psalm for the everyday life of the Christian. For example, in his comments on the exclamation, "Listen, O Jehovah, to my prayer!" (v. 6), an echo of v. 1, Calvin takes the opportunity to use the psalmist as an example of the perseverance that Christians should employ in their prayer lives, saying

30 Calvin, Psalms, 2:380.

31 While it is difficult to say definitively whether Calvin's interpretation of this verse is influenced more by the teaching of the psalm or by his presupposition about God's disposition towards the needy, at the very least, his interpretation of v. 1 and his theological beliefs are not at odds. Moreover, he is clearly comfortable bringing theological claims into dialogue with the text.

32 Calvin, Psalms, 2:388.
that those who do not turn again and again to God in the manner of the author of Psalm 86 "betray the coldness and inconstancy of their hearts." Moreover, he explains that the purpose of repetition in prayer is that the believer will gradually be enabled to release his or her concern into the care of God. From this, and other similar examples, we observe that Calvin appears to feel perfectly comfortable using the text as a springboard for further teaching about the Christian life in a way that some modern exegetes might eschew. Calvin assumes that the text, even at the level of its individual phrases, has an instructional function.

Finally, like Augustine, Calvin acknowledges the presence of christological allusion in Psalm 86, although he is a great deal more discriminating about where he identifies it. In fact, the only place where Calvin notes an explicit allusion to Christ is in the phrase "all nations will come" (v. 9). Calvin takes this to signify a time when even the Gentiles—whom God made (v. 9b)—will be called, a promise of which he says, "David was not ignorant." On this universal nature of God's kingdom, he comments, "whenever he [David] celebrates the prevalence of true godliness among the heathen, he has an eye to the kingdom of Christ, prior to whose coming God gave only the initial or dawning manifestation of his glory, which at length was diffused through the whole world by the preaching of the Gospel." Thus, we can conclude that although Calvin


34 Historical studies have shown that, on the whole, Calvin is much more reluctant to identify specific examples of christological typology in the Psalms than many of his contemporaries; cf. David L. Puckett, *John Calvin’s Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Columbia Series in Reformed Theology; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); S. H. Russell, "Calvin and the Messianic Interpretation of the Psalms," in *Calvin and Hermeneutics* (ed. Richard C. Gamble; Articles on Calvin and Calvinism 6; New York: Garland, 1992), 261-272.

does see a christological dimension in Psalm 86, his vision does not extend nearly so far as that of Augustine's. This inclination to err on the side of caution appears to be driven by a desire to be faithful to the literal meaning and limited historical scope of the original author's words.

Ultimately, then, where does Calvin's exegetical methodology lead him? We have noted five distinctives of Calvin's approach to Psalm 86: (1) the assumption that the psalm's Davidic authorship is significant, (2) his sensitivity to the wider community of scholars as dialogue partners, (3) the influence of Calvin's overall theological grid on his interpretation, (4) the importance of applying the text to the Christian life, and (5) his willingness to identify limited christological allusion in the psalm. This approach enables Calvin to see many theological implications in the text which to modern scholars may not be as apparent. On the other hand, although Calvin sees many of the individual verses of Psalm 86 as containing rich theological significance, he does not seem to be concerned with trying to identify a central theological message in the psalm as a whole, nor does he show any interest in how Psalm 86 might fit into the larger context of the book of Psalms.

Overall, it can be said that Calvin represents a sort of "middle ground" between the exegetical approach of Rashi and the more expositional approach of Augustine. Calvin is concerned to study the psalm in its original language, to establish the text with as much certainty as possible, to analyze its use of obscure phrases, and to determine the literal, historical meaning intended by the author. Yet he is also concerned to draw out the applications of the text for Christian life and doctrine. As a result, Calvin's methodology enables him to delve further into the meaning of the psalm than perhaps an approach that is not as broad in its interests and questions.
Summary

To summarize our investigation into the interpretations of Psalm 86 offered by three of the pre-critical era's most significant expositors—Augustine, Rashi, and Calvin—we can make the following two points. First, as has been shown, all three scholars employ an interpretive method uniquely their own, demonstrating the ability of each to think analytically and systematically about the text and how to interpret it. None is a carbon copy of another. Second, none were hesitant to admit their theological presuppositions nor to allow them to influence their interpretations. The notion that one should try to interpret the text in isolation from one's theological convictions would appear to be quite foreign to their experience and thinking. If Childs and others are correct in their estimation that we have not paid sufficient attention to the exegetical work of pre-critical scholars, these two features of the approaches taken by Augustine, Rashi, and Calvin may be instructive for modern exegetes as well.

Source-Critical Approaches: Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs

After the periods of the Reformation and Post-Reformation, one of the next major developments to take place in biblical scholarship was the increased effort to attempt to determine the source, or sources, of the biblical text in its codified form. With regard to Psalms studies, one of the most representative commentaries of this source-critical approach in North America is the commentary of Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, first published in 1907. Regarding their methodological presuppositions, the

Briggses' observations on Psalm 86 are revealing. Though their comments are not lengthy, they take great care to identify those verses that are original and those that they deem to have been added by later glossators. Thus they remark on vv. 5-10, "Glossators greatly enlarged this Str. [strophe], breaking into several lines and interrupting them."\(^\text{37}\)

And just a little while later, regarding the psalm's ending, they write, "The original Ps. concluded with [verse] 15, an emphatic assertion of the kindness and faithfulness of God."\(^\text{38}\) Verses 16-17 were then, in their opinion, added at a later point "for liturgical reasons."\(^\text{39}\) As another example, on the difficult placement of the phrase אַתָּה אֱלֹהַי in the middle of the second clause of v. 2, the Briggses conclude, with little accompanying justification, that the phrase should actually be moved to the beginning of v. 3 with the comment, "displaced in original text and put into previous Str. [strophe]."\(^\text{40}\)

Finally, on the notable similarity between v. 14 (אֱלֹהִים זֵדִים קָמוּ עָלַי וַעֲדַת עָרִּיצִּים בִּקְּשׁוּ נַפְּשִּׁי וְּלֹא שָמוּךָ לְּנֶגְּדָם: נֵלָגָה) and Psalm 54:3 (כִּי זָרִים קָמוּ עָלַי וְּעָרִּיצִּים בִּקְּשׁוּ נַפְּשִּׁי לֹא שָמוּ אֱלֹהִים לְּנֶגְּדָם), they comment that a glossator copied the latter and inserted it into Psalm 86 at a later point.\(^\text{41}\)

The Briggses are also not insensitive to the many similarities that Psalm 86 shares with the other Davidic psalms, leading them to conclude that the author must have been very familiar with the Davidic collections. This similarity is also, in their mind, the probable reason for the psalm's superscription תְּנֵס, "of David," even though it is clear to


\(^{40}\) Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:236.

them that the psalm should actually be dated to a much later era. Furthermore, the authors note the frequent dependence of the psalm on other biblical passages, namely, Exodus 15:11 (cf. Ps 86:8); Deuteronomy 32:22 (cf. Ps 86:13b); and Exodus 34:6 (cf. Ps 86:15).

Given that the Briggses demonstrate such a keen interest in the features of the text, especially its commonalities with other psalms and biblical passages, it might seem that the commentators would be well-poised to draw out some incisive interpretation of the text. However, this actually appears to be rather the opposite of their intended goal. Instead, their intent seems to be to interpret the psalm as just one more example of the common feelings and expressions that appear throughout the Psalter. This is demonstrated by their frequent use of phrases such as "as usual in prayers" (v. 1, 2:236); "here as usual" (v. 1, 2:236); "a familiar expression" (v. 3, 2:236); "a plea for hearing, in the usual style" (v. 6, 2:237). Although it is not entirely clear in this psalm how the authors have determined which verses are original (vv. 1-5, 8, 10a, 11-12, 13, 15) and which are later additions (vv. 6-7, 9, 14, 16-17), it does appear that the phrases that the authors deem the most unique (e.g., the liturgical function of vv. 16-17; the similarity of v. 14 to Psalm 54:3; the motif of nations-worship in v. 9) are also those that they

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42 The late dating of Psalm 86 is assumed throughout, but is brought out especially clearly in the authors' comments on the psalmist's petition to "make with me a sign for good" (v. 17). About this phrase they remark: "It is not necessary to think of a miracle or a theophany, which could hardly have been in the mind of the editor of this late passage"; Briggs, Psalms, 2:238.

43 They note that the use of "servant" to refer to the psalmist—who, in their opinion, is Israel speaking with one voice—shows dependence on Isaiah 2; Briggs, Psalms, 2:235.

44 Certainly, it is clear that they base their source-critical conclusions at least in part on the structure of the psalm itself, but it is not clear to what extent the content of the phrases themselves are determinative of their originality.

45 Briggs, Psalms, 2:237
believe were added by later glossators. Is this mere coincidence? Likely not, for when the originality of a psalm's unusual features are called into question because of their uniqueness, what is left of the psalm's original composition will by deduction conform to the usual pattern.

The Briggeses are also relatively sparing in their comments about the psalm's instructional value and its teaching about God's character towards his people. To the commentators, the clearest statements of the latter appear in vv. 13 and 15. In v. 13, they understand the phrase "you have delivered me from the depths of the grave" as an allusion to the time when Israel was an exile, an experience akin to descending into Sheol. Yet, "Divine kindness descended upon him [the psalmist on behalf of all of Israel] there in order to bring him thence." In v. 15, they understand the psalmist as recalling God's great mercy of the past in forgiving the sin of the rebellious Israelites and in performing great "wonders of deliverance" on his people's behalf. Although both of these analyses offer fairly strong interpretations of God's beneficence towards Israel, when compared with the great lengths to which some of the pre-critical exegetes go (especially Augustine and Calvin) to bring attention to the psalm's theological focus, the difference in emphasis is clear.

Form-Critical Approaches: Hermann Gunkel and Hans-Joachim Kraus

46 In the introduction to the first volume, Charles Briggs writes: "The Theology of the Psalter has been carefully investigated; only the limits of space prevent me from giving it in this volume"; *Psalms*, 1:vii. It is not clear from this statement whether he refers to the "careful investigation" of the Psalter's theology as conducted by the Briggses themselves or by other scholars.

Any analysis of representative form-critical approaches to Psalm 86 should properly begin with a close look at the Psalms commentary of Hermann Gunkel, the founding father of modern form-criticism. Gunkel's brief comments on this psalm reveal a twofold interest: first, in the structural composition and conventional form-elements of the psalm, and second, in the psalm's originality and literary connections with other biblical psalms. Following his initial analysis of these two areas, he also comments on the major grammatical, syntactical, and text-critical issues raised by the psalm.

On the matter of the structural composition of Psalm 86, Gunkel divides the psalm into two sections—vv. 1-13 and vv. 14-17—noting, with Ewald, that in these two sections the psalm "twice traverses the way from the depths to the heights." In the first section (vv. 1-13), he notes the presence of three primary elements. In vv. 1-7, he identifies a foundation of petitions, including numerous motives for hearing; this is followed by a hymnic motif in vv. 8-10; and finally, the section concludes with a thanksgiving hymn in vv. 12-13. To Gunkel, this two-verse song of thanksgiving even communicates an eschatological dimension by the use of the phrase הָיְצַלְּתָ נַפְּשִּׁי מִּשְּאוֹל תַחְּתִּיָּה ("you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol"), a dimension which he notes it shares with Psalm 102.

Like the first section, the second section (vv. 14-17) also contains three main components—a lament in v. 14; a hymnic motif, this time in v. 15; and lastly, a statement of David's requests regarding himself and his enemies in vv. 16-17. The parallels

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48 Hermann Gunkel, Die Psalmen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 376; "Man muß zunächst (mit Ewald) sehen, daß er zweimal den Weg von der Tiefe in die Höhe geht"; all English translations of Gunkel's commentary are my own.
between the two sections, though not representing an exact correspondence, are nevertheless, for Gunkel, highly apparent.

On the issue of the psalm’s originality, Gunkel also espouses a strong opinion. His remarks on the apparent attribution of the psalm to David are singularly dismissive: "typical of the carelessness of our tradition." However, he gives no sign of considering another purpose, perhaps editorial, for the superscription, in the style advocated more recently by Childs and Wilson. Furthermore, he takes care to mention the psalm’s "many contacts with other poems" as a primary indication of its late origin, specifically mentioning its connection with Psalm 102 three times. (In his comments on grammatical and text-critical matters, he mentions additional connections with Psalms 5, 9, 22, 25, 27, 52 [two times], 54, 55, 57, 66, 68, 72, 89, and 116.) Although he characterizes the poem as containing little that is special, the psalm’s relatively perfunctory contents do not necessarily seem, in Gunkel’s mind, to render it worthless. Against what he claims to be the typically held view of other commentators, he defends the patchwork style of the psalm as nevertheless capable of producing a poem that is not "wholly without recognizable coherence."

Based on this examination of Gunkel’s interpretation of Psalm 86, what are the pros and cons of his unique methodology? Certainly, the helpfulness of the form-critical

49 Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 377.

50 In his chapter, "The Formation of the Psalter," Westermann notes that Gunkel "above all had no interest in how the collection was handed down to us"; Praise and Lament, 251. Note the comments of Kraus, as well: "Above all, the study of types originated by H. Gunkel has completely ignored the titles of the Psalms in order to develop new viewpoints regarding the organization and arrangement from what the form itself of the Psalms has to say"; Psalms 1-59, 31.

51 Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 377.

52 Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 376.
approach for clarifying the structural elements within the poem cannot be denied. At the same time, however, when the poem does appear to stray from its governing form, Gunkel does not always seem to possess the flexibility to allow the text to dictate the legitimate presence of exceptions to the rule. A prime example of this lack of flexibility can be seen in his treatment of vv. 5 and 15, two verses that are widely recognized for their common source in Exodus 34:6 and therefore, for their similarity. Yet because of where each verse stands in relation to the two parts of his compositional structure (vv. 1-13 and vv. 14-17), he identifies v. 15 as a hymnic motif, but not v. 5.

With regard to the psalm's theological dimension, Gunkel appears to show very little interest in making any claims about the psalm's instructive or theological value. His approach intentionally stays at the level of describing the surface features of the text. So, for example, although he very thoroughly catalogues the textual links between Psalm 86 and other biblical psalms, he demonstrates no interest in the significance of these links other than to say that they point to the psalm's late origin.

For a somewhat more contemporary take on the form-critical approach pioneered by Gunkel, we turn to the comprehensive two-volume Psalms commentary of Hans-Joachim Kraus. Although Kraus should rightly be considered an academic descendant of

53 For an expanded critique of this weakness of the form-critical method, see Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 5-6, particularly this statement: "To state our criticism in another way, form criticism by its very nature is bound to generalize because it is concerned with what is common to all the representatives of a genre, and therefore applies an external measure to the individual pericopes. It does not focus sufficient attention upon what is unique and unrepeatable, upon the particularity of the formulation."

54 Although he can hardly be considered an impartial observer due to his own overt commitment to the theological exploration of the Psalms, Brevard Childs's comments on Gunkel's method seem nevertheless accurate: "With all due respect to Gunkel, the truly great expositors for probing to the theological heart of the Psalter remain Augustine, Kimchi, Luther, Calvin, the long forgotten Puritans buried in Spurgeon's Treasury, the haunting sermons of Donne, and the learned and pious reflections of de Muis, Francke and Geier"; Introduction to the Old Testament, 523.
Gunkel,\textsuperscript{55} differences between the two scholars' exegetical methodologies can nevertheless be easily detected.\textsuperscript{56} One of the most obvious differences is in the scope of each commentator's inquiry. So, for example, where Gunkel largely restricts his comments on Psalm 86 to questions of form, structural composition, period of origin, and translation and syntax, Kraus takes form-criticism as his starting point but then goes on to consider a number of other interpretive dimensions as well. Thus, his comments on each of the 150 psalms, including Psalm 86, assume the following standard pattern: 1) Translation and Textual Notes; 2) Form; 3) Setting; 4) Commentary; 5) Purpose and Thrust. Of this list, the last category, "Purpose and Thrust," stands out as perhaps the most innovative when compared to the interpretive priorities of Gunkel.

However, the methodological and, hence, interpretive differences between Gunkel and Kraus are most clearly seen not just in the way each has chosen to structure his commentary, but in the contents of the commentaries themselves. This can be seen by briefly surveying each of Kraus's categories. On the topic of the "Form" of Psalm 86, Kraus begins with an in-depth discussion of the psalm's meter, going to great lengths to try to re-establish the original meter of the psalm, although he is eventually forced to acknowledge that because of numerous copying errors, the task "presents a number of

\textsuperscript{55} In describing the groundbreaking form-critical approach of Gunkel and Begrich, Kraus writes: "A wealth of traditionally shaped, conventional formulations was identified and lucidly presented"; Hans-Joachim Kraus, \textit{Psalms 1-68: A Commentary} (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 15. For more about Gunkel's influence on Kraus, see also his section in the Introduction on "The Categories and Their 'Sitz im Leben'"; \textit{Psalms 1-68}, esp. 38-43.

\textsuperscript{56} Gerstenberger groups Kraus with the second group of form critics to follow Gunkel who, unlike the first generation of Gunkel's pupils who followed his method very strictly, came to be influenced by Barth's theology of the Word and von Rad's appropriation of Barth's theology to Psalms studies. For form critics in this second period, the priority then became to discover revelations of the divine will through "linguistic surface structures." Gerstenberger writes, "Formal analysis remains a tool of exegesis, but the theological perspective is a new one"; Erhard Gerstenberger, "The Psalter," in \textit{The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible} (ed. Leo G. Perdue; Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 187.
difficulties that can hardly be removed."\(^{57}\) Nevertheless, in his translation and notes, he proposes at least three changes to the text based solely on metrical considerations.\(^{58}\) Furthermore, with regard to the psalm's form, Kraus appears to employ a somewhat different set of classifications than that proposed by Gunkel. Rather than using Gunkel's term and calling Psalm 86 a *Klagelied eines Einzelnen* ("lament of an individual"), Kraus calls it a "prayer-song of the individual," claiming that "the preponderant influence on the language and structure of the form is that of the תפלה."\(^{59}\) It is interesting to note, however, that the distinctive features of the תפלה (as identified by Kraus) are not substantially different from those of Gunkel's *Klagelied* and in the end, he and Gunkel basically agree on the psalm's compositional structure.

Regarding the "Setting" of Psalm 86, Kraus again shares many of Gunkel's basic instincts but he develops them in greater detail. Like Gunkel, he acknowledges that the psalm appears to have been compiled from bits and pieces taken from a number of older psalms, leading him to conclude that "determination of the actual situation of the petitioner [is] impossible."\(^{60}\) As a result, Kraus thinks it best to assume that Psalm 86 is "an editorial composition," a bolder conclusion than anything ever posited by Gunkel, yet not inconsistent with Gunkel's view. Kraus also explicitly says that he does not think the fact that Psalm 86 borrows from other psalms is reason to look down upon it since "a


\(^{58}\) First, regarding verse 2, he moves the problematic phrase אַתָה אֱלֹהַי to the beginning of verse 3 on the reasoning that it "goes beyond what the verse can hold metrically." Second, he eliminates the אֲדֹנָי of verse 12 on the basis of meter. Finally, he expunges the phrase וְּלֹא שָמוּךָ לְּנֶגְּדָם from his translation as a secondary addition because it also does not fit the psalm's meter; Kraus, *Psalms 69-150*, 180.


\(^{60}\) Kraus, *Psalms 69-150*, 181.
prayer in its basic understanding is not subject to the same literary criteria as lyric poetry.  

In his exegesis of Psalm 86, Kraus devotes the most space to the section entitled "Commentary." Here is where the "nuts and bolts" of his argument can be found. Not surprisingly, this is also where we find the evidence upon which many of his conclusions as to the psalm's "Purpose and Thrust" are based. Therefore, we will consider these two sections together.

Although, with Gunkel, he believes that the psalm should be divided into two basic sections, vv. 1-13 and vv. 14-17, he chooses to comment on the psalm in three different parts: vv. 1-11, 12-13, and 14-17. In his discussion of vv. 1-11, he spends a great deal of time discussing the levels of meaning implied by the phrase כִּי־עָנִּי וְּאֶ בְּיֹון אָנִּי ("For I am poor and needy"). He claims that the phrase refers to the actual state of the psalmist, and not to "a position of honor for the 'pious'." Moreover, "the petitioner assumes the privileges of being heard and of being helped which apply on Zion (cf. Isa. 14:32)." This is highly significant in Kraus's mind, for it leads him directly to one of, in his opinion, the psalmist's three main emphases: that he, the psalmist, is poor and needy and so is entitled to certain privileges. Further evidence that the psalmist is confident God will respond, even while in the midst of great tribulation and persecution from enemies, is found in the repeated use of kî-, particularly the kî- clause of v. 7 ("for you will answer me") which "reveals the certainty of being heard."

61 Kraus, Psalms 69-150, 181.
62 Kraus, Psalms 69-150, 182.
63 Kraus, Psalms 69-150, 182.
The second point which Kraus identifies as one of the psalmist's main emphases is that God is fundamentally gracious and merciful. Here Kraus reveals how much significance he places in the psalmist's use of Exodus 34:6, God's ancient self-description, in vv. 5 and 15. He has no doubt that this formula would have been quickly recognized by the original readers and its import understood.

Third, Kraus notes that the psalmist's vision of Yahweh is as an all-powerful, saving God whose deliverance has both universal and eschatological effects. The evidence for this claim appears to come primarily from vv. 12-13 where Kraus draws special attention to the use of the verb ḥāḇēr ("honor"). Where other commentators might be quick to gloss over the particular connotations of this verb in this context, Kraus sees it as indicating that "he [the psalmist] will take part in the universal eschatological homage which one day all nations will tender the God of Israel by honoring him."64 (As noted above, the eschatological dimension of these two verses was also pointed out by Gunkel.) It is also significant that Kraus chooses to treat vv. 12-13 in a separate discussion, rather than grouping it together with his comments on vv. 1-11 like Gunkel. This shows further the particular importance for the psalm's overall message that he identifies in the "vow of thanksgiving" made in these two verses.

In Kraus's commentary on Psalm 86, we see many of Gunkel's embryonic ideas taken to the level of drawing concrete conclusions regarding the thrust of the psalmist's message. Why? Aside from the fact that Kraus simply devotes more pages to the psalm than Gunkel, what are some of the methodological factors that make possible this further development? The most obvious explanation remains that Kraus simply asks more

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64 Kraus, *Psalms 69-150*, 183.
questions over a wider area of topics. His expanded scope of inquiry enables him to delve into a deeper level of detail, which, in turn, enables him to propose more solid summary statements. In addition, we cannot neglect the fact that Kraus's commentary seems to assume a level of coherence in the psalm and its message that Gunkel felt he had first to establish and then defend.

To those interested in the topic of the theology of the Psalms, Kraus's conscious attempt to address the issue of the "Purpose and Thrust" of Psalm 86 is certainly heartening. And given that Kraus has written extensively on the theology of the Psalms, this should come as no surprise.65 In the specific case of Psalm 86, however, Kraus does not spend a significant amount of time reflecting upon what the psalm has to teach us about God himself aside from his identification of the psalmist's second emphasis on God's gracious and merciful nature. Rather, he speaks about his appreciation for Psalm 86 because it gives us deeper insight into "the unique way of the impressions of inner Israel."66 and because it demonstrates that "there is life from tradition and in tradition."67 With regard to Psalm 86, at least, Kraus seems content to stay mostly at the level of the psalmist's unique experience and emphases. Whether this is primarily a result of his exegetical method or his own presuppositional commitments is difficult to say.

Rhetorical-Critical Approaches: Marvin Tate and Konrad Schaefer

65 Hans-Joachim Kraus, Theology of the Psalms (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992); see also n. 54.

66 Kraus, Psalms 69-150, 183.

67 Kraus, Psalms 69-150, 183.
Considering that it has been almost four decades since James Muilenburg first delivered (and subsequently published) his watershed lecture, "Form Criticism and Beyond," it is somewhat remarkable that the agenda which he laid out at that time in large part continues to guide rhetorical critics today. That agenda can be summarized in the following quote:

> What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole. Such an enterprise I should describe as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism.\(^{68}\)

Nowhere does Muilenburg claim that previous generations of scholars were not concerned with poetic composition or with structural analysis—both Gunkel and Kraus, for example, give substantial attention to these features of Psalm 86—but his unique contribution, along with those of like-minded colleagues, has been to shed increasing amounts of light on the rhetorical-literary purpose of these structures. Two representative examples of this kind of contribution can be found in the Psalms commentaries of Marvin E. Tate and Konrad Schaefer.

Tate, whose commentary on Psalms 51-100 in the Word Biblical Commentary series was published in 1990, is somewhat constrained methodologically by the five-part format required of most of the commentaries in the series: Translation; Notes; Form/Structure/Setting; Comment; Explanation. Nevertheless, in his commentary on Psalm 86, Tate's own, unique hermeneutical priorities still manage to come through. Like Kraus, Tate's approach can be characterized as broad. It seeks to address many of the same exegetical issues explored by some of the commentators already examined,
including genre classification,\textsuperscript{69} authorship and setting,\textsuperscript{70} and dependence upon other psalms or, perhaps, a common source for its language.\textsuperscript{71}

Tate also, however, introduces some rather novel lines of questioning. Notably, he briefly discusses the relationship of Psalm 86 to its immediate context, suggesting three possible reasons for its placement between Psalms 85 and 87: 1) Psalm 87, with its theme of the international community born in Zion, is an expansion upon the worshipping nations motif mentioned in Psalm 86:9; 2) the placement of a prayer of David here lends extra authority to the Korahite psalms that surround it; and 3) the editors wanted to follow the communal prayer of Psalm 85 with an individual prayer like Psalm 86. Although Tate is not willing to claim with certainty that one or even any of these hypotheses is correct, saying that ultimately, "the reason for the placement of 86… is not apparent,"\textsuperscript{72} his comments show that he at least considers the question to be an important one.

Another area in which Tate demonstrates an exegetical approach different from those already considered is in his analysis of the psalm's literary structure. Rather than simply accepting the two-fold division of Gunkel and Kraus, he proposes seeing vv. 8-13, a section rich in hymnic praise language and thanksgiving, as a "hinge" between the two

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{69} He agrees with most modern commentators that Psalm 86 is a lament of the individual; Tate, \textit{Psalms 51-100}, 377.
  \item \textsuperscript{70} Tate maintains that the psalm is best read as a "literary composition, written for the use of any who found its content helpful," and, citing Wilson, understands the superscription as a scribal attempt "to give the psalm Davidic authority," and therefore not as an indication of true Davidic authorship; Tate, \textit{Psalms 51-100}, 380.
  \item \textsuperscript{71} After reviewing the relevant literature, he appears, in general, to prefer the view that the "generic" quality of the psalm is more appropriately attributed to the author's intentional use of traditional prayer language than to direct borrowing from other written psalms; Tate, \textit{Psalms 51-100}, 378-79.
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Tate, \textit{Psalms 51-100}, 380.
\end{itemize}
complaint sections found in vv. 1-7 and 11-14. This, in turn, makes him more open to considering the chiastic structures proposed by both G. Giavini and Walter Brueggemann, the former of whom considers v. 11 to be the central verse of the chiasm;73 the latter, v. 10.74 In Tate's mind, the placement of this "hinge"-section is highly significant, setting up as it does "a kind of dialectical tension between praise and supplication."75

Tate summarizes the meaning and message of Psalm 86 in the section entitled "Explanation" with three main observations. First, on the basis of careful examination of the psalm's use of literary and rhetorical devices, he concludes that the most outstanding stylistic feature of Psalm 86 is its "high cluster of imperative petitions (twelve in vv 1-7 and 15-17, 2 in vv 8-13, for a total of fourteen.)"76 The only other prayer psalms with a comparable number of imperative petitions, he points out, are Psalm 69:17-19 and Psalm 119:33-40. Second, and not surprisingly in light of his earlier analysis of the compositional structure, he identifies vv. 10-11 as the center of the psalm. Finally, Tate's third observation, a theological one, comes as a direct result of reflecting upon the combined import of the first two. In Psalm 86, we have a psalm that is dominated by the psalmist's demands of God (Observation #1) and yet has at its center a recitation of God's incomparable power and a request to be given a heart of undivided allegiance (Observation #2). Based on this, Tate makes a simple yet dramatic theological statement, namely, that "prayers for deliverance and restoration of well-being (vv 1-7; 14-17) need

74 Walter Brueggemann, Message of the Psalms, 62.
75 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 377.
76 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 384.
to be expressed with an adequate understanding of God."\textsuperscript{77} He goes on to elaborate upon the three personal characteristics for which the psalmist prays in v. 11 that embody what it means to possess this "adequate understanding." First, he points out the importance of understanding the way in which God works in the world in order for prayers to be empowered, stating, "Times of trouble and fear are times when wise supplicants especially seek to learn the ways of God."\textsuperscript{78} Second, he talks about the necessity of a life of faithfulness that reflects the faithfulness of God. Third, he discusses how essential it is for the pray-er to possess a unified heart, one which is "united in purpose and concentrated on the divine will,"\textsuperscript{79} in order to make authentic petitions before God.

In Tate's explanation of Psalm 86, we observe one of the most theologically-attuned interpretations of this psalm since that of the scholars of the pre-critical era. The question for us is this: is his willingness to explore the psalm's theological dimension directly related to his rhetorical-critical methodology? The answer: yes. The tight reasoning of his "Explanation" section demonstrates this. His first observation comes out of a consideration of the psalm's most notable rhetorical element, imperative petitions. His second observation directly results from his analysis of the literary structure of the psalm. Based on these, he posits a theological conclusion. On the basis of Tate's work, therefore, we can tentatively conclude that the rhetorical-critical method does lend itself well to the task of discerning the theological message embedded within the psalm. We

\textsuperscript{77} Tate, \textit{Psalms 51-100}, 384.

\textsuperscript{78} Tate, \textit{Psalms 51-100}, 384.

\textsuperscript{79} Tate, \textit{Psalms 51-100}, 384.
turn next to the work of rhetorical critic Konrad Schaefer to see if this tentative
collection can be further confirmed.

Schaefer's commentary on Psalm 86 is distinctive for its clear stress on two
priorities: stylistics and compositional structure. With regard to the former, his
observations on the psalmist's use of repetition are perhaps the most penetrating of any
commentary. For example, he points out the frequent occurrence of sets of seven in
Psalm 86: seven occurrences of אַתָּה; seven occurrences of אֲדֹנָי; seven total uses of יְּהוָה and שֵׁם;
seven requests (in the form of imperatives and jussives) before the final kî-
clause (v. 13a). He also notes the three-time use of the termךָּעַבְּד ("your servant") to
describe the psalmist along with the similar phraseךָּבֶן־אֲמָתֶ("child of your maidservant").
Schaefer treats the repetition of this self-identifying title as significant, positing that it
explains the relationship between the psalmist and God and thereby provides the reason
for God to respond to the psalmist's requests for help, "lest his [God's] own property be
damaged." By making this further statement about the meaning of the repetition of
"your servant," Schaefer demonstrates a willingness to move from a strictly technical
level in his interpretation (e.g., stylistics) to the level of discerning the psalm's
instructional value and theological dimension.

We see this kind of move repeated in Schaefer's analysis of the concentric
structure that he observes within the psalm. Based on observed lexical parallels as well
as repeated themes, he proposes the following pattern:

80 Schaefer does not explain why he believes there to be seven occurrences when it is clear that
there are only six (vv. 2, 5, 10 [2 times], 15, 17).


82 Schaefer, *Psalms*, 211.
A request; imperatives "incline your ear," "answer," "preserve," "save" (vv. 1-2)
B "save your servant"; "be gracious to me" (vv. 2-3)
C You Lord, abounding in love (v. 5)
D "the day of my trouble" (v. 7)
E incomparable greatness of God's being and action (v. 8)
F international homage (v. 9)
E' the greatness of God's being and works (v. 10)
D' "the insolent rise up" (v. 14)
C' You Lord, abounding in love (v. 15)
B' "be gracious to me"; "save the child of your serving girl" (v. 16)
A' request; imperative "show" (v. 17)

For Schaefer, this concentric structure is interesting not only in and of itself but also because the center of the structure draws the reader's attention to one of the psalm's primary instructional purposes, namely, to highlight the superiority of praise to other types of prayer. "The frame around the central verses sets in relief the excellent form of prayer, praise."84 Speaking more specifically, he notes that the praise of vv. 8-10 paints a picture in which "the poet contemplates God and gets lost in the fascinating reality."85

This is praise at the level of the sublime, perhaps even the level of the mystical.

Interestingly, however, we do not see this same willingness to, or perhaps interest in, moving from the level of observations of rhetorical technique to observations about the psalm's instructional meaning in his analysis of the string of motive clauses noted earlier. Though he takes care to note the psalmist's seven requests along with their accompanying kî- clauses, he does not choose to delve any further into the question of progression within this sequence nor even into the relative worthiness of each motive clause. Instead, he merely catalogs them, lumping "the psalmist's misery, devotion, trust,

83 Schaefer, Psalms, 212. Schaefer does not explain how vv. 4, 6, and 11-13, which are noticeably absent from his proposed chiasmus, fit into the overall compositional structure.

84 Schaefer, Psalms, 212.

85 Schaefer, Psalms, 212.
persistent prayer, and God's nature into one simple list. Whether this indicates an intentional carefulness on Schaefer's part to avoid drawing conclusions where there is insufficient ground in the text to do so, or whether these data are difficult to reconcile with his theological conclusions, or whether he is simply not interested in the particular question is difficult to determine.

Schaefer concludes his exegesis of Psalm 86 with some comments about the theme of self-formation and "personal integration," particularly as seen in the petitions of v. 11. He notes that in the end, the psalm is just as much about these ideas as it is about seeking "deliverance from trouble." From a methodological standpoint, Schaefer's final comments, while indeed stemming from the text, do not appear to be closely linked to any distinctively rhetorical-critical observations. Thus we see that although Schaefer is certainly committed to the rhetorical-critical agenda, he is by no means bound to it in such a way that he can only derive his interpretation from explicitly stylistic or structural considerations.

Based on the commentaries of Tate and Schaefer, what then can we conclude about the relative helpfulness of the rhetorical-critical method for opening up the theological and instructional meaning of the text? Both scholars demonstrate a driving interest in the stylistic components, particularly the repetition of certain key words and phrases that make Psalm 86 so distinctive, and compositional structure of the text. Moreover, both scholars use their analyses of these rhetorical elements to get at the meaning and intended instruction of the text with a large degree of success. At the same time, it would be inappropriate to assume that simply because one uses a rhetorical-

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86 Schaefer, *Psalms*, 212.
critical methodology, one will automatically be enabled to plumb the theological depths of any particular psalm. The correspondence is not nearly so neat and clear-cut. For example, Tate, whose comments on Psalm 86 are far more extensive than Schaefer's, clearly employs other methodological considerations as well,\(^87\) which should perhaps also be credited with supporting his fuller interpretation. Schaefer, who for the most part steers clear of issues like form and setting, does not always make the move from observing key repetitions to making a claim about the purpose and meaning of these repetitions.

**Canonical Approaches: J. Clinton McCann and Erich Zenger**

We turn, finally, to the work of two contemporary Psalms scholars whose interpretive methodologies can best be described as self-consciously canonical in their orientation. For J. Clinton McCann, who describes his method as "explicitly theological" and one that "takes seriously the canonical shape of the book of Psalms itself as well as the psalter's place in the larger canon of Scripture,"\(^88\) these commitments certainly do not exclude the use of other methodological criteria, however. Indeed, in the introduction to his Psalms commentary, McCann plainly declares that he intends to employ a "multiplicity of methods" including form- and rhetorical-criticism.\(^89\) Nevertheless, for McCann, it is a canonical approach to the text that promises perhaps the greatest

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\(^{87}\) See especially his section entitled, "Form/Structure/Setting"; Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 377-380.

\(^{88}\) McCann, *NIB* 4:642.

