A Theology of Lament from the Psalms through the Lens of Active Substance Addiction

by

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Abstract

This thesis develops a theology of lament through the lens of active substance addiction (i.e. substance dependency syndrome) by engaging with the individual lament Psalms. By defining the causal relationship of sin to the psalmist’s negative situation in the lament Psalms, Dyck considers the alcoholic’s sinful action as also constructing his or her suffering experience. To understand this relationship in both the Psalms and active substance addiction, Dyck draws on Augustine’s theologies of the disordered/divided will and conscientia (‘consciousness’) to argue that human sinfulness is a result of a person directing his or her will to something that is not God and a misrelation to that which God created good. In this exercise, Dyck clarifies the moral model’s understanding of the conceptual framework of substance dependency syndrome by again drawing on Augustine to argue that we separate ‘sinfulness’ and ‘evil’ as being synonymous terms to describe the alcoholic and the alcoholic’s negative actions. Furthermore, by pushing against the disease/scientific model’s understanding of substance dependency syndrome, Dyck argues that active substance addiction impacts more than just the sufferer’s physical, psychological, and social realities, but also his or her spirituality. Because of the sufferer’s active substance addiction and compulsive behaviour, he or she experiences a degrading of his or her life situation. As a result, the context of the sufferer’s lament is formulated. This thesis culminates in the argument that the sufferer’s delivery of a prayerful lament to God functions to enable him or her to accept that (1) “I am an alcoholic” and (2) “I can
get better.” This two-fold acceptance allows the sufferer to rediscover that which he or she lost because of active substance addiction: the voice.
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Finally, I acknowledge and thank The VitaNova Foundation, an addictions rehabilitation centre, for aiding me in delivering a two-fold acceptance, that I am an alcoholic and I can recover. Their support gave me the courage to author this piece that is something of a culminating reflection on my experience of lament in active substance addiction.

To each of you and those unmentioned, may the Lord bless you and keep you.

Andrew William Dyck
Dedication

To the still-suffering alcoholic and those on the journey towards restoration
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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

√ Lexical Root Form

→ (indicating progression)

# Number

ICS First Common Singular

3MS Third Masculine Singular

AA Alcoholics Anonymous: Twelve Step Program

ADS Alcohol Dependency Syndrome

ASA Active Substance Addiction

BH Biblical Hebrew

BHS *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*

HB Hebrew Bible

MT Masoretic Text

NASB *The Holy Bible: New American Standard Bible*

NIV *The Holy Bible: New International Version*

NT New Testament

OHRC The Ontario Human Rights Commission

OT Old Testament

PGN Person-Gender-Number

P-Zombie Philosophical Zombie

SDS Substance Dependency Syndrome
The Serenity Prayer

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the different.”
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Kent Dunnington states that there are few philosophical and theological monographs written that develop a conceptual framework for understanding substance addiction, leaving us with a gap in our knowledge of this phenomenon. While many popular-level books, as well as scholarly theses and dissertations, address models for a Christian approach to recovery, few have sought to understand what I consider to be a necessary forerunner to any conceptual knowledge or treatment model: the sufferer’s experience in active substance addiction (ASA). Moreover, this critique extends to works that formulate a theology of addiction. Whereas Dunnington and a select few present arguments for a developed conceptual framework of addiction, its subsequent theology, and possible effective models for its treatment, I contend that any accurate theological investigation into the facets of addiction or effective treatment models must begin with an articulated understanding of the sufferer’s consequential spiritual lament. This is because the sufferer’s negative spirituality impacts the development of his or her substance dependence. I contend that this aspect of a theological investigation into ASA has been overlooked by historical and recent investigations. This thesis aims to supply such research, arguing that we develop a better understanding of the sufferer’s experience in ASA since it is foundational to any conceptual framework; however, I also suggest we go further.

I propose that substance dependency and the experience of active addiction is, in its essence, the antithesis to a positive spirituality and possesses its own spiritual traits. I argue that we can

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1 For philosophical monographs, see Francis Seeburger, Addiction and Responsibility: An Inquiry into the Addictive Mind (New York: Crossroad, 1993); Bruce Wilshire, Wild Hunger: The Primal Roots of Modern Addiction (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998). Theological monographs include: Linda A. Mercadante, Victims and Sinners: Spiritual Roots of Addiction and Recovery (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); James Nelson, Thirst: God and the Alcoholic Experience (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Christopher C. H. Cook, Alcohol, Addiction, and Christian Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For other current philosophical and theological discussions on addiction, see Kent Dunnington, Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2001), 16 n. 2 and 3. Beyond Dunnington’s list, there are several other articles, theses, and dissertations on addiction in philosophy and theology included in my review of relevant literature. To be clear, as I contend later in this chapter, there is a body of research that addresses a theology of addiction, its conceptual framework, and treatment models; none, however, place sufficient weight on the significance of the sufferer’s experience, nor on what theological insights such a reflection can yield.

2 For this thesis, I adopt a definition of ‘spirituality’ that is relative to Christian religiosity. For instance, Marianne McInnes Miller and Nicole Van Ness Sheppard state that spirituality can be described “as a personal, subjective experience of searching for the sacred and transforming the meaning of life.” Marianne McInnes Miller and Nicole Van Ness Sheppard, “What Does Spirituality Mean to You? Mapping the Spiritual Discourses of Psychotherapy Graduate Students,” Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health 16, no. 4 (2014): 290. In another sense, “[s]pirituality is an ubiquitous sense that there exists a higher power, and that one can call upon this higher power in times of triumph and in times of adversity to empower me toward a path of greater functionality and transcendence.
receive greater insight into the sufferer’s negative spirituality and eventual prayer of lament by giving attention to the relationship in the Psalms between sin and the psalmist’s position of lament. For instance, in ASA, as the sufferers fall prey to habitual and compulsive behaviours that are associated with addiction and continuously direct their will to something that is not God, they open themselves to a spiritual world that is absent from God’s benevolence. Augustine, a strong proponent for the notion of humanity having a disordered/divided will, argues, if it is a spiritual practice for one to direct his or her will to God, then to direct it elsewhere would also constitute a spiritual activity. While I argue that ASA has its own spiritual traits, little argument is needed to make the case that these would be negative if God, being the Ultimate Good, is absent. This negative spirituality is one that inevitably culminates in a sustained experience of hopelessness and despair. For some sufferers, as their situation in life degrades, there is an eventual rebirth or reshaping of their spirituality where a cry of lament is made to God. I contend that this lament gives birth, or a rebirth, to a spirituality that emerges from a desperate situation and that is clearly a personal acknowledgment of a need for divine grace to receive freedom.

1.2. A Clinical Diagnosis of Substance Dependency Syndrome

The first step in my theological investigation into the sufferer’s experience of ASA, is to present a methodology for determining a clinical, or medical, diagnosis of Substance Dependency Syndrome (SDS). In order to limit my scope of research, I engage solely with Alcohol Dependency Syndrome (ADS), which serves as the referent for the term ‘substance addiction’ throughout this thesis. This section will supply a definition of ‘alcoholism/substance addiction’ by way of Gerald G. May’s three categories for understanding the complex factors that constitute a diagnosis of ADS. Following, I briefly present some material provided by the Canadian Government that classifies ADS as a disability. Classifying ADS as a disability is significant as I

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It connects me to past and future generations.” Miller and Van Ness Sheppard, “What Does Spirituality Mean to You?” 298.


4 My research concerning some aspects of the disease/scientific model were conducted in consultation with Dr. Martin C. Dyck, my relative and General Practitioner at Grand River Hospital, Kitchener, Ontario.

5 This argument will not explore how the use and misuse of other illicit or non-illicit mood-altering substances can induce a dependency syndrome. I limit myself to the use and misuse of alcohol causing a person’s dependency for two reasons. First, warnings against its use and misuse are directly referenced in biblical and extra-biblical literature (e.g. Deut 21:20; Prov 20:1; 26:9; Isa 28:8; Gal 5:19-21; Rom 13:3; etc.). Second, I possess a personal understanding of ADS and the consequent hopelessness that becomes the sufferer’s reality. By way of personal realization and professional designation, I am, in the colloquial, a recovering alcoholic who fought through six years of active dependency.
later draw on some existing theologies of lament from a disability perspective. I argue that the existing models are insufficient in their ability to account for some of the complexities associated with ADS.

With respect to ADS, May’s three categories for understanding addiction outlines the following schools of thought: (1) the moral model, (2) the disease model, and (3) the scientific model. Summarizing May’s models, Christopher C. H. Cook explains that the moral model “proposes that addiction is the result of sin, evil, or moral weakness and that the addict is personally culpable.” As this is the model I clarify later, I argue that a separation between sin and evil as being synonymous terms for describing the sufferer’s negative action in ASA is need.

I treat May’s other two models together throughout this thesis, since their understanding of the nature of addiction and its development are seemingly parallel. After introducing them individually, I subsequently group them together as the disease/scientific model. The disease model, which is the preferred school of thought by modern addiction treatment centres and Twelve Step Programs, “sees addiction as being the result of pathology for which the addict is not culpable, but nonetheless still ascribes responsibility for the behaviours that result from this disorder.”

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6 Following May, Cook also defines addiction according to these three categories. Cook, Alcohol, Addiction, and Christian Ethics, 17-18, citing Gerald G. May, Addiction and Grace (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 1-41.

7 Cook, Alcohol, Addiction, and Christian Ethics, 17.

8 Ibid., 17. The terms ‘culpable,’ ‘responsible,’ and ‘sin’ used throughout this thesis merit a terminological clarification. These three terms appear in the relevant literature with some consistency to describe negative actions that are the result of a person’s ASA. ‘Culpable,’ the term used by Cook, describes an action that “merit[s] condemnation or blame especially as wrong or harmful” and is synonymous to ‘guilty’ or ‘criminal.’ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “culpable,” accessed August 22, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culpable. When used to describe a person’s negative action in ASA, ‘culpable’ describes an action that is wrong and is the person’s fault but does not necessarily imply a response of acknowledgment. In contrast, ‘responsible’ describes a being “liable to be called on to answer” or “liable to be called to account as the primary cause, motive, or agent” of a negative action. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “responsible,” accessed August 22, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/responsible. By this definition, the person is called to respond or take account for his or her negative action. In this thesis, however, ‘responsible’ is not used to describe the person being called by another to be held accountable, but that the sufferer independently acknowledges that an action was wrong or harmful. ‘Responsible’ is used to describe the moment when the sufferer acknowledges the negative nature of his or her actions. ‘Sin’ as a term to describe negative action in ASA is complex and lacks uniformity in its theological definition. I address it in greater detail in chapter 3. Yet, simply defined, ‘sin,’ as it is commonly used, is “an offense against [a] religious or moral law,” Sin is a crime against god(s)/God. Bluntly, ‘sin’ is “an action that is or is felt to be highly reprehensible.” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “sin,” accessed August 22, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sin.

