

CONSTRUCTING AND DECONSTRUCTING
POWER IN PSALMS 107-150



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W. Dennis Tucker Jr.



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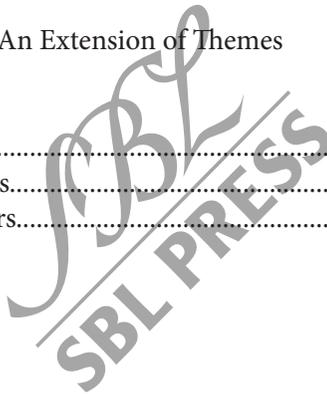
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W. Dennis Tucker Jr.
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ABBREVIATIONS

A2Hc	Royal inscription attributed to Artaxerxes found in Hamadan
A?E	Royal inscription of either Artaxerxes II or III found at Elvend
A?P	Royal inscription of either Artaxerxes II or III found at Persepolis
AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AcIr	Acta Iranica
AH	Achaemenid History
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
AMI	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran</i>
ANES	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AZERKAVO	Veröffentlichungen des Arbeitskreises zur Erforschung der Religions- und Kulturgeschichte des Antiken Vorderen Orients
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBR	<i>Bulletin of Biblical Research</i>
BCOT	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament
BE	Biblical Encyclopedia/Biblische Enzyklopädie
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph. 5th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977.
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies University of California, San Diego

BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahT	Cahiers Théologiques
CANE	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> . Edited by Jack M. Sasson. 2 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995.
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CC	Continental Commentaries
CHJ	<i>Cambridge History of Judaism</i> . Edited by W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–2006.
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
COS	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Edited by William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997-2002.
DB	Behistun Inscription of Darius I
DE	The Granj Nameh inscription of Darius I
DNa	Inscription at Darius I's burial tomb at Naqsh-e Rostam near Persepolis
DNb	Inscription at Darius I's burial tomb at Naqsh-e Rostam near Persepolis
DPd	Inscription of Darius I found at Persepolis
DPe	Inscription of Darius I found at Persepolis
DPg	Inscription of Darius I found at Persepolis
DPH	Trilingual text of Darius I from the apadana at Persepolis
DSab	Trilingual inscription on a statue of Darius I found at Susa
DSe	Inscription of Darius I found at Susa
DSf	A trilingual text of Darius I from Susa
DZc	Inscription of Darius I found at Suez
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited by M. E. J. Richardson. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
HANES	History of the Ancient Near East Studies

HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBT	<i>Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Study
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MLBS	Mercer Library of Biblical Studies
MT	Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible
NIB	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i> . Edited by Leander Keck. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996–2004.
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OP	Old Persian
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PIBA	Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association
PRSt	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
QD	Quaestiones disputatae
SB	Sources bibliques

SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBLABS	Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBM	Stuttgarter biblische Monographien
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>StIr</i>	<i>Studia Iranica</i>
<i>T&K</i>	<i>Texte & Kontexte</i>
<i>TgPss</i>	<i>Aramaic Targums of the Psalms</i>
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by Ernst Jenni, with the assistance of Claus Westermann. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997.
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
XPh	Daiva Text, a Persian text found at Persepolis attributed to Xerxes
XPl	Persian text found at Persepolis attributed to Xerxes
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

BOOK 5 IN THE PSALTER: AN INTRODUCTION

1.0. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“Whoever is among you of all his people, may Yahweh his God be with him. Let him go up!” (NRSV, modified). These hopeful words conclude the book of 2 Chronicles. Coupled with a modified version of the Cyrus decree, the narrator places this generous invitation on the lips of Cyrus. With such an invitation, the writer of Chronicles appears to imply that the suffering of exile has ended and that the joyous, even celebratory, work of restoration lies just ahead. Likewise, Deutero-Isaiah announces such a theme in the salvation oracles found in that collection. These oracles portend a future in which the people of God will “go up” to enjoy a land prepared for the exiles. Deutero-Isaiah suggests, albeit it with more poetically persuasive imagery, that with the arrival of Cyrus, history will be righted and so will the people of God.

Historians have frequently labeled the period beginning with the edict of Cyrus, “the Restoration.”¹ Perhaps like the narrator of 2 Chronicles, scholars have sought to paint this period as one fraught with hope, a period filled with restorative possibility. At times, the attention given to such possibilities may have overshadowed the larger socio-political dynamics asso-

1. See most notably, Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968). See also the works of John Bright, *A History of Israel* (4th ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Norman K. Gottwald uses the term “restoration” but refers to this period more broadly as “Israel’s Colonial Recovery,” recognizing the socio-political implications of imperial rule for Yehud (*The Hebrew Bible: A Brief Socio-Literary Introduction* [abridged by Rebecca J. Kruger Gaudino; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009], 235–336).

ciated with empire—dynamics that no doubt influenced the events that transpired in a small region of the Persian Empire called “Yehud.”