\(^{89}\) McCann, *NIB* 4:643.
theological payoff because it empowers the reader to understand the psalms "as God's word to humanity—as Scripture," not simply as human words to and about God.90

How does McCann's methodological program play out, then, in his exegesis of Psalm 86? Regarding the form of the psalm, he acknowledges that it is an individual complaint but does not elaborate on this further except to point out that Psalm 86 (along with Psalm 88) is one of only two such psalms in Book III.91

He spends much more time, however, on the topic of the psalm's use of repetition and its compositional structure. First, McCann views the six occurrences of אַתָּה as a central structuring device in the psalm.92 (Interestingly, he does not explicitly mention the other repeated words and phrases that Schaefer finds so significant.) The use of the second person pronoun in vv. 2 and 17, vv. 5 and 15, and twice in v. 10 creates a basic chiastic formation with the center of the psalm falling at vv. 10 and/or 11. In this regard, McCann also reproduces the concentric structure proposed by G. Giavini (noted above) which similarly places the center at v. 11. For McCann, the significance of these structural considerations lies in what they communicate about the psalm's central message, and that, in his view, is that God is exclusively sovereign: "For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God" (v. 10). This is not to say that Psalm 86 is not also fundamentally about the poet and his current state of suffering, but the psalmist's identity is continually brought into relationship with God's identity. Indeed, according to

90 McCann, NIB 4:643.
91 McCann, NIB 4:1019.
92 McCann, NIB 4:1019.
McCann, vv. 1-7 teach us that the psalmist's life and identity depend upon who God is—gracious, good, willing to forgive and sovereign.

But what about the psalm's placement within the canonical Psalter and Book III, in particular? Interestingly, McCann does not actually have a great deal to say on this topic, although it is the first one he addresses in his comments on Psalm 86. He notes that it stands out among the psalms of Book III for its genre (e.g., individual complaint) and also for the fact that it comes in the middle of a Korahite collection (Psalms 84-85; 87-88), both of which would imply that its placement is intentional. Yet what that intent might be is, to him, "unclear." At best, he can only point out the general correspondence between the themes of Psalm 86, particularly its allusions to Exodus 32-34, and the overarching theme of Book III as a meditation upon the experience of the exile and its later consequences.

In McCann's commentary on Psalm 86, we do indeed observe him using the "multiplicity of methods" mentioned in his introduction, not just the canonical approach for which he is known. Moreover, his overall interpretation, particularly with regard to discerning the psalm's theological message, seems to rest most heavily not on canonical considerations like the placement of the psalm within Book III and the larger Psalter, but rather on structural considerations like the six-fold use of אַתָּה in a chiastic arrangement. In fact, although McCann does dutifully address the question of the psalm's canonical placement, even calling it "intentional," nowhere does he claim to have received any great theological insight from pursuing this line of inquiry. Whether this reflects

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93 McCann, NIB 4:1019.

94 McCann, NIB 4:1019.
scholarly restraint on McCann's part or simply an inability to follow-through on his stated methodology is difficult to determine.

Finally, it is interesting to note that McCann's interpretation of Psalm 86 does become explicitly christological in the final section entitled, "Reflections." There he makes two observations. First, he notes that as a suffering servant, the psalmist's words foreshadow the life of suffering led by Christ. Second, as a model of prayer, Psalm 86 teaches us about the importance of a submissive and dependent attitude in prayer just as Jesus also emphasized in teaching his disciples how to pray in Matthew 6. What, if any, aspect of his exegetical work enables McCann to make this jump to the explicitly christological level? Based on a careful reading of this section, one must conclude that more than anything, it is his own presupposed commitment (stated in the "Introduction" to the commentary) to reading the text in light of Christ, who "embodied the psalter's articulation of God's will for justice, righteousness, and peace among all peoples and nations,"95 and not anything specifically having to do with his exegesis of Psalm 86 that drives the christological component of his interpretation.

If a tentative use of the canonical approach is what characterizes McCann's exegesis of Psalm 86, then enthusiasm for the canonical approach might be considered the trademark of the canonical approach to Psalms interpretation employed by Erich Zenger, whose groundbreaking commentary with Frank-Lothar Hossfeld on Psalms 51-100 contains some of the most original Psalms research currently in publication. Like McCann, Zenger's commentary on Psalm 86 covers all of the methodological basics. He begins with a discussion of the psalm's form and what various form-critics have

95 McCann, NIB 4:642.
proposed in order to make it better conform to the formulaic structure of an individual lament. Although he unabashedly rejects these attempts to re-structure the psalm as if in its current form it represents some sort of mutation, he nevertheless discusses them at some length. Zenger himself is convinced that the structure of the psalm must be preserved and that it actually exhibits a very purposeful A B A' pattern with vv. 14-17 recapitulating and concretizing vv. 1-7. Based on this and other parallel repetitions within the text, he argues that Psalm 86 is a structural unity which has as its center vv. 8-13.

While Zenger's discussion of the stylistic and structural components of the psalm is thorough and well laid out, where he clearly spends the bulk of his energy (and ink) is on the topic of the psalm's intertextuality and the implications for interpretation. For Zenger, analyzing the psalm's use of phrases and words from other psalms and biblical literature is the key to discovering its meaning and function within the canonical Scripture, and his approach to doing so can best be described as maximalistic. Let us consider a few representative examples here.

One of Zenger's most interesting proposals is that Psalm 86 functions within book III as a summary of the Davidic psalms in Books I and II. He bases this theory on the identification of certain linguistic ties between Psalm 86 and Psalms 40-41 and Psalms 69-71/72, with which both of the earlier "David-psalters" (Psalms 3-41 and Psalms 51-71/72) conclude. He goes on to also propose that by erecting the "Sinai-Theology" of

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96 Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, Psalmen 51-100 (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament; Herder: Freiburg, 2000), 536.

97 Hossfeld and Zenger, Psalmen 51-100, 537-538.
Exodus 33-34 as a backdrop to this summary psalm (referring to the two references to Exodus 34:6 in vv. 5 and 15), the entire Psalter-context receives a further dimension of meaning. 99 Though the exact meaning of this statement could be debated, Zenger appears to be saying that because Psalm 86 functions as a summary of the two "David-psalters" and because the "Sinai-Theology" of Exodus 33-34 serves as the theological backdrop for Psalm 86, the "Sinai-Theology" of Exodus serves as the theological backdrop for the two "David-psalters,"—and this all based on the identification of linguistic ties between Psalm 86 and Psalms 40-41, Psalms 69-71/72 and Exodus 34:6.

A second example of Zenger's maximalist approach to intertextual literary analysis can be found in his summary statement about the way in which Psalm 86 connects together the Psalter as a whole and its various theologies. As a psalm which, in his analysis, shares linguistic commonalities with Psalms 102, 119, and 143 and thematic commonalities (e.g., a shared Sinai-Theology) with Psalms 25, 103, 111, 116, and 145, and which is also influenced by the Zion-Theology of its surrounding psalms (Psalms 84-85, 87), Zenger declares Psalm 86 to have created a reading context (buchübergreifenden Lesezusammenhang) which combines together Zion-, Sinai-, Nations-pilgrimmage-, and Torah-theologies. Moreover, it does so according to its genre as a messianic prayer. 100


99 Zenger writes: "... by adopting the Sinai theology of Exodus 33-34, he gives the psalm an overall horizon that then acquires further dimensions of meaning in the context of the Psalter"; F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100 (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 369.

100 Hossfeld and Zenger, Psalmen 51-100, 547.
A third example of the breadth of Zenger's intertextual method is the way in which he ties Psalm 86 to the New Testament record, specifically the hymn of Revelation 15:3-4. Because of the Hebraic style of this "song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" and because of its ties to Psalm 86:8-9, Zenger calls Revelation 15:3-4 a "re-reading" of Psalm 86 which re-announces what the psalm has already alluded to, namely that all nations will be brought together by the justice of God for the purpose of worshipping him.\textsuperscript{101}

As a final means by which to gain a better understanding of his canonical-critical method, let us consider Zenger's approach to reading Psalm 86 within its immediate Psalter-context by looking at an example from his comments on the implicit "Zion-Theology" of vv. 8-13. Although he admits that Zion is not specifically mentioned in these verses, he sees clear Zion imagery in the phrase: "All the nations… will come/go in" (v. 9) as the psalm envisions the streaming together of the people of God to worship and glorify him. Perhaps just as significantly, he points out the heavy emphasis on Zion in the neighboring psalms, specifically Psalms 84-85, and 87, and believes this to be further evidence of the Zion-perspective in Psalm 86. Looking a bit further out, he also notes the Zion-Theology of Psalm 25, a psalm to which Psalm 86 also has distinctive ties.\textsuperscript{102}

Because many of Zenger's lines of interpretive inquiry, especially into the canonical context and intertextuality of Psalm 86, are so directly relevant to the interests of this project, his ideas will be engaged in greater detail in later chapters. For the

\textsuperscript{101} Hossfeld and Zenger, \textit{Psalmen 51-100}, 547-548.

\textsuperscript{102} Hossfeld and Zenger, \textit{Psalmen 51-100}, 542.
purpose of this chapter, however, we are primarily interested in evaluating his methodology and its usefulness for uncovering the theological dimension of the psalm's interpretation. As in the case of McCann’s commentary, it would be difficult to ignore the fact that Zenger's exegesis of Psalm 86 is also "explicitly theological." There is no doubt that he is overtly (perhaps even overly?) concerned to read the psalm biblically-theologically, seeing new layers of biblical meta-themes around seemingly every corner. It is also clear that he bases his conclusions about the presence of Sinai-, Zion-, Nations-theologies, etc. on the analysis of the text itself. Yet, to an even greater extent, he finds his most promising data in the psalm's linguistic (cf. Psalms 40-41, 69-71/72, 102, 119, 143), thematic (cf. Psalms 25, 103, 111, 116, 145), and contextual (cf. Psalms 84-85, 87) connections to other psalms and biblical texts (cf. Exodus 33-34 and Revelation 15:3-4). Perhaps this, then, is one of the main reasons why many of Zenger's suggestions regarding the psalm's theological dimension and function differ so markedly from those of other commentators, including McCann, whose methodologies focus much more on the psalm's stylistic components and compositional structure.

Zenger's commitment to this method of intertextual literary analysis and contextual reading is also directly responsible for the extremely robust picture of the binding function of Psalm 86 within Books I-III of the Psalter and even within the larger canonical Scripture—reaching as it does all the way back to Exodus and all the way forward to Revelation—that he proposes. In comparison with the other commentators examined, this also represents a rather novel dimension.

Zenger is to be commended for his willingness to think in a new and different way about how Psalms exegesis should be conducted and about what questions to ask.
However, where Zenger's interpretation may be found to be lacking is not in his questions, which are often legitimate and deserving, but in the evidence, or lack thereof, that he gives to support his answers. For example, the supposed linguistic ties between Psalm 86 and Psalms 40-41 are never actually documented by Zenger and they are certainly not obvious and specific enough to be assumed. In conclusion, Zenger's methodology may be highly thought-provoking and even instructive for those with an appreciation for a canonical-critical approach to Psalms interpretation. Unfortunately, this does not change the fact that some of his most bold and exciting proposals will require further substantiation before they can be fully accepted.

**Conclusion**

This overview of representative commentators from five different eras or methodological schools of Psalms interpretation has yielded three main results. First, it has given us a clearer picture of the philosophical and methodological shifts within the field of Psalms research over the last several centuries. These shifts have been numerous and wide, but not without continuity. Note, for example, that Rashi's pattern, which did not necessarily originate with him, of treating the text according to its individual phrases is still the first exegetical step taken by virtually every commentator examined in this chapter since him. This fact testifies to the basic soundness of Rashi's generally careful approach. On the other hand, the methodological discontinuity experienced within Psalms studies over the past two millennia is also instructive for us. In general, the trend in modern Psalms research appears to have shifted away from efforts to break down the text into pieces that can be identified as original vs. later additions—in the style of the
Briggses, for example—and towards working to interpret the text in its received and canonical form. Even Gunkel, who acknowledges that Psalm 86 strays from the typical form of an individual lament, seems willing to accept that the psalm may still be able to communicate something coherent despite its anthological style. More recently, others have begun to view the psalm's "patchwork" quality not as an interpretive handicap to be overcome, but as a key to discerning the psalm's theological meaning and canonical-function. Furthermore, the work of scholars like Wilson and Zenger represents yet another shift towards using individual psalms to help determine the intention of the Psalter's final editor(s) in shaping the Psalter as they did. In a way, this effort mirrors the earlier source-critical priority of trying to identify the individual psalm's author(s), yet the difference is significant. Rather than working under the assumption that the key to understanding the psalm lies in pulling away all of its added layers in order to get to the original kernel of meaning, this newer canonical approach assumes that by offering clues as to the editor's purpose in the placement of a particular psalm, the psalm may be able to reveal important data regarding the larger theological message embedded within the Psalter's shape.

Second, this overview has helped to shed some light on the question of which methodologies have historically been the most effective at unveiling the psalm's theological dimension. First, it should be acknowledged again that methodology alone does not determine interpretation. Two exegetes may claim to use the same basic method and yet come out with two fairly dissimilar interpretations due to their non-methodological differences. Nevertheless, it does appear in general that those modern commentators whose primary commitments are to posing rhetorically- and canonically-

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103 This is the claim of Howard, "Current Study," 24.
oriented questions to the text are also the same commentators whose exegetical work yielded the greatest theological payoff. Again, this cannot be attributed to methodology alone, but certainly for those interested in interpreting the psalms biblically-theologically, it is a pattern worth noting. What exactly it is about rhetorical-criticism and the canonical approach that seem to make them more effective in this way is a question that will be explored in greater depth later. However, one cannot help but notice that when attention is no longer focused on attempting to get back to the psalm's "original" phrases and/or form by deconstructing it into any number of smaller pieces, and when the psalm's structural unity is assumed and respected, greater energy can be focused on reading the psalm as God's instruction to his people. In this regard, rhetorical- and canonical-critics may have more in common with exegetes of the pre-critical era like Augustine and Calvin, who also primarily addressed the psalms in their final forms and who saw the Psalter as richly theological, than they do with many source- and form-critics.

Finally, although this was not one of the stated purposes of the chapter, this overview has demonstrated the important influence that each commentator's own faith presuppositions have had on his or her interpretation of Psalm 86. From Augustine's insistence on reading every word in the light of Christ to the Briggeses' dedication to identifying the non-unique feelings of the psalmist; from Gunkel's hesitation to discuss any significant aspect of Psalm 86's instructional-theological value because for him it is not revelatory but merely religious, to McCann's willingness to record his reflections on the messianic character of Psalm 86 with little or no reference to his own exegetical work—we have observed incontrovertible evidence that when it comes to Psalms interpretation, the belief system to which one subscribes will somehow shape the
interpretation that results. When actually applied to the text, no exegetical methodology functions in a vacuum. The more readily this reality is accepted, the easier it will become to differentiate between interpretive conclusions reached as a result of a certain method used and those reached as a result of the exegete's own theological commitments.
CHAPTER 3: AN EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY FOR THE PSALMS PROPOSED AND DEFINED

Introduction

As stated in chapter 1, one of the primary goals of this study is to propose and test an exegetical methodology for the Psalms that: a) incorporates a wide range of critical tools for the purpose of adequately addressing the myriad of interpretive issues raised by the Psalms, and b) does so in a way that is "practical." By "practical," I am referring to a method that is actually able to be practiced; to be more specific, a method that has a sufficient number of objective components for it to be used with a variety of psalms. "Practical" in this sense does not refer to the method's ease but to its inherent repeatability.

How does one go about devising such a method? Should it be based largely on ideology (in other words, governed by presuppositions about the purpose and most significant features of the biblical psalms) or should methodology be shaped primarily by empirical testing (in other words, what works)?

The contention of this study is that both matter and, therefore, both should be taken into consideration. Moreover, we can expect the interaction between both of these considerations to intermingle in such a way that may at times be difficult to untangle. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, we will attempt to address each separately. Accordingly, this chapter will attempt to outline a methodology that is in keeping with my basic understanding of the most important

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1 An example of the former can be seen in the history of the development of form-criticism. As previously noted (ch. 1, n. 7), Gunkel's beliefs about the importance of each psalm's *Sitz im Leben* in conjunction with Mowinckel's single-minded interest in the religio-cultic function of the psalms for Israel's worship life combined to fuel their groundbreaking investigations into the various genres represented in the Psalter.
features of the biblical psalms while the final chapter will look back on the way in which the actual exegesis of Psalm 86 has influenced my methodological decisions.

Proposal of a Holistic and Hierarchical Approach

Every proper exegetical method begins with a meticulous and careful reading of the text. This statement may seem so obvious that it hardly bears repeating. In keeping with the importance of this task, the interpreter should expect to use as many of the analytical tools available in the collective arsenal of modern Psalms scholarship as are relevant and helpful. In what comes below, I will argue for a hierarchy of these methodological steps that together constitute a careful reading.

The first order of business in reading the text carefully is to nail down the basic meaning of the words by proposing a translation of the Hebrew text, giving special attention to phrases with ambiguous meanings when necessary, and addressing any text-critical issues.

Once the text has been established, the exegete can move on to the broader question of the unity of the composition and, when appropriate, matters of its historical background and transmission. Classic source-criticism, of course, considers historical questions of authorship, dating, and occasion to be of the greatest importance. Our survey of the comments of Briggs and Briggs on Psalm 86, for example, demonstrated that for them the classification of the psalm's various phrases as original or later additions is paramount. In contrast, my methodology is overall more interested in addressing the text in its canonized form in the style advocated by Mays. In explaining this aspect of his methodology in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms, he writes:
The comment on particular psalms pays more attention to the language and literary shape than to questions about their original social and historical context. The language and the literary shape constitute the text that has been preserved, and it is this text that has been used reread, and translated as a psalm. Form-critical and historical questions are subordinate rather than primary agenda.2

Nevertheless, where the text necessitates further investigation into its historical development and particularly where this involves the issue of compositional unity—as, for example, in the case of psalms that are divided differently by the MT and LXX (e.g., Psalms 9-10, 114-115, 116, 147)—this line of inquiry should be carried out early on for the purpose of establishing where the composition begins and ends. In this regard, the delimitation of the pericope could also be considered one aspect of establishing the unity of the text, although the former is often considered one of the steps of form-criticism, not source-criticism. In the case of the biblical psalms, delimitation of the composition is, of course, governed in part by factors wholly unique to the Psalter. The presence of superscriptions, for example, help to mark where a new composition begins, or, at the very least, tip us off to where the editors would like the reader to see a new composition beginning. The numbering of the psalms also acts as a delimiting marker. In some cases, stylistic devices like inclusios or chiasms help to demarcate the limits of the composition. Finally, shifts in genre from one composition to the next are also indicators of where a pericope begins and ends.

Following on the heels of establishing the unity of the text and its delimitation, the next step is to delve further into the psalm's form by identifying its genre and determining its compositional structure. The typical genre categories have been well-

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2 Mays, Psalms, ix. By "form-critical questions," it is safe to understand Mays as referring more to the socioreligious background of individual psalms than to questions of the psalms' genre categorization since he does often address the latter in his commentary. Insofar as this is the case, I agree with Mays on this count as well and consider the question of each psalm's Sitz im Leben to be most important when the text itself references its historical and/or occasional setting (e.g., Psalms 38, 70, 92).
defined elsewhere. Identifying the category into which each psalm fits best involves observing the presence of typical form-elements (e.g., request for an audition, vow of praise, petition, confession of trust, complaint, declarative praise of God, etc.) and defining the psalm's compositional structure. The latter can be investigated through a series of steps, namely: 1) breaking the composition down into its individual clauses (clausal delimitation); 2) outlining the syntactical relationship between the clauses (creating a clausal flow chart can help in this regard); 3) identifying the speaker, addressee, and subject of each clause, 4) then based on steps #1-3, dividing the composition into its main sections (segmentation) and assigning a speech function to each. Based on the compositional structure and identification of typical form-elements, a genre can then be assigned to the psalm composition.

Where my method diverges from that of the conventional form-critic, in the style of Gunkel, is in the value that I, like Muilenburg, assign to variations from the form, particularly the order in which one would expect to find the typical form-elements. Rather than seeing divergences from the form as either so unlikely that exegetical gymnastics must be performed in order to account for their presence or as errors.

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4 Muilenburg's comments on the weakness of the form-critical approach in this regard bear repeating: "To state our criticism in another way, form criticism by its very nature is bound to generalize because it is concerned with what is common to all the representatives of a genre, and therefore applies an external measure to the individual pericopes. It does not focus sufficient attention upon what is unique and unrepeatable, upon the particularity of the formulation. Moreover, form and content are inextricably related. They form an integral whole. The two are one. Exclusive attention to the Gattung may actually obscure the thought and intention of the writer or speaker. The passage must be read and heard precisely as it is spoken. It is the creative synthesis of the particular formation of the pericope with the content that makes it the distinctive composition that it is." Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 5-6.

5 A good example of this approach is found in Gunkel's exegesis of Psalm 86:5, 15. See my comments in ch. 2.
requiring detailed explanation or even excision, I see these divergences as a way for the psalmist to communicate his unique message by drawing attention to particular themes or emphases. This dynamic will be more fully demonstrated in the exegesis of Psalm 86 to follow.

Once the form, and variations from the form, of the psalm have been established, the most noteworthy literary features of the psalm should be investigated, a task which may be broadly categorized under the heading of rhetorical criticism. In many ways, Muilenburg's summary of this task continues to set the agenda for the rhetorical critic.

What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole. Such an enterprise I should describe as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism. Defined this way, rhetorical criticism—particularly the phrase, "discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole"—may be understood as simply making the observations that naturally emerge from reading the text carefully. As Geoffrey Grogan writes, "this type of criticism has always been applied to literature, and, though less formally, has been used in all responsible Bible study."  

More specifically, when rhetorical criticism focuses on the narrower topics of stylistic and phonetic analysis, the significance of features like repeated words or

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6 Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 8.

7 Geoffrey Grogan, Psalms (Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 29.

8 In recent decades, Psalms scholars attempting to use the tools of rhetorical criticism have been criticized for focusing too narrowly on stylistics and under-appreciating the broader applications of rhetorical criticism as developed by other disciplines, namely the emphasis on discovering the author's intent and how that intent is transmitted to the reader rhetorically: Jack R. Lundblom, Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); George A. Kennedy, New Testament
synonyms, parallelism, end-rhyme, structural markers (e.g. inclusio, chiasm, acrostics), word-play, and use of metaphor and simile, to name just a few examples, is explored in greater depth. The purpose of these features can range widely. Structural markers can be used, for example, to draw attention to the central phrase or theme of the text (e.g., chiasm) or to denote the beginning and end of a particular section of the text (e.g., inclusio). Repeated words or synonyms can also be used as structural markers, or simply as a means to draw attention to a central theme. End-rhyme can be used in a variety of ways, often to unify a string of clauses, or sometimes, when the end-rhyme series comes to an abrupt end, to provide a strong point of disjunction with the clause that follows.

It is important to note that the relationship between rhetorical features and genre and compositional markers is less like that of ducks in a row, as one might mistakenly infer from the order in which they have been presented here, and more like that of a bowl of noodles. All of these features touch one another, interact with one another, influence one another, and therefore, must ultimately be considered together. In order to facilitate this kind of integrated interpretation, however, one should begin by considering matters of form and style individually with the expectation that a firm grasp of the parts will, in turn, lead to a better understanding of the dynamism of the whole.

Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984). Stated another way, the study of a text's rhetoric should focus not only on style but function, especially how the text is able to successfully persuade the reader; Martin Warner, ed., The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility, Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature (New York: Routledge, 1990). In this way, the work of modern rhetorical critics may be expected to overlap with the field of reader-response criticism; Duane F. Watson and Alan J. Hauser, Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 13. This is an interesting claim that deserves further investigation.

Mays summarizes the work of rhetorical critics this way: "They look for features that mark smaller units, search for foreshadowing that spans such indications of demarcation, and specify the signs of reiteration and summation. Critics also look for suasive techniques, metaphorical speech, editorial additions, changes in speakers, direct address to readers, plays on words… and other literary features." Mays, The Lord Reigns, 97.
How Does a Canonical Approach Fit Into a Holistic Methodology?

Finally, we consider the role of the canonical approach in an exegetical methodology for the Psalms. Since the time of the earliest writings of Sanders and Childs, two of the founding fathers of the canonical approach to biblical interpretation, confusion has existed about the correct terminology to describe this perspective. Sanders, the first to coin the phrase "canonical-criticism" in his 1972 book *Torah and Canon*, understands canon "as a dynamic process that operates within and behind the text, shaping traditions and books en route to canonization."\(^{10}\) He is highly interested in both the "dynamic and dialectical relationships between texts, traditions, and communities of faith"\(^{11}\) as well as in the process by which these texts came to be considered canonical, as evidenced by the title of the essay "The Issue of Closure in the Canonical Process," which he contributed to *The Canon Debate*, a book he co-edited with Lee Martin McDonald.\(^{12}\)

In other words, he is far less concerned with the authority of the final form of the text, as the *final* form, and more with the history of its establishment as the final form and the dialectic between the diversity of texts, some of which appear to be dramatically at odds with one another, contained within the final form. In addition, Sanders seems generally content to consider his version of canonical-criticism as more or less an additional layer

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\(^{10}\) Anthony C. Thiselton, "Introduction: Canon, Community and Theological Construction," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Scripture and Hermeneutic Series 7; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1-30; quote from p. 5.

\(^{11}\) Thiselton, "Canon, Community," 5. See also Sanders, *Canon and Community*.

of modern biblical criticism with a different emphasis than but parallel function to
source-criticism, redaction-criticism, and form-criticism.13

By contrast, Childs prefers the term "canonical approach," stating:

I have always objected to the term "canon(ical) criticism" as a suitable description of my
approach. I do not envision my approach as involving a new critical methodology analogous to
literary, form, or redactional criticism. Rather, the crucial issue turns on one's initial evaluation of
the nature of the biblical text being studied. By defining one's task as an understanding of the
Bible as the sacred Scriptures of the church, one establishes from the outset the context and point-of-standing of the reader within the received tradition of a community of faith and practice…. In
sum, its content is not merely a literary deposit moored in the past, but a living and active text
addressing each new generation of believer, both Jew and Christian.14

Childs's basic objection to the characterization of his approach as "involving a
new critical methodology analogous to literary, form, or redactional criticism" appears to
be grounded in his understanding of the Bible as the "sacred Scriptures of the church,"
which is, in turn, closely tied to his understanding of canon. While Sanders writes about
the decisions of "a council of rabbis, meeting at Yavneh or Jamnia on the Palestinian
coast within a decade or two … of 66 to 73 C.E." as to the content and limits of the
Jewish canon,15 Childs maintains that no ecclesial body "can ever 'make a book
canonical.' Rather, the concept of canon was an attempt to acknowledge the divine
authority of its writings and collections."16 In this way, Childs represents a way of


14 Brevard S. Childs, "An Interview with Brevard S. Childs," in "Essential Readings for Scholars

15 Sanders, "Closure in the Canonical Process," 252. He goes on in this essay to discuss the need for "shedding the 'Jamnia' mentality" in our conception of how the canon came to be and replacing it with a
greater emphasis on the role of faith communities in determining the shape of the canon, citing the recovery of "hundreds of actual biblical manuscripts in Hebrew, albeit mostly fragmentary, a thousand years older than any known previously" as evidence of the general fluidity of the canonical process; 253. His
statement in this regard is telling: "Consequently, I prefer the terms "stabilization" and "canonical process"
to "canonization"”; 254.

16 Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, 105; ital. original. Sanders' statement that "the term
"canonized" implies something officially or authoritatively imposed upon certain literature" ("Closure in
thinking much more in line with the traditional view of canonicity as governed by the "rule of faith," which believes canonical texts to possess self-attesting authority.\textsuperscript{17}

So, if the canonical approach is \textit{not} simply another rung on the ladder of modern biblical criticism, what is it? According to Christopher Seitz, the canonical approach is, in fact, a proposal of a completely different frame within which to conceive of and carry out the exegetical task. Specifically, the approach takes as its starting point the view that the biblical text in its final, canonized form is a coherent witness to the history and \textit{theology} of the discourse between God and humanity. Because this kind of canonical approach assumes the importance of the final form (and even the \textit{superiority} of the final form\textsuperscript{18}), the goal of biblical criticism shifts. For example, attempts to reconstruct the history of the text, most notably by the use of source-, and redaction-criticism, are seen in an altogether different light. Rather than serving the purpose of breaking the text apart into pieces simply for sake of establishing which parts came first and which came later, in a canonical approach, historical reconstruction serves the purpose of shedding light on the nature and quality of the final form.

Moreover, for Seitz, following Childs, this frame certainly does not preclude use of historical-critical methods. Yet it does propose a different way in which to orient these


\textsuperscript{18} See Seitz's discussion of what the "superiority" of the final form actually constitutes; "Canonical Approach," 73-76. There he writes that the final editors did not possess any sort of "moral superiority" to previous editors, but that "later hands have a greater historical perspective, due to the sheer range of their awareness of the past, which is still unfolding at the time of early tradition-levels." Seitz, "Canonical Approach," 76.
methods, putting them on the same "playing field" as pre-critical methods and biblical-theological readings of the Old and New Testaments.

In my view, what was radical in the approach was … what was being attempted: nothing less than the re-construction, in a new form to be sure, of the length and breadth of aspects of critical reading which had devolved into various sub-specialties, such that an organic and integrated presentation of the biblical witness might be had once again. History, literary analysis, text-criticism, Old and New Testaments, earlier history of interpretation—all these facets were brought back onto a single field of play…."

Seitz goes on to say, "It is this desire for comprehensiveness which … is the hallmark of the canonical approach and its legacy for our day." In other words, what makes the canonical approach, as formulated by Childs, uniquely comprehensive is both its emphasis on the organic coherence to be found within the biblical text and its use of a wide range of methods—indeed, wider than historical-critical methods alone—to explore that coherence.

Of particular interest is Childs's consideration of "Old and New Testaments" and "earlier history of interpretation" in his canonical approach. Based on our own examination in chapter 2 of some of the principles that guided the pre-critical era exegeses—for example, allowing personal theological convictions to serve as a dialogue partner and guidepost—and on Childs's other work in the field of biblical theology, it is apparent that these are much more explicitly theological categories. And in fact, the theological emphasis of the canonical approach is the second distinguishing feature of the canonical approach that Seitz identifies. Noting the criticism that this so-called

19 Christopher Seitz, "The Canonical Approach and Theological Interpretation" in Canon and Biblical Interpretation (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Scripture and Hermeneutic Series 7; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 58-110; quote from p. 60.

20 Seitz, "Canonical Approach," 62; ital. original.
"dogmatic reading" of the text is principally misguided\(^\text{21}\) and that the approach sacrifices the unique voice of each testament, Old and New, for sake of coherence, Seitz is nevertheless unapologetic in his claim that "… The canonical approach will always have as its chief task the theological interpretation of the plain witness of two testaments, and that task is unending."\(^\text{22}\)

The result of this dual emphasis on theological interpretation and methodological comprehensiveness (neither of which is emphasized by Sanders in the same way) is an approach that, in my view, capitalizes on the best of both the historical-critical tradition and the contributions of biblical theology and the pre-critical exegetes. In so doing, Childs's canonical approach enables the interpreter to plumb the text further, both in its literary and theological dimensions.

When considering the Psalter, specifically, the question of how one actually carries out the canonical approach becomes more pointed. Canonical readings of the Psalms vary widely. In his survey of the current state of Psalms studies, David M. Howard devotes most of his attention to canonical approaches, dividing these studies into two camps: macrostructural approaches and microstructural approaches.\(^\text{23}\) The former refers to those dealing with themes and patterns, particularly as related to the shape and message of the Psalter, that run throughout the collection (e.g. Wilson's work on the location of the royal psalms at the seams of the Psalter\(^\text{24}\); the latter to studies dealing

\(^{21}\) Seitz, "Canonical Approach," 68-72.

\(^{22}\) Seitz, "Canonical Approach," 104.

\(^{23}\) Howard, "Current Study," 24-29.

\(^{24}\) Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter."
with smaller groupings of psalms (e.g. Howard's own study on Psalms 93-100). At the same time, canonical readings of individual psalms have also become increasingly more popular. One of the best examples of this approach is found in the Psalms commentary of Hossfeld and Zenger.

Moreover, canonical approaches to the interpretation of the Psalms have not been without their critics. One of the most common complaints is that the canonical "method" with regard to the Psalter is simply too undefined. This critique has been directed at the approach on many different levels. One of the critiques most relevant to this study of Psalm 86 as a canonical reading of an individual psalm has been offered by Gordon Wenham. While generally very positive towards the canonical approach, Wenham has voiced his concern that practitioners of the method have still not consistently agreed on how to demarcate the canonical context in which each psalm should be read. For his

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26 Wenham charges canonical studies of the Psalms of heretofore insufficiently addressing the issue of the Psalter's historical setting(s). He writes, "Should we see the Psalter as compiled during the exile, after the exile, or even later? It could make a difference to the way we read it"; Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading," 348. Offering a different critique, Norman Whybray expresses concern that the methods of those investigating the wider theological arc of the Psalter (i.e., what Howard calls the "macrostructure" of the Psalter) have not yet been reconciled to and meaningfully integrated with the methods of those studying the interrelatedness of smaller groups of psalms, often closer in proximity to each other (i.e., the "microstructure" of the Psalter); Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, 32; Howard, "Current Study," 24. As a third example, Brueggemann has written of his misgivings concerning the as-yet undefined mechanics of how to get from the study of the Psalter's literary shape to theological assertion. From his perspective, "that connection is the crucial one for canonical study. If that connection is not made, canonical study becomes… merely literary analysis"; Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience," 64, n. 1.

27 Wenham writes: "There is, I think, no doubt that this approach has led to a deeper and richer theological approach to reading the psalms, an approach that is especially congenial to the Christian interpreter. The earlier historically orientated and form critical readings seem threadbare by comparison." Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading," 347.

28 Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading," 347.
part, Wenham favors three contexts as the most important: 1) the whole Psalter, 2) the Jewish canon/Hebrew Bible, and 3) the Old and New Testaments.²⁹  

A narrower set of parameters is proposed by Zenger. He summarizes his principles for reading the psalms canonically in the following four propositions:

1. Canonical exegesis pays attention to the connections between one psalm and its neighbors.
2. Canonical exegesis pays attention to the position of a psalm within its redactional unit.
3. Canonical exegesis sees the titles of the Psalms as an interpretative horizon.
4. Canonical exegesis takes into consideration the connections and repetitions of Psalms within the collection.³⁰

Although these four principles do not address precisely the question of which canonical contexts matter the most in Psalms exegesis, there is certainly a great deal of overlap with the issue and are, nevertheless, instructive for us.

Perhaps best is to seek a middle ground between the generality of Wenham's categories and the specificity of Zenger's proposals. In my opinion, there are four canonical contexts for each psalm that are the most deserving of attention: the inner-biblical context, the intertextual context, the book context, and the Psalter-wide context.

- **The Inner-biblical Context.** This phrase refers to any connections between a psalm and the canonical books of the Old or New Testaments. That many of the psalms have the history of Israel, including specific events in that history, and even certain pieces of canonical poetry in their background is no secret.

Furthermore, as the OT book quoted more frequently than any other in the NT, we

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³⁰ Quoted in Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading," 344.
should make the most of the opportunity to learn from the NT writers' reflections on the canonical psalms.

- **The Intertextual Context.** This term refers to the particular psalms within the canonical Psalter with which an individual psalm may share especially strong lexical or thematic connections. It corresponds roughly to Zenger's fourth principle: "Canonical exegesis takes into consideration the connections and repetitions of Psalms within the collection."

- **The Book Context.** This refers to the other psalms located within the same book division, especially those that neighbor it directly. This category corresponds to Zenger's first and second principles.

- **The Psalter-wide Context.** This context is the most difficult to define, but generally refers to any features of the Psalter in general that might have bearing on the interpretation of an individual psalm. One example of making use of the Psalter-wide context would be to look at the use of certain significant terms (e.g., covenant, king, law) in order to see if they are used in a consistent way throughout the psalms. Another example would be to examine whether or not a particular psalm fits within the overall theological trajectory proposed by some to be contained within the Psalter (i.e., a macrostructural approach).

After looking at these various contexts, the next step is to draw conclusions about the psalm's meaning and message based on the most significant connections that emerge. It is at this stage that one would expect to be best-equipped to bridge the gap between text and theology.
Conclusion

To summarize, the exegetical methodology for the Psalms proposed here can be characterized as both holistic and hierarchical—holistic in the sense that it seeks to utilize as wide a range of methods as is relevant and text-driven, and hierarchical in the sense of following a particular logic and order in its steps, starting with the establishment of the text and ending with an investigation of its relationship to other canonical texts. Does the fact that the proposed method is fundamentally hierarchical align it more with the canonical-criticism movement led by Sanders than with the canonical approach advocated by Childs? I believe it does not, for although Childs clearly does not view the canonical approach as just one more critical method layered on top of the last, he, in his commentaries, nevertheless also clearly follows a certain step-by-step process that engages textual-, source-, form- and traditio-historical analyses before beginning in on his examination of the final form of the text and reflecting theologically on its message.31 So, why so many steps and only in a particular order? A holistic and hierarchical method, at its best, serves to prevent the interpreter from falling off either edge of the exegetical path. On the other hand, to sacrifice the initial stages involved in establishing the text, its delimitation, form, compositional structure and literary-rhetorical features is to sacrifice the text itself. But to neglect the investigation of the text's connections to the rest of the canonical Scripture, and thus a crucial part of its theological dimension, is to risk leaving the text in such a fragmented state that what results is a collection of, in Childs's words, mere "bits and pieces."32

31 See particularly Thiselton's analysis of Childs's method as illustrated in Childs's commentary on Exodus; "Canon, Community," 6-7.