To contrast the use of ‘culpable’ and ‘responsible’ to ‘sin,’ we must understand that ‘sin’ is a theological term and ‘addiction’ is not. Those who promote the disease/scientific model avoid the use of ‘sin’ to describe a negative action because the sufferer’s experience is the result of a disease and to attribute blame for its development is scientifically and ethically complex. SDS is often compared to other diseases or sicknesses where the sufferer is not blamed for his or her ailment (i.e. cancer). As a theological term, some consider that the use of ‘sin’ to describe
is the manifestation of a person’s allergy to alcohol that results in its chronic consumption, best explained as an allergy of the body and an obsession of the mind.\(^9\) Dr. William D. Silkworth’s 1939 research was the first to argue that there exists a series of biological factors that influence the development of a person’s substance dependency, although his investigation was less scientific and more a collection of abstract observations.\(^10\) In contrast, the scientific model seeks to prove that which the disease model observes. The scientific model “is concerned with culpability.”\(^11\) This model underpins the Canadian Government’s classification of substance dependency as a chronic illness and a disability.\(^12\) Scientific and medical researchers analyze the sufferer’s DNA to isolate genomes that indicate SDS to be hereditary.\(^13\)

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an action often suggests that the sufferer is also a ‘sinner’ (see Cook, *Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics*, 17; Dunnington, *Addiction and Virtue*, 132-133). The disease/scientific model does not categorize the sufferer as a sinner; instead, the sufferer is suffering because of a sickness of mind and body. For this reason, terms like ‘culpable’ and ‘responsible’ are used to describe the sufferer’s guilt, if guilt is even an appropriate term.\(^9\) Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Big Book). 4th Edition (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001), xxviii. To further clarify, the diagnosis of ADS according to AA exists in parallel to its criteria for program membership and is contained in Step One and Tradition Three. Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol— that our lives had become unmanageable.” Third Tradition: “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.” Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2016), 5, 10; also see 21-24, 139-146.

The ‘allergy’ refers to the alcoholic’s physical and psychological responses to the taste of alcohol that causes him or her to throw aside all inhibition, personal conviction, resolve, and self-preservation in favour of ‘having more.’ This is described in an AA slogan as “one is too many and a thousand isn’t enough.”

\(^{10}\) Modern medicine supports the notion that ADS is a disease, known as a patho-psychological disease or neuropsychiatric disease, and that it can cause other diseases, including kidney disease or cardiovascular disease. However, medical research considers it difficult to support May’s central notion: that once the dependent begins drinking, the existence of the allergy completely hinders the sufferer’s ability to stop. See Rainer Spanagel, et. al., “A Systems Medicine Research Approach for Studying Alcohol Addiction,” *Addiction Biology* 18, no. 6 (2013): 883; Z. A. Rodd, et. al., “Candidate Genes, Pathways and Mechanisms for Alcoholism: An Expanded Convergent Functional Genomics Approach,” *The Pharmacogenomics Journal* 7, no. 4 (2007): 223-224, 226; Dunnington, *Addiction and Virtue*, 15-30.

\(^{11}\) Cook, *Alcohol, Addiction, and Christian Ethics*, 17. The scientific model provides the most objective list of criteria for diagnosing ADS: (1) excessive consumption of alcohol, (2) persistent and unsuccessful attempts at cutting down, (3) time consuming—obtaining, consuming, and recovering, (4) cravings, (5) failure to fulfill obligations, (6) consequential recurrent social and interpersonal problems caused by alcohol consumption, (7) loss of interest in social, occupational, and recreational activities, (8) recurrent alcohol use in situations that are physically hazardous, (9) sustained use despite a knowledge of physical and psychological dangers, (10) increased tolerance to alcohol, (11) experience of withdrawal symptoms. See American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostics and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*, 5th Edition (Washington: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 223-224.


\(^{13}\) The disease and scientific models differ in their approaches to and models for a successful recovery, fundamentally with regards to a person’s culpability. Although both argue that the sufferer should not be considered morally weak or sinful as he or she is suffering a biological disorder, in the disease model, the sufferer still needs to acknowledge his or her wrongdoings in order to recover. In the scientific model, personal culpability is not necessary. Within the scientific model, the hope is that research will bring about a medical treatment that will
To contrast the moral model with the disease/scientific model, the fundamental difference concerns the origin of a person’s SDS. As briefly noted, the moral model ascribes the origin of addiction to sin, particularly personal sin. A person’s repeated and excessive consumption of alcohol is not only the result of personal sin, but also causes the same person to commit other sins, a point I return to in chapter 3 when I discuss historical treatments of sin and addiction.\(^{14}\)

Simply stated, addiction is entirely sinful, and the sufferer requires divine grace to receive or achieve freedom. Conversely, the disease/scientific model does not describe the sufferer as a sinner or that his or her actions are sinful; the person is suffering from a biological disease. This model sees addiction as something to be cured by medical professionals or beaten by the sufferer with the aid of medical intervention.\(^{15}\)

Concerning ADS as a definable disability, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) argues that it is well-recognized among other human rights legislations that alcohol and drug addictions (i.e. substance dependencies) are disabilities. According to their own legislation, the OHRC defines ‘substance dependency,’ distinct from the less severe category of ‘substance abuse,’ as a disability according to a medical perspective in the following way:\(^{16}\)

A primary, chronic disease, characterized by impaired control over the use of a psychoactive substance […] Clinically, the manifestations occur along biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual dimensions. Common features are change in mood, relief from negative emotions, provision of pleasure, pre-occupation with the use of substance(s) […] and continued use of the substance(s) […] despite adverse physical, psychological and/or social consequence. Like other chronic diseases, it can be remove or obviate the genomic markers that may biologically predispose a person to a potential substance dependency.

\(^{14}\) I use the term ‘excessive’ as a unit of measurement to describe a person’s consumption of a mood-altering substance (i.e. alcohol). Although what one would deem as ‘excessive’ is subjective, the most effective criterion for its determination is when a person’s use of alcohol creates situations where his or her life becomes unmanageable. The unmanageability must be directly related to or is the result of the consumption of alcohol. Although I argue that the consumption of alcohol is not wrong, there is, however, a mark where the action of consumption becomes problematic. To clarify, for the consumption of alcohol to be deemed ‘excessive,’ this unit of measurement includes more than just an understanding of ‘how much.’ For example, an excessive consumption includes a person’s untimely use of alcohol or the repeated use of alcohol to cope with difficult situations.

\(^{15}\) Here, there is a place for divine grace in both models, depending upon one’s theological disposition. For instance, the moral approach argues that divine grace is central if the sufferer is to recover. For the disease/scientific model, one could hold that divine grace is necessary for providing researchers and medical professionals with guidance to discover a cure. As such, it is not necessarily the point that the moral model alone leaves room for divine grace, but that it is the approach that explicitly emphasizes the centrality of divine grace if and when the sufferer seeks recovery.

\(^{16}\) A less severe category of substance abuse can include but is not limited to a person’s recreational use of an illicit or non-illicit mood-altering substance that he or she consumes to experience intoxication.
As seen from these criteria that designate substance dependency as a disability, the OHRC emphasizes the debilitating nature of addiction. The sufferer becomes not only psychologically reliant on the continued use of a substance, but he or she can also develop a physical dependency, although a physical dependence is not always a symptom of the use and/or misuse of some psychoactive substances. The result of a person’s dependency, although not explicitly stated in the above citation, is a continuing degradation of his or her life to a point of unmanageability. As a disability, ADS can cause the sufferer to lose his or her higher and lower cognitive functionality and can even lead to premature death.

1.3. Review of Relevant Literature: Sin and Addiction

As the moral model is that which I follow throughout this thesis, I now turn to a review of relevant literature that considers there to exist a relationship between sin and substance addiction. First, I discuss some key biblical texts that argue there to exist a relationship between the excessive consumption of alcohol and sin. Second, I review a general position of some philosophers from antiquity on drunkenness as being a window into a person’s soul that reveals his or her true likeness. Finally, I consider some of the key understandings of addiction and sin in our modern era.

1.3.1. Biblical Texts on the Excessive Consumption of Alcohol

Research into ADS experienced a growth in scientific research after 1962 when the Yale Center of Alcohol Studies moved to Rutgers University. This marked a shift within academia from the moral model to the disease/scientific model, since the latter informed modern addiction research. While academic investigations into the biological, psychology, and social facets of addiction received an increase of attention by the mid-twentieth century, Jewish and Christian Scriptures had long since warned against a person’s use and misuse of mood-altering substances (i.e. alcohol). As such, a review of these texts is in order. In what follows, I also include some writings from the Wisdom of Ben Sira texts.

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In the Old Testament (OT), drunkenness (i.e. the excessive consumption of alcohol that causes intoxication) is associated with foolishness (e.g. Prov 20:1). Elsewhere in the OT, drunkenness as foolishness is given more specificity (e.g. Prov 26:9; Isa 28:8; also see Jer 25:27; Isa 5:11; Hab 2:15, etc.). New Testament (NT) writers are even clearer by speaking harshly against a person’s excessive consumption of alcohol by associating its misuse with debauchery (e.g. Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:18; 1 Pet 4:3) and sexual immorality (e.g. Gal 5:19-21; Rom 13:3; 1 Pet 4:3).

Furthermore, in the OT, drunkenness is also related to gluttony (e.g. Deut 21:20). In the Wisdom of Ben Sira texts, wine is considered a good part of God’s creation but only if consumed in moderation (e.g. Sir 31:27-28). In the same passage a few verses later, drunkenness is shown to be an abuse of what was created good, and is accordingly associated with foolishness (v. 30).

Beyond those texts that specifically speak against the excessive consumption of alcohol, other biblical narratives negatively portray the actions, or consequential implications of those actions, of biblical characters who were intoxicated or thought to be intoxicated. For instance, Gen 9:18-28 contains the narrative of Noah planting the first vineyard. Here, he becomes drunk from its wine, lays down uncovered inside his tent, and is later discovered by his son Ham who mocks Noah for his indecent state. As this narrative is the first biblical reference to the invention/discovery of a psychoactive substance (i.e. alcohol) and a person’s consumption of wine, the author negatively portrays the effects of alcohol. In the NT, the description of Pentecost in Acts 2, a rather different narrative than the above, shows that the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages (vv. 4, 6-12). In amazement, a crowd gathered, but some of those present “were mocking and saying, ‘They are full of sweet wine’” (v. 13, NASB). By this, the Apostles are not seen to be actually inebriated, but it is clear that in the ancient world there already existed an understanding that the excessive consumption of alcohol could reduce an individual to a lesser mental state, something seen here as worthy of mocking.