Recent studies have attempted to rectify this deficiency by paying particular attention to the concept of empire more broadly, as well as its impact on the texts generated in this particular period.² As a result of such extensive work, Jon Berquist has even suggested that a paradigm shift of sorts has occurred in the nomenclature associated with that period, shifting from that of “exile and restoration” to that of “empire and colony.”³ This shift, according to Berquist, has provided a “different conceptual framework for understanding Jerusalem and its environs in the time of the Persian Empire.”⁴ Equally so, this “different conceptual framework” has opened up new avenues for reading and interpreting the literature generated under empire. For obvious reasons, research along these lines has focused primarily on narrative texts such as Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and selected prophetic texts (e.g., Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Trito-Isaiah). These studies have sought to discern the socio-political and

2. Examples of such work would include Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); “Constructions of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 53–66; Jeremiah W. Cataldo, *A Theocratic Yehud? Issues of Government in a Persian Province* (LHBOTS 498; New York: T&T Clark, 2009); Kenneth G. Hoglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* (SBLDS 125; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); John Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (VTSup 91; Leiden: Brill, 2002); Melody Knowles, *Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the Religious Practice of Yehud and the Diaspora in the Persian Period* (SBLABS 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006); Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, eds., *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006); John W. Watts, ed., *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (SBLSymS 17; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001).

3. Jon L. Berquist, “Approaching Yehud,” in *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period* (ed. Jon L. Berquist; SemeiaSt 50; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 2. See also the article by Julia O’Brien in the same volume. She dispenses with the label “exile and restoration,” preferring instead “exile and empire,” reflecting scholarship’s relatively recent foray into the study of empire and its impact on biblical studies (“From Exile to Empire: A Response,” in *Approaching Yehud*, 209–14).

4. *Ibid.*, 2.

socio-theological dimensions of the text as it relates to empire and the role of empire in the construction of identity and ideology.

Largely absent from research on empire, and the Persian Empire in particular, however, has been the book of Psalms.⁵ Although commentators have frequently assigned specific psalms (e.g., Pss 1; 9–10; 107; 137; 145) to the postexilic period based on form or theme, they have not necessarily sought to explore the connections between the psalms and the larger imperial context in which the psalms were allegedly written or collected. In “Psalms and the Construction of the Self,” one of the few recent articles attempting to evaluate the psalms with reference to the notion of empire, Berquist offers a somewhat cursory analysis of the psalms read as Persian period literature.⁶ He suggests that the psalms construct identities that both connect to and resist the empire. Although Berquist’s attention to identity formation is an important conclusion, and one to which we shall return later, his overall approach in the article remains too general and lacks the kind of specific engagement with the biblical text found in previous studies devoted to the role of empire in narrative or prophetic texts.⁷

5. Gunther Wanke has attempted to identify the principal themes of the psalmists during the Persian period. Among those identified by Wanke include: (1) the focusing of Israel’s hope on Zion-Jerusalem; (2) a stronger orientation towards Temple worship in Jerusalem as a result of the change from “nation to congregation;” (3) the prominent attention given to the law; (4) the addition of a “universal dimension” to the image of God, separating such a conception from its close ties with Palestine; and (5) the use of wisdom theology (“Prophecy and Psalms in the Persian Period,” *CHJ* 1:162–88, esp. 183–84). Surprisingly, altogether absent in Wanke’s treatment of the psalms in the Persian period is any discussion of the Persian Empire itself and the political impact of empire upon the theology of the Psalter.

6. Jon L. Berquist, “Psalms, Postcolonialism, and the Construction of the Self,” in *Approaching Yehud*, 195–202. Berquist opines that “the psalms were part of the empire’s control of the region through its ideological social control of persons and lives. Psalms offer words and social spaces that shape individual experiences and emotions into socially accepted expressions, which at least indirectly serve imperial interests” (196). In his earlier work, *Judaism in Persia’s Shadow*, Berquist is less shrill in his assertion that the psalms functioned to serve “imperial interests,” suggesting instead that “within the songs are traces of the Persian Empire’s domination of individual lives” (193). The evidence within the psalms themselves seems to support Berquist’s claim that the psalms reflect the domination of human life by those in power (cf. Pss 125; 129; 144).

7. For a similar critique of Berquist’s article, see O’Brien, “From Exile to Empire: A Response,” 212.

As a result, what remains needed is an extended reading of the Psalter, or some portion thereof, that offers evidence of such claims, or that extends the argument in new and important ways.

Erich Zenger provided a new reading of the Psalter in light of empire in a brief but provocatively entitled article, “Der jüdische Psalter—ein anti-imperiales Buch?” Zenger suggests that the Psalter in its final form might properly be labeled a *Kampfbuch* against imperial powers.⁸ Read in this way, the Psalter “concerns the political relevance of religious traditions” and attempts to explore the relationship, if any, between *Gebet* and *Politik*.⁹ The psalms, individually and collectively, portray Yahweh as a warrior for justice and righteousness, but they also portray Yahweh as a warrior who wars against chaos. Zenger qualifies such a statement, arguing that chaos is often portrayed in biblical texts by “political systems, and especially in the kings and princes of enemy nations.”¹⁰ The Psalter makes the same claim repeatedly “that the biblical God of power brings the enemy to an end, breaking the threatening, oppressive, and destructive power.”¹¹ According to this line of reasoning, the “anti-imperial” bias in the Psalter would appear to be solely directed at those who lie beyond the borders of Israel. Yet Zenger does not reserve critique of imperial power to foreign nations alone but instead suggests that the identity of power *within* Israel itself is altered in the structure and theology of the Psalter. As Zenger explains, by the end of book 5 (Ps 144), David is defined as the “servant of Yahweh, clearly not a powerful, imperial king, but a weak figure who stands in need of deliverance by Yahweh.”¹² Thus for Zenger, imperial power writ large, be it foreign or otherwise, falls under the castigating gaze of the psalmists. Ideologically, for some interpreters, this may be an attractive proposal because it deconstructs empires of all sorts. As attractive as the proposal