32 Childs, Exodus, xiv-xv.
CHAPTER 4: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter will seek to document the findings of a careful reading of Psalm 86 with the goal of laying the groundwork for later study of this psalm's contributions to the wider theological message(s) of the canonical Psalter.

Translation and Textual Criticism

We begin our investigation into the text and message of Psalm 86 with a translation of the text and analysis of its textual difficulties:

Psalm 86
1   A prayer of David
    Incline, O Lord, your ear; answer me;
    For poor and needy am I.
2   Guard my life,
    For I am loyal to you.
    Save your servant, (O you, my God)2, this one who trusts in you.
3   Show grace to me, O Lord,3
    For to you I cry all day long.
4   Gladden the soul of your servant
    For to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
5   For4 you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,5

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1 This translation accepts the stichometry of BHS.

2 The MT placement of this independent main clause in the middle of what appears to be a coordinate-subordinate construction is somewhat atypical. Aside from the LXX which appears to omit the 2nd person pronoun (τὸν δοῦλόν σου ὁ θεός μου), there is little other corroboration to warrant a textual change.

3 Multiple manuscripts, including the Syriac, record YHWH here instead of Adonai. The difference is not particularly significant. This change is also recorded in 5a, 8a, 9c, 12a, and 15a.

4 Note that virtually all of the major English translations (NRSV, RSV, ESV, NASB, NKJV, KJV) translate the κι conjunction here as "for." Only the NIV (and TNIV) omit it, translating v. 5 as simply, "You are forgiving and good, O Lord."
Abounding in covenant-love to all who call on you.

6 Listen, O Lord, to my prayer
and attend to the sound of my supplications.

7 In the day of my trouble, I call to you
For you can answer me.  

8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord
and there are no works that are like yours.

9 All the nations (which you have made) will come
and worship before you, O Lord,
and will glorify your name.

10 For you, you are great, the one who does wonderful things
You alone are God!

11 Teach me, O Lord, your way;
I will walk in your truth
Unite my heart to fear your name.

12 I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all of my heart;
Let me glorify your name forever.

13 For your covenant-love towards me is great
And you have saved my soul from the lowest part of Sheol.

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5 The adj. סלח is a hapax legomenon although the verbal form is used in Ps 25:11 and Ps 103:3. Tate (Psalms 51-100, 374) along with the NASB and NKJV translate it as "ready to forgive."

6 The translation of this YQTL verb is difficult. All three options (simple future, modal, habitual) are legitimately able to communicate causality as this ki clause does. Most modern English translations translate "you will answer me," taking (presumably) this verse as a statement of confidence. However, I have chosen to translate it with a modal aspect following Tate and others. The reason for this will be explained later in the paper. Other verses with a similar construction include Pss 3:8; 17:6; 49:16; 118:10, 11, 12; 128:2. The LXX uses the aorist tense.

7 I have chosen to enclose this subordinate relative clause with parentheses, rather than commas in order to communicate its emphasis on the fact that Yahweh has made all the nations, not that all the nations that God has made (which number may be in doubt) will come to worship.

8 The LXX has "let my heart rejoice" (ὡφρανθῇ ἡ καρδιά μου) indicating that some Hebrew texts may have pointed the verb as the piel imperative of חֲדוֹד which is used in v. 12a. חֲדוֹד is probably the more difficult reading, though, and should be maintained. The NIV and NRSV both translate "give me an undivided heart" but this loses some of the force of the petition.

9 Most modern translations do not translate יַאֲכַבְּדָה as a true cohortative, but as a simple future YQTL: "I will bring glory to your name." This, however, loses the sense of conditionality inherent to the vow of praise. It is as if the psalmist is saying, "please deliver me so that I may glorify you."

10 This is the first QTL verb to be used in the psalm and also the last verb in this sense unit (vv. 8-13). Both Tate and Dahood have trouble translating this as a past event saying, "In the context of Ps 86, I take it that there is a contingency factor in these verses; the divine action of deliverance has not yet occurred." (Tate, Psalms 51-100, 376; ital. original). Thus, Tate translates it as a simple future, "in that you will deliver my soul." Dahood agrees: "To translate the verb as past, "You have rescued me" (The Jerusalem Bible), is to render the imperative and precatives meaningless." Mitchell Dahood, Psalms II, 51-100 (AB 17; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 296. I am not convinced, however, that
14 O God, arrogant men have risen up against me, 
   And a mob of violent men have sought my life; 
   They do not pay you any regard.12
15 But You, O Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, 
   slow to anger and abundant in covenant-love and truth.
16 Turn to me and show grace to me; 
   Give your strength to your servant 
   And save the son of your maidservant.
17 Show me a sign for good 
   So that those who hate me may see it and be humiliated14 
       For you, O Lord, have helped and comforted me.15

The main textual change to Psalm 86 that has been proposed is to the vowel-pointing of the phrase הָלֹא לְבֶן־אֲמָתֶ in v. 16d. Based on the use of הָלֹא in v. 11b (as well as v. 15b, though this is considered of secondary importance), Dahood suggests that the phrase be read as "your faithful (אֱמֶת) son" rather than "son of your maidservant (אָמָה)."16

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11 Commonly translated "the depths of Sheol," the descriptor תַחְתִּיָה is more appropriately understood to indicate the lowest part of Sheol, as Sheol was often conceived of as a place with varying depths; the lower one went, the worse off one would be. See Philip S. Johnston, "The Underworld and the Dead in the Old Testament" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1993); Aron Pinker, "Sheol," JBQ 23 (1995): 168-179. Augustine translates this verse "you have rescued my soul from a deeper hell"; Expositions, 237.

12 The NIV, NRSV, and RSV translate all three QTL verbs in this verse as present tense. The NASB, NKJV, and KJV translate all three verbs as past. Interestingly, the ESV translates the first verb (וְקָמ) as past, but the next two (וְשְׁבִיק, שָמוּךָ) as present, thus: "O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them."

13 The phrase הָלֹא לְבֶן לְנֶגְּדָם literally reads, "they do not set you before themselves." Tate calls it an "idiomatic statement," Psalms 51-100, 376.

14 Most translations have "be ashamed" for וְשָׁבֹה, but H. Seebass has shown that the verb means more literally to be humiliated by being made to appear weak and/or foolish; H. Seebass, "בָּשֹׁה," TDOT, 2:50-60.

15 Taking into account the accent marks in the MT, it is also possible to translate כִּי־אַתָה יְּהוָה as a non-verbal clause, hence: "Because you are Yahweh, you have helped and comforted me."

16 Dahood, Psalms II, 51-100, 296.
This is an understandable proposal given that the alternative reference to Yahweh's maidservant seems initially to be rather enigmatic. However, F.C. Fensham has thoroughly investigated the use of this phrase, לְבֶן־אֲמָתֶךָ, in other Northwest Semitic literature and found that of the three occurrences in Ugaritic texts, all three times it is used in parallel with the noun 'bd. This in turn leads him to conclude that the phrase is "either denoting vassalage or referring to a faithful servant." Fensham, "Son of a Handmaid," 317. In the Old Testament, the phrase is used a total of six times, four times as a legal term (Gen 21:10, 13; Exod 22:12; Judg 9:18) and two times in the Psalms (Ps 86:11; 116:16). Since nothing in the context of the Psalms occurrences would indicate that the term is being used with a legal nuance and since in both contexts the phrase is used in some sort of parallel fashion with עבְדֶךָ, Fensham further concludes that "in both [Psalms] cases this concept is used to denote the submissiveness of the supplicant to the Lord. It is, thus, a word giving expression to humility." Fensham, "Son of a Handmaid," 319.

Zenger, furthermore, implies that by the use of this phrase the psalmist is comparing himself to a houseborn slave, who would have enjoyed greater family affection and privileges than a slave who was acquired from outside the household. Zenger, Psalmen, 546. This, too, is a possibility despite the fact that according to biblical law, even foreign slaves were to be included within the covenantal framework of Israel's religion (cf. Exod 20:10, 17, 21; Lev 25:6; Deut 12:12, 18; 16:11, 14; 23:16-17). Practice does not always

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18 Fensham, "Son of a Handmaid," 319.

19 Zenger, Psalmen, 546.

20 Isaac Mendelsohn, Slavery in the Ancient Near East: A Comparative Study of Slavery in Babylonia, Assyria, Syria, and Palestine from the Middle of the Third Millenium to the End of the First
conform to the law, however, and it is certainly not difficult to imagine a slave who has
grown up in the home receiving different treatment from one who has not. As one who is
houseborn, he already belongs to the familial covenant and would have more reason to
hope for the loving attention of his master. In light of this analysis, the MT pointing
should most likely be maintained and the phrase be understood as referring to the humble
and subservient position of the psalmist. It likely also carries an additional allusion to a
familial and covenantal relationship.

Source-Critical Considerations

In chapter 2, we touched on the theories of Briggs and Briggs regarding which
parts of Psalm 86 are original (vv. 1-5, 8, 10a, 11-12, 13, 15) and which lines were added
by later glossators (vv. 6-7, 9, 14, 16-17). Gunkel as well identifies the psalm as late in
its origin and composite in its makeup. He further calls the psalm's attribution to David
a typical example of the tradition's "carelessness." Over against the position of scholars
like these and in keeping with the agenda set forth by Muilenburg, Tate and Schaefer
(representing the rhetorical-critical school) along with the McCann and Hossfeld and
Zenger (representing the canonical-critical school) choose to treat the psalm as a unified

---

Fensham takes his conclusion one step further by positing a historical connection between the
Ugaritic and biblical usages: "It is quite probably borrowed from international political terminology to
express submissiveness and vassalage"; Fensham, "Son of a Handmaid," 320.

Briggs, Psalms, 2:237.

Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 377.

Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 377.

Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 8.
composition, giving relatively little attention to the question of sources. For reasons stated in the previous chapter, that is the approach taken in this study as well.

**Form-Critical Considerations**

The unity of the poem is also related to the composition's delimitation. Based on the inclusion of a superscription at the beginning of Psalm 86 and another at the beginning of Psalm 87, we can assume that Psalm 86 is intended to stand alone as a distinct pericope. Additionally, Psalm 86 is written in a different genre (individual lament) than Psalm 85 (communal lament)\(^\text{26}\) and Psalm 87 (Song of Zion).\(^\text{27}\)

Now that the text and translation has been established, we turn to a more detailed analysis of the psalm's genre. Commentators are almost unanimously agreed that Psalm 86 is a lament of the individual, though some prefer to nuance it as an "individual prayer for help."\(^\text{28}\) The lament form in the Psalter has been perhaps best illuminated by Claus Westermann who characterizes the lament psalms as dealing with three basic characters: God, the one who laments, and the others/enemies.\(^\text{29}\) Though he concedes that not every lament contains all three of these components, Westermann nevertheless considers these three elements to be determinative for the lament structure. Moreover, he further distinguishes the component parts of the lament from the basic structure of the lament psalm which often takes the following shape: 1) Address (and introductory petition); 2)

\(^{26}\) Stek, "Psalms," 786.

\(^{27}\) Stek, "Psalms," 786.


\(^{29}\) He writes, "These three parts or dimensions alone constitute the lament as complete." Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 169.
Complaint or lament; 3) Turning towards God (confession of trust); 4) Petition; 5) Vow of praise, though this too may vary.\textsuperscript{30} This basic structure, however, should not be understood as ironclad since, according to Westermann, the structure may shift depending on the time period in which it was originally composed.

The compositional elements present within the biblical lament are also, to a certain extent, governed by whether the psalm is a lament of the people (LP) or a lament of the individual (LI). For example, the LP often opens with a complaint against God (e.g., "why?" or "how long?") but in the LI, this is far less common. Instead, it may be replaced by a "mixed form" which Westermann calls the "negative petition" (e.g., "Hide not thy face"; "cast me not off").

When these general expectations are compared with Psalm 86, what does one discover? First, one finds that Psalm 86 does seem to contain all five of the elements that typify a lament psalm: address (request for an audition), complaint, confession of trust, petition and a vow of praise. However, these elements definitely do not appear to be arranged in the order presented in Westermann’s model. The following table containing a delimitation of the clauses of Psalm 86 will help to make this clear.

**Clausal Delimitation of Psalm 86 (Table 4.1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem/PGN</th>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>Lament Element</th>
<th>Clauses</th>
<th>Vs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiph ms</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Request for audition/Address</td>
<td>תפילה לנדב</td>
<td>1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal ms</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>שמרנה נפשי</td>
<td>1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>זאש ייהולה ואה</td>
<td>1d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal ms</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Petition</td>
<td>זאש ייהולה ואה</td>
<td>2a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{30} Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 170.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb Type</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiph ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative Petition</td>
<td>והשעך</td>
<td>2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Confession of trust</td>
<td>כלתיה</td>
<td>2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participle</td>
<td>תמי תל🔍</td>
<td>2e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative Petition</td>
<td>שמע נפש עבד</td>
<td>4a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal 1cs</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL</td>
<td>כל עד המילתים</td>
<td>3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative Petition</td>
<td>שמח נפש עבד</td>
<td>4b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal 1cs</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL</td>
<td>אתה אלהי</td>
<td>5a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal mp</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL</td>
<td>ורבה חסד</td>
<td>= 5b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiph ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative Petition</td>
<td>נאתיו י제도 עבד</td>
<td>6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiph ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative &quot;</td>
<td>אחושבה ב℘ כלנון ג</td>
<td>6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal 1cs</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL</td>
<td>כים זארת אServiço</td>
<td>7a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal 2ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL</td>
<td>יתיי</td>
<td>= 7b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Confession of trust</td>
<td>אין כמך כי אלהי</td>
<td>8a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>אין כמשיך</td>
<td>= 8b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal 3mp</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL</td>
<td>כל עד &quot;ברוא</td>
<td>9a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal 2ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>QTL</td>
<td>אש ישת</td>
<td>9b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hish 3mp</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL</td>
<td>ושימוח השוכ אדיק</td>
<td>9c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel 3mp</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL</td>
<td>יבדללא</td>
<td>= 10a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>לא תאמר</td>
<td>= 10b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participle</td>
<td>עלשה פקולה</td>
<td>11a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>אתה אלהי</td>
<td>= 11b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiph ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative Petition</td>
<td>הולני והנה ברך</td>
<td>11c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel 1cs</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL Vow of Praise?</td>
<td>כלתיה אומסנה</td>
<td>11d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative Petition</td>
<td>ירקב</td>
<td>= 12a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. Const.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vow of Praise?</td>
<td>לราะ שם</td>
<td>= 12b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiph 1cs</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL Vow of Praise</td>
<td>כלתיה כלתיה כלתיה</td>
<td>= 13a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel 1cs</td>
<td></td>
<td>YQTL/coh</td>
<td>ושבעה שם</td>
<td>= 13b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Confession of trust</td>
<td>פירקוטך בでしょう</td>
<td>= 14a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiph 2ms</td>
<td></td>
<td>QTL</td>
<td>ומאתה ינדמל</td>
<td>= 14b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal 3cp</td>
<td></td>
<td>QTL Complaint</td>
<td>אלהים ודואים</td>
<td>= 14c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel 3cp</td>
<td></td>
<td>QTL</td>
<td>אין תועדו</td>
<td>= 15a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal 3cp</td>
<td></td>
<td>QTL</td>
<td>לא שמעו</td>
<td>= 15b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Confession of trust</td>
<td>אתה אלהי</td>
<td>= 15c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notice, for example, that the psalm opens with a request for an audition, "Incline, O Lord, your ear; answer me" (vv. 1a-b), but these petitions are not confined to just one part of the psalm. Rather they are spread liberally throughout all seventeen verses with 18 total volitive verb forms (1 cohortative, 2 jussives, and 15 imperatives). The psalmist also confesses his trust in God, not just once, in fact, but six separate times (vv. 2d, 5a-b, 8a-10c, 13a-b, 15a-b, 17d-e). Notably, he very conspicuously grounds his statements in vv. 5 and 15 in the creed-like confession of Exodus 34:6-7a, a point to which we will return later. As for a vow of praise, this can be seen quite clearly in vv. 11-12, though these verses are also closely linked with petition. Finally, the single clear example of a complaint comes in v. 14, although v. 7a also appears to identify a general period of unhappiness (i.e., "in the day of my trouble"). The late appearance of the complaint element is notable for its divergence from the typical ordering of the LI, which expects petitions to follow the complaint, not precede it. Westermann appears to place a great deal of stress upon the ordering of the lament and petition when he writes, "The lament is
a part of those prayer Psalms in which the petition must follow the lament; the lament precedes the petition."\(^3\)

Thus it is apparent from these observations that although the psalmist employs the general form of the individual lament, he also modifies and crafts the form in such a way as to communicate his own unique emphases.\(^2\) Specifically, two ways in which Psalm 86 diverges from the typical form of the genre lead us to this conclusion. First, Psalm 86 is characterized, on the one hand, by a preponderance of petitionary verbal forms and, on the other hand, a relative paucity of actual complaint language. Second, Psalm 86 includes no examples of negative petitions (i.e., requests for judgment or harm to fall upon God's enemies) but only positive petitions (i.e., requests for God's aid),\(^3\) nor does it contain any explicit (or even implied) complaints against God as is common in Book III,\(^4\) but only multiple confessions of trust. These two variations from the typical lament form demonstrate that the central focus of Psalm 86 is not the cause of the psalmist's prayer—namely, his enemies—but the prayer itself as a communication between a

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\(^{32}\) One is reminded again of the related comments of Muilenburg: "[Form criticism] does not focus sufficient attention upon what is unique and unrepeatable, upon the particularity of the formulation. Moreover, form and content are inextricably related. They form an integral whole. The two are one. Exclusive attention to the *Gattung* may actually obscure the thought and intention of the writer or speaker. The passage must be read and heard precisely as it is spoken. It is the creative synthesis of the particular formulation of the pericope with the content that makes it the distinctive composition that it is." Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 5-6.

\(^{33}\) Verse 17 is the only verse that could be construed as containing a "negative" petition when it says, "Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame." Strictly speaking, however, the request is for God to give the psalmist a sign of his goodness (masc. sg. imperative of_rendered), with the result that the enemies would be shamed.

\(^{34}\) In Book III (Pss 73-89), complaints against God, both explicit and implied, are found in Pss 74:1, 10-11; 77:7-9; 79:5; 80:4-6, 12-13; 83:1; 85:5-6; 88:6-12, 14-18; 89:38-51.
servant (vv. 2, 4, 16) and his Lord (vv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17). What is the significance of this relationally-oriented emphasis?

**Rhetorical-Critical Considerations**

To begin to answer that question, we turn our attention to the related issues of the psalm's use of repetition and its compositional structure. As has just been noted, Psalm 86 stands out for its repeated use of terms designating the relationship between the psalmist and his God. Several terms are used to refer to God, most notably, "you" (אַתָּה) six times, "Yahweh" (יהוה) four times, "Elohim" (אֱלֹהִּים) five times, and "my Lord" (אֲדֹנָי) seven times. "Your name" (ךְָּשִּׁמַּה) as a representation of God's being, is also referred to three times. As for the psalmist, he refers to himself as "servant" (עֶבֶד) four times, and "I" (אָנִּי) two times. In addition to communicating the psalm's central emphasis on the relationship between the You (God) and I (psalmist), some commentators hypothesize that these key repeated terms, particularly the 2nd person pronoun אַתָּה, have also been used to frame the psalm's compositional structure.

**Compositional Structure of Psalm 86**

Most commentators identify a natural division at v. 14 and often at v. 8 as well, such that the psalm is split into three sections: vv. 1-7, 8-13, and 14-17. These divisions reflect the psalm's most obvious changes in tone and theme. Some scholars have also recognized a chiastic arrangement in the organization of the verses. Specifically, when...

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35 For a fuller discussion of the repetition of key words in Psalm 86, see Schaefer, *Psalms*, 211.

the distribution of אתָה is more closely observed, one notices both that its appearances are evenly spaced (vv. 2, 5, 10 [2 times], 15, 17) and that it is used in each of the five confessions of trust. This elegant symmetry has led Brueggemann to further hypothesize that the repetition of אתָה forms a concentric structure.37

You (אתָה) are my God (v. 2d)
Surely you (אתָה) O Lord (v. 5a)
Surely great are you (אתָה) (v. 10a)
You (אתָה) are God alone (v. 10c)
You (אתָה), O Lord (v. 15a)
Surely you (אתָה), Yahweh (v. 17d)

In this regard, he notes the similarity between vv. 2 and 17 which use the synonymous verbs ישׁע andעזר, between vv. 5 and 15 which both appear to quote Exodus 34:6-7a, and the twofold repetition of the pronoun in the chiasm's center, v. 10.

In competition with Brueggemann's chiastic proposal, however, is the chiasm suggested by G. Giavani who outlines the psalm as follows:38

A vv. 1-4 ("your servant")
B vv. 5-6 ("abounding in hesed")
C vv. 7 ("in the day of my distress")
D vv. 8-10 ("they will glorify your name")
E v. 11 ("your name")
D' vv. 12-13 ("I will glorify your name")
C' v. 14 ("arrogant men have risen up against me")
B v. 15 ("abounding in hesed")
A vv. 16-17 ("your servant")

Both chiastic structures clearly have merit, although both may also be critiqued at certain points. Brueggemann, for example, bases his connection of vv. 2c and 17d in part on the similarity of the verbs used, though it should be noted that פרס is also used in v. 16d. An additional point of dissimilarity is found in the syntactical function of the two

37 Brueggemann, Message of the Psalms, 62-63.
clauses: v. 2c is an imperatival clause; v. 17d has a causal function. Giavani also bases his concentric structure on multiple repeated terms (though not specifically on אַתָּה) but conveniently ignores the repeated terms that do not fit into his arrangement, for example, הנש (vv. 1c, 7b), וּני (vv. 1b-noun, 6a-verb), and קָרַא (vv. 3b, 7a). In light of the comparable strengths and weaknesses of these two concentric arrangements, the conclusion of McCann may be the best that we can do: "While the structural proposals differ slightly in details, they are similar enough to warrant the conclusion that the poet was intent upon focusing the reader's attention on the center of the psalm—v. 10 or v. 11, or perhaps the two together."

Proposal of a Third Organizational Model

I would suggest, however, that there is another identifiable organizational structure at work that may also give us some insight into the fundamental theological message of Psalm 86. This is a structure that emerges not primarily from repeated terms, but from a pattern of verbal forms, subject changes and ki- clauses—the literary features which I believe to be the psalm's most striking.

As has already been pointed out, a comparison of Psalm 86 to the "typical" structure of the LI highlights some fascinating differences, namely its over-abundance of: 1) petitions, corresponding to the imperative verbs, and 2) confessions of trust, corresponding to the six-time use of the pronoun אַתָּה. One also notices an excessive use

39 See clausal and syntactical analysis chart on pp. 77-78.

of the preposition כִּי (kî), meaning, in this case, "for" and indicating causality. It appears a total of nine times, although this number does not include the five subordinate-coordinate clauses (5b, 10b, 10c, 13a, 17e) that also depend upon it syntactically, bringing the total number of adverbial-causal clauses up to fourteen. Finally, we should not neglect the fact that "You" is not the only pronoun to be dramatically spotlighted, but also "I" with the occurrence of the pronoun אָנִּי in vv. 1d and 2b and the 22-time occurrence of the 1cs suffix. What is the purpose of these striking features? Do they cooperate in such a way as to present a coherent structural picture? The following clausal and syntactical analysis leads us to answer that question in the affirmative.

**Syntactical Function and Motive Clauses in Psalm 86 (Table 4.2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactical Function</th>
<th>Motives for Petitions</th>
<th>Subject of Ind. Clause</th>
<th>Clauses</th>
<th>Vs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You (Impv), for (kî) I (causal)</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>שָׁמְּרָה נַפְּשִּׁי 1b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>עֲנֵנִּי 1c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>יִכְּלַע עַבְּדוֹן אָנִּי 1d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>שָׁמְּרָה נַפְּשִּׁי 2a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>יִכְּלַע עַבְּדוֹן אָנִּי 2b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>וֹאֵשׁ עַבְּדֶ 2c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>[אֱלֹהַי אַתָּה] 2d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appositional</td>
<td>You (Impv), for (kî) I (causal)</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>יִכְּלַע עַבְּדוֹן אָנִּי 2e</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>שָׁמְּרָה נַפְּשִּׁי 3a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>יִכְּלַע עַבְּדוֹן אָנִּי 3b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>וֹאֵשׁ עַבְּדֶ 4a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>יִכְּלַע עַבְּדוֹן אָנִּי 4b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>יִכְּלַע עַבְּדוֹן אָנִּי 5a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(You)</td>
<td>יִכְּלַע עַבְּדוֹן אָנִּי 5b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You (Impv), I (decl), for (kî)</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>נַפְּשִׁי אֲדֹנָי אֵשָׁא 6a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>נַפְּשִׁי אֲדֹנָי אֵשָׁא 6b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>בְּיוֹם צָרָתִּי אֶקְּרָאֶךָ 7a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(You)</td>
<td>יִכְּלַע עַבְּדוֹן אָנִּי 7b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>Ones like You</td>
<td>אָנִּי־כֹל אֱלֹהִים אֲדֹנָי 8a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41 It may also be used to denote an emphatic nuance ("indeed...") but the context would seem to argue against this translation and for causality. For more on this topic, see Barry L. Bandstra, "The Syntax of the Particle "kî" in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1982).
This table demonstrates two things. First, it outlines the evolution of the psalmist's prayer from petitions based on his qualifications to petitions based on "Yahweh's qualifications; this evolution is traced most clearly in the column titled "Motives for Petitions." Another way to diagram the progression of the psalm's motive clauses is as follows:

**Diagram of Motive Clauses in Psalm 86 (Table 4.3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existential</th>
<th>Works like Yours</th>
<th>וְּאֵין כְּמַעֲשֶיךָ:</th>
<th>8b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>All nations</td>
<td>יָבוֹא כָּל־גוֹיִּם</td>
<td>9a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectival</td>
<td>(You)</td>
<td>עָשִיתָ נִפְּלָא</td>
<td>9b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>All nations</td>
<td>יִשְׁתַחֲווּ לְפָנֶיךָ</td>
<td>9c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>All nations</td>
<td>אֲדֹנָי יִכַּבְּדוּ</td>
<td>9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(You)</td>
<td>כִּי־גָדוֹל אֱלֹהִּים</td>
<td>10a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(You)</td>
<td>לְבַדֶךָ</td>
<td>10b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(You)</td>
<td>יַחֵד לְּבָבִּי</td>
<td>10c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You (impv), then I (result)</td>
<td>לְּיִרְּאָה שְּׁמֶךָ</td>
<td>11a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You (impv), so that I (result), for (ki) you (causal)</td>
<td>וַאֲכַבְּדוּ לִשְּׁמֶךָ</td>
<td>11b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Result</td>
<td>You (impv)</td>
<td>לְּבַדֶךָ</td>
<td>11c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>לְּיִרְּאָה שְּׁמֶךָ</td>
<td>12a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>אֹודְּךָ אֲדֹנָי</td>
<td>12b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>(Your hesed)</td>
<td>כִּי־חַסְּדְּךָ גָדוֹל עָלָי</td>
<td>13a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(You)</td>
<td>בְּכָל־לְּבָבִּי</td>
<td>13b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>They</td>
<td>אֱלֹהִים זֵדִּים קָמוּ־עָלַי</td>
<td>14a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>Mob</td>
<td>וַעֲדַת עָרִיצִּים בִּקְּשׁוּ נַפְּשִּׁי</td>
<td>14b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>They</td>
<td>אֲדֹנָי אֶרֶךְ אפַיִּם וְּרַב־חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת</td>
<td>14c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You (Impv), then so that they (result), for (ki) you (causal)</td>
<td>פְּנֵה אֵלַי</td>
<td>15a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>הָנוּ עֻזָךְ</td>
<td>15b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>אֲדֹנָי אֶרֶךְ אפַיִּם וְּרַב־חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת</td>
<td>16a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>מָזוּנָה</td>
<td>16b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>הַלֵּךְ בַאֲמִּיתֶךָ</td>
<td>16c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>והִזַּלְתָ נַפְּשִּׁי מִּשְּאֹול תַחְּתִיָ</td>
<td>16d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiderative/Result</td>
<td>The haters</td>
<td>יִרְּאוּ שֹנְּאַי</td>
<td>17a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiderative/Result</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>וְיֵבֹשׁוּ</td>
<td>17b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>(You)</td>
<td>יְּהוָה עֲזַרְּתַנִּי</td>
<td>17c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>וְּנִחַמְּתָנִּי</td>
<td>17d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv.-Causal</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>עֲשֵׂה־עִּמִּי</td>
<td>17e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second, Table 4.2 elucidates the shifting dynamics between the psalmist and his addressee, God, over the course of the psalm's three sections (vv. 1-7, 8-13, 14-17) from self-orientation to God-orientation. This is demonstrated in the column "Subject of Independent Clause."

We begin with a closer look at the progression of the psalm's motive clauses. In vv. 1-4, we see the construction "You (imperative)…, for I…" a total of four times. The poet seems to have sufficient confidence in his relationship with Yahweh that he can address God with a series of pleas. What is the basis for this kind of confidence?

According to Brueggemann, the answer is alluded to by the "You" of v. 2d. By it, the psalmist shows that this is not a distant and isolated God with whom he speaks but a "known, named, identifiable You" who has chosen to join himself with Israel in "determined solidarity." In other words, this is not just any god; this is the psalmist's covenant God. However, the reasons the pray-er cites in order to compel God to act in vv. 1b-2b are also revealing. He tells the Lord: "for poor and needy am I" (אָנִּי וְּאֶבְּיוֹן כִּי־עָנִּי) in v. 1d; and "for a loyal one am I" (כִּי־חָסִיד אָנִּי) in v. 2b. Note the repetition of the 1cs pronoun in both clauses. In short, he argues, "Because I am 'x,' you should perform 'y.'" A further stylistic indication of the psalmist's self-orientation is the...

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use of end-rhyme and similar phonemes in vv. 1-2. Note the driving repetition in the words עֲנֵנִּי, עָנִּי, and אָנִּי. Note also the two final words of vv. 2a and 2b: נַפְּשִּׁי and again אָנִּי. The psalmist is clearly aware in these early verses that he desperately needs the help of his covenant God and he is determined to demonstrate why, based on his own qualifications, he deserves that help.

Looking again at the motive clause diagram (Table 4.3), the first indication that the psalmist's perspective is beginning to shift comes in the statement in v. 2d, "You are my God" (אַתָּה אֱלֹהַי), conspicuously inserted between the phrase הָוֹשַׁע עַבְּד and its modifying clause בְּבוֹטֵחַ אֵלֶּה. The second indication comes in v. 5, which is also introduced by the preposition ki and is thus subordinate to v. 4b. Here, the pray-er appears to modify his second round of petitions with an addendum (also the second confession of trust). He remembers that the reason he lifts his soul to the Lord is because his God is good and forgiving, abounding in covenant-love (חֶסֶד) to all who call on him. Although the speaker's first usage of the root חָסִּיד in v. 2b (כִּי־חָסִּיד אָנִּי) refers to himself, v. 5b may be seen as the psalmist's subtle acknowledgement that it is the חֶסֶד of Yahweh that makes possible his own identity as one of the חָסִּיד.

This shift towards reflection on the revealed nature of his covenant God is altogether appropriate because, as Patrick Miller argues, it is not just the weakness and need of the pray-er that motivates God to act, but the fact that God possesses at all times a merciful disposition towards the weak and needy. The distinction is subtle, but important. In regard to how the motive clause actually accomplishes its goal, Miller writes:

What happens in all such motive clauses is that the fundamental ground of prayer, that is, the responsiveness of God to the cry of human need, is lifted up. All the description of the plight of the afflicted... assumes God's care and compassion, especially for those in distress. Here again
the appeal is implicitly to "the Lord, gracious and merciful," the one who has promised to heed the cry of the afflicted "for I am compassionate" (Exod 22:21-26).43

Verses 6-7 mark another small step in the evolution of the psalmist's prayer. Again he implores the Lord to give him heed (v. 6a-b) because "In the day of my trouble, I will call to you" (v. 7a), a declarative statement followed by the causal clause, "for you can answer me" (v. 7b). Here, as in vv. 4b-5b, the poet acknowledges that he petitions God because he knows that God is the one who is able to answer. Although this YQTL verb could just as easily be translated as simple future tense, given the context, a modal aspect seems more appropriate. The psalmist is becoming increasingly aware that although he cannot force God to do what he wants, nevertheless he can depend on Yahweh's own revelation of his kind and compassionate nature, first stated in Exodus 34:6-7a and now reiterated in v. 5.44

This leads us into the heart of the psalmist's confession of praise and trust found in vv. 8-10. Suddenly, the imperatives stop and a series of declarative statements ensue.

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44 This formulation of what the prayer of the psalmist actually accomplishes is not necessarily at odds with that of Miller's when he writes, "God may not be coerced, but God can be persuaded"; "Prayer as Persuasion," 361. We both agree that God's hand cannot be forced. Instead, Miller emphasizes that the purpose of the motive clauses that appear so frequently in the psalms of lament is to convince God to act according to his own nature and promises: "They [motive clauses] appeal to God to be and to act as God would be and act" (361). Not dissimilarly, the dynamic that I have identified in Psalm 86, based on the progression of the motive clauses and syntactical flow, is one of a growing sense that God can be depended on to help because of who he promises to be—the God of Ex 34:6. In fact, Miller states it best when he says: "It is in the very nature and structure of the relationship between God and the human creature that the deliverance from pain and suffering, the overcoming of affliction, guilt, and oppression by others can be counted upon" (362). Where my actual disagreement with Miller lies is in the extent to which his statements—"The mind and heart of God are vulnerable to the pleas and the arguments of human creatures" (361) and "There is, therefore, an openness on God's part, an expectation that the intercession will have an impact, an invitation to shape the future" (Patrick D. Miller, "Prayer and Divine Action," in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann* (ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 211-232; quote from p. 220)—are incompatible with the confessional understanding of the knowledge of God and his eternal decrees (cf. WCF III.1-2; WLC 12; BC 13). Unfortunately, a fuller discussion of this topic is outside the purview of this thesis.
Through them the poet exalts the singular greatness of Yahweh which will shine forth so mightily that all the nations will come to him in worship (v. 9). Next, the psalmist reflects on the נִפְּלָאוֹת, the marvelous doings of Yahweh (v. 10). Tate summarizes the speaker's praise: "For great you are, a Worker of Wonders!" The nuances of the term נפְָּלאוֹת should not be missed. On it, Brueggemann comments:

The term "wondrous" (niplā'ôt) might be variously rendered as "impossible," "difficult," "miraculous," or "inexplicable." Yahweh is known and named as one who commits creative, healing, transformative acts that are outside our usual field of vision and our horizon of expectation.

In contrast to the self-oriented perspective of vv. 1-2b, these verses are distinctly You-centered, with אַתָּה being used twice in v. 10. Finally, further evidence that vv. 8-10 should be viewed as a distinct and self-contained unit (and as the poem's third confession of trust) is found in the fact that it is bracketed by references to Yahweh's supreme uniqueness in v. 8a ("there is none like you among the gods") and again in v. 10c ("You alone are God"). This central confession of faith acts as an important pivot-point for the psalm. In its language, it closely reflects Moses' praise of God after his deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea: "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Exod 15:11). That its vision of the worshipping nations is fundamentally eschatological in orientation is demonstrated by the fact that these three verses are quoted in the Revelator's Song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15:3-4).

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45 Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 374.