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18 To comment briefly, Basil (329-379 AD) argues, “[w]ine is a creation of God given to the sober that they may strengthen their weakness, but not given to the intemperate as an instrument of lasciviousness.” Irving Woodworth Raymond, The Teaching of the Early Church on the Use of Wine and Strong Drink (New York: AMS, 1970), 99, citing Basil, Exegetic Homilies, 14.1. Though Basil did not draw from Sir 31:27-30, his conclusion is parallel. Otherwise, to guard against drunkenness, Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) “advise[d] a very liberal use of water in mixing it and then counsels that it be not drunk as if it were water.” Raymond, Teachings of the Early Church, 99, citing Clement of Alexandria, Paedagogus, 2.2.3-34.
1.3.2. Some Historical Thoughts on Alcoholism: Between Pittacus and Thomas Aquinas

In the wider world of antiquity apart from references within Christian and Jewish sacred texts, some philosophers provided arguments against the excessive consumption of alcohol. While the following review is brief at best, it puts into perspective the thrust of modernity’s (i.e. the disease/scientific model) rejection of the moral model as describing a negative action in ASA as sinful.

Several Greco-Roman philosophers believe that a person’s misuse of alcohol functions as a mirror of the soul, to reveal the true likeness of the intoxicated person. For instance, Aristotle (384-322 BC) observes that an inebriated individual often acts out of sorts. Aristotle cites Pittacus (640-568 BC), a framer of laws, who proposes a law that addresses offenses committed in a state of drunkenness:

[A] special law of [Pittacus’s] is that if men commit an assault when drunk they are to pay a larger fine than those who offend when sober; because since more men are insolent when drunk than when sober he had regard not to the view that drunken offenders are rightly held less guilty, but to expediency.

Here, Aristotle via Pittacus acknowledges that a drunken offense is classifiable as foolishness and should be punishable to a greater extent by a court of justice than the same negative action committed by someone sober in mind and body. Furthermore, Solon (638-588 BC), another philosopher during the time of Pittacus, argues for an even more severe punishment when the intoxicated offender is in a position of political leadership. Solon states, “the magistrate found intoxicated should be punished with death.” Also, the Greek rhetorician Lucian of Samosata (120-190 AD), in agreement with Aristotle and Pittacus, negatively describes the mild-mannered Thrasycles’s violent behaviour when intoxicated in Timon, or the Misanthrope. Cook comments: “[f]or Lucian, it would seem that drinking reduces inhibitions and brings to the

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surface the evil of the drinker’s true character.”\textsuperscript{23} While there appears to be agreement that drunkenness and the misuse of alcohol reveals the evil of a person’s character, J. D. Rolleston explains that in antiquity drunkenness (\textit{Μεθη}) is also represented as a goddess or demi-goddess.\textsuperscript{24} Therefore, while some Greco-Roman philosophers see drunkenness as a form or manifestation of foolishness, revealing the true likeness of a person, it is not equated with sinfulness. However, while a negative action that is the result of drunkenness may not be sinful, these philosophers agreed that drunkenness is morally reprehensible. Furthermore, crimes that are the result of inebriation deserve more severe consequences (e.g. Solon).

Once ecclesiastical leaders in the early church began to explicitly equate drunkenness with sinfulness, as Cook notes, the ethical position of the church toward the use and misuse of alcohol was rather uniform until the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{25} He surmises, “[a]ll agreed that drunkenness was a sin.”\textsuperscript{26} For instance, Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274 AD) argues that drunkenness is a punishable defect that is the result of a person’s inability to reason due to inebriation.\textsuperscript{27} A person’s excessive consumption of alcohol and failure (or loss) of reason gives way to irresponsibility. In contrast, Aquinas, reflecting on Noah’s intoxication in Gen 9, explains that it is possible to experience non-sinful drunkenness. Yet he concludes, by citing Ambrose (340-397 AD), that “we should shun drunkenness, which prevents us from avoiding grievous sins. For the things we avoid when sober, we unknowingly commit through drunkenness.”\textsuperscript{28} If drunkenness is equitable with sinfulness by the early church, what then is the argument of modern theologies that investigate the same issue in light of modern medical research?

\textsuperscript{25} Cook, \textit{Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics}, 52.
\textsuperscript{26} Augustine (354-430 AD) also addresses the problematic use and misuse of alcohol in the church. I include a discussion of Augustine’s position among the ‘modern treatments’ since Cook and Dunnington draw heavily upon Augustine’s arguments.
\textsuperscript{27} In this era, while “moderate drinking was generally understood as good, or morally neutral, drunkenness was generally conceived of as a sin of intemperance.” Cook, \textit{Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics}, 52.
1.3.3 Modern Theologies and Conceptions on Sin and Addiction

Turning to modern discussions, Cook addresses the relationship between addiction and sin, framing it within the disease/scientific model, by offering three reflections on the Pauline doctrine of the divided will found in Rom 7:14-25. He argues, first, that addiction may not be so much occupied with ‘sins’ as with ‘sin.’ He states, “[i]t may be concerned not so much with freely made moral decisions as with a struggle against the power of sin,”\(^{29}\) a power that has the tendency to enslave and corrupt an individual’s attitudes, values, and actions. Second, addiction, like sin, can be solely concerned with the sufferer’s attitude or orientation towards God.\(^{30}\) Third, since sin cannot be conquered through self-reliance, the sufferer stands in need of God’s grace to receive freedom from enslavement.\(^{31}\)

Cook also draws on Augustine’s interpretation of the above Pauline doctrine.\(^{32}\) Citing H. G. Frankfurt’s interpretation of Augustine’s argument, Cook makes the distinction between first- and second-order desires and volitions as they relate to the divided will.\(^{33}\) A first-order desire is “a desire to do or not to do one thing or another” and a second-order desire concerns the “wanting to have (or not to have) certain desires or motives.”\(^{34}\) A first-order volition “is an action or intention to action motivated by a first-order desire” and a second-order volition wants “a particular first-order desire to be the will, whether or not it actually is, and it is that which […] is essential to the concept of personhood.”\(^{35}\) Because of the first- and second-ordering, the will can be divided within itself. In addiction, the suffer experiences a division of will, one that touches its freedom, in that “there are no first-order volitions to discontinue drug use which might provide a source of conflict with the second-order volition to continue drug use.”\(^{36}\)

Dunnington argues that it is improper and a “category mistake” of philosophy to study addiction as “the sorts of things that humans do (action) […] rather [than] the sorts of things that humans


\(^{30}\) Cook goes further to explain the pitfalls of developing a primarily Pauline theistic theology of addiction. If one takes this approach, it is best to understand the problem of addiction and the divided self as “an inner conflict […] between openness to the grace and power of God in Christ […] and openness to the power of sin.” Ibid., 146.

\(^{31}\) This position is most helpful for developing faith-based models of rehabilitation. E.g. ibid., 146-147.


\(^{34}\) Cook, *Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics*, 156.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 156

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 157.
In light of Augustine’s argument on “the bondage of the human will in the face of temptation,” Dunnington posits that sin, as something a human suffers, “is therefore not fundamentally something that we do but rather something that we discover about who we are.” On SDS, Dunnington redefines addiction as something that is not entirely the result of a person’s voluntary action, although he still emphasizes the importance of the sufferer’s culpability in terms of a habit. Instead, he argues that the sufferer is “unable not to sin and yet nevertheless rightly held to be acting voluntarily in [his or her] sin.” Dunnington develops his understanding of moral action in addiction by defining the complex relationship between human action (i.e. voluntary or involuntary action) and the nature of humanity’s fallenness. He concludes that addiction is not a sin relating to something we do but is rather a consequence of who we are as a fallen humanity.

While Cook and Dunnington argue that addiction is ultimately due to the Fall, although it is tinged with culpability because of a division in the human will, May takes a similar position without using the term ‘sin.’ He presents addiction as a ‘paradox,’ explaining that it “abuses our freedom and makes us do things we really do not want to do.” He continues, “addiction attaches desire, bonds and enslaves the energy of desire to certain specific behaviors, things or people. These objects of attachment then become preoccupations and obsessions; they come to rule our lives.” In this account, addiction is an enemy of human freedom. Aligning with Augustine’s position outlined earlier in this chapter, May agrees with the conclusion that addiction is relatable to humanity’s divided will.

In another examination, William McDonough aligns himself with the general position of AA by stating that “[a]lcoholism isn’t a sin.” Representing the views of AA, he claims that the

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38 Ibid., 132. No citation for Augustine is provided.
39 Ibid., 132. Emphasis original.
40 Ibid., 133. Emphasis original.
41 Dunnington aligns in many ways with Linda A. Merchandante’s position on the relationship between sin and addiction. However, their two arguments differ in their appreciation of what addiction can offer Christian theology. Merchandante contends that an addiction recovery paradigm “challenges the Christian doctrine of sin […] especially highlight[ing] the moralism and will orientation (Pelagianism) of the contemporary church, reintroducing an idea of human frailty.” Merchandante, *Victims and Sinners*, 13. According to her approach, a proper theology of addiction must focus on the significance and necessity of divine grace considering human frailty. By this, it seems that her research is more concerned with a theology of addiction recovery than a theology of addiction itself.
43 Ibid., 4. May posits that the remedy for the loss of human freedom caused by addiction is the person’s realization that he or she is in desperate need of an extra measure of divine grace.
organization is unafraid to use the term ‘sin’ to describe the actions that come from addiction or addiction related behaviours. However, when he critiques other approaches to the same subject, he rejects their use of ‘sin’ as the proper term to describe the negative moral implications of action in addiction.\textsuperscript{45} The most significant of his rejections is directed to John C. Ford who is considered “a recognized authority on alcoholism.”\textsuperscript{46} McDonough, on the topic of culpability in addiction, summarizes Ford this way:

Subjectively, it seems that not many alcoholics are morally guilty as far as the addiction itself is concerned. Men and women who are beginning to drink too much...do not believe...the horrible examples that are pointed out to them...Add to this the general ignorance about the nature of alcoholism and the moral confusion with which the majority of them consider the question of excessive drinking itself...It seems to be a rare case where the future alcoholic sees and recognizes the danger he is in...[The priest] should be lenient rather than severe in judging [the alcoholic’s] subjective guilt as to the drinking.\textsuperscript{47}

McDonough argues that AA writings do not oppose the term ‘sin’ to describe the negative actions of the still-suffering alcoholic.\textsuperscript{48} On inadvertent wrong doings, AA is entirely against ascribing the alcoholic a freedom from culpability due to a type of ignorance. Instead, AA writings “insist that persons are materially responsible for actions done while ‘under the influence’ but are not thereby sinful or bad.”\textsuperscript{49} Here, McDonough argues that an action done while intoxicated can be considered sinful; however, such a sinful action does not make the alcoholic a bad person, nor does it mean that a sinful action is definitive of the perpetrator’s character.