8. Erich Zenger, “Der jüdische Psalter—ein anti-imperiales Buch?” in *Religion und Gesellschaft: Studien zu ihrer Wechselbeziehung in den Kulturen des Antiken Vorderen Orients* (ed. Rainer Albertz; AZERKAVO 1/AOAT 248; Münster: Ugarit, 1997), 95–105.

9. *Ibid.*, 95. All translations are the author’s unless otherwise noted.

10. *Ibid.*, 97. See also Bernd Janowski, “Dem Löwen gleich, gierig nach Raub: Zum Feindbild in den Psalmen,” *EvT* 55 (1995): 155–73. See especially Janowski’s treatment of Egyptian iconography as illustrative of the connection often made between mythic war and historical-political enemies (169–71).

11. Zenger, “Der jüdische Psalter,” 96.

12. *Ibid.*, 98. For further comments on the role of David in book 5, see §6.2.3 in the present study.

may seem, it is still found wanting. While the Psalter does pose a challenge to imperial power, against both those within Israel but especially beyond, Zenger fails to acknowledge the differentiation that exists in the critique of each. The critique of foreign powers remains much more acute and far more pointed than the critique of the Davidic monarchy.¹³ The critique, if it can be called such, against the Davidic monarchy is far more nuanced. It is less about a critique, as seen in the prophetic corpus, and much more about the growing awareness of the complex social and political context following the exile.

Similar to Berquist, Zenger provides only a sketch of what such a thesis might mean for reading and interpreting the Psalter. He suggests that Pss 2–89 formed an initial collection, a “messianic Psalter,” but one that actually “democratized” the messianic perspective to include the nation of Israel in this role (cf. Ps 89:51).¹⁴ Psalms 90–150 shift to a “decidedly theocratic concept” announcing the universal reign of Yahweh. The bulk of Zenger’s article, however, is focused on Pss 1–2 as the introduction to the full collection and Pss 146–150 as the conclusion, with attention to their respective contributions to an anti-imperial bias. Book 4 and book 5, comprising a sizable portion of the Psalter, are covered in only two short paragraphs, providing exceedingly broad generalizations about each collection.

13. David C. Mitchell has challenged the assertion that the Psalter stands against any form of Davidic rule. For Mitchell, even a psalm such as Ps 89 is not meant to signal the end of the Davidic monarchy but rather likely meant to refer to a “David scion not yet come” (“Lord, Remember David: G. H. Wilson and the Message of the Psalter,” *VT* 56 [2006]: 526–48). See also Mitchell’s earlier work, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). Although he does not address book 5 as a formal unit, he does consider the role of the Songs of Ascents and selected psalms from book 5 in his attempt to uncover an eschatological predictive program in the Psalter, similar to the alleged program in Zech 9–14. Although an intriguing proposal, it has failed to garner considerable support in recent psalms’s scholarship, due primarily to Mitchell’s attempt to reconstruct some form of an enthronement festival.

14. Zenger, “Der jüdische Psalter,” 98. For a similar conclusion, see W. Dennis Tucker Jr., “Democratization and the Language of the Poor in Psalms 2–89,” *HBT* 25 (2003): 161–78. On Pss 2–89 as a messianic collection, see Christopher Rösel, *Die Messianische Redaktion des Psalters: Studien zu Entstehung und Theologie der Sammlung Psalm 2–89* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1999). For a different assessment of the David figure in the Psalter, especially in books 4–5, see Jerome F. D. Creach’s *The Destiny of the Righteous in the Psalms* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 99–110.

The chief weakness in Zenger's thesis is his failure to identify the basis for an anti-imperial theology in the Psalter, in particular, as it relates to foreign threats. He does suggest that such a theological move is born out of an encounter with a "hostile, wicked and destructive world."¹⁵ Within such a world, according to Zenger, political systems, particularly the kings and princes of foreign nations, threaten the existence of Israel.¹⁶ Beyond these rather broad claims, however, Zenger offers little else by way of specificity.¹⁷ Or put differently, despite Zenger's penchant for a diachronic reading of the Psalter elsewhere in his scholarship, he offers little historical or ideological evidence in which to root his initial claims. The absence of such specificity does not undermine the final claims of Zenger (i.e., the Psalter has an anti-imperial bent), but it does weaken the force of his overall argument.