Refreshed by this re-affirmation of the wonder of his God, the pray-er now addresses Yahweh with a new and different series of imperatives, petitioning God to teach him and to unite his heart, in order that he might fear Yahweh's name. The pattern has changed once again and reality has come more sharply into focus for the psalmist. He sees now that his need is not the direct cause of God's action but his blessing will be the result of God's acting out of his great love (see again Diagram 3.1). The infinitive construct of v. 11d along with the cohortative verb of v. 12b make this clear. Both of them point unambiguously to the conditionality of the psalmist's position. Only when Yahweh acts to unite the petitioner's divided heart and to work his wonders will the psalmist be able to fear and glorify his Maker's name. Yahweh is the teacher, the initiator (v. 11). The psalmist's role in this section is to respond with praise and obedience (vv. 11b, 12a). He sees now that his petitions are fundamentally based on the fact that God is able and willing to answer and when God does, the results will be borne out in him. Rather than "You do 'x', because I am 'y'," the order of his petition has become "You do 'x,' so that I become 'y', because you are 'z'."49

Also of particular interest in this center section of Psalm 86 is the threefold reference to God's "name" (vv. 9, 11, 12) and to his "steadfast love" (v. 13). In his essay "Prayer and Divine Action," Patrick Miller identifies these two themes in particular as the proper basis for appeals to God to act.

The appeals are always made toward the direction of God's already intended action. That is, motivating clauses that urge divine action "for your name's sake" or "for your steadfast love" seek an involvement by God that is consistent with the way that God is and with the way that God has chosen to act. The particular moment of suffering and distress is presented as an opportunity that, when clearly heard and assessed, will be seen to fit the circumstances appropriate to divine

activity…. Thus prayer is consistent with God's will and purpose for the world—large and small—as it seeks something that is wholly consistent with the divine nature.\textsuperscript{50}

Once again, it is not that the psalmist's needs are unimportant or invalid as a legitimate impetus for God to act, but the power of these motive clauses is only activated when working in concert with God's gracious disposition. Moreover, God's pledge of mercy precedes the psalmist's need, logically and chronologically (i.e., the wilderness generation came before this psalm "of David").\textsuperscript{51}

This right perspective makes all the difference in the section that follows, where the reader immediately encounters the strongest complaint yet: "O God, arrogant men have risen up against me!" (v. 14a). Now, equipped with the proper perspective on the threats of his enemies, he immediately recites again the creedal statement of Exodus 34:6-7a: "But you (וְּאַתָּה ),\textsuperscript{52} O Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in covenant-love and truth." The power of this recitation lies in the fact that this is a claim authenticated by God himself. In essence, the psalmist "prays God's character back to God, insists that Yahweh be who Yahweh asserted God's own self to be, and reminds Yahweh that Yahweh can be 'no other God.'"\textsuperscript{53}

The text concludes with the final step in the maturation of the psalmist's prayer. The imperatives in vv. 16-17 once again resemble the imperatives used in vv. 1-4, but

\textsuperscript{50} Miller, "Divine Action," 217.

\textsuperscript{51} On this point, I find Miller's concept of the relationship between "God's nature and character" and "the situation of the petitioner(s)," which he calls "really different aspects of a single reality," to be insufficiently nuanced; Miller, "Prayer as Persuasion," 357. This is not a "chicken and egg" conundrum. If God had not purposed to come to the aid of the weak and powerless, the psalmist would be utterly without hope. If the situation were reversed, on the other hand, and the psalmist had no need of God's help, would God therefore be left somehow impoverished? See the discussion below on the incommensurability of God.

\textsuperscript{52} The disjunctive clause-initial waw is unmistakable in this context.

\textsuperscript{53} Brueggemann, \textit{Life of Faith}, 47.
with some key differences. Now with Yahweh as both the one petitioned and the basis for the petition, the result is enacted not upon the "I" (as in vv. 11-13) but upon the "they" in vv. 16-17. The "I", who is the speaker, is still very much involved in the picture, as shown by the six 1cs pronominal suffixes used in these two verses alone, but he is not the subject. Rather, the poet asks that God, based on God's past faithfulness (vv. 17d-e), would give him some sort of a miraculous sign (לְּטוֹבָה אוֹת נָא) in order that his threatening enemies might also be put in their proper place. Thus, in these final two verses, we learn that the evolution of the psalmist's prayer to a more God-oriented perspective does not rid him of his basic need for refuge and protection. Rather, it informs and transforms his sense of dependence on and his confidence in God's ability to ensure his well-being.

To summarize, Psalm 86 is a psalm that talks its way to the right perspective. Through a series of (re-)encounters with Yahweh's self-revealed character (vv. 2d, 5, 8-10, 15, 17), the psalmist is brought into a right orientation with God and thereby, a right position for prayer. Psalm 86 is an example of the transformative power of prayer—not primarily the power to transform God, but the power to transform the pray-er. Through the act of praying, the psalmist has had his bottom-line shifted from a worldview where his own happiness is the highest good (and his own suffering, the greatest evil) to an understanding that God's nature and character are primary. All grounds for petitions

54 The meaning of this word in this context is difficult to understand. Tate takes it literally to mean "a sign for my welfare/benefit" citing the loose translation of Johnson, "a sign that all will be well"; Tate, Psalms 51-100, 374. Alternatively, the Jerusalem Bible translates, "Give me one proof of your goodness." I have taken it as referring to a miraculous sign based on the prior use of נִפְלָאוֹת in v. 10b.

55 The psalm does not deny the function of prayer as a God-ordained means of effecting real change, enabling God's people to become active agents in his creative and redemptive work. However, based on the syntactical progression in the psalm, we can conclude that this aspect of prayer is not the focus of Psalm 86.
begin with him; all hope of deliverance finds its source in him; all glory that results from
his saving work goes to him.\footnote{In this regard, Psalm 77, also found in Book III of the Psalter, is an example of another lament-prayer that talks its way to the proper You-I orientation. Like Psalm 86, Psalm 77 begins with a seemingly unrelenting series of "I" and "my" statements (vv. 1-6) but after a pivotal turnaround in v. 10, it ends with a slew of declarations dominated by "you" and "your" (vv. 11-20). Concerning the transformation that this "total, decisive, and intentional" contrast belies, Brueggemann writes, "The dramatic move concerns the abandonment of self as the primal agenda for the Thou who is out beyond us in freedom. We make no mistake to observe that that transfer of the agenda, the ceding of concern for self to the other, is the crucial move of biblical faith, the \textit{sine qua non} for covenanting" (Brueggemann, "Psalm 77: The Turn from Self to God" in \textit{Life of Faith}, 258-267; quote from pp. 262-63). These words may just as aptly be applied to the metamorphosis undergone by the prayer of Psalm 86. For more on the relationship between Pss 77 and 86 through their shared references to Exod 34:6 and Exod 15:11 found in Moses' Song of the Sea, see John S. Kselman, "Psalm 77 and the Book of Exodus," \textit{JANES} 15 (1983): 51-58.}

\textbf{Theological Implications of the I-You Dialogue}

What is the biblical-theological payoff of these observations regarding the psalm's
structure and syntax? The structure of Psalm 86 shows that its fundamental message
concerns the nature of the relationship between a master and his servant.\footnote{So Goldingay writes, "The prayer's dominant image is of Yhwh as the suppliant's master and the suppliant as Yhwh's servant…. This psalm works within the framework of the relationship of mutual "commitment" between a master and servant (vv. 2, 5, 13, 15)." John Goldingay, \textit{Psalms, Volume 2: Psalms 42-89} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 619-20.}

In his 1923 book, \textit{I and Thou}, Martin Buber draws a sharp distinction between I-It
and I-Thou relationships. For Buber, the essence of the I-Thou construct is its dialogical
and reciprocal existence.

God embraces but is not the universe; just so, God embraces but is not myself. On account of this
which cannot be spoken about, I can say in my language, as all can say in theirs: You. \textit{For the
sake of this there are I and You, there is dialogue, there is language}.\footnote{Martin Buber and Walter Kaufmann, \textit{I and Thou} (New York: Scribner, 1970), 143; ital. mine.}

In the absence of these two qualities, the relationship ceases to be I-Thou and becomes
instead I-It. Where Psalm 86 departs from Buber is in his insistence that both the I and
the Thou, even when the Thou is God, need each other in order to exist.\footnote{59} For clearly the lesson of the Psalm is not that the relationship between the psalmist and Yahweh is that of mutual necessity. Rather, the relationship is more accurately compared to a parasitic relationship than to a symbiotic one. The I needs the You in every respect. Everything the I has, he has received from the You. Everything that the I needs, he must ask from the You. The You, however, is not compelled to act simply because the I wants him to. The You is compelled to act only because He has covenanted to do so (cf. Exod 34:5-28).

Returning again to the insights of Brueggemann:

> Israel understood that life never begins in "I," but always in "You." The "I" is by definition derived from and attuned to the "You"; the movement of speech from "I" back to "You" is a yielding acknowledgement of the source and ground of life that lies outside ourselves.\footnote{60}

> In a related essay concerning how finite creatures can dialogue with the infinite God, Brueggemann argues that the incommensurability of God, his wholly other "You"-ness, is something that he himself can choose to "interrupt."\footnote{61} Although God's incommensurability—the fact that he is "God for God's self, concerned for God's own life and honor, whereby Israel is aware of the huge, decisive differential between itself and the God whom it praises"\footnote{62}—is a given in the hymns and songs of thanksgiving found in the Psalter, the lament and complaint psalms address this same God in a radically different way. In these psalms, there is a moment of mutuality when "needy Israel (or a

\footnote{59} See his comment: "That you need God more than anything, you know at all times in your heart. But don't you know also that God needs you—in the fullness of his eternity, you?"; Buber, \textit{I and Thou}, 130.

\footnote{60} Brueggemann, \textit{Life of Faith}, 35.


\footnote{62} Brueggemann, "Incommensurability and Mutuality," 584.
needy Israelite) who has no other visible resource with which to cope with trouble, dares to assume the upper hand and the initiating voice and action in the relationship in order to "compel" YHWH to act."\(^63\) In Brueggemann's view, though this appears to go against everything else that Israel has proclaimed regarding God's incommensurability and total beyond-ness, the ability to approach God for this single moment on the level of equals is completely revolutionary and completely necessary. Why? Because, in Brueggemann's opinion, it enables the Psalter to shift from a focus on dutiful obedience to an expression of exuberant praise. What is so praiseworthy about Israel's God is that he \textit{responds} to being thrust into a position of mutuality: "In the end, this is an incommensurability interrupted by YHWH's own willingness to be interrupted because this is a God unlike any other."\(^64\)

Brueggemann's ideas are certainly thought-provoking, but they also warrant some clarification and perhaps correction. For instance, it is important to make explicit that the actual catalyst for change is not the bravery the psalmist exhibits in coming to God as an equal but that which serves as the foundation for his bravery. In Psalm 86, this foundation is clearly God's own statement of covenantal self-disclosure given in Exodus 34:6, cited not once but twice in the psalm (vv. 5, 15).\(^65\) The source of the prayer's


\(^64\) Brueggemann, "Incommensurability and Mutuality," 599.

\(^65\) Although the reference to Exodus 34:6 is much more obvious in Ps 86:15 where the verse is quoted almost exactly, the allusion to the same statement in Ps 86:5 is also widely acknowledged by Psalms commentators; see for example Stek, "Psalms," 884; McCann, \textit{NIB} 4:1021; Kraus, \textit{Psalms 69-150}, 182; Schaefer, \textit{Psalms}, 210. For simplicity's sake, I will often refer to the two verses together even though the connection to Exodus 34:6 is much stronger in v. 15.
efficacy is not found within the poet himself. Rather, it is God's own statement about his merciful disposition towards his people that imbues the psalmist's petition with power.

**Inner-Biblical Exegesis: Exodus as Backdrop to Psalm 86**

Contrary to Buttenweiser's estimation of Psalm 86 as "only a second-class poem," we have seen to this point that Psalm 86 actually possesses a number of fascinating and unique characteristics including its attributed Davidic authorship, its use of repeated terms to highlight the relationship between the psalmist and his God, and a compositional and syntactical structure that elucidates the total dependence of the "I" on the "You" for all things. In addition to these, another noteworthy feature of this psalm is its obvious Mosaic background. Indeed, a close reading of the text reveals that Mosaic language forms the architectural matrix upon which this composition is built.

As was already noted, a high degree of lexical similarity exists between Psalm 86:8-10 and Exodus 15:11, a part of Moses' Song of the Sea.

Psalm 86:8-10

אֲשֶׁר עָשִּיתָכָם בְּדוּ לִּשְׁמֶךָ׃
כְּמַעֲשֶיךָ בָאֱלֹהִּים אֲדֹנָי וְּאֵין אֵין־כָמוֹךָ בְּדוּ לִּשְׁמֶךָ׃
יָבוֹאוּ וְּיִּשְּׁתַחֲווּ לְּפָנֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי וִּיכַעָשָׂה כָל־גוֹיִּם אֲשֶׁר אַתָה אֱלֹהִּים לְבַדֶךָ׃

Exodus 15:11

פֶלֶא שֵה עֹנֶאֶדָר בַקֹדֶשׁ נוֹרָא תְּהִּלֹת מִי כָמֹכָה באֵלִּים יְּהוָה מִי־כָמֹכָה

Another significant connection between Psalm 86 and a composition attributed to Moses is with Revelation 15:3-4. Echoes of Psalm 86:8-10 can clearly be heard throughout this "Song of Moses and of the Lamb" and there is no other NT text that appears to reference Psalm 86 so closely. Compare, for example,

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66 Cited in Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 378.
LXX Ps 86:9a
πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ὅσα ἐποίησας ἥξωσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιόν σου κύριε καὶ
dοξάσουσι τὸ ὄνομά σου

Rev 15:4b
tίς οὐ μὴ φοβηθῇ, κύριε, καὶ δοξάσει τὸ ὄνομά σου; ὅτι μόνος ὅσιος, ὅτι πάντα τὰ ἔθνη
ἥξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιόν σου, ὅτι τὰ δικαιώματά σου ἐφανερώθησαν.

The high degree of similarity between the two verses is readily seen.67 This evidence
suggests that Psalm 86 was likely already understood as having Mosaic and Sinai
overtones during the NT period.

By far the more important allusion to the book of Exodus in Psalm 86, however,
is to Exodus 34:6. Because the psalmist's appeal to Exodus 34 is so crucial to the psalm's
logic, it will be helpful to examine the context of Exodus 34:6 more closely as well as its
use in other parts of the Old Testament.

Context of Exodus 34:6
Exodus 32 tells the tragic story of Israel's betrayal of her God and her leader,
Moses, by building an idolatrous calf, driving Moses to shatter the newly given tablets of
the Decalogue that symbolized God's covenant with Israel. Yahweh's judgment on their
faithlessness was severe—three thousand men were killed by the Levites in addition to
those whom God destroyed with his own hand—and it appeared that his favor might
never return. But in Exodus 33, Moses tenaciously intercedes for obstinate Israel. When
God promises to continue to carry out his good plan for Moses ("My Presence will go
with you, and I will give you rest"; 33:14), Moses insists that it be for all the people ("If

your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here"; 33:15). Moses goes on to reason with God that he must continue to be faithful to the whole nation for his own name's sake, otherwise, "What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" (33:16b). Finally, God relents and in order to show Moses his glory (cf. 33:18) and prove that he will do this thing, he proclaims, "I will cause all my goodness (טוּבִּי) to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (33:19). Not only is this a foretelling of the covenant renewal of Exodus 34:5-7, but the phrase "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you" is also an interpretation of what is happening in that moment; God's statement of his moral disposition toward Israel is the theological equivalent of his goodness passing by. In this regard, note the parallel use of the verb עבר in Exodus 33:19 and Exodus 33:6. But what exactly is God's טוב, his goodness? About this verse, Nahum Sarna writes,

In ancient Near Eastern treaties and in several biblical texts, the term טוב bears the technical legal meaning of covenantal friendship, that is, amity established by the conclusion of a pact. In light of this, it is possible that the present verse also contains an intimation of the renewal of the covenant between God and Israel.

The author has skillfully managed to interweave covenantal terminology throughout his account, even though the term ברית does not appear until Exodus 34:10.

68 All ital. mine. For a fuller literary analysis of the Exod 32-34 narrative, see Peter Enns, Exodus (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 568-88.

69 Nahum M. Sarna, Exodus (JPS Torah Commentary Series; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 214; other biblical examples where ברית is used with this connotation include: Gen 32:9, 12; Deut 23:6; Josh 24:20; I Sam 25:30; 2 Sam 2:6; 7:28; Jer 18:10; 33:9, 14; see also M. Fox, "TÔB as Covenant Terminology," BASOR 209 (1973): 41-42.
Transitioning into ch. 34, in vv. 1-3 we see the original preparations to receive the tablets repeated. Because the preparations are the same (with the exception that Moses must go without Aaron this time; cf. Exodus 19:24; 34:3), we are to understand the covenant as being the same. Moreover, this is a covenant with roots going back to Exodus 3:14-15 where God first revealed his name YHWH to Moses, as he does once again in Exodus 34:5c, יְּהוָה וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יִהְיֶה. Yet, this covenant is also different, different in the sense that it comes after Israel's great transgression of Exodus 32. This is a point of great significance. Why God would choose to forgive and renew a covenant he did not break with a rebellious people he cannot trust is a question only he can answer, which is precisely what he does in stunning fashion in the words of Exodus 34:6-7:

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Childs, commenting on the fact that this statement is not found in the original covenant-making event recorded in Exodus 19 but appears for the first time here, writes:

The community which treasured these traditions was not the generation who could confidently say: "all that Yahweh has spoken we will do" (24.7), but the people who stood beyond the great divide caused by the sin of the golden calf. The faith which Israel learned to prize was not a proud

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70 For a good exposition of the parallels between Exodus 34:1-3 and Exodus 19-20, see Sarna, Exodus, 215.

71 Although some translations (NASB) take Moses as the subject of this clause ("and he called on the name of the Lord"), many commentators (Sarna, Exodus, 216; Enns, Exodus, 566; Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 603) favor understanding God as the subject ("and he proclaimed the name, the Lord"), as do the RSV, NJPS, NEB, KJV, and NIV.

72 Note that in the sequence of Genesis 15-17, the pattern is similar. God initiates a unilateral covenant with Abram in Genesis 15, which is quickly followed in Genesis 16 by Abram's faithless agreement to Sara's suggestion of conceiving a child through Hagar. Despite Abram's lack of trust in the superiority of God's ways, God chooses to renew his covenant with the newly named Abraham immediately afterward in Genesis 17.
tradition that once in the past God had singled out a people, but rather that God had continued to sustain his original purpose with a sinful nation both in mercy and judgment.\textsuperscript{73}

So foundational were these verses to Israel and later to Jewish tradition that they came to be known by their own label: \textit{shelosh 'esreh middot}, or "The Thirteen Attributes of God."\textsuperscript{74} They became a common element in Jewish liturgy, regularly read either before or after the Torah reading. They were also read during festival and holy days and chanted during the penitential prayers offered on these special occasions. This last use is especially worth noting and seems to have been based on Rabbi Johanan's comment on \textit{Rosh Ha-Shanah} 17b that "God's recital of His moral qualities was intended to set the pattern for Israel's future petitions to God."\textsuperscript{75} Moreover, because of the relatively frequent reference to this formula in other parts of the Hebrew Bible, we can be almost certain that its prominence in the liturgy and prayers of Israel existed before the Second Temple period.

Furthermore, the recurring use of the formula of Exodus 34:6-7 does not seem to have diluted its original power nor caused it to become detached from its historical moorings, at least in the biblical writings.\textsuperscript{76} In almost every instance in which it is cited in the Old Testament, the covenant renewal at Sinai is clearly in the backdrop.\textsuperscript{77} In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73} Childs, \textit{Exodus}, 612.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Sarna, \textit{Exodus}, 216. How the thirteen attributes are calculated can differ.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Sarna, \textit{Exodus}, 216.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Scholars commonly identify OT citations of this refrain in Num 14:18; Jer 32:18; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Nah 1:3; Pss 86:15; 103:8 (of David); 145:8 (of David); Neh 9:17; cf. Pss 111:4; 112:4; 116:5 for partial references.
\item \textsuperscript{77} The only possible exceptions are Jer 32:18 ("You…bring the punishment for the fathers' sins into the laps of their children after them") and Nah 1:3 ("The Lord is slow to anger… the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished"), both of which only quote limited parts of Exodus 34:6-7.
\end{itemize}
Numbers 14:81, for example, the people are despairing after the spies’ discouraging report about the promised land. When they complain that they wish they had died in Egypt, God's anger reaches its boiling point and he vows to destroy this contempt-filled people and start again. But once again, Moses is there to plead for God's forgiveness, using Exodus 34:6-7 to convince God to relent and show mercy as he had so many times in the past. Joel 2:13, on the other hand, cites the formula in order to convince the people to return to the Lord in repentance as this is the God who is able to forgive even the worst transgressions. Interestingly, Jonah 4:2 uses it in a very different context, though also as proof of God's inestimable stores of mercy. In this verse, Jonah complains that it was impossible for him to have gone to Nineveh to proclaim repentance because he knew God to be a gracious and compassionate God who would certainly forgive even the heinous sins of the Ninevites should they heed Jonah's word. Finally, Nehemiah 9:17-19 recalls the exact episode of the golden calf and God's stunning response: "Even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, 'This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt…' because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the desert."

In the Psalms, the situation is very similar. Of the two psalms other than Psalm 86:5 that quote the formula most completely, both can be seen as setting the statement within a Mosaic and/or wilderness context. Psalm 103, a psalm of David, says in vv.7-8, "He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." Looking at these verses, the easiest way to understand the syntactical function of v. 8 is as a direct quotation of God's revelation in Exodus 34:6, especially when one notes how Psalm 103:7a picks up
on Moses' request in Exodus 33:13, "teach me your ways so that I may know you." The psalm then goes on to say "He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities" (Ps 103:10), also a statement of the unmerited nature of God's favor.

Similarly, in Psalm 145, also a psalm of David, the recitation of Exodus 34:6 in v. 8 can be seen as making up the substance of each succeeding generation’s proclamation (v. 4).

Verses 4-8 would thus read something like this:

One generation will commend your works to another:
They will tell of your mighty acts…
They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty…
They will tell of the power of your awesome works…
They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness:
"The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love."

In light of the excess of "speaking" verbs (רנן, אמר) used in vv. 4b-7, it is easy to see these verbs as setting up a direct quote in v. 8. Furthermore, as the words "one generation will commend to the next" imply, it certainly would have been understood that the original generation to bear this responsibility was that group that wandered the wilderness with Moses. Although it is difficult to prove definitively that the psalmist is here thinking specifically of the Sinaitic background to v. 8, it is also not difficult to imagine that it is indeed in his mind. Certainly, no other generation witnessed so many of God's mighty acts on their behalf.

Implications for Psalm 86

78 Sarna believes that the recital of the divine attributes in Exodus 34:6-7 is a direct reply to Moses' request in Exodus 33:13; Exodus, 216.

79 N.B. Establishing the text of Psalm 145 has proven to be exceedingly difficult, with the MT, LXX, Syriac and Qumran scrolls all recording slightly different versions of this psalm. Here I have chosen to list only the best substantiated (and therefore least controversial) verbs.
Turning back to the interpretation of Psalm 86, several implications of our study of the literary context of Exodus 34:6 and its uses in other places in the OT quickly emerge. First, we have seen that this statement of Yahweh’s attributes is not for the self-righteous and self-sufficient; rather, it is for the fallible who know how much they require his mercy, compassion, love, and faithfulness, and also how little they deserve it. In Psalm 86, consequently, the allusion to Exodus 34:6 in vv. 5 and 15 cannot function as the psalmist’s bargaining chip in an attempt to manipulate God into answering his requests.\(^{80}\) Not only would this be a perversion of its intended purpose, but it would be patently ineffective as well. Instead, the two-time allusion to Exodus 34:6 in Psalm 86 is emblematic of the psalmist’s gradual realization that God’s covenant promise to be "the Lord, the Lord, merciful and gracious" towards him is all the solid ground on which he and his prayer have to stand. This refrain sets, as Rabbi Johanan has said, the pattern for all of Israel’s petitions, including those of Psalm 86, because it reveals the real reason why God answers prayer: God. There is nothing in the petitioners themselves—they are golden calf idolaters—that need compel him to show compassion; there is only the compulsion of his own nature and his own purposing to covenant with his people. When, on the other hand, Ex 34:6 is seen through the lens of God’s covenantal faithfulness, his statement of self-disclosure can rightly be used to appeal to and even remind him to act, as in Numbers 14:17-19.

\(^{80}\) This is the interpretation held by Eugene March who proposes that the psalmist might actually be throwing this statement of self-disclosure "back in God’s face" in order to accuse him of forgetting to carry out justice for the poor and needy; "When Love Is Not Enough," 22. Brueggemann tempers this kind of rhetoric somewhat and prefers to call the psalmist’s attempt to spur God into action "an act of assertive mutuality," one example of which he cites in Ps 86:10; "Incommensurability and Mutuality," 591.
Second, we have also observed how Exodus 33:12-34:28 is laced through with
covenantal language and covenantal movement. Not surprisingly, some of the key
covenantal terms, and key terms in general, of the Exodus narrative are repeated in Psalm
86. The word טוב, for instance, appears twice in Psalm, first in v. 5 and then again in v.
17 where the psalmist asks God to "show me a sign for good" (憂הש את טוב; NIV:
"give me a sign of your goodness"). Seeing a covenantal nuance in the use of this word,
especially in v. 17, has the potential to be very helpful. Traditionally, commentators have
been somewhat divided over how to understand this clause. Augustine, for example, says
about this verse, "What sign, if not the resurrection?" Others have preferred to say
relatively little about a specific referent. Tate's view, however, may be the most helpful
and most naturally complemented by a covenantal vision. Citing O.T. Helfmeyer's
definition of אות as an object, occurrence, or event through which the credibility of
someone or something is established, Tate claims that "in the case of a 'sign' done by
God, it is something which affirms and makes recognizable divine action." In addition
to its use in v. 17 with this connotation, he mentions other similar usages of אות in Psalms
74:9; 78:43; 105:27; and 135:9. Consequently, by combining the term אות with טוב, the
psalmist is in essence asking God not only for recognizable divine action but for proof of
the recognizable divine covenant which has been in place since the time of Sinai.

84 Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 383; he sees similar usages in Pss 74:9; 78:43; 105:27; 135:9.
Two other word parallels with the covenant renewal scene of Exodus 33-34 deserve highlighting. The first is found in Psalm 86:10 and is almost a synonym of the phrase אַלָּא לְטוֹבָה. Just as in Exodus 34:10, Yahweh declares, "I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders (נִפְּלָאֹת) never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you," so in Psalm 86:9-10, the psalmist writes, "All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds (נִפְּלָאֹת;) you alone are God." In both contexts, the result of God's נִפְּלָאֹת will be to inspire the reverence and awe of the nations. The second parallel is found in Psalm 86:11 where the speaker, echoing Moses in Exodus 33:13 (אַלָּא תּוֹדִּיעֵנִי נָא), asks, "teach me your way, O LORD" (הוֹרֵנִּי יְהוָה דַּרְּכֶךָ). Earlier, we mentioned that Exodus 34:6 can be seen as a direct answer to this petition, originally voiced by Moses. Now, this petition, put into the mouth of David, once again receives the response of Exodus 34:6 in Psalm 86:15. The difference is that here it is the psalmist, reminded of and refreshed by God's unchanging covenant faithfulness, who recites the familiar words in answer to his own petition as if to say, "here is God's provision for my need."

Third, just as in the majority of the other places in the OT where Exodus 34:6 is cited, Psalm 86 should also be read with a Sinaitic backdrop in mind. Why is this important? It matters because when the psalmist addresses God with his own revealed attributes in v. 15, he is also in the same moment remembering how absolutely true God has been to his covenant despite Israel's repeated faithlessness. This then is at least in part the basis for his unexpected use of QTL verbs in vv. 17d-e, even after the petition for
a sign in v. 17a. He ends the psalm reflecting on the fact that he and God have a history together; this is not their first meeting. Indeed, he stands within a long trajectory of God's רַב־חֶסֶד with the certainty that Yahweh has loved needy Israel, and this needy Israelite (to borrow Brueggemann's phrase), too much to stop loving her now.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this chapter has been to read the text of Psalm 86 with care and attention to detail. This process has uncovered several of the psalm's unique features used to convey its message concerning the internal workings of prayer. To be more specific, Psalm 86 documents the metamorphosis of a servant of God (identified by the superscription as David) from a self-oriented supplicant to a humbled petitioner who grounds his requests in his covenantal relationship with his God.

In order to communicate this message, this psalm is saturated with layers of covenantal and Mosaic language including the phrase "son of your maidservant" in v. 16, an allusion to Exodus 15:11 in vv. 8-10, and two allusions to Exodus 34:6 in vv. 5 and 15. Every pivotal remembrance of God's character (vv. 5, 8-10, 15) is grounded in his ancient redemptive acts (e.g., the deliverance of the Israelites through the Red Sea) and in his ancient self-revelation at Sinai. The upshot: even David, whose covenant with God (cf. 2 Samuel 7) is in many ways the cornerstone of Books I-III of the Psalter (cf. Psalms 72, 89), must come to Yahweh on the basis of a more ancient covenant—a covenant re-established by God directly in the face of Israel's wanton idolatry and spiritual adultery.
Nothing could highlight better the basic inequity of the relationship between the covenant-maker and the covenant-recipient (cf. Genesis 15). Nothing could bring into focus the psalmist's perspective on prayer more effectively than the reminder of this gracious act of God in redemptive history.

In addition to the covenantal language that saturates the composition, the psalm's basic theological message is also communicated through its stylized syntax. Here is where we find tangible movement from petitions driven by the psalmist's qualifications to petitions driven by God's qualifications. This movement is conveyed with such rhetorical force that the actual cause of the laments—the psalmist's enemies—become of secondary importance to the prayer itself. Although there is still no real relief from the violent men who seek his life (v. 14), by the end of the psalm the psalmist nevertheless speaks of God's help and comfort as something that has already been actualized (v. 17), thus revealing the true nature of his needs. Just as much as he needs protection from those who would want to cause him harm, the poet of Psalm 86 needs a right orientation from which to approach his God, a "united heart" with which to fear his name (v. 11).
CHAPTER 5: INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF PSALM 86

Introduction

As has already been discussed, Psalm 86 is not the kind of psalm that strikes the reader as exceptionally unique. Instead, many of the phrases and terms used in Psalm 86 can be found in numerous other psalms as well. The significance of this feature of the psalm has been debated. Many commentators seem unwilling to assign any interpretive significance to the psalm's cobbled-together appearance.¹ Others put great stock in this aspect of the psalm's composition, claiming its rich intertextuality to be the key to unlocking the psalm's contextual meaning.² Which view is correct? The answer to this question will be the subject of the next two chapters.

Fundamental to any exegetical method that seeks to incorporate a consciousness of the canonical whole is the comparison of texts. One's ability to make the case that the shape of the collection matters is directly proportional to one's ability to demonstrate the direct relationship between one canonical text and another (or many others, as the case may be). To discover how a particular psalm fits into the editor's overall purpose, for example, one must compare both its similarities and dissimilarities to the other psalms.

¹ See, for example: Gunkel, Die Psalmen, 377; Duhm, Psalmen, 218.

² Some of the fullest examples of this approach to Psalm 86 include Hossfeld and Zenger, Psalmen 51-100, 536-37, 538, 539, 547, and Cole, Shape and Message, 136-59. Note also the comments of J. Goldingay on the manner in which intertextuality in Psalm 86 functions: "Although practically every phrase in the psalm can be linked with some verses in the Psalms, it would be misleading to list these in such a way as to suggest that the psalmist was directly taking phrases from those sources. Its relationship with other psalms is more like that of the Revelation of John with the OT, where hardly a verse would survive without the scriptural phraseology that lies behind it, but the book comes into being because the visionary is soaked in the Scriptures rather than because he is directly sampling them at every point." Goldingay, Psalms, Vol. 2, 619. If Goldingay is correct, this way of recycling previously internalized scriptural texts also has implications for the relationship between intertextuality and contextualized meaning.
both within its own book and within the Psalter as a whole. Making observations about the psalmic superscriptions is certainly helpful, but ultimately if the texts themselves do not offer any evidence of connection, the argument cannot stand.

Given the anthological style in which it is written, this comparison becomes especially important for the interpretation of Psalm 86. The psalm's composite make-up should be viewed as a helpful tool for understanding the psalm's relationship with the other canonical psalms to which it is semantically linked through the use of common lexemes and phrases. By looking at the locations and main themes of these other psalms, we can expect to gain useful information about the rationale for the unique placement of Psalm 86 and thus its canonical function.

Linguistic Analysis, Thematic Analysis, or Both?

When embarking on the task of comparing texts, it does not take long to discover that there is more than one way to do it. On the matter of method, Wilson writes that the Psalter's editorial purpose "can be discerned by careful and exhaustive analysis of the linguistic and thematic relationships between individual psalms and groups of psalms." In a thematic analysis, one looks primarily at shared images, metaphors and topics. This, for example, is the primary method employed by David C. Mitchell in his doctoral

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3 Wilson, Editing, 155ff.

4 This is Mays's term; Psalms, 278.

5 Wilson, "Pitfalls and Promise," 48, ital. mine.

6 See, for example, Robert Alter's discussion of the use of stock imagery, and in the Psalms in particular, conventional imagery: "Conventional imagery accounts for the preponderance of cases, and the book of Psalms is the showcase for the artful use of such stock images," The Art of Biblical Poetry (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 189. For the full discussion, see pp. 189-92.
dissertation comparing the eschatological program of Zechariah 9-14 with the
eschatological program of the psalms, particularly those found in Book IV. It also
explains how he is able to compare two books in the Hebrew Bible that differ so widely,
not only in genre but in syntax and vocabulary.\(^7\) Thematic analyses also come with their
own set of pitfalls. This is also demonstrated by Mitchell's study, which has been
criticized as insufficiently anchored to the text, and therefore "unconvincing," even by
those sympathetic to his ultimate goal.\(^8\)

On the other hand, a linguistic approach focuses on the lexical and, where
applicable, syntactical connections between particular texts (in our case, psalm
compositions). This is the approach that is generally favored by David M. Howard in his
analysis of the internal coherence within Psalms 93-100.\(^9\) He characterizes his research
for this book as "an exhaustive analysis of every lexeme in every possible relation with
every other one."\(^{10}\) In order to organize and evaluate the data, Howard distinguishes
between a) "key-word links," to which he assigns the greatest significance, b) "thematic
word links," which have moderate significance, and c) "incidental repetitions," which are
wholly insignificant. It is this kind of linguistically-oriented approach with which this
chapter will begin.

\(^7\) David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of
Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

\(^8\) Gerald H. Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and the
Shape of the Psalter," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (ed. P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller,
Jr.; VTSup 99; Boston: Brill, 2005), 391-406; p. 402. Wilson was himself one of the earlier proponents of
an eschatological trajectory in the Psalms and, despite his misgivings about Mitchell's methods, even
continued to cite Mitchell as demonstrating eschatological and messianic overtones in Books I-III; Wilson,
"Structure of the Psalter," 233.

\(^9\) Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*.

\(^{10}\) Howard, "Current Study," 28.
What is the relationship, if any, between linguistically-based and thematically-based comparisons of texts? Insofar as the function of syntax and vocabulary is to communicate a particular concept, when linguistic correspondences are found, one may find thematic correspondences as well. Caution needs to be exercised, however, when attempting to trace connections between words and concepts since a particular concept can be conveyed by entirely different sets of words, as demonstrated by Moisés Silva. (This, in Silva's view, is one of the fundamental problems with word-studies that try to equate themselves with concept-studies.\textsuperscript{11}) In other words, factors other than the words alone must be heavily considered (e.g., Barr's conventional imagery and metaphors) when attempting to trace thematic correspondences.

In the end, because of their different emphases and criteria, both types of comparison—thematic and linguistic—must be taken into consideration in order to ascertain most fully the interpretive significance of the relationship between two texts.

**The Usefulness of Linguistic Analysis**

Recently, studies that compare the linguistic connections between texts, also known as intertextual studies, have been gaining in popularity.\textsuperscript{12} It would be a mistake, however, to view this as a novel methodology. Indeed, studying a text's "intertextuality" can be described as nothing more than applying the tools of rhetorical criticism to more than one text at a time. Even in the pioneering days of his work on rhetorical criticism,

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\textsuperscript{11} See especially Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 22-28. In this context, Silva is thinking specifically of the genre of word-based theological dictionaries.