\textsuperscript{45} McDonough, “Sin and Addiction,” 41. Here, I only note his rejection of John C. Ford’s position. On McDonough’s rejection of other positions, see, with respect to Mercadantes, 40-42; Pope Gregory the Great, 45; Aquinas, 46-49.
1.3.4. Summary

From the Greco-Roman period through to the Reformation, several key critical thinkers understood the nature of drunkenness to be a morally impure act, or that it could result in morally impure acts. By the time of Aquinas, the misuse of alcohol was without question considered to be sinful. By this designation, Aquinas included not only the abnormal behaviours (i.e. negative actions) of an intoxicated person, but also the simple act of consuming too much wine or other alcoholic substance, although Aquinas qualifies Noah’s intoxication (Gen 9:18-28). In the modern era, following the shift within academia after 1962, research moved away from designating addiction and its associated behaviours as sinful to understanding SDS instead as a disorder, one that is hereditary in nature. This gave way to the birthing of the disease/scientific model for understanding addiction. Many of the modern theological investigations into ADS draw heavily on Augustine’s concept of the divided will. In this regard, even though they make use of an Augustinian approach, Cook, Dunnington, and May are slow to use the term ‘sin’ to describe addiction and the sufferer’s related or subsequent behaviours.

1.4. Scope of Research

The present section moves from a review of the relevant literature to a consideration of the scope of the present thesis. To appreciate the scope of research within this thesis, consider the following example: it has been the prayer of many alcoholics, and myself, on days when journeying towards another round of self-destructive behaviour by way of alcohol misuse, “please, don’t do anything stupid tonight.” In what can be subjectively classified by the sufferer as ‘stupid,’ or objectively by the Canadian Government’s Criminal Code as ‘unlawful’ (i.e. stealing, driving under the influence, etc.), there arises an experience of spiritual lament. In ASA, it is not necessarily the excessive consumption of alcohol that causes the sufferer’s life to degenerate, but rather the consequences of his or her subsequent behaviour (i.e. the lying, stealing, and cheating, or the sufferer’s increased aggression and hopelessness). As actions, these can be considered morally negative. As the sufferer’s life degrades in quality and meaning, his or her spirituality, if there previously existed one at all, also falls into ruin.50 For the sufferer, all can feel lost (e.g. healthy social interaction, physical health, financial security, etc.) because of his or

50 I use the term ‘spirituality’ to reference the act of directing one’s will toward God and his benevolence. The complexities of this matter are addressed in greater detail later.
her ASA. This loss can lead the sufferer into sustained periods of psychological depression and/or social and emotional isolation. Eventually, the increase of poor experiences leads the sufferer to what is known as ‘rock bottom’—the place where it seems he or she can go no lower. It is at rock bottom that the sufferer may present a prayer of lament to God. The sufferer may experience a rebirth of spirituality, precipitating from his or her desperation. Any successful development of a theology of addiction requires a deep understanding of what has preceded the sufferer’s acceptance of being an alcoholic. This thesis focuses on this preliminary stage. I argue that the experience of ASA can function as a real and legitimate lens for identifying with, interpreting, and understanding the content of the Psalms of individual lament. In turn, this can establish a more accurate conceptual framework for understanding SDS, and for developing methods that promote a successful recovery.

To accomplish this task, I clarify the moral model’s argument on the relationship between sin and addiction. I argue that it is incorrect for one to interpret the moral model as suggesting that the relationship between sin and addiction implies there is also a relationship between sin and evil. I contend that sin and evil are separate, at least in the case of ASA.

Following, I shift toward an engagement with the individual lament Psalms. I argue that by recognizing a relationship between the sufferer’s sinful actions and his or her experience of despair (i.e. the context of the sufferer’s lament), he or she can effectively identify with the psalmist’s negative situation. From here, I develop a theology of lament that focuses on what I argue to be preliminary to an accurate conceptual framework for understanding addiction (i.e. the sufferer’s negative experience).

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51 I addressed some present terminological problems associated with the use of ‘culpable’ and/or ‘responsible’ to describe the sufferer’s acknowledgment of his or her negative action in ASA. This was contrasted with the moral model’s use of ‘sin’ as the describer. I attributed the convolution or ambiguity to a poorly developed understanding of the identity or agent of human goodness. Here, however, I suggest that a person being ‘culpable’ for a ‘bad’ action is also insufficient to describe negative action in ASA, same as ‘sin.’ I explained, and will again later, that ‘sin’ is a theological term and ‘addiction’ is not. As a result, an investigation into the symmetry between these terms is in order.
1.5. Methodology

To develop my theology of lament from the Psalms through the lens of ASA, I make use of a two-fold methodological procedure. My two-fold approach is, simply put, a merging of biblical studies and theological studies.

Concerning my use of biblical studies, I conduct a corpus-based analysis of the Psalms that leads to the development of a theology of lament. To do this, I will attend to both hermeneutics and biblical theology. I am not aware of a current attempt that develops a theology of lament or interpretive hermeneutic through the lens of ASA, a gap I seek to fill. As such, I integrate hermeneutics and biblical theology in the following way. By way of a corpus-based analysis, I give significant attention to the Psalms of individual lament, while also drawing on other psalmic passages. In my analysis of select Psalms, I reflect on the relationship between sin and the Psalmist’s situation. I ask questions such as, did sin in the Psalm’s context cause the lamented situation? If it did, what was the result and/or solution? If not, what role, if any, did sin play?

Since not all the Psalms of individual lament attribute the cause of the lamented situation to a person’s intentional or inadvertent sin, I also look at the literary use and function of the ‘faceless enemy’ in the lament Psalms. By these points of observation, I engage with the hermeneutical works of Kathryn Greene-McCreight and Amos Yong.52 Both develop hermeneutical frameworks for articulating a theology of lament from a disability perspective though I argue that each are insufficient in their capabilities to account for some of the complexities that are associated with ASA. On what is relevant, Greene-McCreight poses some of the following questions: “[w]hat is the relationship between suffering in mental illness and sin? Is mental illness caused by sin, or is it in some way a punishment for sin?”53 Reshaping these questions for the context of addiction, I add, in what ways does the negative moral actions that are the result of ASA generate of the sufferer’s lamented situation?

For my use of theological studies, I draw upon some relevant discussions already existing within the school of disability theology. Succinctly stated, I make use of theological studies, particularly disability theology, to develop a theology of lament that is specific to ASA. I formulate a theology of lament through the lens of ASA from my response to the questions presented above.

53 Greene-McCreight, Darkness is My Only Companion, 101.
Yet, the thrust of this theology of lament that is specific to ASA concerns my argument that the sufferer must understand the nature of his or her lament if he or she is to attempt a successful recovery. As this project is not specifically concerned with developing a model that promotes a successful recovery, I only argue that which I consider to be preliminary: our understanding of lament in addiction. By this discussion, I argue that the sufferer’s lament gives birth, or a rebirth, to his or her spirituality that comes out of a desperate situation and is a clear personal acknowledgment of the individual’s need for divine grace.

1.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter functioned to introduce the purpose of the present thesis, which is to clarify the moral understanding of SDS so that we can better appreciate the relationship between sin and ASA. Once we understand this relationship, I move toward an investigation of sin in the Psalms of individual lament whereby I highlight a noticeable similarity between the Psalmist’s lament and that of the still-suffering alcoholic. Next, I develop a theology of lament that focuses on a person’s experiences in ASA. To clarify the methodological procedures employed in my research, this chapter also defined my two-fold approach, which merges biblical studies and theological studies.
Chapter 2: Lament in the Psalms: The Suffering Reality of Sin and an Enemy

2.1 Introduction

The present chapter explores several key concepts related to psalmic lament. This explanation precedes my investigation of any existing relationship between the Psalms of lament and ASA. In this chapter, I (1) define the biblical genre of individual lament in the Psalms, (2) review some relevant literature that addresses sin and the figure of an enemy within the Psalms, and (3) examine a few key psalmic texts where sin is the cause of the psalmist’s negative situation.

2.2 Defining a Lament of the Individual in the Psalms

Lament as a literary genre is defined by its purposes in cultic rituals, its modes of expression, and its literary features. In the Hebrew Bible (HB), lament appears in many literary contexts, such as prose and poetry. In its reception, Carleen Mandolfo explains that the presence of lament in the HB is most likely a secondary form, since many of the texts were composed orally for cultic rituals and then scribed later, a position supported by many scholars, including form critics.¹ To address its theology in general terms, “[l]ament language shows little interest in philosophical abstraction. Its theological vision is firmly rooted in the themes of suffering and justice that comprise the thematic heart of lament psalms.”² Mandolfo explains that “lament language might be considered one of humanity’s earliest attempts to grapple with the conundrum of God’s role in human suffering.”³

One classification of the psalmic genre that is seemingly parallel to that of ‘individual lament’ is ‘individual complaint.’ Fredrik Lindström explains that the following biblical Hebrew (BH) lexemes are often found in such Psalms of complaint: תְפֹלָה, ‘prayer’ (Ps 6:10); תַחֲנָנוֹן, ‘supplication’ (6:10; 86:6; 143:1); רַנָּה, ‘lamentation’ (17:1; 88:3); and שׁוּה, ‘cry

³ Ibid., 125. The theological theme of justice and the lament Psalms is best seen in the communal lament Psalms (e.g. Pss 28; 53). The individual lament Psalms, at least how they have been interpreted in previous scholarship, primarily address human sin and divine mercy.
for help’ (102:2). These lexemes are most often used in psalmic headings and can be helpful for determining the situation of context:

Ps 102:1

חלה לבקש רכישת (לך) עיניי יＨוה יבקש שיתו

Hear my prayer, O LORD! And let my cry for help come to you. (NASB)

Similarly, the psalmist may employ חלה, ‘to be weak’ (35:13; 41:4), or מכה, נגמך, or נגע, ‘stroke’ (38:12; 39:11), for example.

Beyond specific lexemes, the marked Person-Gender-Number (PGN) of nouns, pronouns, verbs, and so on, are other distinguishing features of a Psalm of individual lament. Mandolfo, observing dialogic tension in the lament Psalms, argues that in a Psalm of individual lament, the addressee typically uses a 1CS voice when referring to him or herself, although this is not always the case.

In her analysis of Ps 4, she explains that the psalmist “moves from petition to instruction to resolution.” Within this movement, when a human addressee speaks of Yahweh, ‘Yahweh’ is spoken of in the third person (3MS). Mandolfo explains that “[t]his is in contrast to those verses where a 1CS actor speaks to God directly.”