1.1. BOOK 5 IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

Within the last three decades, the role of book 5, as a discrete unit within the Psalter, has received minimal attention, with many studies on the Psalter preferring instead to focus specifically on books 1–3 or book 4, or perhaps the Psalter more generally, including a discussion of book 5.¹⁸ Gerald Wilson's work provided the initial impetus for considering individual

15. Zenger, "Der jüdische Psalter," 96.

16. *Ibid.*, 97.

17. Zenger does suggest that the Psalter likely reached its final form around 200 B.C.E., in a time laden with external political threats and internal fissures (*ibid.*, 95). For a more detailed diachronic proposal concerning the formation of the Psalter, see Erich Zenger, "Das Buch der Psalmen," in *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (ed. Erich Zenger; 6th ed.; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006), 363–65.

18. For a review of contemporary scholarship on books 1–3, see Martin Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen des Königtums Gottes im Psalter: Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Redaktion der theokratischen Bücher IV–V im Psalter* (ATANT 83; Zürich: Theologischer, 2004), 93–123; for book 4, see 125–32. The recent volume in the *Hermeneia* series by Frank Lothar Hossfeld and Eric Zenger provides an exhaustive treatment of the individual psalms in book 5 as well as brief excursions on the smaller compositional units within the collection (*Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* [ed. Klaus Baltzer; trans. Linda Maloney; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011]). Although Hossfeld and Zenger give attention to the social and political themes in each psalm, the nature of the commentary format itself precludes them from providing a general assessment of issues related to empire in book 5. Their comments do, however, inform the treatment of the selected psalms in §3 and §4 of this study.

books and their significance to the Psalter as a whole, but as explained below, his treatment of book 5 proved lacking in many ways related to the present study. More recently, however, the works of Martin Leuenberger and Egbert Ballhorn have sought to explicate more fully the compositional and redactional history of book 5, while correspondingly, to identify thematic strands. The role of enemies and empires in the collection of psalms in book 5, however, receives minor attention in the works of Wilson and Leuenberger, while receiving more attention in the work of Ballhorn, as explained below.

1.1.1. GERALD WILSON AND *THE EDITING OF THE HEBREW PSALTER*

Gerald Wilson's groundbreaking work, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, signaled a significant methodological shift in Psalms research, one that has exerted considerable influence in the research on the Psalter for the last three decades.¹⁹ Wilson explored the organizational strategy of the Psalter, and where possible, examined possible vestiges of editorial work. Although interested in the final form of the Psalter, Wilson's methodology derived in part from the apparent editorial techniques observed in Sumerian temple hymns and Mesopotamian hymnic incipits, with attention to their possible implications for a similar analysis of the Hebrew Psalter. Based upon the editorial positioning of royal psalms in books 1–3 (Pss 2, 72, and 89), Wilson surmised that the first three books were an exilic response to the loss of the Davidic monarchy and represented the community's desire for deliverance and even restoration.²⁰ At the conclusion of book 3, this desire is couched as a rebuke of God for his apparent

19. Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985). Following his initial volume, Wilson refined his views in "The Use of Royal Psalms in the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT* 35 (1986): 85–94; "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Int* 46 (1992): 129–42; "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann Jr.; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 72–82; "The Structure of the Psalter," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (ed. David Firth and Philip S. Johnston; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 229–46; "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller Jr.; VTSUP 99; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 391–406.

20. This position was argued more forcefully in one of Wilson's final pieces, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 391–406.

“hiddenness” in the midst of great national tragedy (89:46–51). Books 4 and 5 (Pss 90–150), according to Wilson, represent the response of the sages to the questions and dilemmas raised in the first three books. In support of this, Wilson stresses the location of wisdom psalms or those clearly influenced by the wisdom tradition (90, 107, and 145) at strategic points in both collections, in effect, influencing the tenor of both books. In summary, Wilson’s volume provided the first extended treatment of the individual books within the Psalter, while also proposing a possible editorial strategy for its present arrangement.

In his analysis of book 5, however, Wilson surmised that a “detailed analysis of the editorial organization of the fifth book” proves difficult due to its unwieldy size (forty-four psalms) and the appearance of previous collections within book 5 which, he suggests, would appear to limit “the amount of editorial manipulation possible.”²¹ Despite these initial disclaimers, Wilson does proffer a number of suggestions related to the editorial structure of book 5 and its implications for considering the dominant thematic threads in that collection. He noted that there are two groups of Davidic psalms (Pss 108–110, 138–145) preserved in book 5 and their placement at the beginning and end of the collection may suggest the primary, and perhaps only, form of editorial intentionality within that book. Wilson avers that “While it is difficult to trace any clear strategy of editorial juxtaposition threading its way through the individual [psalms] ... the groups as a whole seem to intend to set up David as a model in response to the concerns of the [psalms] which precede them.”²² Despite the allusions to David, he correctly notes that the emphasis in book 5 shifts away from human kingship, at least as Israel’s hope, and instead places its focus on Yahweh as the enthroned king (Ps 145). Book 5, according to Wilson, was meant to generate an attitude of trust and reliance upon Yahweh, as modeled in the life of David. Generally absent, however, from his discussion of the book as a whole are the threats posed by the political foes.²³ He does suggest that book 5 challenges the community to “trust in Yahweh as king rather than in fragile and failing human princes,” but even here, the threat

21. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Bible*, 220. He notes that the large number of consecutive, untitled psalms within books 4 and 5 also present challenges in identifying an editorial strategy (177).