\textsuperscript{12} One example is the essay by Nancy deClaissé-Walford, "An Intertextual Reading of Psalms 22, 23, and 24," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (ed. P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller, Jr.; VTSup 99; Boston: Brill, 2005), 139-152.
James Muilenburg appears to have recognized the potential for expanding the search for repeated words and structural patterns beyond a single pericope. He writes, "repetition serves many and diverse functions in the literary compositions… whether in the construction of parallel cola or parallel bicola, or in the structure of the strophes, or in the fashioning and ordering of complete literary unity."13 Thus, in his book on the canonical shape of Book III of the Psalter, Robert Cole states the justification for a canonical approach to the Psalms in the simplest of terms when he writes, "the study of the final shape of the Psalter is simply a recognition that parallelism is not restricted to the individual poem."14 He goes on to title his method "rhetorical criticism and beyond"—a play on Muilenburg's famous phrase "form-criticism and beyond"—where the "beyond" refers to canonical criticism.15 The role of repetition in shaping larger literary units is also recognized by Konrad Schaefer, another rhetorical critic: "Words and catch phrases do connect many psalms, and some are grouped by numerical sequences, [and] framed by repetitions."16 Schaefer acknowledges the intentional use of repetition to group certain psalms together into collections despite his skepticism as to whether there is any "discernible logic" in the Psalter's final shape.17

What is the "payoff" of recognizing these literary connections, other than giving us greater appreciation for the compilers' skill? Could it be that repetition is a device

13 Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 7; ital. mine.

14 Cole, Shape and Message, 10. By "parallelism," I take him to mean repeated synonymous words and phrases.

15 Cole, Shape and Message, 10.

16 Schaefer, Psalms, xxi.

17 Schaefer, Psalms, xxi.
used not only to create *literary* coherence in the Psalter but to create *theological* coherence as well? This would seem to be a natural deduction since it is through the words of the text, shaped into a poetic form, that the message is communicated. Thus, it is not a stretch to claim that the editors have used literary repetition to help create a unified, albeit multi-faceted, theological message for the community of faith. And it is through observing the dynamic interaction between the psalms' shared literary features that we are enabled to see the theological movement and dynamism contained within the canonical Psalter.

**Proposed Methodology of Lexical Comparison**

One of the greatest problems that exists today for those with an interest in reading the psalms canonically is the lack of a tested and defined method by which to do so. And yet one wonders if such a method is even attainable. In other words, the exegete is not like the laboratory scientist, working in a closed system, who knows he has discovered some nugget of scientific truth when the same result is achieved each time the experiment is performed, no matter who performs it. Rather, the world of the exegete is much more like an open system in which the researcher must follow a more dynamic path on his way to fulfilling the burden of legitimacy. Verifiability is still the goal, to be sure, but getting there will require the use of objective criteria as well, sometimes, as personal judgment. In that sense, the task of discerning the phrases and terms shared by one poetic text with another (not to mention other canonical texts found outside of the Psalter) is neither fully scientific, nor fully non-scientific. It is perhaps best characterized as a technical art. One interpreter's results may very often differ slightly from another interpreter's, though both
share the same goal. Given this reality and given that one of the goals of this thesis is to propose an exegetical methodology that includes the canonical approach, a few words on my own method for comparing texts will be necessary and appropriate.

My method is first of all synchronic, not diachronic. For the purposes of finding the lexical ties between Psalm 86 and the other canonical psalms, I have not concerned myself with the dating of the psalms, and I have assumed that they were almost all written before the editors placed them into their final positions. (It is indeed possible that some psalms could have been written or spliced together by the editors in order to "fill in" the final shape or to forge intentional connections between the books, but this, too, would have been governed by the logic of the canonical shape.) Therefore, I have treated the collection's shape, that is, the book delimitations and locations of individual psalms, as of primary importance and the historical details of individual composition secondarily. My main concern has been the literary sequence of the Psalms, not the historical sequence.

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18 Zenger, it appears, would favor this explanation for the origin of Psalm 86: "Möglicherweise ist er [Ps 86] sogar für den Psalter-Zusammenhang geschaffen worden, in dem er nun steht," Hossfeld and Zenger, Psalmen 51-100, 539.

19 Whether or not it truly is possible to create such a divide between the synchronic and diachronic is perhaps another question worth considering. Roland Murphy would seem to maintain that it is not when he writes, "Hypothetical historical reconstruction is as inescapable in contextual interpretation as it is in the usual historical criticism that is applied to the Psalter"; Roland E. Murphy, "Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter (ed. J. Clinton McCann, Jr.; JSOTSUp159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 21-28, p. 21. This statement was made in response to James L. Mays's relatively positive comments about the value of a canonical approach to Psalms exegesis in Mays's essay, "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation," in The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter (ed. J. Clinton McCann, Jr.; JSOTSUp 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 14-20; see pp. 14-15, 20.

20 For a further discussion on the importance that the concept of sequence plays in Psalms interpretation, see Harry P. Nasuti, "The Interpretive Significance of Sequence and Selection in the Book of Psalms," in The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception (ed. P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller, Jr.; VTSup 99; Boston: Brill, 2005), 311-339.
Second, it is plain that not every correspondence is equally meaningful. Therefore, with regard to determining which shared words were important and worth cataloging and which were not, I have attempted to avoid a maximalist approach believing that the onus lies on the one trying to prove connections and not on the one trying to prove that there are no connections. Toward this end, I have found two tests of legitimacy to be particularly useful. The first test I have tried to employ is the test of intentionality. Stated simply, this test asks, is there evidence that the author's use of a certain word or phrase is intentional? The application of this test works itself out in a number of specific questions and ways.

- **Word choice.** When trying to gauge the intentionality of a particular word's use, one should always ask, could the author just as easily have used another word or phrase in this situation? Or was this really the only choice for this context? If the answer to the last question is yes, than we should be very careful about attaching any extra weight to the use of that particular term, although it is possible that extra weight may indeed be indeed present. By way of example, we might consider the question of what to do with formulaic word pairs. The discovery of formulaic word pairs in Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry has been long documented. One example in our text

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21 I am particularly indebted to a class on Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Law taken with Prof. Michael Williams in Spring 2004 and to the writing of Meir Malul for helping to provide the initial categories for thinking about the necessary criteria to establish legitimate lexical connections; see Meir Malul, *The Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Studies* (AOAT 227; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker: Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 108. Although Malul's work and our class discussions mainly concerned the comparison of biblical law texts and ANE law texts, many of the same principles also apply to the comparison of biblical texts with other biblical texts.

of a formulaic word pair is טוב and חסד (v. 5). Because, as Michael L. Barré has demonstrated, these words often occur in conjunction in the Psalms, one cannot read definite intentionality into the appearance of טוב and חסד in a particular text. To do so would be analogous to reading great significance into the use of the word "salt" next to the word "pepper" and to do so every time "salt and pepper" were mentioned together in another context. These two words simply go together, and must be treated more like one lexeme even though technically they are two. Consequently, the significance of the appearance of טוב and חסד together in different texts is somewhat diminished since it is more significant when two texts share a common phrase (2 lexemes or more) than when they share only a single word. This principle will be discussed further in the next point.

- Complexity. The greater the complexity of what is shared, the more likely there is an intentional connection. For example, it is highly unlikely that the connection between Psalm 86:14 and Psalm 53:3[5] is anything but intentional because of the sheer complexity of the phrases they share:

Ps 86:14

אֱלֹהִים זֵדִים קָמוּ־עָלַי וַעֲדַת עָרִיצִּים בִּקְּשׁוּ נַפְּשִּׁי וְּלֹא שָמוּךָ לְּנֶגְּדָם׃

Ps 54:3[5]

כִּי זָרִים קָמוּ עָלַי וְּעָרִיצִּים בִּקְּשׁוּ נַפְּשִּׁי לֹא שָמוּ אֱלֹהִים לְנֶגְּדָם סֶלָה׃

The fact that these two verses share ten lexemes in common is a strong argument that the connection between the two is not coincidental.

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24 See especially Malul's fifth chapter, "The Test for Coincidence versus Uniqueness" (ital. orig.), in The Comparative Method, 93-97.
Theologically-significant terms. The use of terms that are loaded with special theological significance should be noted and studied further. So, for example, the psalmist's use of the word נפלא in v. 10 to describe God as a "worker of wonders" stands out to the reader because of its infrequent appearance in this form in the OT (13 times) but also because of what it uniquely communicates about the nature of God's actions in the world. The root נפלא "refers to things that are unusual, beyond human capabilities" and the function of these wonders is "ultimately to make mercy available to the recipient or reciter, and not just to make a demonstration of power." Whether or not the use of נפלא in Psalm 86:10 carries the weight of this expanded definition is a question deserving of careful investigation.

A second test that I have sought to use is what I will call the test of perspicuity. This test asks, "Is the proposed lexical connection so obscure that it would be virtually impossible for anyone but the most imaginative to perceive?" If so, it can be ruled out based on the common sense assumption that in trying to shape the Psalter into a cohesive shape and message, the goal of the editors was to make its shape and message plain. That goal could not be achieved if the connections between psalms were not easily observed.

25 It is used in: Josh 3:5; Job 5:9; 37:5; 37:14; Pss 72:18; 86:10; 98:1; 106:22; 119:18; 136:4; Dan 11:36; and Mic 7:15.

26 "Ｎלאפ, "TWOT 2:1768.

27 The process of investigating the possible theological import of a particular word should be carried out consistently and with care. One can never assume that simply because a word is capable of connoting various meanings, it does so in every situation. It is especially important to keep in mind James Barr's caution that "the linguistic bearer of the theological statement is usually the sentence and the still larger literary complex and not the word or the morphological and syntactical mechanisms," James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 269.
A third test that I have used is the test of contextual similarity, which asks, "Is the context in which a shared phrase or word appears similar to the context in which that same phrase or word appears in Psalm 86?" So, for example, in my comparison of parallel texts I did not include the phrase שׁנשא נפ ("lift up, soul") as it appears in Psalm 24:4 with the other occurrences of this phrase in Psalms 25:1; 86:4; and 143:8 because the context of Psalm 24:4 (i.e., lifting up one's soul to what is false) is decidedly different from the context of the other three occurrences (i.e., lifting up one's soul to God). Many more examples like this exist. Why, one might ask, should the test of contextual similarity be necessary to determine whether a text should be treated as a legitimate parallel? Recall the earlier discussion of the relative merits of comparing the relationships between texts linguistically/lexically and thematically. Both are important, yet in the tests of intentionality and perspicuity only the linguistic component seems to have been taken into consideration. This test is designed to help correct that one-dimensionality. By looking at the context in which a phrase occurs—in other words, by looking at the broader theme of the psalm—thematic considerations are also allowed to control for lexical or linguistic correspondences, thereby adding another layer of depth to our understanding of the parallel.

Finally, it is important to state up front that the purpose of this method of finding and cataloging lexical parallels was to organize the data in such a way as to present a wide, yet sufficiently detailed, picture of this psalm's intertextuality. The method itself could undoubtedly benefit from further nuancing. As will become clear through the rest of this chapter and the next, it was necessary to form such a picture in order to dialogue adequately with the claims of some commentators, Zenger in particular, that Psalm 86
shares a special affinity with certain sections of the first two Davidic collections, Psalms 3-41 and Psalms 51-72. In the process, however, many more interesting discoveries were made.

As a rule, I have tried to work with as few presuppositions about the intertextuality of Psalm 86 as possible, yet I have encountered some things that were surprising to me along the way. For example, some of the phrases that I expected to show up in many other psalms are actually not very common at all. The clause גָדוֹל אַתָה ("you are great") found in Psalm 86:10, for instance, is found nowhere else in the canonical Psalter. I was also surprised to discover how relatively uncommon it was to find verses among the biblical psalms that shared three or more lexemes with a particular verse in Psalm 86. There is a fairly dramatic difference between the number of verses that share two lexemes with verses from Psalm 86 (59) and those that share three lexemes (20). Both of these observations lead me tentatively to conclude that the chances of coincidentally using the exact phrasing of Psalm 86, especially when it involves three lexemes or more, are relatively low and that the exercise of cataloging Psalm 86's lexical parallels with the goal of discovering intentionality and editorial purpose does have substantial value.

**Lexical Parallels with Psalm 86 in the Psalter**

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28 See the earlier discussion of Zenger's interpretation of Psalm 86 in ch. 2.

29 See Table 5.1.
The detailed results of the application of the method described above can be seen in Table 5.1 below.

**Shared Lexemes between Psalms 1-150 and Psalm 86 (Table 5.1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm</th>
<th>No. Shared Lexemes</th>
<th>Davidic/Non-Davidic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N-D</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N-D</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>72</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Of Solomon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>N-D</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N-D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N-D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N-D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N-D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>N-D</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N-D</td>
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<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N-D</td>
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<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N-D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N-D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To attain these data, each of the canonical psalms was individually compared with Psalm 86 with the goal of finding shared lexemes that would also pass the three tests—intentionality, perspicuity, and contextual similarity—listed in the section above. The psalms containing the highest number of shared lexemes with Psalm 86 are italicized and marked in bold.

In order to see better the distribution of the psalms that share the greatest number of lexical connections to Psalm 86, the data can also be displayed in a graph form (Table 5.2).
Several questions can be posed to these data. First, do the data reveal any patterns with regard to the correspondence between Psalm 86 and the other Davidic psalms? Specifically, do the data confirm Zenger's proposal that "a detailed analysis of the intertextuality of Psalm 86 ... results in the conclusion that the psalm is a skillful re-reading of earlier texts" and that the author of Psalm 86 "combines the conventional psalms-sayings in such a way that Psalm 86 appears as a summary of the "Davidic" psalms"? A look at Table 5.2 shows that while Psalm 86 does share a number of words

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30 Zenger's statement in full: "Eine detaillierte Analyse der Intertextualität von Ps 86 (hier können nur die wichtigsten Beobachtungen notiert werden) kommt zu dem Ergebnis, daß der Psalm eine kunstvolle Relecture ihm vorgegebener Texte ist. Die Kreativität des Verfassers von Ps 86 zeigt sich darin, daß er..."
and phrases with other canonical psalms attributed to David, it also shares many parallels with non-Davidic psalms. In fact, the distribution of shared lexemes is spread fairly evenly across the whole Psalter. The evidence, therefore, does not indicate any special lexical affinity with the Davidic psalms as a group.

As a corollary question, we might also ask if Psalm 86 shares a greater than average number of lexical parallels with the other psalms of Book III. Here again, the answer is no. It does seem to show a closer lexical connection to particular psalms within Book III (i.e., Pss 74, 88), but not to every psalm in the book. For the latter to be true, all, or at least most of the psalms of Book III (including Ps 86), would also have to demonstrate a marked level of lexical similarity with each other, and this is not the case.31

What does emerge from the data is the fact that Psalm 86 bears definite lexical similarities to certain individual psalms, not to entire collections of psalms. In this vein, the following chart should be helpful.
Immediately, it is clear that six psalms stand out for their use of language similar to that in Psalm 86: Psalms 25, 54, 72, 88, 102, and 116. In the interest of containing the scope of this exercise, we will give particular attention to the three psalms that bear the greatest number of connections to Psalm 86: Psalms 25, 72, and 116.\footnote{Admittedly, the decision to restrict this comparative study to Psalms 25, 72, and 116, omitting Psalms 54, 88, and 102, may be seen as somewhat arbitrary since the number of shared lexemes in the latter group is not significantly less. Nevertheless, given that one of the major purposes of this project is to \textit{test} the legitimacy and workability of the method proposed—in this chapter specifically, a method for text comparison—using the three psalms with the greatest number of lexical connections to Psalm 86 seems like a sufficiently large test group. Furthermore, the connection between Psalms 86 and 88 will be treated further in the next chapter when the Book III context of Psalm 86 is examined.} This represents a move from the "wide net" approach we used earlier to form a panoramic picture of the psalm's relationship with the general topography of the Psalter to a more narrow field of investigation in order to gain a better grasp of the actual purpose of the intertextuality of Psalm 86. In other words, by looking at the relationships between Psalm 86 and Psalms 25, 72, and 116, we hope to see more clearly the process—the nuts and bolts, so to speak—of just how two psalms can provide an interpretive context for one another.

Towards that end, we will examine each pair of psalms (e.g., Psalms 86 and 25; 86 and 72; and 86 and 116) paying special attention to three issues: 1) interpretation of the psalm with special attention to its unique features, 2) linguistic and thematic similarities to

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SL = Number of shared lexemes with Ps 86
Psalm 86, 3) linguistic and thematic differences with Psalm 86. Conclusions about the significance of these observations will also be drawn.

**Psalm 25**

The form of Psalm 25 eludes easy categorization. As an alphabetic acrostic, its compositional structure is governed by literary concerns as well as genre considerations. Based on its content and tone, however, it is most often categorized as the lament of an individual.\(^{33}\) Moreover, although the psalm is characterized by petitions (vv. 2-7, 11, 16-22), it also contains numerous statements of trust and wisdom leading some commentators to describe it as a poem in the style of an individual prayer but with the form of an instructional poem.\(^{34}\) Indeed, this catechetical dimension is probably the psalm's most outstanding theological feature, coloring as it does every other component of the psalm.\(^{35}\) Psalm 25 also breaks the traditional bounds of the individual lament by ending with a prayer for Israel, "Redeem Israel, O God, from all their troubles!" (v. 22). The precise significance of this final exclamatory request is debated,\(^{36}\) but the corporate quality that it adds to an otherwise individually-oriented prayer is unmistakable.

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\(^{33}\) Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 170. The fact that Psalm 86 and Psalm 25 share the same genre may already predispose them to lexical similarities. Nevertheless, among all the individual laments in the Psalter, Psalm 86 does share the *most* connections to Psalm 25, which is still significant.


\(^{35}\) Mays, Psalms, 126.

\(^{36}\) Craigie writes, "The effect of the postscript (v. 22) is to transform the more individual prayer of the psalm into a prayer suitable for Israel as a nation; the "troubles" (v. 17) of the psalmist are analogous to the troubles of Israel"; *Psalms 1-50*, 222.
Craigie also points out the complementary relationship Psalm 25 shares with Psalm 1. Psalm 25 fleshes out the Psalter's well-known opening psalm by, in a sense, adding reality to testimony. Choosing "the way of the righteous" of Psalm 1 may be the right thing to do, but the prayer of Psalm 25 shows that the right way can be fraught with perils of its own, perils that can be withstood when one puts his or her trust and reliance in God. The picture is of a pilgrim who pauses in his journey because of the uncertainty and obstacles in his way, yet who also cries out to God for his guidance to keep going. "Psalm 1 is a signpost which directs the wise to the choice of the right road; Psalm 25 is a companion for use along the way."  

Psalm 25 also shares three basic similarities with Psalm 86. Both include petitions for God's help in the midst of trouble; both emphasize the need for God's instruction and both contain statements of confidence in God's character. More specifically, their thematic parallels can be listed as follows:

- of David/לְּדָוִּד (25:1; 86:1)
- desire to be taught God's ways/יֹורֶנוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ יִּבְּחָר (25:12; cf. 25:4, 5, 9); וְּהֹורֵנִּי יְּהוָה דַרְּךֶ (86:11)
- numerous petitions for God to help "me"/15 imperatives in Psalm 25 (vv. 2-7, 11, 16-22); 14 imperatives in Psalm 86 (vv. 1-4, 6-7, 11, 16-17)
- complaint about enemies/רָאָה אַוְָיָם לְרִבְּרֹב (25:19); רָאָה אַוְָיָם לְרִבְּרֹב (86:14)
- petition that enemies be put to shame/יֵבֹשׁוּ הַבֹּגְדִים (25:3); וְּיֵבֹשׁוּ שֹנְּאַי וְּיֵבֹשׁוּ (86:17)
- re-affirmation: "you are my God"/אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי (25:5; 86:2)
- re-affirmation: "in you I trust"/בְּךָ בָטַחְּתִּי (25:2); הַבֹוטֵח (86:2)
- re-affirmation of the total dependence ("all day") of the speaker on God: קִוִּּיתִּי כָל־הַיֹומָה (25:5c); אֶקְּרָא כָל־הַיֹומָה (86:3b)
- request for God's forgiveness/וְּסָלַחְּתָ לַעֲוֹנִּי (25:11); statement that God is forgiving/כִּי־אַתָה אֲדֹנָי טֹוב וְּסַלָח (86:5)

37 Craigie, Psalms 1-50, 222.
This last parallel is particularly interesting because of the mutual reference to God's radical self-disclosure in Exodus 34:6: "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." Although a well-known verse, it appears to be clearly referenced only four other times in the canonical Psalter (103:8; 111:4; 116:5; 145:8). Thus, Psalm 86 clearly appears to reiterate some of the dominant themes of Psalm 25.38

Yet for all their similarities, their differences can be equally instructive. Perhaps the most noticeable difference is the way each speaker describes himself. Although they have certain things in common—both are עָנִּי (25:16, 18; 86:1)—the poet of Psalm 25 is much more explicit about his own rebellion and sin against God. "Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD" (Psalm 25:7); "For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great" (Psalm 25:11); "Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins" (Psalm 25:18)." It is therefore fitting for the psalmist to ask God to סלח ("forgive") in v. 11 because he has plainly the reasons why he requires forgiveness. Noticeably, the author of Psalm 86:5 also uses the uncommon (for the Psalms) verb סלח—the only other occurrence of this verb is in Psalm 103:339—implying that he, too, might require forgiveness. On the other hand, given that he uses the verb in his

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38 By "reiterate," I mean only in the sense that it comes later in the Psalter, not necessarily that it comes later historically.

39 It does occur in its nominal form (סְלִיחָה) in Psalm 130:4.
paraphrase of Exodus 34:6, it is also possible that he is simply associating this term with
the character of the Pentateuchal God of Israel; the God of his fathers is a God of
forgiveness. (Indeed, of the forty-six verses in which סלח is used in the OT, twenty are
found in Exodus-Deuteronomy.) At the very least, we can conclude that the psalmist’s
care over his personal sin is not as prominent in Psalm 86 as it is in Psalm 25.

This basic difference in the stance of the psalmist before God can also be seen by
observing how the two authors differ in their use of the כִּי-conjunction. As observed in
chapter 4, the role of the כִּי-conjunction in Psalm 86 has great bearing on the psalm’s
interpretation. There it was pointed out that כִּי often introduces the reason why the
psalmist believes his petition should be answered. In Psalm 86, it is used eight times with
this causal function⁴⁰ and in Psalm 25, five times. (Including Psalm 25:11 where לְּמַעַן is
used as a synonym of כִּי brings the total number of causal clauses up to six.)

Psalm 25:5 Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day
long.

Psalm 25:6 Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.

Psalm 25:11 For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

Psalm 25:15 My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.

Psalm 25:16 Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.

Psalm 25:20 Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

Psalm 25:21 May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.

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⁴⁰ See ch. 4, Table 4.2.
It is important to note the natural break in reasoning between Psalm 25:15 and Psalm 25:16. Where the first part of the psalm appeals to God on the basis of God's character, after v. 16 the author shifts the attention to his own position and actions: "for I am lonely and afflicted"; "for I take refuge in you"; "because my hope is in you." This is the exact opposite of the order taken by Psalm 86 which begins with "for I am afflicted and needy" (v. 1) and "for to you I cry all day long." (v. 3) and then shifts to focusing primarily on God's character: "for your חֶסֶד towards me is great" (v. 13); "but you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God…" (v. 15); and "for you, O Lord, have helped and comforted me" (v. 17). Furthermore, the order of Psalm 25 seems fitting. Before staking his claim on God's mercy and grace, the psalmist first establishes God's stated intention to show mercy and grace. Towards the end of the psalm, Psalm 86 appears wholeheartedly to adopt this attitude as well, but we catch only a glimpse of it in the first section of petitions (cf. v. 5).

The two psalms also differ as to the wider community which they reference. Psalm 25 ends with a rousing petition for God's chosen nation, Israel (25:22). Psalm 86 speaks of all the nations that God has made (כָּל־גוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשִיתָ) coming to worship him and glorify his name (86:9). Also Psalm 25:10 proclaims that God is חֶסֶד and אֱמֶת to all who keep the demands of his covenant (לְנֹצְּרֵי בְּרִּיתוֹ וְּעֵדֹתָיו). Psalm 86:15 does not specify to whom God is חֶסֶד and אֱמֶת, only that he is. Psalm 86 is therefore more universal both in its scope and vision of the recipients of God's blessing.

In our comparison of Psalm 25 and Psalm 86, we noted several important points. First, Psalm 25 shares a unique relationship with Psalm 1 as the real-life account of one who follows the guidance of the latter. Second, the need for forgiveness of personal sins
is more prominent in Psalm 25 than in Psalm 86. As such, the David of Psalm 25 appears more humble and penitent than the David of Psalm 86. Third, the causal clauses (i.e., the motives for God to act) appear in reverse order in the two psalms. This would seem to imply that for the author of Psalm 25, the character of God is his first concern in thinking about whether or not he will be delivered from his distress with consideration of his own pitiable state coming second. This is in contrast to Psalm 86 which appeals first to the author's own sad condition and second, to the gracious character of God. Fourth, Psalm 25 ends with its focus on the redemption of Israel; Psalm 86 has a wider focus on the worship brought by the nations.

**Psalm 116**

Unlike Psalms 25 and 86, Psalm 116 is not a psalm of David, nor is it the lament of an individual. Rather, it is an individual song of thanksgiving with no authorial attribution—a part of the *hallel* psalms (Psalms 113-118), in which the psalmist gives thanks for God's answer to his prayer for deliverance: "I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy" (v. 1). In terms of its genre, it is exactly the kind of psalm that should follow an individual's lament—the psalmist asks for God's help; God answers; in response, the psalmist sings a song of thanks. In this regard, Leslie Allen speculates that liturgically, Psalm 116 may have been composed for individuals to use when they wanted to bring a thank offering before the public assembly as a testimony of answered prayer. Commentators also point out that its compositional structure is

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unorthodox. Indeed, Kraus goes so far as to call it "disorderly."\textsuperscript{43} Because it does not follow the traditional form of a song of thanksgiving,\textsuperscript{44} some scholars have considered treating it as two psalms—separating the composition between vv. 1-9 and vv. 10-19—as does the LXX and Jerome.\textsuperscript{45}

Possibly one of the most noteworthy structural features of Psalm 116 is the repeated references to the past crisis. In fact, Allen uses this repetition as an organizing principle in his division of the psalm. Specifically, Allen sees three sections—vv. 1-7, 8-14, and 15-19—each of which vividly recalls and even re-voices the former lament (vv. 3-4, 10-11, 16b, respectively),\textsuperscript{46} thus serving to heighten the feeling of thankfulness. This radical transformation from lament to praise is linguistically illustrated, for example, in the use of the verb "call" (קרא) throughout the psalm. Initially קָרָ֑א is used to report the psalmist's lament (v. 4) but because of God's delivering intervention, the psalmist can then use the same verb to shout out his vow of gratitude to the Lord (vv. 13, 17).\textsuperscript{47}

On the surface, Psalm 116 might not seem like the most likely candidate to share a strong relationship with Psalm 86 given their differences in author designation and especially in genre. But upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the two psalms bear many unmistakable lexical and thematic connections. The shared lexemes alone can be listed as follows:

\textsuperscript{43} Kraus, \textit{Psalms}, 384; also McCann, \textit{NIB} 4:1147.

\textsuperscript{44} For an example of a traditional song of thanksgiving, see Psalm 30.


\textsuperscript{46} Allen, \textit{Psalms 101-150}, 112; also McCann, \textit{NIB} 4:1147.

\textsuperscript{47} Kraus, \textit{Psalms}, 389.
From this table, we can discern several of the themes that the two psalms share. Both psalms affirm God's character as gracious and merciful (116:5; 86:15, 5). Both psalms deal with the problem of enemies, especially as personified by death (116:3, 8; 86:13). In both psalms—and only in these two psalms—the speaker claims to be the servant of God and the son of his maidservant (116:16; 86:16).  

Each one of these points of connections is highly notable for its indication of shared complexity, particularly the last parallel. Together, they suggest that the relationship between the two psalms is neither random nor coincidental. Yet, an even more fascinating aspect of the lexical relationship between Psalms 86 and 116 is the interplay between their shared verbs.  

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48 For uses of this phrase in other Ancient Near Eastern texts, see Fensham, “Son of a Handmaid,” 312-21. 

49 See the following chart of their shared verbs:
very imperatives of Psalm 86 and then either turn them into the now completed actions of
God or into reflections on the psalmist’s earlier prayer. For example, Psalm 86:1 prays,
"Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me"; Psalm 116:2 recounts, "Because he has
inclined his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live" (ital. mine).

Moreover, Psalm 86:1 complains to God, "for I am afflicted and needy"; Ps 116:10
remembers, "I believed when I said, "I am greatly afflicted."

Where Psalm 86:2 asks God to "preserve my soul… save your servant who trusts in you,"
Ps 116:6 declares, "The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought law, and he saved me."

Psalm 86:3b implores the Lord saying, "for to you I call all day long"; Ps 116:4 recalls,
"Then I called on the name of the Lord, "O Lord, save me!"

In addition, Ps 86:3a petitions God, "Be gracious to me, O Lord"; Ps 116:5 declares,
"Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yes, our God is compassionate."
Finally, Ps 86:16 asks for God to turn and have mercy because the psalmist is "your servant… the son of your maidservant"; Ps 116:16 reaffirms this statement as if it has now been proven beyond doubt, "O Lord, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains." (Notice especially the double repetition of the phrase אֲנִי-עַבְּדֶךָ.)

On the basis of the above evidence, we can conclude that Psalm 116 does indeed represent a recapitulation of the petitions of Psalm 86, now graciously answered.

Having discussed what the two psalms have in common, we should briefly return to the differences between Psalm 86 and 116. For all of their similarities, the psalms diverge rather dramatically in the last part of Psalm 116 where the poet takes inventory of all that he will do to fulfill his vow of praise to the Lord. This is such a dominant theme in the last part of the psalm that the author states his pledge in v. 14 and then again in v. 18: "I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people." To do so, he will "lift up the cup of salvation," (v. 13) "sacrifice a thank offering," (v. 17) and "call on the name of the Lord" (vv. 13b, 17b). All this he will do in the public assembly, that is, "in the courts of the house of the Lord—in your midst, O Jerusalem" (v. 19). The fact that Psalm 86 never reaches this kind of climax (although it certainly has its own peaks of praise) is further demonstration that Psalm 116, logically and sequentially, goes beyond the place where Psalm 86 ends, thereby carrying on the story that Psalm 86 began.
Just how confidently can we claim that Psalm 116 is intended, at least in part, to praise God for his answers to the prayer of Psalm 86? Do the data actually support the assertion of such a direct connection? To answer this question, let us review the evidence according to the three tests discussed previously, that is, the tests of intentionality, contextual similarity, and perspicuity. First, are the shared terms sufficiently unique and the literary connections sufficiently complex to demonstrate intentionality? In this regard, the strongest example of uniqueness is found in the shared phrase, "son of your maidservant," found only in these two places in the Psalter, and indeed, the entire Old Testament. Furthermore, compelling evidence of shared complexity is found in the repeated use of the imperatives and other present-tense situation descriptors of Psalm 86 as indicatives in Psalm 116 or as reflections on past turmoil. In other words, the vocabulary of the present in Psalm 86 literally becomes the vocabulary of the past in Psalm 116.

Second, do the lexemes that Psalms 86 and 116 share occur within a similar context? One would have to answer no if similarity, in this case, were to imply the same genre. However, if the contention is that one psalm serves to answer the other, then one would have to say yes. An individual psalm of thanksgiving (Psalm 116) is exactly the genre of psalm that one would expect in response to the granting of the petitions of an individual lament (Psalm 86). Furthermore, the poet of Psalm 116 shows that his situation has progressed beyond the intense personal disorder of Psalm 86 by vowing repeatedly to thank the Lord before all the people even though he knows that he is unable to ever "repay the Lord for all his goodness to me" (v. 12). The complementarity of the two psalms' genres is, then, further evidence of their complementarity in general.
Third, are these literary connections basically tenuous and difficult to discern or are they fairly obvious? In other words, has the test of perspicuity been met? Although this question is somewhat subjective in nature—perhaps the most subjective of the three—I believe that it should be answered in the affirmative. The number of shared lexemes and/or lexical phrases is high; there are at least eleven. The nature of the lexemes that are shared is unique, especially the phrase, "son of your maidservant." The way in which they are shared, particularly the interplay of the verbs used in both psalms, is complex; that is to say, such interplay is not easily accomplished by coincidence. All of these factors combine to demonstrate clearly the author's intention to draw an obvious and meaningful connection between the two psalms. Specifically, Psalm 116 is intended to reflect back on the psalmist's encounter with God in Psalm 86 and reveal its outcome: God's hand is strong and his character faithful to deliver his poor and needy servant.

Psalm 72

The third psalm we will consider for its similarity to Psalm 86 is Psalm 72, a royal psalm par excellence. Scholars debate whether the superscription לִּשְּׁלֹמֹה should be translated as "(A Psalm) Of Solomon," implying perhaps that it is written by Solomon,\(^{50}\) or "For Solomon," implying that the author is actually David, his father.\(^{51}\) Whichever the case may be, the prayer of Psalm 72 is clearly for a Davidic king and one whose authority is ultimately rooted in God's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7. Echoes of the blessings

\(^{50}\) See NIV, NRSV, NASB, NKJV.

\(^{51}\) The Syriac heading reads, "A Psalm of David, when he had made Solomon king." Another version of the Midrash Tehillim also says, "David said of Solomon" (Padua edition; Warsaw, 1865); n.b. further discussions on this topic by Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 516; McCann, *NIB* 4:963. The LXX is somewhat ambiguous with its translation, εἰς Σαλωμων.
and everlasting nature of this king's reign and God's covenant with him appear in Psalm 72:5, 7, and 17a. Equally central to the psalm, however, is the responsibility of the king to rule with God's justice (מִּשְׁפָּט) and righteousness (צְדָקָה). The primacy of this responsibility is further emphasized by the way in which these two terms are used chiastically in vv. 1-2.

A אֱלֹהִים מִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לְּמֶלֶךְ תֵן
B בְּצֶדֶק וְּצִּדְּקָתְּךָ לְּבֶן־מֶלֶךְ
B' בְּמִּשְׁפָּט וְעַנִּיֶיךָ
A' לְצֶדֶקֶךָ בְּצֶדֶקֶךָ

The ruler of Psalm 72 is an unmistakable ideal. He perfectly carries out his responsibilities to the poor and needy (vv. 1-4, 7, 12-14) and is internationally lauded as a result (vv. 8-11, 15, 17). Yet none of the things he achieves are ultimately by his own doing, nor to his own credit. Rather, his reign is as a vassal king whose ability to uphold justice and maintain righteousness derives from the king and Lord of all (cf. v.1 – "Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness"; ital. mine). Thus McCann writes, "what Psalm 72 ultimately prays for is the enactment of God's reign and God's will for the world." Moreover, the adulation that the Davidic king receives is also merely derivative of the praise that rightly belongs to Yahweh.

52 McCann, NIB 4:963; ital. original. See also Mays's comment: "Saving justice for the helpless is the definitive mark of the reign of God, the sign of the one who represents the Lord of all the world. Read Psalm 82"; Psalms, 237. The notion that the king should be the guardian of מִשְׁפָּט and צְדָקָה, or qîttum and mîšarum as they are called in other ANE documents, is also commonly found in other non-Israelite records that speak about the king's mandate. See, for example, the concluding line of the prologue to the Code of Hammurabi: "When Marduk sent me to rule over men, to give the protection of right to the land, I did right and righteousness in..., and brought about the well-being of the oppressed." Available from: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp. Similar examples can also be found in the prologues to the Laws of Ur-Nammu and Lipit-Ishtar.
which is why the psalm closes with a benedictory blessing directed not to the king, but to God (vv. 18-19).\footnote{Psalm 72:20 ("This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse") is not usually considered a part of the doxology or even a part of the body of the psalm. Instead, it appears to be a postscript that closes off Books I-II, the two books that are dominated by Davidic psalms. For a fuller discussion of its function as a postscript, see Wilson, "Seams," 88-89.}

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
who alone does marvelous deeds.
Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and Amen!

This understanding of Psalm 72 is especially helpful to keep in mind when thinking about the connections between it and Psalm 86. Together, the two psalms share three themes that are communicated through four word groups – עָנִּי אֶבְּיוֹן (72:4, 12; 86:1); חוה כָּל־גוֹיִּם (72:11; 86:9); כְּבוֹד/שֵׁם כבד (72:19; 86:9, 12); עֹשֵה נִפְּלָאוֹת לְּבַד (72:18; 86:10).