For determining the literary features of an individual lament Psalm, Claus Westermann, a form critic, provides the following criteria: The Psalm must contain (1) an address to God, (2) a lament, (3) a confession of trust, (4) a petition, (5) an assurance of being heard, (6) a double

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5 Concerning situational context, Lindström makes clear that “it is unfruitful for other reasons form-critically to separate the psalms of individual complaint and categorize [… them] through different supposed situational contexts.” He argues that the sub-genres or sub-situations of individual complaint psalms are irrelevant as the interpreter should focus on the greater theme that relates to “a situation of life-threatening affliction.” Ibid., 42.

Mandolfo also argues that it is more difficult to locate the original context or true situational context of these Psalms, although many have tried. Mandolfo, “Language of Lament in the Psalms,” 117, citing Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms: A Continental Commentary*, 2 vols., trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), on illness (Pss 6; 22; 31; 103; etc.); on spiritual distress (Pss 13; 69); on persecution (Pss 35; 69); on sin (Pss 51; 130).

I acknowledge Gerald Henry Wilson’s discussion concerning the issues with psalmic superscription. However, for this project, I deal only with the final redacted form of the Hebrew Psalter as seen in the Masoretic Text (MT). I make little reference to issues of text criticism. For reference to debates of psalmic superscription or the greater topic of the editing/redacting of the Hebrew Psalter, see Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico: Scholars, 1985); Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014); J. Clinton McCann, *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1993).


8 Ibid., 32.
wish,⁹ (7) a vow of praise, and (8) a praise of God.¹⁰ Mandolfo argues for only five identifying features: (1) an invocation, (2) a complaint, (3) a request, (4) an expression of confidence, and (5) a vow of praise.¹¹ She is clear, however, that not all Psalms of lament contain these elements. Others have also noted that the necessity of a text to contain all the elements in order for it to be classified as a lament is a weakness of Westermann’s argument. Furthermore, Mark J. Boda, summarizing another position although it is also his own, suggests that the Psalms all fall into one of three categories: (1) orientation, (2) disorientation, (3) or reorientation.¹² Psalms of individual lament would often be classified as Psalms of disorientation.¹³ To move passed matters that relate to psalmic genre classification to instead consider their content, we see that a Psalm of individual lament can depict the suffering of the addressee as mental, physical, social, and/or spiritual. Suffering in this context is not an objective depiction, but is subjective to the petitioner’s own perception of his or her situation.¹⁴ As such, in most contexts a Psalm of individual lament is not diagnostic, in the case of a physical ailment, or even objectively judicial, in the case of an injustice. Plainly stated, a Psalm of individual lament is a form of prayer literature and personal expression.¹⁵

Because of the disagreement in psalmic scholarship surrounding which elements must be present, and with what consistency, in a lament Psalm for it to be classified as a lament, for the purpose of my thesis, I extrapolate and explain my own list of the literary and theological

⁹ Succinctly defined, a ‘double wish’ in the Psalms is where “the psalmist prays both for delivery from enemies and for the destruction of those enemies.” Nancy L. DeClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth Laneel Tanner, The Book of Psalms (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 118; also see Claus Westermann, Praise and Lament in the Psalms; trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox, 1981), 117. A ‘double wish’ is an instance where the psalmist calls on God to come to his or her defense against a pressing enemy (e.g. Pss 7:5[6]-6[7]; 129:5-8; also Jon 2:8-9).

¹⁰ Westermann, Praise and Lament in the Psalms, 64.


¹³ Analyzing Ps 25, Boda explains that the Psalm clearly falls within this classification, since the psalmist “plead[s] with God for rescue from a predicament that involves enemies (vv. 2, 3, 19), and the psalmist is left lonely, afflicted, troubled, and vulnerable to death and shame (vv. 16, 20).” Boda, A Severe Mercy, 415.


features. First, the most important literary/theological element of a lament Psalm is that the psalmist expressly makes a statement of complaint (e.g. lament) about the nature of his or her present situation (e.g. physical, psychological, social, and/or spiritual suffering). Second, the Psalm must function as a prayer liturgy whereby the psalmist personally expresses his or her reliance on God as his or her salvation from the suffering. Since many other Psalms also contain elements of a ‘prayer liturgy,’ additional criteria are required. The remaining criteria are not as consistent within the lament Psalms as the above two. Third, in a lament Psalm, the psalmist often confesses to trust God during the negative situation, and looks to God as the solution or the one who can deliver a solution. Fourth, a lament Psalm will often depict the psalmist praising or promising future praise to God.

2.3 Review of Relevant Literature: Sin and an Enemy in the Psalms

After establishing some of the distinguishing features of an individual lament Psalm, I now turn to a review of relevant literature on sin and the Psalms. In this discussion, I additionally include a brief engagement with those Psalms referencing the presence of an enemy as causing the psalmist’s negative situation. Relevant treatments concerning sin and the Psalms most often address this topic by way of evaluating the penitential Psalms (e.g. Pss 6; 32; 38; etc.). Yet as the following review will demonstrate, the subject of human sin in the Psalms goes far beyond the genre of the penitential Psalms and individual lament as rightly emphasized by Boda and John Barton. For instance, sin in the Psalms is engaged within the theological themes of sin and suffering, and retribution theology. In other genres, sin is a present theme and/or literary element in the Psalms of the accused (e.g. Pss 7; 109; 142) and entrance liturgies (e.g. Pss 15; 24:3-6). For this review, I focus on sin and the psalmist’s confession and/or acknowledgment that his or her human transgression is to blame for the suffering, even if the transgression is unintentional or inadvertent. When possible, I focus on the psalmist’s admitted guilt, if sin is confessed, as being the cause of the negative situation.

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16 I only address the identifying features of the individual complaint/lament Psalms and not those of the communal lament Psalms.
To begin, sin in the Psalms is commonly addressed by the psalmist when he or she makes known the difference between the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous as seen in Ps 1:6—a contrast arising from the wisdom tradition. Boda explains,

> The way of the wicked is accompanied by various sinful characters, including the wicked (רשׁע), the sinner (השׁט), and the scoffer (לץ; vv. 1, 5) and leads to a judgment (משׁפט), which involves expulsion from the worshipping community (v. 5) and destruction by Yahweh (v. 6b). In contrast, the way of the righteous is guided by the Torah (v. 2) and leads to enduring life and prosperity (v. 3) under the watchful eye of Yahweh (v. 6a).  

This same distinction between the wicked and the righteous appears in the Psalms that reflect ancient liturgies, what Boda titles ‘entrance liturgies.’ For instance, Pss 15 and 24 clearly show that to enter a sacred space, the person or community entering must have ethical purity. Furthermore, this distinction is present in the Psalms of the accused, where the psalmist argues for his or her innocence. As such, many investigations into sin and the Psalms frequently give emphasis to the relationship between sin and the wicked where the wicked is often a non-Israelite individual or community. Many do not consider the relationship between sin and the psalmist(s).

Discussing the lament Psalms and the enigma of human suffering, R. Kelvin Moore addresses the psalmist’s suffering by way of loneliness (e.g. isolation, abandonment, etc.) and persecution (where persecution is (1) outward, from enemies and denial of God, and (2) inward, from torment and anxiety). Moore engages with the psalmist’s personal sin and the presence of an enemy to suggest that both cause the negative situation. In the case of Ps 44, Moore argues that the psalmist suffers because of personal sin, although the sinful action is not defined. As a result, the psalmist is mocked and lied to, which leads him or her towards a reliance on Yahweh’s stabilizing force, the remedy to the suffered isolation. Moore also notes that the psalmist may indicate a present enemy or hostile force as “an external act [e.g. source] of enmity” that causes the lamented situation. The psalmist often describes an external source of enmity by pairing the

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21 Boda, A Severe Mercy, 399.
24 Ibid., 22.
25 Ibid., 11. Emphasis original.
lexemes שָׁאָל (‘to hate’ or ‘dislike’) and אֵיבָא (‘adversary,’ ‘infest,’ or ‘persecute’) (e.g. Pss 7:5[6]; 17:9; 25:19; 71:10; etc.). In the case of Ps 25, the psalmist describes his or her experience of loneliness (דָּרְסָא, v. 16, e.g. isolation) as the consequence of a hostile enemy (אֵיבָא, v. 19). An enemy need not be the only cause of the psalmist’s isolation. For example, whether isolation is caused by an internal or external source, the outcome is quite similar. In both instances, the psalmist is separated from Yahweh’s presence and, in some cases, from other members of society (e.g. family, faith community, etc.). Moore explains that the lament Psalms are less concerned with the origin or cause of a negative situation than they are with the experience of loneliness and isolation (i.e. divine abandonment).

To further clarify the relationship between sin and suffering, Brent A. Strawn explains that in the Psalms, it would be wrong to conclude that only “some sin has invariably led to the suffering in question.” As such,

one [is] immediately aware that such a connection between calamity and sin is too simple if perceived as a one-to-one correlation…One needs to be careful, however, about throwing the baby out with the bath water in assuming that there is never any connection.

Thus, a relationship exists. However, the complexity of this relationship between the sin and the negative situation in question found within a Psalm of lament requires a more in-depth consideration.

To go deeper, Strawn discusses the psalmist’s unintentional sin by way of ‘psalmic zombism,’ a reclassification of the philosophical zombie (p-zombie). He contemplates what it means for a reader to imagine subjectively the negative experiences of the psalmist with regards to will, volition, and intention. Strawn explains that will, volition, and intention are the key aspects of a

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29 Ibid., 12.
32 Strawn states that a ‘p-zombie’ describes “a hypothetical entity that is exactly like a normal human being in every conceivable way, except that it lacks conscious experience.” Strawn, “What is it Like to be a Psalmist?” 63. Also, see Lindström, *Suffering and Sin*, 12-13.
person’s being that constitute his or her consciousness.\textsuperscript{33} It is consequential of Strawn’s argument that one must reconsider what is moral agency in the HB if one acknowledges the point that a person’s will, volition, and intention are that which constitute consciousness. To facilitate such a reconsideration, one must observe “the interface between wrongdoing and intention”\textsuperscript{34} via BH terms for ‘not knowing’ (בבלא דעת, Deut 4:42; 19:4; Josh 20:3, 5; etc.). Strawn stresses the importance of understanding culpability in wrong action in the HB, especially for legal matters and casting judgment. Culminating in a definition, Strawn states,

\begin{quote}
We might call this the “Ancient Near Eastern Zombic Hunch”, and define it as the scholarly belief that ancient Near Eastern peoples—Israelites included—were often devoid of intention when it came to wrongdoing and culpability; or, at least, that their intention did not ultimately matter when it came to culpability scenarios, at least as far as the gods were concerned.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

I find Stawn’s argument problematic. For instance, I do not agree that “ancient Near Eastern peoples […] were often devoid of intention” when it came to wrongdoing, if ‘ancient Near Eastern people’ references the nation of Israel. A sin of ignorance is still a sin concerning a person’s moral agency in the OT. I think that the significance of Strawn’s argument has less to do with determining OT moral agency than with understanding that the person’s acknowledgment of his or her culpability for a negative action is of no importance when it comes to receiving divine judgment. Related to the Psalms, Ancient Israel thought that a suffered misfortune (e.g. physical sickness) was the result of unforgiven sin and wrongdoing against the divine law (e.g. Mosaic and Levitical law). If, however, the person received forgiveness, then the suffering should dissipate.