22. *Ibid.*, 221.

23. *Ibid.*, 227.

posed by such figures appears minimized and does not figure prominently in the analysis provided.²⁴

1.1.2. MARTIN LEUENBERGER: A THEOCRATIC BOOK 5

In *Konzeptionen des Königtums Gottes im Psalter: Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Redaktion der theokratischen Bücher IV–V im Psalter*, Martin Leuenberger makes a significant contribution to the analysis of the second half of the Psalter and the development of the “kingdom of God” theology which dominates it. In many ways, Leuenberger follows the consensus views established by Wilson and others concerning books 1–3, although he arrives at his conclusions in a way that differs methodologically from Wilson and much of the earlier North American work on the first three books in the Psalter.²⁵ According to Leuenberger the concept of a “messianic king” dominates Pss 2–89, and like Rösel and others, he suggests that the collection functioned independently as a “messianic Psalter.” Leuenberger contends that Pss 90–106, containing the recurring language of יהוה מלך and the larger domain of associated images, were added to this earlier collection. The addition of these psalms consequently shifted the entire collection (Pss 2–106) to a theocratic Psalter.²⁶ Book 5 was a later addition, sharing the theocratic perspective of book 4, but developed and appended to the collection in three stages: 107–118; 119–136; and 137–150. Within each collection, important themes were advanced that support the larger claim of the kingship of Yahweh. Psalms 107–118 highlight, for the first time, the international experience of deliverance, while Pss 119–136 situate this experience of deliverance within the perspectives of creation and history. Psalms 136–150 adopt these themes in principle and develop, in Ps 145, a synthesis of the collection’s theology. According

24. Wilson, “King, Messiah, and the Reign of God,” 393.

25. Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen des Königtums Gottes im Psalter*, 85–92. Leuenberger’s approach is two-pronged, analyzing the text diachronically through redaction history but also analyzing the text synchronically by considering the primary conceptual “horizon markers” (*Leithorizont*), in an effort to identify the fundamental claims through the collection (25). Wilson’s approach would be considered largely synchronic.

26. *Ibid.*, 92.

to Leuenberger, “the conceptual basis of book 5” exists in Ps 145, and particularly in verses 10–13.²⁷

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
 and all your faithful ones shall bless you.
 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
 and tell of your power,
 To make known to all people your mighty deeds,
 and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom
 and your dominion endures throughout all generations. (NRSV)

This language, coupled with the יהוה מלך psalms in book 4 and the language employed in Pss 146–150, suggests that the “Psalter is a song of praise concerning the universal reign of God.”²⁸

The specific presuppositions and conclusions of Leuenberger’s compositional history are not of primary concern for this study. The chief concern relates to his view of the enemy in book 5 and its significance for understanding the collection. While the kingdom of God represents the primary theme of books 4 and 5 for Leuenberger (and most scholars), he does concede that a number of secondary themes are present. Among them is the opposition between the just and the wicked or the enemy, and frequently this opposition is manifested in some type of perceived threat. Within book 5, this threat to the just can be and is often extended to the international horizon (*Völkerhorizont*).²⁹ For example, in Pss 107–110 Leuenberger contends that the threat of the enemy outlined in Ps 107 is extended in Pss 108–110, with Ps 108 highlighting the international aspect of the threat through the listing of numerous enemy neighbors which function as a cipher for the nations writ large.³⁰ Likewise, the threat posed by an enemy nation in Ps 137 serves to introduce the final collection of book 5 (Pss 138–145). Leuenberger argues that the chief theme in that collection remains the kingdom of God, but it must be understood in light of the threat posed by the nations.³¹ He offers a more extended assessment of the enemy nations than that of Wilson, but fails in part to consider

27. *Ibid.*, 387.

28. *Ibid.* See also Zenger, “Das Buch der Psalmen,” 249.

29. Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen des Königtums Gottes im Psalter*, 383.

30. On the role of the nations in Ps 108, see §3.2.1 in this study.

31. Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen des Königtums Gottes im Psalter*, 320–45.

whether such rhetoric contributes to any form of an anti-imperial ideology in the collection.