Significantly, each of these connections directly corresponds to the main themes of Psalm 72. First, Psalm 72 prays that the righteous king, following God, will bring about justice for the "afflicted and needy"; the speaker in Psalm 86 (David, by attribution) refers to himself as "afflicted and needy." This is the theme of the King's responsibilities.

Second, both psalms speak of the day when all the nations will come to worship the King; this is the theme of his international adulation. Third and last, the psalms are connected in their mutual affirmation that it is God alone who is the worker of wonders, and that his name is/will be made glorious. This is the theme of the benedictory praise God deserves.

Let us investigate further these last two points of commonality. The benedictory praise of Psalm 72:18-19 does more than simply close this psalm. It also serves as a book-ending doxology. The presence of a doxology at the end of each of the five books
of the Psalms has been observed by many over the years. An examination of these five statements of praise next to each other quickly shows the elements that all five share.

Of these five, Psalm 72:18-19 clearly stands out as the most elaborate and most exuberant in its doxological language. This should not this come as a surprise when one considers its placement at the end of Books I-II. According to Wilson, Psalms 2-72 tell the story of Israel’s belief that God will bless them through the Davidic king, on the one hand, and obliterate all of their enemies, on the other. Moreover, Psalm 72 symbolizes the very apex of that confidence. What more appropriate place for the psalmist to "lose himself," so to speak, in his praise to Israel's God? This is not to imply that the additions made by the psalmist to the standard elements of the book-ending doxologies were not carefully selected. On the contrary, the phrases that are unique to the doxology of Book II are particularly worth noticing. Thus, in his commentary on Psalm 72, Wilson writes, "In

54 Zenger sees a chiastic structure in the doxologies that conclude Books I-IV, pairing Pss 41:14 with 106:48 and Pss 72:18-19 with 89:53. He uses this as evidence to validate the suggestion that Books I-IV "already existed as a complete compositional entity before the fifth book was added." Erich Zenger, "The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107-145" JSOT 80 (1998): 77-102; quote from p. 81. This claim is not in competition with my own observation about the exuberance and breadth of the doxology of Ps 72:18-19.

55 Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 233-34.

56 It is also possible—perhaps even likely—that these doxologies were added by the final redactors of the Psalter and not the original authors themselves, but for simplicity's sake I will refer to the authors of the various doxologies as the psalmist.
addition to the more basic elements shared by all the concluding doxologies, verse 20 [sic] includes phrases blessing Yahweh for his "marvelous deeds" (72:18b) and directs blessing to Yahweh's "glorious name" (72:19a).”

The significance of these particular phrases for connecting Psalm 72 and Psalm 86 is profound, for one cannot help but notice that the two phrases that are unique to this doxology are the exact two phrases that Psalm 72:18-19 shares with Psalm 86:9-10, which also states "they [the nations] will bring glory to your name" (86:9b) and "For you are great and do marvelous deeds" (86:10a). That Psalm 86 was crafted in a way to direct the audience very pointedly back to Psalm 72 is plain.

Is the intention of Psalm 86, however, merely to reiterate and confirm the statements of Psalm 72? Indeed, not. Rather, a closer look at the individual contexts of these shared statements reveals some marked differences by which Psalm 86 is able to offer commentary upon the earlier psalm. In Psalm 72, the focus is predictably on Israel's king and on "the Lord God, the God of Israel" (72:18a; ital. mine). Especially in Books I-II, it is and always has been for Israel that God performs marvelous deeds. Nevertheless, Psalm 72 also contains two very important mentions of "the nations," demonstrating a widening of the psalmist's vision. The first is the explicit reiteration of God's promise in Genesis 12:3b to Abram, now repeated in Psalm 72:17b: "All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed." The psalmist here is reflecting on the most ancient underpinnings of the Abrahamic faith, that is, that Abram's offspring will be a people chosen by God not simply for their own blessing but for the

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57 One could argue that v. 19b, "and may the whole earth be filled with his glory," should be considered a third unique phrase but here I am following Wilson's identification of only two; Gerald H. Wilson, Psalms: From Biblical Text—To Contemporary Life, Vol. 1 (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 990-91.
blessing of "all peoples on earth" through them. Additionally, there is the declaration of Psalm 72:11b, which Psalm 86:9 echoes, "All kings will worship (יהוה) him and all nations will serve him." Indeed, this entire section of Psalm 72 envisions the other kings of the world flocking to serve Israel's King/king.

Picking up on this vision of Psalm 72, Psalm 86 then takes this theme of the universal submission of the nations and strips away every shred of nationalistic flavor, thereby enhancing and intensifying the picture. Significantly, Psalm 86 contains no mention of God as the God of Israel; rather, it portrays a much more direct relationship between God and the nations. They are not foreign nations, but "the nations you have made" (86:9a, ital. mine). In Psalm 86, the nations are pictured not as mere passive bystanders appreciating his glory, but they themselves will be the agents who bring glory (וּוִּיכַבְּד) to God's name (86:9b). The marvelous deeds that he alone performs are the reason (denoted by the כִּי conjunction) they come to worship him (86:10). Perhaps most significantly, Psalm 86 clearly takes away the "middle man" of Psalm 72. In Psalm 72, it is the typological Davidic king who receives the acclaim of the nations; in Psalm 86, the object of the nations' worship is unmistakably God himself.

To summarize, Psalm 86 appears to play off of the central themes of Psalm 72 in three important ways. First, Psalm 72 instructs the reader about the responsibilities of the righteous Davidic king, as God's vassal, to the poor and those in need. In Psalm 86, on the other hand, the psalmist, named as David, is himself the poor and needy one who requires someone to bring about justice for him. In this way, Psalm 86 very decidedly

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58 The YQTL verb is translated as simple future by virtually all English translations (NRSV, NASB, NIV, ESV, NKJV, RSV); I have treated it the same way.
shifts the focus away from the historical Davidic figure, in the person of Solomon, to the ultimate King, God himself.

Second, in Psalm 72, the nations will be blessed through Israel. All kings and all nations will bow down and serve God's Davidic king. In Psalm 86, the nations will throng directly to God, shifting the spotlight away from Israel and David as the instruments of God's blessing and towards the blessed nations themselves.

Third, Psalm 86 reiterates the key phrases of the benedictory praise with which Psalm 72 concludes, but in reverse fashion.

In Psalm 72, God alone does marvelous deeds (A); blessed be his glorious name (B). In Psalm 86, the nations will bring glory to his name (B'), for he does marvelous deeds (A'), and he alone is God. The way in which Psalm 86 uses and reverses the most unique phrases of the benediction of Psalm 72:18-19 is remarkable indeed. As a stylistic and linguistic link, it serves, at the very least, to tie Psalm 86 back to the closing doxology of Book II, and quite possibly to the book as a whole. Indeed, Mays notes the significance of Psalm 72:18-19 for the whole book, identifying it as the "liturgical marker" that Book II has come to an end.\(^59\)

Also notable is the fact that Psalm 72:18-19 is followed by the weighty pronouncement, "This concludes (כנל) the prayers of David (כנתן לעשה נפלאות קבלה) son of Jesse" (Psalm 72:20). Scholars have debated how best to translate כלה in this context—some

\(^{59}\) Mays, Psalms, 237.
suggest "perfect" rather than "conclude"—given that Psalm 72 is obviously not the last psalm of David to appear in the Psalter. In light of that fact, it seems highly likely that the purpose of this statement, at least in part, is to draw some sort of demarcation between the first two books of the psalms, composed largely of Davidic psalms, and the last three. If this is indeed the case, the placement of Psalm 86, a תְּפִּלָה לְּדָוִּד, in Book III becomes all the more striking. As the only psalm of David to appear with this particular superscription outside of Books I-II (and one of only two psalms in the canonical Psalter to use it at all; the other is Psalm 17:1), we can tentatively conclude that Psalm 86 is meant to be tied to the רַבִּים תְּפִּליַּת of Psalm 72:20 and, thereby, to the "perfected" Davidic psalm collections.

How do these three observations help us to understand better the relationship between the central themes of Psalm 72 and Psalm 86? First, as a reflection back on Psalm 72 and Books I-II, in general, Psalm 86 helps to link Book III back to the earlier Davidic collections. Second, like Books I-II in general, Psalm 72 focuses in large part

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60 Cole suggests that the phrase רַבִּים תְּפִּלָה לְּדָוִּד should be read as "the prophecies of David are perfected" meaning that "the previous description [e.g., Psalm 72] represented the perfection, culmination, and fullest outworking of the promise to David"; Cole, Shape and Message, 138.

61 As a genre-designation in a superscription, תפלה also occurs in Ps 90:1 ("A prayer of Moses") and 102:1 ("A prayer of an afflicted man").

62 Although Psalm 86 is the only psalm explicitly attributed to David to use the superscription in Books III-V, the term תְּפִלָה לְּדָוִּד is used in the superscriptions of three other psalms: 1) Psalm 90 is preceded by the title, תְּפִלָּתָו אֶלֶם אֵיתָנ ("A prayer of Moses the man of God"); 2) Psalm 102:1 opens with תְּפִלָּה אֶלֶם אֶלֶם ("A prayer of the afflicted"); 3) Psalm 142:1 states תְּפִלָּתָו אֶלֶם אֵיתָנ ("A maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A prayer."). Furthermore, the term appears in the opening verse of Psalm 143, called תְּפִלָּתָו אֶלֶם אֵיתָנ ("A prayer of David"), when the psalmist cries, תְּפִלָּתָו אֶלֶם אֵיתָנ ("O Lord, hear my prayer!") In fact, the only other Davidic psalm anywhere in the Psalter to be described as תְּפִלָּתָו אֶלֶם אֵיתָנ is Psalm 17, demonstrating the rarity of this particular superscription.

63 In his article, "The David of the Psalms, James L. Mays provides strong evidence for the fact that לְדָוִּד as a superscription was used by the editors primarily as a canonical ordering device rather than a historical descriptor. Specifically, he cites the fact that "of David" appears in the titles of fourteen psalms in the Septuagint which do not have it in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, "when we notice that the
on the "present" expression of the Davidic king (e.g., Solomon) where Psalm 86 and Book III, in general, begin to shift their focus to the future as it becomes more apparent that Solomon and other historical kings in David's line are not able to fulfill the ideal of Psalm 72. Their failures will eventually result in the exile, which, according to Wilson, is exactly the historical backdrop against which the psalms of Book III should be read.⁶⁴

Stated another way, the humanly-unattainable ideal of Psalm 72 sets the reader up for the catastrophic unraveling, brought about by the exile, of all that symbolized Israel's security and identity. It is into this chaos that Psalm 86 is inserted. Here is the return of David's voice, this time reflecting on and re-casting the ideal vision of Davidic kingship set forth in Psalm 72. By tapping into the themes of Psalm 72 and lifting the eyes of the audience from the earthly to the ultimate, from the nationalistic to the universal, Psalm 86 also has something to say about the true nature of kingship, and there is no one better to say it then Israel's archetypal king—king David.

**David as Servant and King**

To better understand the theological implications of the attribution of Psalm 86 to David we must delve further into the issue of David's identity in this psalm. Is this the voice of David, king of Israel, or merely the voice of a man like any other man, awaiting God's deliverance from suffering?

Opinions about the various voices of David as they appear in the Psalter abound. After surveying all of the psalms of David, Rolf Rendtorff concludes that there are

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⁶⁴ Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 235.
basically three different images of David that appear in the Psalms and, moreover, that these three images correspond to the first three psalms. In keeping with Psalm 1, David is sometimes "the exemplary righteous king who follows the divine Torah." He rules in righteousness and prospers as a result. At other times, he speaks as the David of Psalm 2, "the 'messianic' king whom God has enthroned on Zion." Finally, and most frequently, he is the "powerless fugitive" of Psalm 3 "who in a lamentation asks for God's succor in his need, and who trusts in God's help."65 Rendtorff sees these three voices as distinct and non-overlapping. Thus, when David speaks as the fugitive, as Rendtorff assumes is the case in Psalm 86, his royal status is not at all in view; if it were, he could not play the role of the everyman with whom anyone can identify. Rendtorff concludes that in actuality, the David of the psalms is rarely represented as the king. Furthermore, when his royal office is in view, his name is used most frequently simply to represent the Davidic dynasty and the ruler's function as the servant and helper of his people, not to give particular authority to the statements being made.66

A more maximalist view is espoused by Esther Menn. Rather than drawing sharp distinctions between the different voices of David contained within the Psalter, Menn places the emphasis on David's ability to speak as one man with multiple roles, thus uniquely suiting him "to represent the multiplicity of the psalms, in all of their senses and

65 Rolf Rendtorff, "The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms" in The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception (ed. P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller, Jr.; VTSup 99; Boston: Brill, 2005), 53-64; see p. 63. Childs affirms this view in large part. He sees the Davidic superscriptions as adding the dimension of historicity—not authority—to psalms which originally had a more cultic function. He writes, "... The incidents chosen as evoking the psalms were not royal occasions or representative of the kingly office. Rather, David is pictured simply as a man ... who displays all the strengths and weaknesses of all human beings"; Childs, Introduction, 521. Note Mays's contrary opinion that the Davidic superscriptions were used more for canonical ordering purposes than as historical descriptors; Mays, "David of the Psalms," 152-53.

66 Rendtorff, "Psalms of David," 64.
in all of their employments within religious communities."\(^67\) Though she does discuss the three different "personalities" of David that emerge from the psalms—that is, "as royal sponsor of corporate liturgy, as private man of prayer and praise, and as inspired author of revelatory literature"\(^68\)—she says that the power of his voice lies precisely in the fact that he is still one unified man: one David, not three.

Konrad Schaefer espouses a position yet another step removed from Rendtorff. He believes that David's kingly and priestly functions are, in fact, the key to understanding the purpose of the Davidic superscriptions. For when David's private prayers are transferred to the arena of the biblical canon, he prays no longer as a private man but as the royal representative of Israel, befitting his role as presider over the public liturgy.\(^69\) His role as king is, therefore, inextricably tied to his role as canonical poet and petitioner.

Perhaps one of the most interesting insights into this question of David's voice in the psalms, particularly in Psalm 86, is offered by John Stek. For Stek, David's labeling of himself as "your servant" (ךְָּעַבְּד) three times in this psalm (vv. 2, 4, 16) is of paramount importance because this is a term that specifically connotes royal status.\(^70\) Can Stek's contention be substantiated? A search of the word פְּדוּז as used in the Davidic psalms to

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\(^68\) Menn, "Sweet Singer," 61.

\(^69\) Schaefer, Psalms, 350.

\(^70\) Stek, "Psalms," 884. Note also the statement by Goldingay on Psalm 86: "While the psalm could no doubt be used by the ordinary individual, the stress on the servant-master relationship would make it especially open to use by a person such as a governor or a king (singular "servant of Yhwh" in the OT usually denotes such a person)…"; Psalms, Vol. 2, 620.
describe the speaker yields some interesting results. In addition to its three occurrences in Psalm 86, the word appears as a reference to the author, David, specifically, a total of eleven times in eight different psalms. Four of those instances (Psalm 19:11, 13; Psalm 34:22; Psalm 69:36) occur in the context of a wisdom saying, as in the example of Psalm 19:11, "By them [your ordinances] is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." The other seven occurrences, representing six different psalms (Pss 27:9; 31:16; 35:27; 69:17; 109:28; 143:2, 12), are used in the context of beseeching God to help "your servant." In each case, David's position as God's servant is used as the basis for the appeal to God for his favor, most frequently in the form of deliverance from harm. Not surprisingly, these six psalms also share some commonalities with one another. Most notably, they are all individual psalms of lament and they all have lexical ties to Psalm 86, particularly Psalms 35 and 109 (see Table 5.1). As for answering the question of whether 풀 in these verses is strongly correlated to the notion of kingship, however, these data are not altogether conclusive. The oppressive presence of the enemy is certainly in the foreground of all six psalms, with Psalms 27 and 35 both containing clear battlefield allusions (and possibly Psalm 31; cf. v. 21). Yet these facts alone are not

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71 Ps 19:13: "Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression"; Ps 34:22: "The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him"; and Ps 69:36: "And the children of his servants will inherit it [Zion], and those who love his name will dwell there."

72 Ps 27:9 "Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior"; Ps 31:16 "Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love"; Ps 35:27 "May those who delight in my vindication shout for joy and gladness; may they always say, The LORD be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant"; Ps 69:17 "Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble"; Ps 109:28 "They may curse, but you will bless; when they attack they will be put to shame, but your servant will rejoice"; Ps 143:2 "Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you"; Ps 143:12 "In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant."
enough to draw a decisive connection between servanthood and kingship in the Davidic psalms.

More illuminating to our question is a search for all of the instances in the psalms where "David" and "servant" (עבד…דוד) are used together. Including the superscriptions, this combination is found in six psalms altogether: Psalm 18:1 (superscription); Psalm 36:1 (superscription); Psalm 78:70; Psalm 89:3, 20 (cf. vv. 39, 50); Psalm 132:10; and Psalm 144:10. With the exception of the superscription of Psalm 36, each of these psalms does indeed espouse a strong kingship theme. In Psalm 18, for example, "David" and "servant" used together in the very opening of the psalm: "For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD. He sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul." Historically speaking, the editors have placed this psalm in the crucial period of David's rise to public recognition as the king of Israel. This is fitting, as it is clear from the latter verses of the psalm that the author is thinking very much of his rightful claim to the kingly office to which he had presumably already been anointed by the prophet Samuel (cf. 1 Sam 16).

You have delivered me from the attacks of the people;
    you have made me the head of nations;
person I did not know are subject to me.
As soon as they hear me, they obey me;
    foreigners cringe before me.
They all lose heart;
    they come trembling from their strongholds.

The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior!
He is the God who avenges me,
    who subdues nations under me,
    who saves me from my enemies.
You exalted me above my foes;
    from violent men you rescued me.

Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O LORD;
    I will sing praises to your name.
He gives his king great victories;  
    he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever.  
(Psalm 18:43-50)

Psalms 78 and 89, both found in Book III, also bear clear reference to David's royal status. Psalm 78—a psalm of instruction that exhorts God's people to remember God's manifold acts of mercy in Israel's redemptive history—closes with the reminder that God appointed David as the shepherd of Israel, the one who would care for and lead the people of God. By making these the final verses of this lengthy psalm, the psalmist instructs the hearer that the designation of David as Israel's leader signifies the apex of God's covenant faithfulness.

He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens;  
    from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel  
his inheritance.  
And David shepherded them with integrity of heart;  
    with skillful hands he led them.  
(Psalm 78:70-72)

Although the word "king" is not specifically used in this psalm, the metaphor of a shepherd is certainly more appropriately applied to a king and leader than to Rendtorff's notion of David as a "powerless fugitive," for example. In his notes on Psalm 78:70 and the phrase "his servant," Stek also calls it "an official title marking David as a member of God's royal administration."74

An even stronger connection between servanthood and kingship is made by Psalm 89. Here David is repeatedly referred to as the servant with whom God made a covenant to establish his royal throne forever (cf. 2 Sam 7). There can be no doubt of the fact that the terms "servant" and "king" are used in this psalm almost synonymously.

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant," v. 3  

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73 Stek points out that by placing this psalm next to Psalm 77, the editors of the final Psalter intended to draw a comparison between David and Moses (and Aaron) as shepherds of Israel; "Psalms," 873.

74 Stek, "Psalms," 876.
I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him. v. 20

You have renounced the covenant with your servant and have defiled his crown in the dust. v. 39

Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked, how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations, the taunts with which your enemies have mocked, O Lord, with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one. vv. 50-51

The parallelism in these verses is unambiguous. David, the servant of the Lord, is portrayed as God's chosen (v. 3), anointed (v. 20), crowned (v. 39), covenant-partner. He is also the servant who has been made an international laughingstock (vv. 50-51), hardly a description befitting an everyday citizen.

Finally, we must consider the two occurrences of "David" with "servant"

(עבד…דוד) found in Book V. Psalm 132:10-12 states:

For the sake of David your servant, do not reject your anointed one.
The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke:
"One of your own descendants I will place on your throne—
if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them,
then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever."

Once again the background of this statement is plainly the covenant founded in 2 Samuel 7, and once again, "your servant" (ךָעבד) is used in parallel with "your anointed one" (ךָמְשִיחַ). Similarly, Psalm 144 is also a psalm composed "in the mode of a royal prayer" that bears many resemblances to Psalm 18. Of greatest interest are verses 9-10, which

75 Note, however, Gerald Wilson's observations that the terms "anointed one" (יחַמשי, Ps 132:17) and "crown" (נֵזֶר, Ps 132:18) are also often used of priests. In his opinion, there is some ambiguity as to whether a strong Davidic kingship really is in view in Ps 132. Wilson's hesitation is colored by his strong belief that Books IV-V move sharply away from an emphasis on Davidic kingship to an emphasis on God's kingship. He, therefore, prefers instead to characterize this psalm as one that "ultimately leaves the re-establishment of the broken covenant of kingship a question for future resolution"; "King, Messiah", 397-98.
equate the victory that God gives to kings (מלך) with his deliverance of his servant David.\(^\text{76}\)

I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword.

What do we learn about the nature of David's servanthood as described in these five psalms? First, it is clear that the royal mantle bestowed upon David in the covenant described in 2 Samuel 7 is closely associated with, and even follows from, the fact that David is God's servant. Only a true servant of the Lord like David—in contrast to Saul, whose devotion to himself and his own glory ultimately eclipsed his devotion to his God—could be trusted with the responsibility to rule over and protect God's covenant people. Second, the emphasis in these psalms is universally on God as the primary agent of action; he is the one who chooses the king (Psalm 78:70), who gives the king victory (Psalms 18; 144:10), who rejects or accepts the king (Psalm 132:10), and who renounces or remembers the king (Psalm 89:39, 50). The "king" in these verses, is, in fact, not very kingly at all. Rather, he is portrayed as an inferior vassal whose only basis for appeal to his master is the fact that he is an anointed servant with whom a covenant has previously been made.

Given this close association between the terminology of David as servant and David as king, it is highly likely that Psalm 86, with its three self-references to "your servant" (vv. 2, 4, 16), also has David's kingship in view.\(^\text{77}\) Psalm 86 is, therefore, a prayer that is prayed by the king, and yet, a king whose authority is merely derivative in

\(^{76}\) Stek notes that the use of כָּעַבְּד connects Ps 144:10 with Ps 143:2, 12 (discussed above), a possible explanation for why Ps 143 is traditionally credited to David; "Psalms," 946-47.

\(^{77}\) This view goes against the opinion of Zenger who believes that in this psalm David appears not as the warrior-King but as the suffering servant of Yahweh; Psalmen 51-100, 539.
nature, and thus, subject to change. Ultimately, it is God's sovereignty that is both original and immutable. He is the true Sovereign to whom even kings flee.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined in closer detail the intertextuality of Psalm 86, particularly its relationship to three other psalms—Psalms 25, 116, and 72—with which it shares a number of linguistic and thematic connections. Because of the complexity and perspicuity of these connections in the form of shared phrases and themes, we can safely conclude that all three of these psalms offer some sort of commentary on Psalm 86 and/or vice versa. Furthermore, we must ask whether this commentary is equivalent to theological movement between Psalm 86 and these three psalms.

First, the David of Psalm 25 is in many ways very similar to the David of Psalm 86. Both psalms present a suffering David in need of help and deliverance. In both, the psalmist is in a place of trusting and waiting for future resolution. On the other hand, there are also some differences. In Psalm 25, David is a more penitent figure. His focus on Israel in Psalm 25 also stands in contrast to the nations-focus of Psalm 86. At last, we come to the bottom-line question: do the differences between these two psalms represent theological progression? Although it would be convenient, from the perspective of the canonical approach, to be able to say that a linear relationship exists between the two psalms—either that Psalm 86 is a more "mature" version of Psalm 25 or that Psalm 86 represents a defined point further down the theological trajectory (identified by Wilson, for example) from Psalm 25—there is simply not enough evidence to support such a conclusion. Overall, the similarities between these two psalms outweigh the differences.
Moreover, the differences that are present do not indicate a strong disjunction between the two psalms. For these reasons, it would be unwarranted to interpret their interplay as representing a defined theological leap.

This does not mean that the differences between the two psalms are meaningless, however. The transition to a nations-focus helps to further highlight one of the key themes of Psalm 86. Even though the theme of universal praise in vv. 8-10 is striking all by itself, it stands in even greater relief when compared with the backdrop of the earlier Psalm 25. In addition, the more penitent David of Psalm 25 helps to bring out the boldness of the requests in Psalm 86. This, in turn, highlights the need for a dramatic shift in the psalmist's question-framing motives.

In contrast to the general similarity between Psalms 25 and 86, the relationship between Psalm 86 and Psalm 116 is more obviously one of call and response. Psalm 116 should be seen as the flipside of Psalm 86, providing answers to many of the questions left hanging by Psalm 86. The differences in genre alone—a lament of an individual (Psalm 86) versus a song of thanksgiving (Psalm 116)—point to the nature of the two psalms' relationship. Add to this the complexity of the phrases which the two psalms share as well as the repetition of particular verbs and conversion of those verbs from imperative into indicative form, and the evidence that these two psalms should be read in light of one another becomes decisive. As a response to the petitions of Psalm 86, Psalm 116 calls us to rejoice in the certainty that God is faithful to deliver his poor and needy servant.

Is this progression in keeping with the basic differences between the "earlier Psalter" (Books I-III), with its focus on the sufficiency of the Davidic monarchy, and the
"later Psalter" (Books IV-V), with its focus on the reign of Yahweh himself? In general, yes. In Psalm 116, it is clearly Yahweh who does the saving; God has come to the rescue of his needy servant when no one else could. This is consistent with the general tone of Books IV-V, set by the *Yahweh Malak* psalms (Psalms 93; 95-99). Furthermore, Books IV-V are generally characterized by praise and thanksgiving, which Psalm 116 also exemplifies. Psalm 86 is also grounded well within the arc of Books I-III with its Davidic authorship, genre (i.e., a lament in a series of books full of laments), and typical petitions for help. Framed in terms of theological progression, therefore, the dynamic between these two psalms represents movement from the "trusting and waiting" phase to the "thanking and praising" phase. This movement aligns with the overall theological curve of the canonical Psalter from a building crisis in Books I-III to gradual resolution in Books IV-V.

Finally, Psalm 86 offers some clarification to the kingship theme of Psalm 72. It does so by moving attention away from the historical Davidic king to the ultimate King and away from Israel and David as instruments of blessing for the nations to the blessed nations themselves. In this way, Psalm 86 offers a universalized and more fully realized—which is to say, grounded in a deeper reality—re-reading of certain parts of Psalm 72.

This chapter also looked more closely at the voice of David as he prays Psalm 86. Contrary to the view that David in the psalms represents the suffering everyman or the "powerless fugitive," the psalm's threefold use of the term "your servant" led us to conclude that David speaks in Psalm 86 as the king; moreover, as a king who seems to understand the inferior and derivative nature of his reign. The significance of this should
not be missed. If David is indeed speaking as the servant-king in Psalm 86, then as king, he reflects back on what is required of him in Psalm 72 and says in essence, "I need a king greater than me to save me. I cannot fulfill these requirements on my own." Read in this way, Psalm 86 becomes both an acknowledgement of David's own inability to be the king that Israel ultimately needs and a prayer for God to be that king for his servant, David. It is the vassal calling on the suzerain to make good on his end of the deal to bring out the military muscle the vassal could never hope to possess on his own.

In terms of their canonical-interpretive value, these observations help clarify the significance of the placement of Psalm 86 as it pertains to the unfolding picture of true kingship over the course of the Psalter. Although it has been placed by the editors in the "earlier Psalter" (Books I-III), already Psalm 86 is serving to curb the enthusiasm of Psalm 72's lofty rhetoric. This is perhaps in anticipation of the crisis of identity that is coming in Psalm 89 where the insufficiency of the Davidic monarchy as an infallible source of salvation and security is thrust under the glaring spotlight of the Babylonian exile.

In conclusion, we ask, can the observations made about these three intertextual psalm pairs—Psalms 25 and 86, Psalms 72 and 86, and Psalms 86 and 116—be synthesized into a single panoramic view? Can they be spliced together in an organic way while still preserving the integrity of each pair's unique interplay? The answer to this question lies in their shared themes. Both Psalms 25 and 72 stand in contrast to the way in which Psalm 86 speaks positively about the direct relationship the nations will have to Yahweh. Other than this example, however, the other dominant themes shared by individual psalm pairs are, for the most part, isolated just to that pairing, i.e., the
kingship theme in Psalms 72 and 86; and deliverance in Psalm 116 as an answer to the cries for help of Psalm 86. The evidence, therefore, does not support the idea that simply because Psalm 86 is uniquely linked to each of these three psalms, these three psalms must also share a relationship with one another. To put it in mathematical terms, the transitive property cannot be applied; we cannot contend, for example, that Psalm 116 is an answer to Psalm 86 which is a further development of Psalm 25, thereby linking Psalm 116 and Psalm 25 through Psalm 86.

The fact that this is so reveals something important about the boundaries of the canonical approach. The theological movement between individual psalm pairs (or psalm groupings, as in the case of Psalms 22-2478) may not necessarily lend itself towards being plotted upon a particular Psalter-wide trajectory, as in the case of Psalms 25 and 86; nor should it be made to do so. On the other hand, the further examination of psalm pairs that are clearly linguistically related can help us to understand better the individual psalms and their own distinctive emphases, again as in the example of Psalms 25 and 86. As always, the text must drive the interpretation, and in this case, the interpretive methodology as well. The clear intertextuality of these three psalm pairs, on the one hand, dictates that broad vistas of interpretation be explored and, on the other hand, self-limits the possibilities of other interpretive ways forward. If the canonical approach is to have any value for the study of the Psalter, then both its potential and limitations must be respected.

78 deClaissé-Walford, "Psalms 22, 23, and 24", 139-152.
CHAPTER 6: THE RELATIONSHIP OF PSALM 86 TO BOOK III (PSALMS 73-89)

Introduction

In his 2006 essay surveying the current state of the canonical approach to Psalms studies, Gordon Wenham identifies one of the most pressing and unresolved issues facing the canonical method as this: how to determine the scope of the canonical context in which each psalm is read. In their commentary, for example, Hossfeld and Zenger regularly discuss each psalm as it relates to numerous different contexts—i.e., the psalm's relationship to neighboring psalms, to particular psalms outside of its own book, to psalms by the same author, to particular Old Testament texts with which it shares a unique connection, and to the New Testament in general, not to mention the broader "theologies" to which its message contributes. Mindful of the diachronic nature of the Psalter's formation, the two scholars are also careful to give attention to the meaning of each psalm at the various stages of the shaping of the Psalter. The danger of this kind of approach is that in the process of elucidating and clarifying the psalm's meaning, it may in fact obscure that very meaning by failing to distinguish between the relative importance of the psalm's many interconnections. Stated another way, when every

1 Gordon Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms" in Canon and Biblical Interpretation (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 333-351; see p. 347. The second issue concerns the integration of the psalm's historical setting into the canonical method.

2 This is a favorite term of Zenger's. Consider, for example, his statement about the context of Psalm 86 outside of Book III: "In addition, by its linguistic commonalities with Psalms 102, 119, and 143 as well as its Sinai theology, shared with Psalms 25, 103, 111, 116, and 145, Psalm 86 acquires, beyond its immediate book, a reading context combining Zion, Sinai, pilgrimage-of-the-nations, and Torah theology, and all this in accordance with the genre of Psalm 86 as a messianic prayer"; Hossfeld and Zenger, Psalms 2, 376.
diachronic development and intertextual reading is made significant, it diminishes the significance of them all.

A different, and yet also explicitly canonical, method is adopted by McCann in his (shorter) Psalms commentary. In contrast to Hossfeld and Zenger, he chooses to focus primarily on the psalm as it stands in the present Psalter, restricting himself (at least in his commentary) to the present shape of the Psalter and steering clear, in large part, of some of the "shaping" issues. McCann does regularly address the psalm's NT significance as well, particularly as it pertains to the psalm's theological dimension, though this is done as a secondary step.\(^3\)

As stated in the introductory chapter, one of the primary goals of this study is to propose an exegetical method for the psalms that incorporates a canonical approach. To this point, the investigation of the ability of the text of Psalm 86 to support and even require a canonical reading has focused largely on the psalm's intertextuality. The presence of intentional interplay between Psalm 86 and Psalms 25, 116, and 72 as well as Exodus 34:6 was demonstrated and the significance of these connections introduced. Suggestions were also made about the contributions of these connections to the theological dynamism of the Psalter by helping to add a dimension of movement to the Psalter's larger message.

In this chapter, we focus our sights, in earnest, on the significance of the canonical placement of Psalm 86. In addition to returning to the question of the canonical function of Psalm 86 for the Psalter as a whole, we will also investigate the canonical function of Psalm 86 for and within Book III.

\(^3\) McCann, \textit{NIB} 4:642-643.
Canonical Function of Psalm 86 For Book III

As has been stated previously, one of the most fascinating features of Psalm 86 is that it is the only psalm in Book III to be attributed to David. In light of the way in which the psalms of David dominate Books I-II, this sudden drop-off in Book III and following appears to be rather unexpected. Moreover, David's rapid withdrawal from the spotlight at this point is apparently unique to the canonical Psalter. Both the LXX Psalter and the Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs⁴) present a much more consistent Davidic emphasis throughout when compared to Books III-IV of the Masoretic text. The LXX Psalter, for example, while very similar to the MT with regard to the substance and positioning of the psalms, attributes many more psalms to David than does the canonical Psalter, many of these coming in the fourth book.⁴ Moreover, a majority of these additional attributions are in the Yahweh Malak psalms (e.g., Psalms 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99),⁵ significant because, in Gerald Wilson's estimation, these psalms are located at the seismic center of the canonical Psalter's shift from trust in human, Davidic kingship to trust in Yahweh's kingship.⁶

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⁴ In Book IV of the MT, two of the seventeen psalms are assigned to David as compared to nine in the LXX Psalter.

⁵ Psalms 91, 94, and 104 may also be considered a part of the Yahweh Malak grouping.

⁶ Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 241. Note that this view has been challenged by some who charge that Wilson's interpretation has gone too far in subjugating the significance of the Davidic monarchy for Israel to the kingship of Yahweh and does not sufficiently account for the continued presence of David in Book V. Rather than interpreting the shape of the Psalter primarily in historical terms and viewing David's kingship and Yahweh's kingship as fundamentally at odds, these scholars urge taking more of an eschatological perspective. In so doing, they lay greater stress on the way in which the earthly (Davidic) and heavenly manifestations of God's kingdom cooperate together to communicate a message of hope, and this through a Messiah; Mitchell, Message, 78-82; Howard, "Current Study," 26-27. In some of his later writings, Wilson himself seems to try to address these exact objections when he states that he definitely sees a messianic dimension to the royal psalms and that his understanding of the shape of the Psalter only
The Qumran Psalms scroll, on the other hand, which corresponds most closely to Books IV-V of the canonical Psalter,\(^7\) omits the \textit{Yahweh Malak} psalms completely as well as the psalms located at the seams of Book IV: Psalms 90-92 and Psalms 106-108. As a result, the Qumran psalm collection reads in a dramatically different way than the canonical Books IV-V.

The omission of these important psalms radically changes the response of 11 QPs\(^a\) to the agonized loss of the kingdom expressed in the third book. There can be no shift of focus to the kingship of Yahweh, because the requisite psalms to establish this theme are missing.\(^8\)

When these marked omissions are considered together with the fact that 11 QPs\(^a\) includes eleven non-canonical compositions, many of which are attributed to David,\(^9\) the singularity of the canonical Psalter's \textit{de-emphasis} on David in the latter part of the collection becomes even more striking. The compilers of the LXX Psalter and 11 QPs\(^a\) clearly had a vastly different intent.

If, then, it was so important to the editors of the Psalter to make David into a secondary player once the failure of the Davidic monarchy became apparent, we can deduce that the few psalms of David which \textit{are} included in Books III-IV, psalms like Psalm 86, must have been intentionally placed.\(^10\) Why? What particular role, perhaps helps to promote a messianic reading, not detract from it. This, in fact, is one of the reasons the editors chose to downplay the Davidic references in Books IV-V—to make room for an increasingly messianic focus; Wilson, "King, Messiah", 391-406.

\(^7\) Wilson claims that there is no reason to believe, based on the discoveries at Qumran, that a significantly different arrangement of Books I-III was used by the Qumran community: "Structure of the Psalter," 242, n. 26; see also Gerald H. Wilson, "11QPs a and the Canonical Psalter: Comparison of Editorial Technique and Shaping," \textit{CBQ} 59 (1997): 448-64.