Barton states, “[t]he sins condemned in the Psalms are almost all drawn from the sphere of social-interactions: there is extremely little about sins of thought or desire, though the psalmists’ enemies do a fair bit of plotting.”\textsuperscript{36} This is a notable trend when the psalmist strives for justice. Yet, Pss 19:14 and 66:18 do reference sins of thought. Barton argues further that for the most part a psalmist’s reference to sin is open and explicit, although I do not necessarily agree with this conclusion.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{flushright}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{33} Strawn, “What is it Like to be a Psalmist?” 64.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{36} Barton, “Sin in the Psalms,” 51.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 51.
\end{footnotesize}
\end{flushright}
these condemned actions should be avoided by the Ancient Israel population in daily living, he does not clearly discuss the impact these sins have on the negative situations. He does, however, address the impact these sins may have on the psalmist’s social dynamics (e.g. the experience of social isolation).

With regards to the reality of sin before God in biblical lament, Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore explain that in the Psalms “‘[s]in’ and ‘grace’ are never separated, as the apostle later states with such assurance: ‘where sin abounded, grace did much more abound’ (Rom 5:20).”38 They argue that the form of a penitential prayer is best portrayed in Neh 9:1-37 as “[i]t marks the renewal of the covenant on the people’s return from captivity in Babylon.”39 To appreciate the significance of personal confession of human sin to God as the act that restores the psalmist’s proximity to God, one must understand the concept of divine abandonment. In Ps 13, Lindström explains that the psalmist’s experience of Yahweh’s absence is central to the described suffering.40 Whereas Strawn draws a connection between human transgression and the manifestation of a physical ailment, Lindström argues that there is also a relationship between human sin and divine absence (i.e. a lack of proximity to a divine entity [Yahweh]). If God is absent, then physical, psychological, social, and spiritual suffering ensues. To restore the self from a state of suffering, the solution for the psalmist is often to confess his or her transgressions against God’s law.41 As such, the psalmist confesses his or her sin(s) and wickedness to re-secure the surety of God’s intimate presence.42

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38 Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 10-11. They also argue that the reality of sin as sin against God is the fifth element of that lament and confession in the Old Testament.
39 Ibid., 11.
40 Lindström, Suffering and Sin, 95-97.
41 To solidify the notion that a confession of personal sin restores one’s proximity to God, consider the penitential Psalms (Pss 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). These Psalms were, in ancient tradition, prayed devotionally to guard against succumbing to the seven cardinal sins. As a procedure for confessing personal sin, Waltke, Houston, and Moore explain, “[t]he first step is fear of punishment (Ps. 6:1[2]). The second step is sorrow for sin (Ps. 32:5). The third step is hope of pardon (Ps 38:15[16]). The fourth step is the love of a cleansed soul (Ps. 51:7[9]). The fifth step is longing for heaven (Ps. 102:16). The sixth step is having distrust of self (Ps. 130:6) by looking only to the Lord. The seventh step is prayer against the final judgment (Ps. 143:2).” Waltke, Houston, and Moore, The Psalms as Christian Lament, 16, citing Norman Snaith, The Seven Psalms (London: Epworth, 1964), 10. By following this procedural liturgical prayer, one would not only confess present sin(s), but guard against those of the future. The ultimate purpose of this practice was to restore or maintain one’s proximity to God. Waltke, Houston, and Moore, The Psalms as Christian Lament, 10-11, 121-128; also see Mouton W. Bloomfield, “The Origin of the Seven Cardinal Sins,” Harvard Theological Review 34, no. 2 (1991): 121-128; J. M. Neale and Richard Frederick Littledale, A Commentary on the Psalms: From Primitive and Mediaeval Writings (London: Joseph Masters, 1874), 124.
42 Waltke, Houston, and Moore, The Psalms as Christian Lament, 11.
In sum, the above review culminates in the understanding that a described suffering situation in the lament Psalms primarily concerns the psalmist’s experience of isolation. This isolation can result from an internal source (e.g. personal sin) or external source (e.g. present hostile enemy), and can manifest itself as a feeling or experience of being ‘cut off’ from those around (e.g. other members of society) or God himself. Most often, the greatest experience of suffering the psalmist describes concerns his or her perception of divine abandonment, rather than isolation from other members of society. I argue that psalmist’s experience of isolation is central to our understanding of the negative situation because of the notion that if God is absent then there is nothing to guard against potential ailments (e.g. sickness, enemies, etc.).

2.4 Sin, an Enemy, and the Psalms of Lament: A Brief Examination


2.4.1 Psalm 38: Deserved and Undeserved Suffering

Psalm 38 depicts the psychological complexities of a person’s mourning, where his or her suffering appears to be a consequence of distinct factors: “personal sin(s), the devil and his demons, [and/or] recognized physical illness.” The psalmist’s psychological confusion seems to be a result of his or her “intense and confused feelings and thoughts about the cause(s) of [his or her] sufferings,” which leads to the development of “moral resilience in the process.”

Psalm 38 contrasts what the psalmist perceives as deserved suffering (e.g. the psalmist’s physical sickness) and undeserved suffering (e.g. the psalmist’s oppression from a hostile enemy). In the first two stanzas (vv. 1[2]-4[5]; 5[6]-8[9]), the psalmist “aim[s] to move God to pity and so to cease punishing him.” In these stanzas, the psalmist considers his or her experience of physical suffering (e.g. sickness) to be a result of divine punishment. The next two stanzas (vv. 9[10]-

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43 Ibid., 122.
44 Ibid., 123.
“aim to move God to do what is right.” What is right for the psalmist? For the psalmist, it is right that his or her suffering comes to an end. Here, however, an important question comes to the forefront: what is deserved and undeserved suffering? Furthermore, if the Psalms illustrate a connection between personal sin and the experience of suffering, a present notion within Ps 38, can any of the described negative situations be understood as undeserved?

Waltke, Houston, and Moore seem to support the notion that the oppression the psalmist experiences at the hands of a hostile enemy is undeserved. They explain,

If God does not relent from afflicting him for his sins—he does not minimize that as “sins of ignorance or inadvertence”—his physical death is imminent and certain (v. 17[18]); and, because of his afflictions, he cannot defend himself against the treacherous false accusations of his enemies.

As the psalmist is unable to defend him or herself against hostile forces because of a physical ailment, Michael H. Floyd explains that the psalmist’s petition requests that Yahweh relent in his anger (e.g. v. 1[2]) so that the psalmist can stand his or her ground. As such, does the psalmist suffer undeservedly because of an inability to combat the present enemy if this inability is the result of a sickness that is a deserved suffering? I find it difficult to conclude that the psalmist’s experience of suffering at the hand of a hostile enemy is undeserved for two reasons. First, the psalmist makes no implicit or explicit statement in Ps 38 that either of his or her negative

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46 Ibid., 135.
47 While it seems that the psalmist pleads for a deliverance from his suffering via the arrival of divine justice, Ps 38 does not contain a direct statement where a request for assistance is made to Yahweh. While such an explicit statement is not present, the psalmist does express his willingness to wait for Yahweh’s answer (עָנָה, v. 15[16]), and that Yahweh not rebuke (יָכַח, v. 1[2]) or forsake him (עָזַב, v. 21[22]).
situations are undeserved. The psalmist’s inability to combat the hostile enemy is the result of his or her sickness; however, this does not suggest that the hostile enemy as a form of suffering is undeserved. Second, as the psalmist indicates that his or her sickness is deserved because of personal sin, what is to suggest that the hostile enemy is different? For instance, Isa 10:5 shows Assyria to be “the rod of My anger (שֵׁבֶט אַפִּי)” (NASB). What is to say that the psalmist’s experience of a present hostile enemy is not also a part of Yahweh’s judgment?

In closing, David A. Bosworth explains,

> Attributing painful experience to God’s punishment for one’s guilt is one way of making sense of adverse events. Modern parents bereaved of children sometimes seek to uphold the moral order of the universe by understanding the death as a punishment for their own sins. As one parent remarks, “it is easier […] to find yourself guilty of some sin than to admit how helpless you really are.”

Even if a sinful action is inadvertent, the suffering is undeserved, or the cause of the distress is unknown, to attribute the cause of the distress to God’s agency (e.g. his casting of judgement) brings with it a sense of resolution for the sufferer, if resolution is what is sought. In the case of Ps 38, the psalmist’s plead for relief is a rebirthing of his or her spirituality so that the he or she can endure the present hopelessness. Furthermore, dismissing the notion that the psalmist’s suffering is undeserved to instead consider the idea that he or she did not understand the cause of the suffering, is it possible that the psalmist confesses to a sinful action because nothing else makes sense? As seen above, many psalms illustrate a relationship between sin and a suffering situation. If this relationship exists, and elsewhere in the OT Yahweh is seen to use the nations as a rod of judgment against Israel, why would this instance in Ps 38 be different? I consider it difficult to accept that there exists a reality of undeserved suffering before God, at least in the case of Ps 38.

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To frame Rosof’s argument within the perspective of Ps 38, as the sufferer attributes the cause of his or her distress to God, he or she not only avoids admitting how helpless he or she is, but also how destructive God can be. God as a destructive force by his delivery of divine judgment is sometimes an overlooked reality.
2.4.2 Psalm 51: A Sinner’s Lament and Divine Grace as the Remedy

Psalm 51 is a unique and well-known penitential prayer. Its superscription (v. 2) connects the passage with the historical setting of David’s act of adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife (2 Sam 11-12).\(^52\) Addressing the historical setting and the literary techniques found within the Psalm, Boda explains, “[w]riters of Old Testament narratives rarely explicitly state their evaluation of the event they are relating. Instead, they will use various narrative techniques.”\(^53\)

The narrator of 2 Sam 11, however, provides an unquestionably negative evaluation of David’s actions by presenting the details of the narrative as a contrast between the faithfulness of Uriah and the unfaithfulness of David. The story makes clear that David sinned greatly against God and humanity: “a married woman is pregnant by a man other than her husband, and her husband, a faithful soldier, lies dead because of the murderous plot of the man who impregnated his wife.”\(^54\)

This contrast becomes even clearer when David encounters the prophet Nathan (2 Sam 12).