1.1.3. EGBERT BALLHORN: BOOK 5 IN LIGHT OF A PROPER *LESERICHTUNG*

Leuenberger sought to provide a diachronic rendering of books 4 and 5 in the Psalter, suggesting that the dominant theme that bound the collections together was the kingdom of God. Egbert Ballhorn, in *Zum Telos des Psalters: der Textzusammenhang des Vierten und Fünften Psalmenbuches*, considers the same section of the Psalter as Leuenberger, but differs in approach methodologically.³² His book begins with the question “Why should one read the Psalter *as a book*?” and continues by suggesting that one only understands the Psalter in all of its complexity in light of a proper *Leserichtung*, “reading direction.”³³ As one reads from the beginning, various collections are identified throughout the Psalter. The synchronic approach employed by Ballhorn, however, “in no way can or must mean an eschewal of the diachronic analysis” of the text.³⁴ Diachronically Ballhorn, similar to Leuenberger, attempts to track the “formation” of the discrete units found within book 5, but he does so with a particular sensitivity to a proper *Leserichtung*. As he explains, “What stands at the end, has a greater weight. Whatever has the last word dominates” the entire collection.³⁵ Although the focus of his work is on books 4 and 5, he does locate these books within the larger “narrative structure” of the entire Psalter.³⁶ The differing collections and themes represented in the Psalter stand in “mutual dialogue.” By that, he means that “these collections however are not in enclosed units, but exist in varying connections with one another” and the words and themes that unite these collections are what remains of primary importance.³⁷ Thus, the appropriate “reading direction” ensures that the reader recognizes how these themes have been “initiated, superimposed, transformed, negated, and carried forward.”³⁸

32. Egbert Ballhorn, *Zum Telos des Psalters: Der Textzusammenhang des Vierten und Fünften Psalmenbuches* (BBB 138; Berlin: Philo, 2004).

33. *Ibid.*, 11, emphasis original.

34. *Ibid.*, 28.

35. *Ibid.*, 27.

36. *Ibid.*, 32–33.

37. *Ibid.*, 361.

38. *Ibid.*

Ballhorn identifies five themes in books 4 and 5 of the Psalter: the concept of Israel; the Torah; Israel and the nations; the changing character (*Gestaltwandlung*) of the Temple; and the Davidic King and the Kingdom of God. As noted above, according to Ballhorn, all five themes stand in a mutual dialogue across the various collections. The role of the nations in the final two books appears to shift somewhat from collection to collection, making it difficult to harmonize the various statements and their portrayal of the nations. In some texts such as Ps 96 or Ps 100, the psalmists offer a more sympathetic rendering of the nations and their participation in the kingdom of God. Other psalms (Pss 108–110; 144) offer a much more negative appraisal of the nations. Yet the apparent discrepancy in perspective may be better understood when nuanced correctly. He notes the subtleties in both lines of thought, explaining “Every form of human rule will be wiped out by God, but all humans will take part in the universal, eschatological praise of God (Ps 150).”³⁹ Thus, book 5 serves as an indictment against all forms of foreign power but not necessarily a castigation of all foreign people. In short, when understood properly, according to Ballhorn, the psalms found in book 5 possess an anti-imperial bent similar to the position outlined by Zenger.

1.2. FOREIGN NATIONS AS THE ENEMIES IN THE PSALTER

Wilson, Leuenberger, and Ballhorn have recognized, in varying degrees, the presence of enemies in book 5. As will be made evident below (§§3–4), Leuenberger and Ballhorn, in particular, imply that the threat posed by the enemies may best be understood in many psalms in book 5 as a political threat, one associated with another nation or people group.⁴⁰ Neither

39. *Ibid.*, 377.

40. The literature on the enemy in the psalms is extensive. For a general overview of selected positions in scholarship, see Hans Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (trans. Keith Crim; CC; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 125–36; Steven J. L. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (JSOTSup 44; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 15–48; T. R. Hobbs and P. K. Jackson, “The Enemy in the Psalms,” *BTB* 21 (1991): 22–29; Gerald Sheppard, “‘Enemies’ and the Politics of Prayer in the Book of Psalms,” in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. David Jobling, Peggy Day, and Gerald Sheppard; Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 61–82. See also the influential positions outlined in Harris Birkeland, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1955); Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (2 vols.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 1:195–

scholar, however, provides a sustained analysis of the role of enemies and empires within the collection.⁴¹ The identification of the enemy as a nation or foreign power has a long history within psalms scholarship and was championed most forcefully by Harris Birkeland in his monograph, *Die Feinde des Individuums in der israelitischen Psalmenliteratur*, and later in a subsequent revision of the thesis, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms*.⁴² Although the identification of the enemy in communal laments as a foreign power (Pss 74; 79) was not disputed, the identity of the enemy in the individual psalms remained, and remains, a point of debate in psalms scholarship. As noted below, Birkeland sought to champion the claim that in many of the individual psalms the enemy was likely that of a foreign nation and that the “I” in the psalm either represented Israel or its desig-nee (i.e., the king).

His initial work appeared nearly three-quarters of a century before the emergence of postcolonial criticism, yet in many ways, the two share common concerns, albeit through differing methodologies.⁴³ For example, Birkeland noted the frequency with which the Psalter spoke of the

219; and Othmar Keel, *Feinde und Gottesleugner: Studien zum Image der Widersacher in den Individualpsalmen* (SBM 7; Stuttgart: Katholisches Biblewerk, 1969). A number of more recent studies have explored the metaphorical rendering of the enemy in the Psalter: Amy C. Cottrill, *Language, Power, and Identity in the Lament Psalms of the Individual* (LHBOTS 493; New York: T&T Clark, 2008); Dharmakkan Dhanaraj, *Theological Significance of the Motif of Enemies in Selected Psalms of Individual Lament* (Glückstadt: Augustin, 1992), 38–53; Bernd Janowski, “Dem Löwen gleich, gierig nach Raub,” 155–173; Peter Riede, *Im Netz des Jägers: Studien zur Feindmetaphorik der Individualpsalmen* (WMANT 85; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchen, 2000).