\(^8\) Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 242.

\(^9\) Specifically, the scroll includes the final words of David found in 2 Sam 23, a prose composition about David's writings, two new Davidic psalms (Pss 151A and 151B), and two additional Davidic attributions (Pss 104 and 123); Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 243.

specifically pertaining to the shape and message of the Psalter, would the editors have intended for Psalm 86 to fulfill?

There are a variety of ways to approach the question of the distinctive contributions of Psalm 86 to the overall shape of the Psalter. From a linguistic perspective, Psalm 86 is crafted and placed in such a unique way as to tie Book III to the previous two "David-psalters,"¹¹ that is, Books I-II. Already, the earlier examination of the linguistic connections between Psalms 86 and 72, particularly between Psalm 86:9-10 and Psalm 72:18-19, has demonstrated a strong association between Psalm 86 and the concluding doxology of Book II. In addition, the psalm's rare superscription תְּפִּלָה לְּדָוִּד is strongly reminiscent of the concluding statement of Books I-II: כָלוּ תְּפִּלוֹת דָוִּד בֶן־יִּשָּׁי. One probable purpose of these two remarkable linguistic connections is not only to connect Psalm 86 with Book II—and, by extension, Book I¹²—but to connect, in fact, the larger Book III with the previous collection of psalms.

Zenger, for his part, goes further than the above statement. Not only does he emphasize the connection between Psalm 86 and the end of closing lines of Book II, he claims that Psalm 86 shares a particular affinity with the psalms that close both of the "David-psalters," i.e., Psalms 40-41 (end of Book I) and Psalms 69-71/72 (end of Book II), calling it a "summary of 'Davidic' psalms."¹³ In order to evaluate the merit of this claim, a detailed comparison of the texts follows below:

¹¹ This is a term that is particularly favored by Hossfeld and Zenger.

¹² The question of whether or not Books I-II existed as a collection first or Books II-III is not within the direct purview of this study. Nevertheless, for more on one scholar's view of the origins of the various groupings and sub-groupings found in the Psalter, see Zenger's "Introduction" in Psalms 2, 2-7. See also n. 16 in this chapter.

¹³ Hossfeld and Zenger, Psalms 2, 369.
According to these results, Zenger is at least partially correct. Psalm 86 does share a number of parallels with Psalms 71 and 72, especially 72. It also has a few words in common with Psalms 69 and 70, although the number of shared lexemes is not particularly noteworthy—only two shared lexemes between Psalms 86 and 69 and three total between Psalms 86 and 70. In genre and theme, however, Psalms 69 and 70 do resemble Psalm 86. All three are individual laments that ask God for his deliverance from enemies. Yet the noteworthiness of this similarity is also dubious given that the vast majority of the psalms assigned to David are individual laments that often deal with the threatening presence of enemies. To summarize, Psalm 86 does seem to bear a

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connection to the text of Psalms 72 and 71, especially 72, and may bear a loose
connection to Psalms 70 and 69, though perhaps unexceptionally so.

As for the other half of Zenger’s proposal, i.e., that there is a correspondence
between Psalm 86 and Psalms 40-41, this is a more difficult theory to validate. Two
occurrences of lexical parallels between Psalm 86 and Psalm 40 are, in fact, documented
in the above chart. Interestingly, these are the exact same lexemes that Psalm 70 shares
with Psalm 86. However, the hypothesized relationship between Psalm 86 and Psalm 41
is not held up by the text. Other than the use of the common word חָנֵנִי ("be gracious to
me")—in this form it occurs in nine other verses in the Psalter, including Psalm 86:3—
there is very little linguistic evidence to demonstrate that Psalm 86 is a recapitulation of
Psalm 41.\footnote{In referring to Ps 40-41 as a "Teilkomposition" (Hossfeld and Zenger, Psalms 2, 369), Zenger
appears to be thinking of the two psalms as a combined unit; consequently, any lexical connection between
Ps 40 and Ps 86 might be credited to Ps 41 as well. Even considering this, however, evidence of an
intentional connection is not strong.} Any association between Psalm 86 and Psalms 40-41 must, at best, be
labeled tenuous.

Although Zenger’s assertion that the use of "conventionalized Psalms language" in
Psalm 86 ties it to the conclusions of Book I and Book II cannot be fully substantiated,
the word-connections between Psalm 86 and Psalm 72, in particular (and Psalms 71, and
69-70, to a lesser extent) are sufficiently apparent as to lead us to conclude that the
editors intentionally placed Psalm 86 in Book III for the purpose of providing a linguistic
tieback to the earlier Davidic collections, thereby linking it with Book II.

The linguistic approach is not the only method for getting at the shaping function
of Psalm 86, however. Wilson, for his part, draws attention to interlocking authorial
designations as the key to deciphering the editors' reasons for the placement of the psalms
found in Books II-III. In his 1993 essay, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," he writes that Psalm 86 functions as a "tether," linking the latter Korahite group (Psalms 84-85, 87-88) to Books II-III.\textsuperscript{16} This technique is in keeping with the editors' use of other authorship frames to bind Books II and III together. Note, specifically, in Books II-III the placement of the psalms of Asaph (Psalm 50; 73-83), psalms of David (Psalm 51-71, 72; 86), and the psalms of the sons of Korah (Psalms 42, 44-49; 84-84, 87-88). The following diagram demonstrates the framing technique more clearly:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lcccc}
Korahite & 42\textsuperscript{17} & \ldots & 44-49 & \textsupersetminus{---} & 84-85\ldots 87-88 \\
Asaphite & 50 & \textsupersetminus{---} & 73-83 \\
Davidic & 51-71, 72 & \textsupersetminus{---} & 86 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Wilson explains that Psalms 84-85, 87-88 needed to be specifically tied to the preceding collection because "the Elohist Psalter concludes at Psalm 83 and this latter Qorahite group (84-85, 87-88) is of distinct character (and perhaps distinct origin) from the earlier group."\textsuperscript{18} Although this explanation for the placement of a psalm of David in Book III does not address the theological contribution of Psalm 86 to the shape of the Psalter in

\textsuperscript{16} Wilson, "Editorial Linkage," 77. Wilson believes that Books II-III were compiled first with Book I being added subsequently. For this reason, he focuses on the frames found within Pss 42-89.

\textsuperscript{17} Psalm 43 has no authorial designation.

\textsuperscript{18} Wilson, "Editorial Linkage," 77.
any way, it does recognize its unifying function—fusing, as it does, the final psalms of Book III to the rest of the group—and would certainly seem to have some merit. 19

This section began by pointing out the noteworthiness of the inclusion of a single psalm of David in Book III. Had Book III followed in the Davidic trajectory of Books I-II and/or kept in step with the Davidic emphasis found in the LXX and Qumran versions of Book IV, certainly it would have included many more psalms of David. The psalm’s singularity bespeaks its significance for the larger collection. Moreover, when the canonical function of this psalm for Book III is examined from both a linguistic perspective and from the perspective of its authorial attribution, we reach the same conclusion: Psalm 86 functions as a kind of extension of Book II to fuse the non-Davidic Book III with the highly Davidic Book II. In this way, the editors have given it a unifying and smoothing role to play in the overall shape of the Psalter.

**Canonical Function of Psalm 86 Within Book III**

In addition to reaching across book divisions for the purpose of creating unity, Psalm 86 also has a unique relationship to the other psalms within its own book. How each psalm relates to the book in which it has been placed is one of the most organic canonical questions one can, and should, ask. Indeed, Wilson has identified this question as of primary importance. 20 From a methodological standpoint, scholars approach the

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19 Book V, according to Wilson, demonstrates a similar set of frames, although it is not entirely guided by attributions as in Books II-III. In contrast to the first three books, which are framed by royal psalms thus creating a Davidic focus, the latter two books are framed by sapiential psalms—namely, Pss 1, 73, 90, 107 and the group of Pss 144-146. These psalms are intended to provide the ultimate answers to the insufficiency of the Davidic monarchy. In Book V, specifically, he identifies a wisdom frame and a Davidic frame (Pss 108-110) surrounding a Torah center; "Editorial Linkage," 78ff.

20 Wilson, "Pitfalls and Promise," 43.
task of discerning the structure and shape of each individual book of the Psalter in a range of ways. The variegated fabric, which Psalms 73-89 together compose, can be examined from several distinctive points of view: linguistic, thematic, and formal. But how should these different points of view be integrated together? Two examples of differing methodologies are provided by Robert L. Cole and John Stek.

In his 1996 dissertation, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73-89)*, Cole examines the interconnectedness of the psalms contained within Book III and the theological vision which they together present. In addition to taking into consideration issues of genre and authorship, his method relies primarily on finding as many word connections as possible between the different psalms; these connections then form the basis for further theorizing about the rhetorical interweaving of the psalms and the theological meaning of Book III in relation to the overall trajectory of the Psalter. On the topic of the placement of Psalm 86, for example, Cole describes the section of Korahite psalms (Psalms 84-88) with Psalm 86 in the center, as characterized by a smooth unity, despite the author changes. This unity is brought about by a "network of interlocking factors both formal and thematic across this string of psalms."21 Citing P. Auffret, for example, he maintains that Psalms 85 and 86 share a number of "catchwords," even though they are ascribed to different authors, while Psalm 85 and 87 seem to have relatively little in common, though they are both "of the sons of Korah." He also points out that Psalm 86 is very similar to Psalm 88 in content and genre, although, like Psalm 85, it also does not share much in common with Psalm 87. By tying Psalm 85 to Psalm 86 and Psalm 86 to Psalm 88, the editors have, therefore, not only found a way to smooth

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over the author changes in this section and seamlessly include a psalm of David among a set of Korahite psalms, but also found a way to tie the troublesome Psalm 88, which is highly unique in the degree of its hopelessness and lack of praise, to this grouping.

The shape that Cole ultimately discerns in Book III is based upon many more of these kinds of building blocks—interpretive assertions based on the linguistic analysis of various sub-groupings of psalms. And although Cole states that his goal is to approach the text without any pre-formed expectation of what he will find, it quickly becomes apparent that Cole's propensity for finding harmonious connections, especially on the macro-level, is driven at least as much by his presupposition of unity as by its actual presence. As a result, many of the conclusions which he reaches about the cohesiveness of the book are ultimately unconvincing. Nevertheless, his analysis of smaller groupings of psalms, like the example above, can be instructive.

22 Cole, Shape and Message, 13-14.

23 My main objections to the way in which Cole carries out his methodology are twofold. (1) Many of Cole's conclusions are based on tenuous lexical connections, at best. For example, he bases his contention that the speaker in Ps 73 is the same as in Ps 86 almost entirely on two shared words: טוב (Ps 73:1, 28; 86:5, 17) and לבב (Ps 73:1, 13, 26; Ps 86:11). First, Cole compares the goodness (טוב) of God that was initially doubted in Ps 73 and then later confirmed (vv. 1 and 28, respectively) to Ps 86's statement about the goodness of God (v. 5) and request for a "sign for good" (v. 17). Second, he draws a connection between the purity of the psalmist's heart (לבב) in Ps 73 (vv. 1, 13, 16) and the "united" and "whole" heart of the author of Ps 86; Shape and Message, 142. These connections seem shaky at best and are ultimately unconvincing because they cannot pass the test of intentionality. With regard to the use of לבב what other organ would the psalmist (in either Psalm) have used to denote the seat of his emotion toward God? Although לבב does dominate Ps 73 (of its thirty-five appearances in the Psalms, six are in Ps 73), it does not appear to be a particularly 'loaded' term in Ps 86. Furthermore, the use of the common word טוב in both psalms (a quick frequency search reveals that it occurs seventy-three times in the psalms) does not show sufficient complexity to warrant recognition as an intentional linguistic connection. Moreover, he uses this supposed connection between Ps 73 and Ps 86 as further evidence of his claim that "the pious individual of 73 and 86 (also portrayed in 75, 77, 78, 80, 84, 85) are the same"; Shape and Message, 142. Many more examples of Cole's zeal to discover connections that cannot be substantiated could be cited. (2) His constant weaving together of single words from different texts violates the boundaries of the psalms themselves and results, for Cole, in what is essentially one long composition rather than sixteen separate poems.
John Stek, in his notes on the structure of Book III in the *NIV Study Bible*, presents a very different way of approaching the issue.\textsuperscript{24} Unlike Cole, he is not concerned with the need to smooth over various author changes nor is he interested in the indiscriminate cataloging of connections between individual words. Stek, rather, focuses on the way in which shared themes and key words naturally divide Book III into three separate groups of psalms: Psalms 73-78; Psalms 79-83; and Psalms 84-89. Moreover, Stek contends that each of these groups is chiastically arranged. So, for example, he diagrams Psalms 73-78 as follows:\textsuperscript{25}

73 Instruction based on individual experience

74 Communal prayer:
    God has "rejected" his people

75 Thanks to God: His "Name is near," and he "cuts off" the horns of the wicked but causes the "horns of the righteous" to be "lifted up."

76 Celebration: God's "name is great in Israel"; he "breaks the spirit of the [enemy] rulers."

77 Individual prayer: God has "rejected" him

78 Instruction based on communal experience

Notice that Stek's method is heavily informed by form-critical criteria. For example, Psalms 73 and 78 are both psalms of instruction.\textsuperscript{26} Psalms 74 and 77 are both prayer-psalms, the former spoken by the corporate body, the latter of the individual. He also relies on the identification of shared themes and word repetition. Note the repetition of

\textsuperscript{24} Stek, "Psalms," 786.

\textsuperscript{25} This is almost an exact representation of the diagram found in Stek's "Introduction to the Psalms" in the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*; "Psalms," 786. The only difference is that I have represented the chiasm vertically rather than horizontally as it originally appears.

\textsuperscript{26} Mays calls Ps 78 a "historical psalm" that rehearses a part of the narrative of Israel in order to instruct its hearers in the way they should live. It is historical in its content and, at the same time, didactic in its purpose; Mays, *Psalms*, 29, 254-255.
the word "reject" in Psalms 74 and 77 and the common theme of God striking down the wicked in Psalms 75 and 76.

Of particular interest to us is Stek's breakdown of Psalms 84-89. He also sees a concentric arrangement in this section of six psalms with Psalm 84 introducing the five psalms that follow.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, Psalm 85 corresponds with Psalm 89 (both communal prayers), Psalm 86 with Psalm 88 (both prayers of the individual) and at the center of the chiasm is the hope-filled "Song of Zion," Psalm 87—four lamentations surrounding a song of exultation in the glorious city of God which welcomes all its rightful citizens. To Stek, it is fitting that the pivotal psalm in this section should be one that looks forward with joyful, even eschatological, anticipation. Only a song such as this could effectively mollify the deep despair of God's people in exile that achieves its darkest expression in Psalms 88 and 89. Psalm 86, in this view, has merely a supporting role to play in the structure of Book III. It does share in common with Psalms 85, 88, and 89 the themes of God's "love and faithfulness" and his "saving" help,\textsuperscript{28} and therefore, harmonizes well with its neighboring psalms. However, unlike Psalms 87, 88, 89, or even 84,\textsuperscript{29} its contributions to this section of Book III are not particularly noteworthy.

**Lexical, Form, and Thematic Ties to Psalms 73-89**

If we learn anything from the sample methodologies of Stek and Cole, it is that the study of how Psalms 73-89 fit together to form the overall structure of Book III must

\textsuperscript{27} Stek, "Psalms," 786.

\textsuperscript{28} Stek, "Psalms," 885.

\textsuperscript{29} Regarding Ps 84, Stek writes: "… the psalm now voices the devotion to and reliance on God that motivate the remaining prayers of the group it introduces"; "Psalms," 882.
begin by identifying if and how the words and themes of these individual compositions relate to one another. Though this may seem like a relatively straightforward statement, the carrying out of this task requires nuance. Mechanical cataloging of individually shared lexemes alone (in the style of Cole) may provide an abundance of data, but not always the kind of data that is useful and incisive. My own method seeks to avoid this pitfall by looking specifically for shared words that demonstrate a degree of complexity such as to give a reliable indication of intentionality. Following these criteria, a number of connections were found between Psalm 86 and its neighboring psalms in Book III and are listed in the following table.

**Comparison of the Psalms of Book III (Pss 73-89) with Psalm 86 (Table 6.2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew Expression</th>
<th>Ps 74:19; 74:21</th>
<th>Ps 86:1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לֹא רָאִּינוּ אֹותֵינוּ</td>
<td>Ps 74:4; 74:9</td>
<td>Ps 86:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הַטֵּה־יְּהוָה אָזְּנְּךָ עֲנֵנִּי כִּי־עָנִיִּֽו</td>
<td>Ps 77:2</td>
<td>Ps 86:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עָנִּי וְּאֶבְּיֹון יְּהַלְּלוּ שְּׁמֶךָ׃</td>
<td>Ps 77:3</td>
<td>Ps 86:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בְּיֹום צָרָתִּֽי אֶכְּרָאֶךָ כִּי־עָנִי׃</td>
<td>Ps 78:70</td>
<td>Ps 86:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אֹתֹֹֽות שָמוּ אֹותֹֽתָ л</td>
<td>Ps 78:43</td>
<td>Ps 86:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עָזְּרֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִּשְּׁעֵנוּ עַל־דְּבַר כְּבֹוד־שְּׁמֶךָ</td>
<td>Ps 79:9</td>
<td>Ps 86:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עֲשֵּׂה־עִּמִּי לְּטֹボָה אֹות</td>
<td>Ps 83:18</td>
<td>Ps 86:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בְּדָוִּיד עַבְּדֹו וַיִּבְּחַר אֹתֹֹותָיו אֲשֶׁר־שָם בְּמִּצְּרַיִּם</td>
<td>Ps: 85:7; 85:10</td>
<td>Ps 86:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הַרְּאֵנוּ יְּהוָה עֶלְּיֹון עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ</td>
<td>Ps 86:13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 For more on my method, see ch. 5, "Proposed Methodology of Lexical Comparison."

31 Pss 86:13; 88:4; and 89:49 are the only verses in Book III to make a direct reference to Sheol.
Several observations can be made about these data. First, the key words and therefore, key themes, contained in Psalm 86 are shared by many of the other psalms in this book. As a result, Psalm 86, though of different authorship, fits smoothly with the overall themes and trajectory of the book. Second, this comparison demonstrates that Psalm 86 shares a particular affinity both with the beginning and ending psalms of Book III, i.e., Psalm 74, a lament, and Psalms 88-89, two laments par excellence, respectively. The shaping purpose of these lexical connections to the so-called seams of the book may be multivalent. On the one hand, such ties further help to anchor this "psalm of David" in a book devoid of other Davidic compositions. On the other hand, the frame thus created by Psalms 74, 86, and 88-89 may itself serve as an anchor for

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32 לע and רָדָא are used together in the body of a psalm only five times in the Psalter (Pss 78:70; 89:3; 89:20; 132:10; 144:10); for more on this, see ch. 5, "David as Servant and King."

33 If Ps 73 is treated as an introductory psalm for the book—a view favored by Brueggemann who contends that it is the gateway into the second half of the Psalter ("Bounded by Obedience," 81-88)—Ps 74 may be properly viewed as the beginning of the body of Book III.

34 Wilson also claims that Ps 74 and Ps 89 serve as thematic 'bookends' for Book III, which he calls, "the place where the collapse of the Davidic monarchy is most keenly felt." Of Ps 74 and 89 he writes, "These bookends set a tone of agonized reflection and questioning as a consequence of the collapse of the Davidic monarchy and the subsequent experience of exile.... These two psalms suggest a fitting conclusion for the eschatological programme that [is] the message of Pss. 2-89." Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 238-39.
another frame bounded by Psalm 86 and Psalm 90. This theory will be explored further below/momentarily.

In order to understand better the issue of the trajectory of Book III, genre analysis should also be brought to bear alongside the initial linguistic analysis. Even a cursory reading of these seventeen psalms clearly reveals a feeling of growing despair. The mood of deepening desolation which Psalms 73-89 communicate so effectively is further underscored by the sequence of Book III by genre. The forms of Psalms 73-89 can be listed as follows:

- Ps 73 – Psalm of Instruction
- Ps 74 – Communal Lament (CL)
- Ps 75 – Song of Thanksgiving
- Ps 76 – Hymn/(Song of Zion?)
- Ps 77 – Lament of the Individual (LI)
- Ps 78 – Historical Psalm
- Ps 79 – CL
- Ps 80 – CL
- Ps 81 – Imperative Hymn of Praise
- Ps 82 – Legal Speech
- Ps 83 – CL
- Ps 84 – Song of Zion
- Ps 85 – CL
- Ps 86 – LI
- Ps 87 – Song of Zion
- Ps 88 – LI
- Pa 89 – LI

Schaefer has noted that the third book of the Psalter is composed primarily of communal complaints, as opposed to Books I-II which are dominated by laments of the individual. It is important to note, as well, that these laments, both individual and corporate (Pss 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85, 86, 88 and 89), are weighted toward the end of the book, and almost completely dominate what Stek identifies as the last grouping in Book III.

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35 Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 235.

36 Mays calls this one of two psalms in the Psalter with this particular form, what he calls a "speech made in legal proceedings"; *Psalms*, 29.


Moreover, not only are the greatest number of complaints concentrated in the final subdivision of Book III; this is also where we find the complaints imbued with the greatest intensity, in Psalms 88 and 89. Together, this pair represents the Psalter's deepest abyss. Psalm 88 is, of course, well-known for its singular absence of praise, the only psalm included in the Tehillim to have found no use for this key feature. Psalm 89 is equally as startling with its raw indictments of God's inaction with regard to his covenantal oaths to David.

"If his sons forsake my law
    and do not follow my statutes,
if they violate my decrees
    and fail to keep my commands,
I will punish their sin with the rod,
    their iniquity with flogging;
but I will not take my love from him,
    nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.
I will not violate my covenant
    or alter what my lips have uttered.
Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness—
    and I will not lie to David-
that his line will continue forever
    and his throne endure before me like the sun;
it will be established forever like the moon,
    the faithful witness in the sky."

But you have rejected, you have spurned,
    you have been very angry with your anointed one.
You have renounced the covenant with your servant
    and have defiled his crown in the dust.

O Lord, where is your former great love,
    which in your faithfulness you swore to David?
Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked,
    how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations,
the taunts with which your enemies have mocked, O LORD,
    with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one.
(Psalm 89:30-39, 49-51)

For Wilson, this psalm is absolutely crucial to the theological problem posed by the first three books. It is the cry of Israel that most clearly expresses that without a Davidic monarchy, they simply do not know who they are anymore. "[Psalm 89] is the crisis that calls forth the response of the fourth and fifth books of the Psalter. How can a
people continue to live faithfully when all their former hopes are gone? How can a people reidentify (sic) themselves when all the old landmarks have been swept away?"  

In Psalms 88 and 89, Israel's flagging hope has finally been snuffed out; even God's face is nowhere to be sought.

In their forms, Psalms 88 and 89 also reflect Israel's growing desperation. The move from the lament of an individual (Psalm 88) to a lament voiced by the entire nation (Psalm 89) demonstrates that the progression of Book III, both in content and genre, is that of ongoing degeneration.

McCann, for his part, recognizes an additional, complementary dimension to the third book of the Psalter. Rather than placing the emphasis on the predominance of communal laments in Book III, McCann emphasizes that Psalms 73-89 are largely psalms of community, some of which are laments. Thus, in his view, the community-orientation of this grouping should be considered one of its strongest distinguishing features. This is not to imply that McCann does not also acknowledge the somber mood of the book, but here again he puts a different spin on his characterization by contending that in the midst of growing despair, glimpses of hope can also be seen. Although he fully agrees with Wilson's basic premise that Books IV and V provide the full answer to the crisis of identity brought about by the exile, a crisis that is most poignantly expressed towards the end of Book III, McCann nuances his assessment of the downward path towards identity-loss by pointing out that "Books I-III themselves already begin to

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39 Wilson, "Shape of Book of Psalms," 140.

answer the problem posed by the exile, dispersion and oppression of Israel by the nations in the postexilic era."""41

In Book III, specifically, McCann identifies a perfectly alternating pattern of lament and hope. In order to stay true to his pattern, he is required to combine some psalms and split others, however. For example, he combines Psalms 79-80 into one lament section and Psalms 81-82 into an alternating section of hope. Moreover, Psalm 73, upon which he wrote his 1985 dissertation, with its movement from lament to hope encapsulates both themes and thereby "sets the tone for the whole of Book III."""42

Although some of the gymnastics McCann is forced to perform in order to substantiate his claim of an alternating pattern seem forced at times, nevertheless, his observations about the way in which the corresponding themes of hope and lament interact and inform one another in these seventeen psalms are helpful for obtaining a more well-rounded perspective on the book as a whole. A particularly good example of this is found in his discussion of the psalms in Book III that deal with the theme of Zion.

The two rehearsals of Davidic/Zion theology (Psalms 78:67-72; 89:1-38) and the two songs of Zion (Psalms 84 and 87) might be called two-edged expressions of hope. On the one hand, they serve to remind the community of God's past deeds on behalf of the people; on the other hand, the juxtaposition of traditional Davidic/Zion theology with laments of the community makes the traditional hope ring hollow at best.43

McCann's point is that as a "two-edged expression of hope," the theme of Zion serves both to provide real and lasting hope in a future greater reality while simultaneously...

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41 McCann, "Books I-III," 95 (ital. original). Wilson, himself, seems to be sympathetic to McCann's contentions about the hope present in this part of the Psalms when he writes, "The earlier Psalter [Books I-III]... provides a framework that both questions the purpose of God in allowing this destruction and finds hope in a future messianic restoration..." (ital. mine); "Structure of the Psalter," 235.

42 For more on his division of Book III into alternating sections of hope and lament see his "Table 2"; McCann, "Books I-III," 97.

revealing how feeble and anemic present, earthly expressions of Zion really are. In these psalms, the ideal of Zion is used to inspire both hope and discontentment.

McCann’s reading of Book III is worth giving attention to because it demonstrates a way to read these psalms canonically—which is to say, in light of one another—while still allowing room for each one to speak individually. Furthermore, a balanced and text-driven approach such as this highlights the nuanced and delicate hand with which the final editors approached their craft. It draws out the story that is deeply embedded in the Psalter’s shape, the story of Israel’s loss of hope in a Zion that is insufficient to make good on ancient promises and the transfer of that hope to an ultimate Zion ruled by an other-worldly King. At the same time, it does justice to the intricacy and roundedness of the landscape with which the editors have surrounded the story. Yes, the Psalter tells a story through its shape, but hardly in the manner of a simplistic storyboard. Rather, this story is told with stops and starts; sometimes moving forward, sometimes backwards; sometimes foreshadowing something ahead, sometimes alluding to something behind; and sometimes including pieces that don’t seem related to the larger story at all.

Psalm 86 and Connections to Zion

If McCann is right that Book III already begins to hint at some of the solutions to the crisis with which it concludes, we should not be surprised to find that Psalm 86 fits into this paradigm as well. Though an individual lament, it is certainly not devoid of moments of hopefulness, and even eschatological anticipation. Verses 8-10, the arguable center of the psalm, express this hope particularly clearly.
8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord
and there are no works that are like yours.
9 All the nations (which you have made) will come
and worship before you, O Lord,
and will glorify your name.
10 For you, you are great, the one who does wonderful things
You alone are God! (translation mine)

The mention in v. 9 of the worshipping nations thronging to God to give him
glory is especially striking and somewhat unexpected. The Hebrew word for "nations"
(גֹויִּם) used here appears a total of 58 times in the Psalter. Of these appearances, 39 are
with a negative connotation (e.g., Ps 79:6: "Pour out your wrath on the nations"), seven
are essentially neutral (e.g., Ps 105:13: "They wandered from nation to nation, from one
kingdom to another"), and only 12 are used in a positive context, as in the case of Psalm
86:9. Moreover, of its 8 total occurrences in Book III (Pss 78:55; 79:1, 6, 10; 80:9; 82:8;
83:4; 86:9), this is the only positive usage. A closer examination of the individual
contexts of these eight occurrences reveals just how different the perspective of Psalm 86
towards the nations is from those of the other five psalms in Book III that reference the
same word. For example, both Psalm 78:55 and Psalm 80:9 talk about the גֹויִּם as those
peoples that had to be driven out of Canaan in order for Israel to receive the land that was
promised to her. In these instances, the גֹויִּם are treated more or less as a nuisance.
Indeed, Psalm 80:8-9 employs the metaphor of native weeds that had to be cleared from
the ground in order for a good vine (Israel) to take root. In Psalm 79:1, 6, 10, on the
other hand, גֹויִּם has a much more explicit negative connotation. Here the psalmist pleads
for God to exact revenge on the nations for the destruction of Jerusalem and her temple as
well as the murder and imprisonment of God's people. Psalm 82:8 offers yet another

44 This is the view taken by Stek; "Psalms," 885. For more on my own analysis of the structural
center of Ps 86, see ch. 4, "Compositional Structure of Psalm 86."
reflection on the nations when it calls them God's "inheritance." Given that these are the same nations that have pledged their fidelity to the false gods whose condemnation this psalm predicts, this is unlikely to be a positive reference overall. Finally, in Psalm 83:4, הוא is used in the singular form to refer to Israel as the nation whom the surrounding peoples thirst to destroy.  

In marked contrast to these five psalms, Psalm 86 speaks of the nations in a radically hopeful way. Here the גוים are portrayed as willingly and joyfully drawing near to God in obedience and praise, an image that is both strongly reminiscent of Psalm 72:9-11, 17 and preparatory for the multi-national vision presented by the song of Zion that follows, Psalm 87.

According to Mays, Psalm 87 has two main tenets: first, that Zion has become God's holy city and second, "that there are citizens of the city of God resident in all the nations of the world." The language of birthing that pervades the psalm (vv. 4, 5, 6) makes a powerful point: foreign-born worshippers of Yahweh will be given the full rights of native-born children. Of them it shall be said again and again, "this one was born there." This is an astonishing picture, indeed, for it is not the language merely of adoption but of re-birth or true birth. Although their citizenship may have appeared to come from Rahab (Egypt) or Babylon (v. 4a), their true birthplace is Zion. This is no

45 To further substantiate the noteworthiness of this usage of גוים, one may also ask whether the author could have chosen to use a different word for "nations" in this verse. Synonyms of גוים, such as כלים and עם, are, in fact, used in parallel with גוים in four of the twelve positive appearances (Psalms 72:11; 96:3; 102:15; 117:1). The fact that the psalmist chooses to use גוים rather than another synonym further demonstrates intentionality. Why might the psalmist have chosen this particular word? One key difference between גוים and its synonyms is that it possesses a narrower semantic range. According to the lexicons (TWOT #326e; BDB #01717), הגוים usually refers to non-Hebrew peoples so that in certain contexts it is even given the specific translation of "Gentiles," although in its singular form it can also refer to Israel. In Ps 86:9, as in the majority of its other usages in the Psalter, גוים should be understood as referencing the former—that is, those nations which are foreign to Israel.

46 Mays, Psalms, 281. This is a theme shared by Ps 22:27 and Ps 48:8-9.
legal fiction; it is confirmed by Yahweh himself: "The Lord will write in the register of the peoples: 'This one was born in Zion,'" (v. 6, ital. mine). Moreover, the Zion of Psalm 87 is not a sparsely populated city; rather, it is brimming over with humanity. Calvin writes: "... the number of the new progeny shall be exceeding great, so that the city which had been for a time uninhabited, and afterwards only half filled with a few people, shall be crowded with a vast population." It appears that Israel's God has not been picky, choosing just a few from Philistia and a few others from Tyre and Ethiopia. On the contrary, the nets have been cast wide and are filled almost to breaking.

As McCann has already hinted at, the Zion motif crops up repeatedly throughout the generally gloomy Book III. In addition to Psalm 87, the editors have chosen to include a second paradigmatic Song of Zion in this grouping in Psalm 84. Additional explicit references to Zion can be found in Psalms 74:2; 76:2; and 78:68. Thematic references to Zion theology can also be demonstrated in Psalm 89:1-38 and, of course, Psalm 86:8-10. Of these seven passages reflecting on the nature of God's city, however, only Psalm 86:9 and Psalm 87 bring out the additional dimension of the eschatological city's ethnic diversity. By placing these two psalms in such close proximity to each other, the editors have strengthened the overall vision of a nations-infused Zion, making

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48 Mays consider these two psalms along with Pss 46 and 48 to be the quintessential examples of this genre; *Psalms*, 33.


50 The reference to Mount Zion in Ps 78:67-68 actually represents an opposing philosophy. In these verses, Mt. Zion is pictured as the location that God has chosen for his special dwelling place instead of the tent of Joseph or the tribe of Ephraim. Given the context, it is clear that "Zion" in Ps 78 has the near reference point of the historical Jerusalem. This is an important distinction to remember: the name "Zion" does not carry an eschatological overtone in every context although it does always refer to the city of God, whether that be the earthly or heavenly version.
it more forceful and vibrant. At the same time and just as significantly, the placement of these two psalms in direct conjunction with Psalms 88-89 achieves the effect of mitigating the harsh accusations levied against God contained therein.

One additional connection to Psalm 86 may serve a similar purpose; this is the connection between Psalms 86 and 90.

Psalm 86 and Connections to Sinai

Earlier, we mentioned the frame formed by Psalms 74, 86 and 88-89 and the fact that one of the purposes of the lexical connections between these three psalms may be to anchor another frame bounded by Psalm 86 and Psalm 90. Psalm 90 lies just on the outside cusp of the earlier Psalter (Books I-III) and is, indeed, the introduction to the later Psalter (Books IV-V), containing many of the broader answers to the questions of identity and true kingship raised by the first three books. By foreshadowing many of its themes, Psalm 86 provides a link to the beginning of these answers. Wilson describes the canonical role of the message of Psalm 90 in this way:

Ps. 90 introduces pre-monarchical Mosaic themes of reliance on Yahweh. Human strength is fragile and must turn to Yahweh as refuge, while acknowledging sin as the reason for divine wrath and judgment. This is a markedly different attitude from the demanding cries of Ps. 89, and prepares for the emphasis in the Yahweh Malak psalms (93; 95-99) on the kingship of Yahweh.

The similarities between Psalms 86 and 90 are not difficult to see. Both are labeled נְטִיָּה. When used in the superscription as a genre-designation, the term appears

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51 Significantly, Wilson includes Ps 90 in the 'Final Wisdom Frame' (e.g., Pss 1, 73, 90, 107 and 145), one of two major frames that, in his opinion, help to structure the Psalter. The other, as mentioned previously, is the 'Royal Covenantal Frame' consisting of Pss 2, 72, 89, and 144. Wilson, "Editorial Linkage," 78-81.

52 Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 240. For a similar take on the message of Ps 90 in light of its immediate placement after Ps 89, see Grogan, Psalms, 23-24.
only four other times in the Psalter. Both stand out in their respective books for being the only psalms with their particular author designations: for Psalm 86, "of David"; for Psalm 90, "of Moses, the man of God." Both psalms possess overtones of Sinai. The allusions found in Psalm 86:5, 15 to Exodus 34:6 and the covenant renewal ceremony at Sinai (in addition to connections to Exodus 15:11 and Revelation 15:3-4) have already been discussed, but it bears repeating that the purpose of these throwbacks to Sinai is to draw the attention of the covenant community back to the basics, namely, that the identity of the Hebrew nation was grounded first in the covenant made with Moses, and only later, in the covenant with David.

Psalm 90—the prayer of Moses—is similarly a "back to basics" kind of psalm. The psalmist opens by confessing that the Lord (יְהֹוָה) has been "our dwelling place throughout all generations" (v. 1b). God is to be praised and thanked because he has been "our" God ever since there was an "us." Verse 2 elaborates on this theme of longevity by extolling God for his own eternal existence which was (and is) before the creation of the world: "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." Verse 4 continues the theme: "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night." Echoes of Exodus 3:14 can be detected in these introductory verses as well as an allusion to Deuteronomy 33:27a ("The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms"), a part of Moses' final blessing to the sons of Israel

53 These are Pss 17:1; 102:1; 142:1; 143:1
54 Note that Ps 90 is the only psalm attributed to Moses in the canonical Psalter.
55 See discussion in ch. 4, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis: Exodus as Backdrop to Psalm 86."
before his death.\textsuperscript{56} And although God's eternity is a source of comfort and grounds for worship, according to Mays, it also raises the fundamental theological question of the relationship between God, humanity, and time—a question with which the remaining two sections (vv. 3-12, 13-17) of Psalm 90 grapple.\textsuperscript{57} Just as in the case of Psalm 86, Psalm 90 is a prayer with a rich Sinai subtext.