In Ps 51, the psalmist uses a number of BH lexemes that relate to the concept of a negative action (טֵחַת, ‘sin’; עָוֹן, ‘iniquity/guilty’; פֶּשֶׁע, ‘transgression’) in the HB by his confession of sinful action. This is evident when the psalmist states, “Against You, You only, I have sinned (חָטָאתִי) and done what is evil (וַחֲרָאתִי) in Your sight” (v. 4a[6a], NASB). In this Psalm, and in many others, the specific sinful action is absent beyond the superscription, “after he had gone in (כָּאשֶׁר־בָּא) to Bathsheba” (v. 1b[2b], NASB).

With regards to the psalmist’s language and content expressed, the passage does not explicitly relate David’s act of adultery to the negative situation. I find it unclear if David laments his separation from Yahweh or the soon-to-be death of his unborn son, who is understood to be Bathsheba’s firstborn. Instead, the Psalm emphasizes a theology concerning the necessity of divine grace as the remedy for human sinfulness. If David is lamenting either of the above (e.g. divine absence or the death of his son), he acknowledges that he requires divine mercy (v. 1e[3b], 4[6]) to be freed from the consequences of his previous actions (v.7[9], 9[11]-10[12]), although these actions may be undefined. Here, he makes a two-fold request of Yahweh by an

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\(^{52}\) For Ps 51, when addressing ‘the psalmist,’ I use the pronoun ‘he’ as I generally consider the psalmist to be David.


\(^{54}\) Boda, After God’s Own Heart, 134.
“impassioned cry for both mercy and for cleansing from sin.” These requests are linked to Yahweh’s characteristics of ‘unfailing love’ (חסד) and ‘great compassion’ (רב רהמים), these being divine revelations of Yahweh’s character that lie at the heart of the HB.

As previously stated, Ps 51 clearly shows that the reality of human sinfulness and the necessity of divine mercy as its remedy are closely, if not inseparably, related. This relationship is seen when David petitions God to ‘wash’ (כבס) him, a metaphor that is found elsewhere in the HB to describe a “physical cleansing and ritual purification.” By this metaphor, the psalmist relates the nature of his present distress to the concept of human sin and divine grace as its remedy within the prophetic tradition. As such, the summative theological point of Ps 51 is that there is an indisputable relationship between the consequential reality of human sin, the cause of a lamented situation, and the necessity of divine grace that functions as its remedy.

2.4.3 Psalm 119: Inadvertent Sin and the P-Zombie

Psalm 119 contains a prominent discussion of moral action and is often “referred to as a piece of Torah-mysticism, in the sense that it encourages meditation on the Torah and is itself an example of such meditation.” For this text, I focus on the psalmist’s description of ‘inadvertent sin’ (i.e.

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55 Ibid., 139.
unknown or unintentional sin).\textsuperscript{60} I engage with Strawn’s arguments concerning specific language within the Psalm and the relevance of the p-zombie concept.

Psalm 119 contains the lexeme שׁגג (שׁגגא, ‘ignorant sin’) to emphasize the relationship between inadvertent sin and its consequences.\textsuperscript{61} To begin, Strawn outlines four relevant instances within Ps 119 where the psalmist clearly describes the consequences of inadvertent sin:

1. In v. 10, the psalmist claims to have sought God wholeheartedly and then requests that God not let him stray from the commandments (כָּלְתַּשֵּגַי מִצְבָּתֶךָ).
2. In v. 21, the psalmist declares that God rebukes proud people (זְדוֹן; cf. above), who are further described as ‘accursed ones’ (אָרָוֹרִים) ‘who stray from your commandments’ (כִּי תָשֵּׂגַי מִצְבָּתֶךָ).
3. In v. 67, the psalmist states ‘Before I suffered, I had strayed, but now I keep your word’ (כִּי־אכֹנֵנִי אֲנָשָׁה אֲרָוֹרִים נַפְשָׁתִי).
4. In v. 118, the psalmist asserts that God disregards (כִּי־שָּׂנוּת תַּרְמִיתָם) all who stray from your statutes’ (כִּי־שָׂגוֹת מִצְבָּתֶךָ).

The psalmist shows in v. 10 (#1) that to go astray from Yahweh’s commands is to set oneself against seeking God wholeheartedly. As the Psalm equates well-doing with obeying the Torah, the psalmist emphasizes the importance of a person being reliant on Yahweh to stay aright (e.g. morally pure).\textsuperscript{63} Verse 21 (#2) builds from the psalmist’s request that his or her eyes be opened (v. 18) and that the divine commandments not be hidden from him or her (v. 19). Strawn explains, “[i]t would seem that those lacking insight (שָׁרִי) or in willful (זֵיר) disregard of such are the זְדוֹן [זְדוֹן, ‘presumptuous’ or ‘arrogant’] and שָׁגוֹת [שָׁגוֹת, ‘those who stray’ (NASB)] of v. 21, who deserve God’s rebuke and are cursed, perhaps as a direct result.”\textsuperscript{64} The psalmist sets himself or herself far apart from the guilty to ensure that he is able to follow the righteous path. In v. 67 (#3), the psalmist shows that he or she has been subjugated to past inadvertencies. To describe these inadvertencies, the psalmist uses the lexeme שׁגג (‘ignorant sin’ or ‘sin inadvertently’) to state “Before I was afflicted I went astray (כִּי־אכֹנֵנִי אֲנָשָׁה), But now I keep Your word” (v. 67, NASB).\textsuperscript{65} While the psalmist acknowledges that before he or she did what was wrong, an explicit confession is not provided. At least, the statement of v. 67 is not as direct as vv. 10 and 21. A

\textsuperscript{60} Strawn, “What is it Like to be A Psalmist,” 67-68.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 67-68.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 70.
\textsuperscript{63} Barton, “Sin in the Psalms,” 57; Strawn, “What is it Like to be a Psalmist,” 71.
\textsuperscript{64} Strawn, “What is it Like to be a Psalmist,” 71.
\textsuperscript{65} It is important to note that שׁגג is not the most common lexeme for ‘sin’ or ‘transgression’ in the HB. שׁגג only appears once in the Psalms (v. 67) and three times elsewhere (Lev 5:18; Num 15:28; Job 12:16). Some suggest that שׁגג also appears in Gen 6:3. However, this instance is best understood as a ב preposition particle + ש relative particle + כ conjunction particle = ‘because also.’
possible interpretation is that the lack of a clear confession is because \( \text{שׁגג} \) denotes ‘unconsciousness’ or ‘inadvertence’ in action. While this may be the case, the surrounding verses show the psalmist making requests of \( \text{Yahweh} \) “for [the] knowledge (vv. 66, 68, 71) and the language of God’s law (vv. 66-72).”

Retrospectively, the psalmist may now be aware that his or her sinful action, although inadvertent, is sinful. Or, the psalmist is now aware that his or her suffering is consequential of a sinful action, and, as such, is searching for a sense of enlightenment (e.g. his searching for a knowledge of \( \text{Yahweh’s law} \) [vv. 66-72]). In v. 118 (#4), there is a strengthening between “the causal relationship between wrongdoing and punishment, though it is not clear if \( \text{שׁגג} \) means a deliberate rather than accidental straying here.”

In vv. 67 and 71 (#3), Strawn explains that “it does not matter whether the psalmist acted advertently or inadvertently—only that the psalmist’s actions have produced suffering.” This is evident through an implied sequence within the Psalm that suggests a strong, causal relationship between suffering and wrongdoing, even if the wrongdoing is inadvertent: ‘I strayed’ → ‘I suffered’ → ‘I now obey.’ The reason this sequence makes sense as an implicit factor within the text is because the psalmist gives power to the practice of retrospection. It is irrelevant whether the psalmist possessed a real-time knowledge that his or her action, advertent or inadvertent, was sinful or not, the sequence receives significance when the psalmist reflects on the nature of his or her actions from the time when he or she strayed (e.g. v. 67). As the psalmist grows in a knowledge of the language of \( \text{Yahweh’s law} \), he or she realizes the error of those former ways. Through retrospection, the psalmist realizes that at one time he or she strayed from the divine law. As a result, there was suffering. Now that the psalmist realizes the sinfulfulness of

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66 Ibid., 71.
67 Strawn cites John Goldingay as being opposed to this position on and interpretation of v. 118. Further, Goldingay does not necessarily agree that when the psalmist uses \( \text{שׁגג} \) he is without a conscious acknowledgment of his guilt. Strawn, “What is it Like to be a Psalmist,” 71, citing John Goldingay, Psalms 90-150 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 392, 407, 425.

In Lev 4:13, \( \text{שׁגג} \) describes a person’s involuntary wrong doing. However, unlike \( \text{שׁגג} \), emphasis on the action as inadvertent does not seem as significant. \( \text{שׁ(HttpStatusCode: http://www.example.com)ג} \) is also not the most common lexeme for ‘sin’ or ‘transgression’ in the HB as it only appears 22 times. A more common lexeme is \( \text{חטא} \) (‘sin,’ ‘miss,’ ‘be at fault,’ etc.).
68 Strawn, “What is it Like to be a Psalmist,” 72.
69 Ibid., 72.
70 On the power retrospection receives by the experience of affliction, Strawn cites Jože Krašovec and explains that “the role of affliction is […] to make human beings more sensitive to their sinful state and to persuade them to confess their sins.” Strawn, “What is it Like to be a Psalmist,” 72, citing Jože Krašovec, Reward, Punishment, and Forgiveness: The Thinking and Beliefs of Ancient Israel in the Light of Greek and Modern Views (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 602.
his or her former way of life, he or she amends his or her behaviour and commits to following the righteous path.

What is important to understand from these verses and Strawn’s ensuing engagement is that, although the psalmist committed an ‘unconscious’ sinful action, he or she acknowledges that divine grace remains the only sufficient remedy for the negative situation. Like Ps 51, the psalmist in Ps 119 considers divine grace to be the only remedy because he or she ultimately suffers because of divine abandonment (i.e. spiritual isolation). The purpose of the psalmist’s confession is to restore him or herself to Yahweh’s proximity. Furthermore, although there are many complex ethical questions that concern the extent to which a person is responsible and/or culpable for an inadvertent wrong action, the psalmist shows that the consequences for such a wrong doing are equal in severity to those of a conscious sinful action. Succinctly stated, the ultimate consequence is an experience of isolation from Yahweh’s stabilizing force.