41. Ballhorn does highlight the role of the enemy in selected psalms throughout his monograph and concludes with a very short summary of the relationship between Israel and the nations based on a proper *Leserichtung*. His summary, however, remains too general to offer much help in analyzing the role of empire within the collection (*Zum Telos des Psalters*, 376–77).

42. Harris Birkeland, *Die Feinde des Individuums in der israelitischen Psalmenliteratur: Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der semitischen Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte* (Oslo: Grøndahl, 1933); *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms*.

43. See especially Jon L. Berquist, “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives,” *Semeia* 75 (1996): 15–35. See also Fernando Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000); Rasaiah S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and his more recent work, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

enemies of the nation and the enemies of the “I”, thereby creating “an outstanding feature in the ideology of the Book of Psalms.”⁴⁴ This focus on an “ideology” of power that threatened Israel not only served his thesis well, it has also remained a central point of investigation and analysis in postcolonial criticism. For Birkeland, the continual threat of war and the persistent presence of imperial powers no doubt informed Israel’s ideology of power. He states

Wars occurred during the greater part of the history of Israel, and many [individual psalms] and [national psalms] are based on situations created by these wars. But Israel also suffered from gentiles when there was no war, viz. when gentiles ruled the country. As a matter of fact, Israel had to suffer from foreign occupation and domination in Assyrian, in Babylonian, in Persian, and in Greek and in Roman times ... Gentiles, thus, are found both within and without the Israelite society.⁴⁵

The considerable work in biblical studies over the last three decades has explored the impact of the Persian Empire, in particular, on Yehud.⁴⁶ These studies have recast Persia and Persia’s influence on the region in language that is similar to that of Birkeland’s (“to suffer from foreign occupation and domination”).

In an attempt to identify the impact of empire upon the theology of isolated psalms more generally, and the impact of the empire related to the identity of the enemy more particularly, Birkeland set out to redefine scholarship’s approach to the question. Prior to his work on the subject, the enemy in the individual psalms was construed as either a group that stood in opposition to the “pious circles” of the “I” or, following Mowinckel’s claim, the enemy was associated with sorcerers who allegedly plagued the psalmist with sickness.⁴⁷ Perceiving both options as unsatisfactory, Birkeland pursued a different path of investigation. According to his findings, there were twenty psalms that clearly identified the enemy as a foreign nation. In these psalms he noted patterns of language that remained consistent throughout this subset. For Birkeland, the term “pattern” func-

44. Birkeland, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms*, 7.

45. *Ibid.*, 25.

46. See above, note 1.

47. See Sigmund Mowinckel, “’Āwen and the Psalms of Individual Lament,” in *Psalm Studies* (trans. Mark E. Biddle; 2 vols.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).

tioned sociologically, “signifying a complex of traditionally combined manifestations of human behavior or ideology.”⁴⁸ Thus, he alleged that the pattern used to describe the enemy as a foreign power in these twenty psalms included references to malicious speech by the enemy, treacherous behavior, hubris, and “absolute godlessness.”⁴⁹ In many of the remaining individual psalms, he suggested that similar patterns of language appear in reference to the enemy, likely implying that these references should be construed as foreign powers, or their designees, as well. His approach proves suggestive in its attempt to identify a “pattern” or an “ideology” in the Psalter. He sought to identify an ideology of the enemy in the individual laments, and in some ways he succeeded in identifying such language and its contribution to such a sustained ideology. The presence of enemies, and in particular political enemies, formed the foundation of such an ideology and intersects in part with the present study. Whereas Birkeland sought to uncover patterns of language that would identify convincingly the enemy in individual psalms as a national political threat, this study will consider the language and patterns present in book 5 that suggest the Psalter contains an ideology that stands in response to power, and political power more particularly. In his postcolonial analysis on the book of Jeremiah, Steed Davidson suggests that a postcolonial perspective may refer to a “close reading of texts *qua* text to discover embedded codes of resistance or otherwise, to explore rhetorical shapes, and to examine literary constructions ... it sees the Bible as subsumed within the rhetorics of resistance to colonial and hegemonic power.”⁵⁰ Through a close reading of selected psalms, this study will consider the manner in which human power is envisioned and note the way in which a certain “rhetoric of resistance” emerges. This rhetoric generates an ideology that remains firmly anti-imperial in orientation. It is an ideology that at once seeks both to deconstruct and construct power.

48. Birkeland, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms*, 17.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Steed V. Davidson, *Empire and Exile: Postcolonial Readings of the Book of Jeremiah* (LHBOTS 542; New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 43. Postcolonial readings of biblical texts may also pay attention to the manner in which the text supports and promulgates the agendas of those in power. While such a reading may be justified in some biblical books, the psalms in book 5 do nothing to legitimate those who hold power, as will be suggested in the following chapters.