The Sequence of Psalms 86-90

If one accepts the similarities between Psalms 86 and 90 and the corollary theory that together they form a frame, what then is the purpose of this frame? One way to think of Psalms 86 and 90 is as the bookends of an especially significant sequence placed right in the heart of the Psalter's existential crisis. In the center of the sequence are Psalms 88-89. Both psalms ask fundamental questions about the nature of God's covenant love for his people. For Psalm 88, it is the question of whether God's love extends beyond death and is posed most poignantly in the psalm's central verses: "Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction?" (v. 11, see also vv. 10 and 12). For Psalm 89, it is the question of whether God has reneged on his promise to establish David's seed forever and build up a throne to all generations (Psalm 89:4, 49-51). Both questions receive partial answers from the psalms immediately flanking them. On the one side is

\textsuperscript{56} The close relationship between parts of Ps 90 and Deut 33 may be the reason that tradition attributes the psalm to Moses; Mays, \textit{Psalms}, 294. Delitzsch sees a connection between the "mountains" of Deut 33:15 and Ps 90:2; Franz Delitzsch, \textit{Biblical Commentary on the Psalms, Vol. 3} (Clark's Foreign Theological Library 31; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1871), 50.

\textsuperscript{57} Mays, \textit{Psalms}, 290-96. Mays offers these comments on they way in which vv. 1-2 lay out the fundamental problem: "So the psalm's introduction brings together the eternal whose concern is universe and humanity and the Lord whose concern is with a particular people in a special history. The tension in the psalm appears in its opening theological statement. Faith often has to believe and think and worship in the tension between the universal and the particular, between Creator and Savior, between humanity and congregation"; \textit{Psalms}, 291.
Psalm 87, a gloriously universalized picture of Zion clearly set in the future. On the other side is Psalm 90, a prayer grounded in Israel's past and in the identity of the Sinai-God. Psalms 87 and 90 contribute, therefore, a much needed sense of perspective—past and future—on the present anguish expressed in Psalms 88-89.

Finally, we must consider how Psalm 86 fits into this series. Spoken by David, bearing close linguistic connections to Psalms 88-89, bringing together the complementary motifs of Sinai (vv. 5, 15) and Zion (vv. 8-10)—Psalm 86 is the perfect introductory psalm to this sequence. For the author of Psalm 86, Sinai symbolizes an idyllic "mountaintop experience" where God's being and character are revealed through his law and his glory is experienced in unequaled fashion. In this way, Sinai is a shadow of the eschatological Zion-reality. Both are places where the presence of God is fully experienced. The difference: one is a mountain to which only one man acting as the representative of Israel may gain entrance, the other is a holy city teeming with people from all nationalities. Yet the God who possesses and enlivens both is the same.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has focused primarily on identifying two of the canonical functions of Psalm 86—its function for Book III and its function within Book III—with a secondary goal of further clarifying the canonical function of Psalm 86 for the overall Psalter. With regard to its canonical function for Book III, this process has demonstrated that the fundamental role of Psalm 86 is that of an adhesive. It adheres Book III to the earlier Davidic collection found in Book II (and, by extension, Book I) and it adheres the Korahite psalms (Psalms 84-85, 86-87) to the Asaphite collection (Psalms 50, 73-83).
The psalm's adhesive properties, so to speak, are generated primarily by its unique authorial attribution ("of David") and secondarily, by its use of key word-connections to Psalm 71 and especially, Psalm 72.

The significance of the psalm's unique attribution is further magnified by the fact that, in virtually every other way, Psalm 86 is a psalm that feels very much at home in Book III. In genre, it harmonizes well with the many other laments in the book and the overall tone of growing despair. Lexically, it shares many individual words and themes in common with the other psalms in this grouping, particularly the psalms located at the "seams" of Book III, which, in turn, helps to further anchor Psalm 86 in the third book. The fact that the text of Psalm 86 does not feel unfamiliar to the terrain of Book III is significant for two reasons. As has just been mentioned, the fact that it corresponds so well to the rest of the book with regard to its genre and language allows the difference in its attribution to truly stand out. An analogy can be made to a laboratory experiment; the experiment is permitted to change only one factor at a time in order to yield an honest result. In the same way, if Psalm 86 varied dramatically from the other psalms in Book III in its language and attribution, for example, the exceptional quality of its authorship would lose some of its weight. Second, it displays again the savvy and care employed by the editors in the shaping of this book and raises the question once more of whether Psalm 86 was composed expressly for this placement in Book III. Although the further investigation of that possibility falls outside the purview of this analysis, it is nevertheless an intriguing theory that the evidence may tentatively support.

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58 So Zenger writes, "It was possibly even created for the context in the Psalter in which it now stands..." Psalm 2, 371.
The psalm's canonical function within Book III is a separate, yet related, matter. As a member of Book III, Psalm 86 is a part of one of the shortest books in the fivefold division of the book of Psalms, yet also perhaps the most critical to the overall theological movement of the Psalter—somewhere between Psalm 72 and Psalm 89, things have gone desperately wrong. One of the loftiest descriptions of the glory of the covenanted Davidic king has, in the space of seventeen psalms, degenerated into a hoarse-throated cry that God has forsaken this very same king and covenant. Historically speaking, the Babylonian exile was the catalyst for this dramatic change. Textually speaking, Psalms 73-89 provide a poetic interpretation of this dramatic change. And once again, the uniquely adhesive properties of Psalm 86 enable it to play a distinctive role in this interpretive process.

Helpful models for understanding the overall shape of the third book of the Psalter have been proposed by both Stek and McCann. Although different from one another, both are reasonable and instructive. The acceptance of these models does not, however, rule out the possibility of identifying other structural subunits within the larger framework of Book III. One such subunit was identified in Psalms 86-90, an important sequence that includes the fiercest expression of the book's most pressing existential crisis alongside key allusions to both Sinai and Zion. By using stock language and imagery from such diverse semantic fields as Exodus 34:6, the language of Zion, and the language of death and Sheol, Psalm 86 acts as an appropriate introductory composition.

59 Both Books III and IV contain only seventeen psalms.

60 Although it is possible to see a thematic connection between the enemies mentioned in Ps 86:14 and the enemies of Ps 88:8, 18 and Ps 89:10, 22, 23, the absence of any specific lexical connection makes the intentionality of this common point of reference difficult to substantiate. Moreover, the qualities of the enemies in all three psalms differ markedly. In Ps 86, the enemies are portrayed as violent mockers of
to this fascinating sequence. Even though the primary purpose of Psalms 88-89 is to convey the despair of God's people in the apparent loss of their identity, the editors have ordered these five psalms in a way that allows the twin themes of Zion-hope and faith in the Sinai God who chooses to be known to shimmer around the edges of Israel's deep darkness.

Another way to summarize the findings of this chapter is to ask the question: what does the study of the way in which Psalm 86 relates to its book contribute to our overall understanding of the theological movement within Book III? These contributions can be listed as follows:

1) Psalm 86 helps to demonstrate that Book III is a unity and its theological message should be understood as such. The simplicity of this statement should not be allowed to mask its significance. The unity of the collection must be established in order for a theological message to even exist. If Psalms 73-89 are mere disparate pieces lumped together in no particular order, there can be no broader message.

2) Psalm 86 shows that the editors of the Psalter forged some intentional connections between Book II and Book III and that these two collections should, therefore, be read together. From this we can deduce that the theological message of Book III (see point #1) is clarified when read in light of Book II;

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God. In Ps 88, on the other hand, the figure who possesses the qualities most like an enemy is God himself, for he is the one who has turned the psalmist's closest companions against him (v. 8). Likewise, in Ps 89, God is again pictured on the side of the enemies and accused of aiding the enemies of Israel's anointed in their victory: "You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice" (vv. 42, cf. vv. 40-45).
3) Psalm 86 demonstrates that in the midst of things getting as bad as they can (Psalms 88-89), hope in the revealed character and future-oriented promises of God remains and can temper even the most desperate distress. Although this may not be the central thrust of Book III's theological message, it is nonetheless an important corollary component.

In conclusion, this study of Psalm 86 as it relates to its immediate context has helped to clarify the question with which this chapter began, namely, the problem of determining the scope of the canonical context in which each psalm should be read. In light of the progress that has been made towards a fuller understanding of the theological message of Book III as well as a better sense of the multi-dimensional functionality of Psalm 86 itself, we can confidently agree with Wilson⁶¹ that one of (if not, the) most promising canonical contexts in which to study an individual psalm is that of the book in which it has been placed.

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⁶¹ Wilson, "Pitfalls and Promises," 43.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The Goals of This Study: Were They Met?

It is a vastly dangerous thing to become too attached to one's own working hypothesis. Hopefully, for those who find themselves grappling with this temptation, the dim apparition of Paul Kraus is never too far away. (Kraus, the 1930s scholar who undertook the ambitious project of demonstrating that the entire Old Testament had been written in poetic verse, committed suicide after realizing two-thirds of the way through that he had been wrong.1) Indeed, Gerald Wilson suggests trying to avoid working hypotheses as much as possible, saying that it is methodologically far superior simply to "allow any sense of the structure that develops to derive from an intensive and thorough analysis of the psalms in question in terms of their linguistic, thematic, literary and theological links and relationships."2 In other words, the exegesis of an individual psalm or group of psalms must be driven by what is actually present in the text, not by what one expects to find. I have, therefore, consciously endeavored to proceed in this study with an attitude that holds loosely to the aims and principles stated in the introductory chapter (and, to some extent, in the third chapter as well), while at the same time using them to focus and guide the exegetical process. The ultimate proof of the usefulness of these goals and hypotheses, of course, lies in their ability to withstand the testing which the body of this study represents. That will be the subject of this concluding chapter.

1 Paul L. Kraemer, "The Death of an Orientalist: Paul Kraus from Prague to Cairo" in *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (eds. B. Lewis and M. S. Kramer; Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1999), 201-222.

This study began with two stated goals, one with a macro-orientation and the other with a micro-orientation. The first goal was to demonstrate an exegetical methodology for the Psalms that could be characterized as both thorough and practical. In this case, the descriptor "thorough" refers to the method's capacity for analyzing the full dimensionality of a psalm as revealed through its numerous and varied features including: the words of the text and syntax (and related text-critical issues), genre, literary features and compositional structure, and canonical context(s). "Practical" implies a method that has a sufficient number of objective components for it to be used with a variety of psalms. "Practical" in this sense does not refer to the method's ease but to its ability to be practiced, and thus, to its inherent repeatability. The second goal was to demonstrate "that by incorporating the language of Moses/Sinai, Zion, and Davidic servant-kingship, along with key lexical and thematic ties to Psalms 72, 89, and 90, Psalm 86 offers a strategically-placed reflection on the contingent nature of David's monarchy and the wholly independent, self-actualized quality of Yahweh's kingship." In other words, the second goal, closely related to the first, was to demonstrate the potential exegetical yield of a method that is intentionally very broadly conceived in its application and scope. Furthermore, although neither of these statements of the study's objectives makes explicit reference to the canonical approach, the evidentiary lines explored in chapters 4-6 show just how vital an integrated and canonically-aware perspective is to both objectives. In this sense, an evaluation of the extent to which both of these goals were met also provides the opportunity to evaluate the merits of the canonical approach to Psalms interpretation on a case-study level.

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3 See ch. 1, p. 4.
Results of a Holistically- and Canonically-Oriented Exegetical Method

Relationship between Theory and Execution

We begin with a detailed review of the exegetical method, including the canonical approach, that has been applied in this study to Psalm 86 and the resulting interpretation. A brief outline of a holistic method incorporating the canonical approach was first laid out in chapter 3. However, as stated in the introduction to that chapter, the execution of the method should be governed not only by theory but also by the unique requirements of each text. Thus, several times in this study of Psalm 86, investigative paths were traveled that the words, themes, syntax, and structure of the psalm themselves required traveling. One example of this is the two obvious references to Exodus 34:6 in vv. 5 and 15 that presented an occasion for considering in detail the original Exodus context. In all cases, the overriding principle behind this study has been to leave no stone unturned, thereby doing full justice to the many different features of this unique composition, while at the same time exercising judicious restraint with regard to final conclusions.

Results of a Holistic Reading of Psalm 86

The exegesis proper of Psalm 86 began first with a careful reading of the text. In this study, careful reading of the text entailed the use of almost all of the analytical tools available in the collective arsenal of modern Psalms scholarship. The first order of business was to nail down the basic meaning of the words. A translation of the Hebrew was proposed, text-critical issues were addressed, the delimitation of the text was established, and phrases with ambiguous meanings, in particular the phrase כָּלְבֶן־אֲמָתֶךָ.
were explored. Second, the psalm's main themes were delineated. This was done by integrating a number of different observations regarding the psalm's form, compositional structure, syntax, and use of repeated words. Initially, the psalm's genre as a lament of an individual was discussed as well as the noteworthy ways in which Psalm 86 diverges from the typical form. These divergences—in the form of a preponderance of petitionary verbal forms, only one complaint appearing late in the psalm, and multiple confessions of trust—led us to conclude that the psalm has a relationally-oriented emphasis. Furthermore, these divergences also corresponded closely to the key ideas marked out by the psalm's three-part division (vv. 1-7, 8-13, 14-17). The psalm's key themes were thereby identified as: 1) the right motives for petitionary prayer (vv. 1-7, 14-17), and 2) the petitioner's vision of God's unique standing among the other gods and his glory among the nations (vv. 8-13). Finally, the psalm's assertions about the true nature of prayer began to emerge more clearly as we examined the composition's progression, structurally and syntactically, from beginning (v. 1) to end (v. 17).

These observations, arising out of the application of the historical-critical methods most commonly used in contemporary Psalms studies, although not explicitly canonical in their orientation nevertheless formed the foundation for the next step: reading Psalm 86 canonically. Meticulous consideration of the psalm's words, form, syntax, and rhetorical features had to come first, not just because these methods pre-date the recent rash of interest in the canonical approach—in other words, because they are more "traditional" methods—but in a logical, substantive sense. This was true for two reasons. First, a foundation of observations about the text driven by the text ensured that subsequent suggestions about the psalm's canonical significance, particularly as it related
to the somewhat more speculative topic of the overall shape and message of the Psalter, could not be fully isolated from the text itself. Second, as was demonstrated in the sample methodologies of Cole and Stek in their analyses of the cohesive structure of Book III, theories about how the canonical psalms relate to one another are often based on standard rhetorical-critical and, to a lesser extent, form-critical moves. Similarly, in this analysis of Psalm 86, conclusions regarding the connective function of Psalm 86 were based primarily on the repetition of key words and themes as well as on such considerations as the psalm's genre as the lament of an individual in a book dominated by communal laments.

This study has demonstrated, therefore, that a holistic exegetical approach that incorporates the investigative tools of the source-, form-, and rhetorical-critical schools should be expected to enrich and, in fact, substantiate canonical readings of the psalms. In this sense, the task of reading the psalms canonically, sometimes thought to be a more narrowly defined and specific task (in the style of Sanders), actually proves to be a task that reaches its full potential only when broadly supported by a wide base of evidence. Unlike, for example, conventional form-criticism which focuses primarily on one aspect of the psalm (e.g., its genre), the canonical approach should be conceived of as widely expansive in its methodological scope, giving attention out of necessity to each psalm's multidimensionality for the purpose of discerning its canonical significance.

Results of Reading Psalm 86 in Light of its Canonical Connections and Placement
The specifically canonical portion of this exegetical reading of Psalm 86 was largely shaped by a consideration of four different canonical contexts: the inner-biblical context, the intertextual context, the book context, and the Psalter-wide context.

The inner-biblical context, as has been touched upon already, is made up of those canonical texts outside of the Psalter that bear a close connection to the psalm. Identifying these texts was the first step. In the case of Psalm 86, these texts were located in Exodus 15:11; 34:6; and Revelation 15:3-4. An important second step was to look at the wider context of the verse or passage referenced. Particularly if it is a well-known verse, as in the case of Exodus 34:6, its general context may well be in view, too. As was discussed in chapter 4, for example, the power of God's proclamation of his never-ending faithfulness towards Israel is only fully appreciated when one remembers that the statement was made directly in the face of Israel's most egregious act of spiritual adultery. In the case of this paradigmatic formula of self-disclosure, the immediate context imbues the words with even deeper gravity. Moreover, for the majority of the OT citations or partial-citations of the Exodus 34:6 refrain, the wider context of Exodus 32-33 was demonstrated to be directly relevant to the context in which the refrain was cited.4

Chapter 5 focused on the subject of the intertextual context of Psalm 86 and those psalm-texts with which the psalm in question shared a particular lexical affinity.5 In the

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4 See ch. 4, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis: Exodus as Backdrop to Psalm 86."

5 Speaking about the term itself, J.Todd Hibbard states, "Because no clear and authoritative definition exists for the term, biblical scholars have appropriated it in widely different ways." He points out that intertextuality as a term has been adopted both by those whose literary analyses are largely post-structuralist in nature, and on the other hand, those whose work is not very far removed from traditional models of source criticism, with a whole range of methods in between. J. Todd Hibbard, Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 14-15. Given the contested nature of the term in its current
case of Psalm 86, with its composite quality, a number of other canonical psalms fell into this category. Using three tests—the tests of intentionality, perspicuity, and contextual similarity—this list was narrowed down to those psalms bearing the greatest number of semantic similarities to Psalm 86: Psalms 25, 72, and 116. Although the three tests did not all carry the same amount of weight, together they nuanced the narrowing process, thereby transforming what was initially a bare cataloging of shared lexemes into a defensible picture of compositional correspondence.

Once these key psalms were identified, a comparison of each psalm-pair (i.e., Pss 25 and 86; 72 and 86; and 116 and 86) was conducted. Two important methodological principles, both having to do with the limits of the information provided by a psalm's intertextual context, emerged out of this process. The first principle maintains that only after each pair of psalms is compared and evaluated as a unit can the question be asked whether the theological movement within the psalm-pair fits within a Psalter-encompassing theological trajectory. Moreover, the answer to this question may sometimes be "no." Such an answer does not diminish the significance of the psalm-pair, the greatest value of which lies in the ability of each psalm to accentuate and underscore the key themes of the other and not in the pairing's ability to reveal something new about the Psalter's meta-themes. A single two- (or even three-) psalm unit is simply too small to bear that amount of exegetical weight on its own. On the other hand, a psalm-pair may be useful for confirming or further supporting a proposed pattern of theological movement within the Psalter, as in the case of the dynamic between Psalm 86 and 116.

Usage, the safest option might be to avoid it altogether; nevertheless, I have modeled my own use of the term somewhat after that of deClaissé-Walford in her study of Psalms 22-24; "Psalms 22, 23, and 24", 139-152.
The second important methodological principle to emerge was also related to the question of limitations. In the course of comparing the psalm-pairs, the question arose: is the theological interplay between related psalms universally determinative for the central themes of each psalm or are these emphases only significant in relation to the complementary psalm? To use an analogy, does A only appear tall when standing next to shorter B, or is A universally considered to be tall, a fact that is only emphasized when he stands next to B? So, for example, although the David of Psalm 86 echoes almost exactly many of the cries of David in Psalm 25 regarding his own personal turmoil (compare 25:4, 5, 9, 12 and 86:11; 25:1-2, 16-21 and 86:1-4, 6-7, 16-17; 25:19 and 85:14; 25:3 and 86:17; 25:9, 16, 18 and 86:1), Psalm 86 noticeably leaves out the dimension of repentance for personal transgressions that is so integral to Psalm 25 (cf. vv. 7, 11, 18). What is the significance of this difference? On the one hand, a maximalist approach might argue that, similar to the way in which the context of Exodus 32-33 highlights the magnanimity of God's grace in Exodus 34:6, the context of Psalm 25 highlights the psalmist's lack of personal repentance in Psalm 86. On the other hand, a more cautious approach could argue that such reasoning is basically an argument from silence, and that the absence of repentance for personal sins in Psalm 86 is certainly not a central feature of the psalm since it is not a feature of the psalm at all.

Ultimately, the question boils down to the degree to which Psalm 25, serving as a contextual partner for Psalm 86, can determine the interpretation of the psalm. How decisive a canonical context is Psalm 25 for Psalm 86? The maximalist approach implies that Psalm 25 provides as clear and definitive a context for Psalm 86 as would two or more adjacent texts to which it was clearly joined in the style, for example, of the Songs
of Ascent (Psalms 120-134). The more cautious approach implies that Psalm 25 provides only a tenuous context for Psalm 86 and that any differences between the two compositions are meaningful for the comparison of these two psalms alone and not for establishing the universal themes of Psalm 86 as a stand-alone composition. In my estimation, the judgment that exercises more restraint is, in this case, the better one. Even with two psalms that bear as many similarities as Psalm 25 and Psalm 86, the maximalist is hard-pressed to meet the burden of proof which would definitively demonstrate that the relationship between these two psalms, separated by 58 other psalms, is as mutually determinative as the relationship between psalms that are clearly intended to be read as a group.

Aside from those groupings of psalms that are commonly recognized as defined units, does the basic principle which claims that texts that are proximal to one another provide a clearer context for each other apply to the Psalter as well? This question was examined in greater detail in chapter 6 where the Book III context of Psalm 86 was explored. In many ways, among the four canonical contexts examined, the book context is the most obviously deserving of attention. The presence of five distinct books within the Psalter is certainly the clearest divisional marker left by the editors and, as such, indicates the editors’ intention that the psalms within each book be read together in some way. But how? The method by which this question was explored in chapter 6 in many ways paralleled the method used to establish the intertextual context of Psalm 86 in chapter 5. In order to ascertain the connections between Psalm 86 and the particular psalms within Book III, the tests of intentionality, perspicuity, and contextual similarity were once again applied. At the same time, the criteria that had to be met in order for a
particular composition to be counted as authentically connected to Psalm 86 were somewhat less stringent. Thus, for example, keyword connections that might have been deemed insufficient for proving an intentional connection between Psalm 86 and a psalm outside of Book III were more willingly considered as possible links between two psalms already located within a common book. Why this seeming double standard? The fact that the final editors grouped these psalms together is itself evidence of some degree of connection. By way of analogy, imagine a flask, the volume of which represents the amount of evidence needed to demonstrate a defensible connection between two (or more) psalm texts. When dealing with psalm texts that occur in different books, one starts with an empty flask. When dealing with psalm texts that occur in the same book, however, it is as if the flask is already half-full.

Methodologically, our study of the Book III context of Psalm 86 also interacted with the organizing features (as identified by Gerald Wilson) native to the first three books of the Psalter, notably the authorial designations and genre markings found in the psalm superscriptions. As a prayer of David, Psalm 86 was argued to have a binding function, connecting Book III back to the Davidic collection of Book II (Psalms 51-72) and, by extension, Book I. As a prayer (תְּפִּלָה) of David, Psalm 86 was further connected to the prayers (תְּפִּלוֹת) of David identified as completed, or perfected, in Psalm 72:20. In this way, both of the organizing elements of the superscription of Psalm 86 were seen to serve a common goal, that is, to tie Book III, with its decidedly less hopeful tone, to the Davidically-oriented Books I-II.

Quite aside from the binding function of the psalm's superscription, the attribution of Psalm 86 to David had another extremely important function that had more directly to
do with the content and theological message of the psalm, a function that was initially
discerned by researching the application of the descriptor "servant" to David as it appears
in different instances throughout the Psalms. This, then, brings us to the fourth and final
canonical context examined in this study: the Psalter-wide context. The most unwieldy
and difficult to delimit of the four canonical contexts used, the Psalter-wide context
refers, in general, to any lines of investigation, as required by the psalm text, involving
the entire Psalter. (Under this general definition, the intertextual context could also be
placed in this category. However, because of the specific nature of the methods by which
the intertextual context is discerned and evaluated, it is best treated as a separate
canonical context.) In the case of Psalm 86, the Psalter-wide context became relevant for
the analysis of the individual words of the psalm (e.g., "servant") and helped to illuminate
the implications of that unique title for how we are to understand the voice of David in
the psalm.

**Observations about the Canonical Approach to Psalms Interpretation as a Result of
This Test Case**

The Determinative Function of the Goal of Canonical Studies in the Psalter

Finally, it must be emphasized again that the selection of all four of these
canonical contexts turned out to be just as much driven by the text of Psalm 86 as it was
by the interpretive principles outlined in chapter 3. For example, including the
consideration of other canonical texts outside of the Psalter was made necessary by the
unique qualities of Psalm 86. Unlike other psalms that are not characterized by such
explicit references to other OT texts, Psalm 86 required that attention be paid to its
Exodus context. Likewise, the reference to Psalm 86:8-10 in Revelation 15 required that
its canonical NT use also be considered. But should these connections to Exodus and the NT really be considered under the rubric of the "canonical approach" to Psalms studies? If the "canonical approach" is more narrowly defined as only addressing the shape and message of the Psalter, for example, then probably not. The goal itself limits the method to texts within the Psalter. But if the "canonical approach" is more broadly understood as the investigation of a psalm's entire canonical context for the sake of its interpretation, then the connections between Psalm 86 and texts outside of the Psalter should rightly be considered under this heading. Whereas the goal in the former case is to gain a better understanding of the unity of the Psalter, the goal in the latter case centers on gaining a better understanding of the individual psalm and its role in helping to provide coherence to the Psalter, and even the Scripture at large. These differences highlight the way in which the goal of canonical studies of the Psalms helps to determine the methods of canonical studies.

What, then, is the goal of a canonically-oriented approach to the Psalms? And what are its most important potential contributions to Psalms studies? This question was initially addressed in chapter 1 where the canonical approach was recommended for its prospective ability to bridge the gap between text and theology and again in chapter 3 where this was reiterated. In light of our subsequent research on Psalm 86, the simple contention that the theology of the Psalms matters can be further sharpened and refined. In essence, the question can be distilled down to this—what matters more: using the whole (i.e., the context of the Psalter as well as canonical texts outside of the Psalms) to interpret the theology of the parts (i.e., the individual psalms) or using the parts to interpret the theology of the whole? Both matter and neither excludes the other. But at
the end of the day, each individual composition displays a much higher degree of internal unity, and thus a more coherent and compelling theological message, than does the overall collection of the individual compositions. To put it in kerygmatic terms, when it comes to the Psalter, God speaks more clearly through the parts than through the whole. Accordingly, and perhaps ironically, the value of the canonical approach lies at least as much in its ability to uncover further dimensions of the meaning of individual psalms—in our case, Psalm 86—as in its ability to help discern the shape of the Psalter as a whole. This is not to minimize the merit of efforts to determine the theological message of the Psalms as a book; this is a highly useful pursuit for its own sake because it enhances our understanding of how God does indeed speak through the whole in addition to the parts. Nevertheless, the relative novelty of the approach (and the scholarly excitement that often attends novelty) should not distort our ability to discern where the most significant interpretive payoff lies.6

Returning to the principle that the goal helps to shape the method, what implications does this have for the methodology employed by the canonical approach? First, it means that the canonical contexts which have bearing on the psalm should be as broadly investigated as is warranted by the text. Even if a particular text does not shed any direct light on the question of the shape and shaping of the Psalter, if it helps to interpret the psalm, it is significant. Second, although the non-Psalm texts may be considered separately from the Psalter-context for the sake of clarity, as in this study where the Exodus backdrop of Psalm 86 was discussed in chapter 4 under the title of

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6 The question of whether the value of the canonical approach lies in its ability to help us understand the parts or the whole is related to the highly germane debate over the relative merits of macrostructural approaches to canonical interpretations of the Psalter versus microstructural approaches. For more on this, see Howard, "Current Study," 24-29.
"Inner-Biblical Exegesis" and the Psalter-context of Psalm 86 was discussed in chapters 5 and 6, they should not be assumed to be unrelated. In the case of Psalm 86, for example, its clear connections back to the scenes of Moses leading God's people through the Red Sea and receiving God's law on Mt. Sinai are the basis for its connection to Psalm 90, the prayer of Moses. The psalm's Mosaic ties are further reinforced by its citation in the song of Moses and the Lamb in Revelation 15:3-4.

Implications for a Universalized Methodology

What does the text-driven nature of our investigation imply about the universality of the method itself? Does a text-driven approach necessarily imply that a canonical reading of another psalm could result in the investigation of a very different set of canonical contexts? Or can some of the principles for reading individual psalms canonically that emerged out of this study of Psalm 86 be legitimately universalized and applied to other psalms?

I believe that the answer to that question is "yes." Of the four canonical contexts explored here, the book context is certainly the most universal. Every psalm occurs within a book and there is ample reason to believe that the placement of individual psalms was intentionally performed. Second, we can expect to glean a better understanding of many, if not most, individual psalms through studying their Psalter-wide context. After all, although each composition is distinct, its poetic form and use of common vocabulary make it more similar than dissimilar to the other psalms in the

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7 That this is possible is in accordance with the analogy of Scripture; cf. WCF 1.9.

8 See discussion in ch. 1, pp. 11-14.
collection. For some psalms, as in the case of Psalm 86, this might mean studying a pair or set of words as they are used throughout the Psalter. For others, it might mean studying the other psalms that mimic or echo parts of the psalm being studied, in other words, the psalm's intertextual context. Finally, certain psalms clearly will require that they be analyzed in light of canonical texts outside of the book of Psalms, either because of their clear citations of other OT texts or because of their use by NT authors. To summarize: a canonically-oriented exegetical method should look first to the psalm's book context, should expect that the Psalter-wide context will be relevant, and should be open to possible avenues of investigation into the psalm's intertextual and inner-biblical (or OT and NT) contexts.

The Canonical Approach: Friend or Foe of Creativity?

One criticism that has been levied against canonical studies of the Psalms is the contention that the canonical approach significantly limits the exegete's ability to approach the canon creatively. Thus, John J. Collins writes, "The effect of Childs's [approach] is to isolate biblical theology from much of what is vital and interesting in biblical studies today."9 Childs himself responds to those who despair of the excitement the canonical approach is able to generate:

I think the criterion of excitement is a product of the Enlightenment, and grossly misunderstands the responsibility of the theological enterprise. Undoubtedly the Gnostics were more exciting than Irenaeus! Secondly, the development of a canon is by definition a community effort. It is characteristic of the Hebrew canon to play down individual contributions and to blur the marks of the creative genius. The effect is to provide the Old Testament with a radically theocentric focus which has always been a disappointment to those whose interest rests primarily in man and his accomplishments.10

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Childs's comment reminds us that the first goal of Psalms studies should not be to thrill and amaze (although this may, at times, happen) but to understand what the words teach us about God and ourselves in relation to him. In this sense, the canonical approach appears well suited to the task. From two different but complementary angles, we have observed that the canonical approach is particularly adept at facilitating the jump from text to theology. First, the body of this study began with a detailed survey of representative commentators from different eras and schools of Psalms scholarship, a secondary purpose of which was to attempt to discern the relative ability (or indeed, concern) of each method to uncover the psalm's theological message. It was tentatively concluded that, in addition to the pre-critical scholars studied, those exegetes who employed a canonically-oriented method were also the exegetes who had the most to say, quantitatively and qualitatively, about the theology of Psalm 86. Second, the symbiotic connection between canon and theology was further confirmed by this study's canonical analysis of the intertextual and Book III contexts of Psalm 86 (chapters 5 and 6), which resulted in the conclusion that the psalm has a great deal more to say about the nature of true kingship and the subordinate quality of David's kingship than would have been detected had we ignored the psalm's canonical contexts. Thus, in a collection that is made up almost entirely of human words to God, the canonical approach enables us to discern more effectively how the biblical psalms also communicate God's message to humanity.

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In addition to its helpfulness for reading the Psalms theocentrically, the canonical approach also opens up the potential for greater interpretive use of the canonical literature outside of the Psalter. This was clearly demonstrated to be the case for Psalm 86 with its various Mosaic and Exodus connections. For too long, the Psalms have often been isolated from the rest of the Scriptures because of false assumptions about the exegetical limitations that follow from its genre as poetry or its strict delimitation into what were assumed to be unrelated compositions. The canonical approach helps to debunk this kind of thinking and in so doing is both very much consistent with and of service to the Reformational principle of *analogia scriptura*: the idea that Scripture is a unity, and as such, we must use its clearer portions to help interpret those that are less clear.

For all of its benefits, the canonical approach also comes with its own set of unique pitfalls. The greatest of these is the temptation to try to harmonize all of the findings resulting from the employment of this methodology—what might be called "a place for everything" approach. The dangers of this pitfall have been amply demonstrated by the work of Cole on Psalms 73-89 and, to a lesser extent, Zenger and Hossfeld. Commenting on studies that offer a method for reading the Psalms canonically, Wenham writes:

> There is an inevitable tendency in such works to focus on the points that can be easily connected together and to ignore psalms or parts of psalms that do not fit into the pattern. But a commentator cannot do this: he must exegete every verse and this poses challenges for canonical reading.\(^1\)

Those who fall prey to this trap may, in their zeal, have lost sight of the fact that total harmonization is neither assumed by the canonical approach, nor does its absence substantively diminish the value of such an approach.

\(^1\) Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading," 343.
Another pitfall to be avoided is the temptation to apply the method in such a mechanical way to each psalm composition that one begins to lose sight of the rich diversity that exists within the collection. In this sense, as was alluded to earlier, the exegetical task is more art than science. Certain psalms will have more connections with texts outside of itself; others will be more significant to the shape of the Psalter; and still others will have very few of these kinds of features.

In sum, the canonical approach can be a very useful and creative addition to a holistic exegetical methodology for the Psalms when applied judiciously and when the boundaries of the approach are respected.

**The Contributions of Psalm 86 to the Psalter**

We conclude with a brief summary of the insights gained into the message and significance of Psalm 86 in the course of this study. First, Psalm 86 has been shown to be an important psalm that has often been undervalued by Psalms interpreters. At their own expense, many commentators have glossed over the literary features that make it seem so ordinary upon first reading—its use of stock language, its Davidic authorship, its inclusion of typical form-elements—not recognizing that it is these very features that enable the psalm to make such far-reaching connections with such far-reaching implications.

Second, Psalm 86 communicates a unique and cohesive theological message. At its heart, Psalm 86 offers a glimpse into the psalmist's experience of coming to understand the essence of prayer and wherein lies its efficacy. Through praying, God's servant learns how to pray. He learns how to pray in a way that places himself in the
proper position to God and appeals to God on the basis of motives with substance (i.e., God's own character). The relationship between the petitioner and the merciful God upon whom he wholly relies takes on special significance in light of the attribution of the psalm to David. As God's servant, David, the humbled but nevertheless royal petitioner, acknowledges in effect that he requires the aid of a King greater than himself. Though he is a king, David cannot save himself. How much greater then is Israel's need, and indeed the need of the nations, for a King—the King—who is both Sinai's Law-giver and the center of Zion's praise.

Finally, Psalm 86 makes three broader contributions to the Psalter as a whole. First, by binding Book III with Books I-II—primarily through its Davidic authorship and genre-marking and secondarily, by its numerous lexical connections to Psalm 72—it plays a significant role in helping to structure and shape the Psalter. Second, its placement has significance for the structure and thematic flow of Book III. Third, as a psalm that supplies the petitions later answered in Psalm 116, it contributes to the overarching trajectory of the Psalter from a focus in Books I-III on a human king and kingdom to a focus in Books IV-V on a divine King, whose deliverance incites gratitude and praise.

Conclusion

In his essay on the role that the sequence of the psalms has played in interpretation throughout history, Harry P. Nasuti notes the tension that has always existed between the impulse to read the psalms individually and to read them in terms of
their sequence, in other words, to read them more like a book.12 Given the many rich folds of the Psalter, Nasuti believes that there is room in Psalms interpretation for both of these approaches.13 He advises remembering once again the words of Brevard S. Childs:

Although the psalms were often greatly refashioned for use by the later generations, no one doctrinaire position received a normative role. The material was far too rich and its established use far too diverse ever to allow a single function to subordinate all others. The psalms were collected to be used for liturgy and for study, both by a corporate body and by individuals, to remind of the great redemptive acts of the past as well as to anticipate the hopes of the future.14

If Childs is right and the purpose and function of the biblical psalms are indeed as manifold and multi-faceted as he maintains, then surely a single interpretive method cannot hope to adequately address the massive amount of material that lies before us for interpretation. Yet, no matter how daunting the task might appear, we cannot give up on these questions of methodology. Although it may be the case at times that even with the foundation of a tested and defensible method our interpretation may falter at certain points, without such a method there would be no clear way into the storehouses of riches and glory hidden within the biblical psalms.

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12 Nasuti, "Sequence and Selection," 311.


14 Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament, 522.