1.3. SUMMARY

This study builds off the works of Wilson, Leuenberger, and Ballhorn, as well as that of Birkeland in an effort to extend Zenger's thesis regarding an anti-imperial tendency in the Psalter. Wilson, Leuenberger, Ballhorn, and Birkeland acknowledge, in varying degrees, the role of the enemy as political threat within book 5, yet none provides a thorough analysis of how the varying psalmists construct the image of the threat, much less, deconstruct it. While I am not seeking to reinvoké Birkeland's unequivocal claim related to the enemy in the individual psalms, I do propose that his *methodological approach* may be instructive to some degree. Methodologically, Birkeland remained focused on identifying the constitutive elements within an "ideology" focused on the enemy. In modern parlance, he used cultural criticism in an effort to identify the role of the enemy within selected psalms.

Within book 5, there is considerable attention given to the role of empire and political power within Israel's past and present circumstances. Using an approach similar to Birkeland's, one that gives attention to the sociocultural context of the text, I would argue that book 5 seeks to construct a subtle anti-imperial ideology in response to the threats imposed from all empires both past and present, but in particular the Persian Empire.⁵¹ Julia O'Brien has argued that "Persian-period texts cannot be read apart from the ideological and material dimensions of the empire in which they were created."⁵² The Persian period proved formative in the creation of texts and, like much of biblical literature, would likely have had a similar influence on the Psalter. Although some psalms certainly had their origins in the preexilic period, the Psalter as a whole began to take shape under Persian rule. Consequently, the present study attempts

51. Although David Carr explores the role of Scripture within a Hellenistic world, he is right in his insistence that texts function as "a phenomenon of cultural resistance. Like most forms of cultural resistance, it is integrally bound up with the elements and forms of the culture it resists" (*Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 274). See also Greg Carey's similar assessment on the appropriation of imperial language in the ideology of the book of Revelation ("Book of Revelation as Counter-Imperial Script," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* [ed. Richard A. Horsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008], 157–76). See also the discussion on figured worlds and identity formation in §6 of the present study.

52. O'Brien, "From Exile to Empire: A Response," 214.

to locate much of the ideology of power found in Pss 107–145 within the stream of imperial ideology emanating from Persia.

The imperial ideology, which began in earnest under Darius I, dominated throughout the history of the Achaemenid dynasty, and likely would have influenced the ideologies and identity of those living in Yehud. Book 5 in the Psalter contains a strong critique of power, particularly that of foreign empires, and may best be understood as a response to the type of worldview generated and promulgated by the Persian Empire, a view that extended in many ways even into the reign of the early Hellenists, in particular Alexander.⁵³ For the community in Yehud after Darius I, their only frame of reference for imperial rule would have been that of the Persian Empire. Any attempt by those in Yehud to construct their own identity in response to such an ideology, much less any form of ideological resistance, would have required them to draw heavily from the ideology inculcated during that period. This is not to suggest that all of book 5 was formed during the period of Persian rule, although some surely was, only that the Persian imperial ideology served to foment a type of cynicism towards all human power.

In the following chapter, the chief tenets of Persian imperial ideology are identified, with particular attention given to the royal inscriptions and the accompanying iconography. The chapter will also explore how such an ideology may have been disseminated across an empire as massive as that of the Achaemenid's. Chapters 3 and 4 will consider a number of psalms in book 5 in an attempt to identify an anti-imperial ideology that appears throughout the collection. The ideology constructed in these psalms stands in stark contrast to the ideology of empire generated by the Persians and, in many ways, undercuts the depiction of power, subjugation, and cosmic order communicated through the propaganda of the Achaemenid dynasty. At no point in book 5 does a psalmist provide a thoroughgoing endorsement of the Persians or any other imperial power. Rather, as Ballhorn has noted correctly, the psalmists distinguish between the nations as political power, which will ultimately be destroyed, and "all flesh" (145:21), which will be invited to participate in the kingdom of Yahweh.

In addition to deconstructing the images of human power, the psalmists in book 5 also constructed an image of Yahweh as the sole source of

53. On the appropriation of Achaemenid imperial ideology by Alexander, see Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* (trans. Peter T. Daniels; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 873–76.

power. The psalms in book 5, in particular, emphasize that Yahweh is the God of the heavens, and as such, usurps any authority or power assigned to the deities of the other nations. This notion of Yahweh as the God of heaven and the implications for the construction and deconstruction of power will be considered in chapter 5. The psalms in book 5 constructed a particular identity for the people of God, one that stressed the inefficacy of human strength in the face of imperial power and called for utter reliance upon the Divine King. Chapter 6 will explore the manner in which various psalms advocate for such an identity

As Berquist has suggested, “an understanding of psalms within a historical context of the Second Temple must begin with the imperial context of the Persian Empire.”⁵⁴ It is that to which we now turn.



54. Berquist, “Psalms, Postcolonialism, and the Construction of the Self,” 195.