2.4.4 Summary

To summarize the above discussion and lay the foundation to the following chapters, I argued that since there exists a relationship between sin and the psalmist’s described experience of suffering in the lament Psalms, there also exists a similar relationship in the suffering experience of ASA. Simply stated, a person’s negative actions have reactions (i.e. consequences). While the above individual lament Psalms show the psalmist’s experience of physical, psychological, social, and spiritual suffering to be the result of divine judgment for sinful actions, in the following chapters, I relate this same concept to ASA. I explore whether the sufferer’s SDS is the result of divine punishment for a sinful action, or if only the suffered consequences of ASA (e.g. having to pay a fine or serve jail-time for violating the Canadian Government’s Criminal Code, sustaining physical damage for excessively consuming alcohol, being separated from family for their safety, etc.) are the result of divine judgment? If either of these are the case, then to what extent does divine agency govern the sufferer’s negative situation? Furthermore, if divine agency is involved in directing the sufferer’s negative experience, what is the remedy to the situation? Like the lament Psalms, is the requirement that the person confess to committing sinful actions and present a cry for divine deliverance? These questions are addressed in what follows.
2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter provided a succinct definition for the literary genre of individual lament in the Psalms. I summarized several competing definitions that laid out the distinct features of the designated literary genre. Of this section, what was most important concerned the present BH lexemes and their meaning as they promote the uniqueness and theological value of the present genre. Following, I reviewed some relevant literature that argued for a causal relationship between sin and human suffering in the Psalms of lament. While I reviewed various descriptions of this relationship, I presented some points of departure where I did not necessarily agree with that which was argued. Lastly, I provided a brief examination of three Psalms (38, 51, 119) that emphasized some of the complexities of the present study. I showed there to be evidence of a psalmist arguing that not all suffering caused by sin is necessarily deserved (e.g. Ps 38). Specifically, there are consequences one may suffer (e.g. social oppression) that are the result of something else (e.g. experiencing sickness because of unconfessed sin). For Ps 51, I emphasized the necessity of divine grace as the remedy for human suffering when unconfessed sin is the cause of the lamented situation. Observing Ps 119, I explored the complexities of human suffering that result from inadvertent sin. In this analysis, I drew heavily on Strawn’s understanding and use of the p-zombie concept that understand the involuntary nature of the psalmist’s negative situation.
Chapter 3: Active Substance Addiction and the Sufferer’s Lament: Clarifying the Moral Model

3.1 Introduction

This chapter functions to clarify the moral approach’s argument that sin and ASA are related. I assess whether it is correct to assert that (1) a person’s SDS is the result of sin, evil, or moral weakness, and (2), if sin and addiction are related, is this relationship existent within SDS proper (i.e. the compulsive act of excessively consuming alcohol) or only within its consequential behaviours? This clarification culminates in the position that within the moral approach, the sufferer is not considered to be evil in nature because of that which he or she does, but he or she is a sinner. I argue that sin and evil are less related than one might initially think. The purpose of this clarification is to lay a foundation on which the next chapter can assert that as sin and the psalmist’s negative situation are related, the same can be said of a negative situation in ASA.

3.2 “My Bottle, My Resentments, and Me”: A Narrative on the Sufferer’s Experience

As a segue into my clarification of the moral approach, let us consider an example of the suffering experience of ASA as it is presented by one recovered alcoholic. In “My Bottle, My Resentments, and Me,” this anonymous author states, “[f]rom childhood trauma to skid row drunk, this hobo finally found a High Power, bringing sobriety and a long-lost family.”

Describing the triggering event, one that was not the result of moral weakness but of a traumatic experience, he states, “I believe my alcoholism really began when I was eleven years old and my mother was brutally murdered.” He describes himself as growing up in a normal small town home, having the same advantages available to him as to any other child. Unfortunately, this changed because of his mother’s death: his father was accused (though exonerated), his schoolmates gossiped insistently, and no one would provide him with any details concerning the murder. As a result, he withdrew and began to block out reality by drinking. To support his method of coping, he stole bottles from his place of employment, a grocery store.

Once he was old enough to leave home, he joined the marine corps on a two-year contract. He explains that this was an attempt to escape “the origin of my bitterness” (i.e. his hometown, the

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2 Ibid., 437. Emphasis original.
3 Ibid., 437.
location of his mother’s murder). In bootcamp, he struggled with the discipline, authority, and rigid schedule, which resulted in an even greater increase of his bitterness and anger. To function, he would go to the bar every night until he was kicked out for causing a series of drunken disturbances. Once he received an honourable discharge from the marine corps for completing his two-year contract, he returned to his hometown and soon after met the woman who would become the mother of his children. Although he loved his family, his drinking remained unchecked and his wife eventually filed for a divorce. Overwhelmed by anger and even greater resentment because of his marital abandonment, he was ordered by the sheriff to leave town. He explains, “I left with my hatred, resentment, and the clothes on my back.”

In an instance of ‘rock bottom,’ after hopping train cars across the country because of homelessness, he found himself in a desert town. One scorching day, he felt that life was no longer worth living. As he describes it: “[t]o get away from everyone I managed to find some booze and started walking out into the desert, thinking, I’ll just go until I die. Soon, so drunk I couldn’t walk another step, I fell to the ground and moaned, ‘Oh, God! Please help me.’”

If his journey into the desert is the culmination of his negative experiences, then two points from his story deserve emphasis. First, he explains that he placed everything as secondary to his excessive consumption of alcohol. As a result of his skewed priorities, he described himself as being half-starved, weighing 133 pounds, clearly struggling with suicidal thoughts, having driven everyone he cared for away from himself. In every sense of the word, he was alone. This sufferer makes it clear that his excessive consumption of alcohol, though a mode of escapism, resulted in his uninhibited expression of aggression. Most often, his violent behaviour manifested in the bar.

Second, in the desert, he made something of a lament statement to god (i.e. his higher power, an undefined concept of god) by his unconditional petition for help. While his personal spirituality was not of central importance in the narrative, it is significant that in his most desperate state he cried out to god in lament. While it would be a stretch to credit all of the following changes he made in his life to this prayerful lament, its central placement within the narrative when he was at his most vulnerable is of significance.

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4 Ibid., 439.
5 Ibid., 440.
6 Ibid., 441.
3.3 Defining the Complexities of the Moral Model

Moving from the above narrative that illustrates some of the associated complexities for determining the cause of one’s negative experience in ASA, it is time to re-evaluate the already noted aspects of the moral model. Christopher C. H. Cook succinctly explains that the moral model “proposes that addiction is the result of sin, evil, or moral weakness and that the alcoholic is personally culpable.” While I will expand on and critique this definition momentarily, it is important to note that the moral model is no longer a popular position within addiction recovery circles. It was popular prior to the increased importance that was placed on scientific research into addiction’s genomic and hereditary features. This movement toward scientific research is known as the disease/scientific model and emerged in the early twentieth century. This model is the popular position among modern addiction treatment centers and Twelve Step Programs.

To describe the disease/scientific model, it fundamentally does not consider addiction proper to be sinful or the alcoholic to be a sinner. Furthermore, a person’s SDS is not the result of his or her sin, evil, or moral weakness. Relative to the moral approach, the disease/scientific model also does not consider it central that the sufferer be culpable for his or her negative actions that are the result of ASA. The general notion is that the sufferer’s negative actions, what the moral model would deem as sinful actions, are the result of his or her experience of a biological disease (e.g. SDS). Furthermore, since this model argues that SDS is not caused by the sufferer’s sin, evil, or moral weakness, it concludes that SDS develops within the sufferer due to a long list of complex factors (e.g. trauma, genomic markers, etc.). While this model fully acknowledges the roles psychological and social factors play in one’s SDS, it emphasizes the fact that there exists within the sufferer genomic markers that biologically predispose him or her to a potential substance dependency.

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8 On the movement away from the moral model, Cook contends, “[t]he moral model of addiction is now unpopular, and those who subscribe to the disease model would argue that it is not primarily a matter of moral culpability that one suffers from the disease of addiction.” Ibid., 129.

9 On whether the sufferer is a sinner or addiction proper is sinful, it seems that those who promote the disease/scientific model argue that a sinful action is equitable with evil. I argue that their conclusion that addiction proper and the addict are not sinful because he or she is not evil is a misunderstanding of what a sinful action is. In the present chapter, *via* Augustine, I contend that a sinful action and the classification of a person as a sinner does not imply that the he or she is evil. Simply stated, sin and evil are less equal than those who promote the disease/scientific model may think.

10 I struggle with the inclusiveness of the disease/scientific model’s conclusion that the sufferer possesses genomic markers that make him or her biologically predisposed to a potential SDS. While it is clear that there is scientific/medical evidence that such hereditary features exist, I am not sure that it would apply to all who suffer.
While the founding motivation of the disease/scientific model is significant (that the sufferer possesses genomic markers), I contend that there is a weakness to this approach. I hold that the disease/scientific model overlooks the role the sufferer’s negative spirituality plays as another causal factor in the development of the sufferer’s SDS. Although it would be difficult to argue that the alcoholic suffers solely from a biological disease while also maintaining that this suffering is the consequence of sinful actions, I still hold that the sufferer’s negative spirituality is a central factor to consider when identifying the causal roots of SDS. As such, I do not reject the disease/scientific model’s conclusive evidence that the sufferer may be biologically predisposed to a SDS. I do, however, consider it to be necessary that we explore the impact sinful actions have in shaping the sufferer’s negative spirituality via his or her compulsive behaviours.

3.3.1 Active Substance Addiction and Evil: Sin, Suffering, and Despair

The following two sections serve to expand on Cook’s succinct definition of the moral model by engaging with some of the complexities associated with this approach. I address Gerald G. May’s and Linda A. Mercadante’s discussions of the relationship between addiction and sin (and evil if it is addressed), since they are the latest and most substantial arguments for understanding the nature of SDS via the moral model.\(^{11}\) I re-evaluate the existing conclusion that there is a relationship between addiction and sin, and that it is this relationship that causes the alcoholic’s suffering. The purpose of this task is to clarify what the moral approach means when it describes addiction proper and its consequential negative actions as being sinful.

For May, SDS is in its very essence the absolute enemy of human freedom and is an experience comparable to imprisonment and/or slavery.\(^{12}\) SDS is a reliance on a mood-altering substance to achieve a state of comfort. May explores the relationship between addiction and evil using the concept of temptation, a present notion within Scripture. In the NT, “[temptation] is seen as the primary activity of the devil, a seduction […] an evil force in and of itself […] and] as part of the

\(^{11}\) It seems that through May’s and Mercandante’s evaluations of the relationship between addiction and evil, the terms ‘evil’ and ‘sin’ are synonymous (‘moral weakness’ also seems to be an additional synonym). Cook also follows suit with this use of language.

human condition” (e.g. Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-12; Jas 1:13-18).\textsuperscript{13} While the source of temptation varies among biblical texts, May explains that Scripture clearly indicates that a person’s succumbing to temptation “is the starting point of addiction.”\textsuperscript{14} He states,

> Whether we see [temptation] as our biological capacity to become attached, or as a seduction by dark external forces, or both, temptation is always the first step, the preliminary opportunity, for addiction. Once attachment is fully entrenched, our motivations become so mixed that freedom to choose is seriously compromised.\textsuperscript{15}

The human experience of evil is the result of our freedom in moral agency to choose something other than God. It is because of the divine plan for redemption that “[e]vil is irrevocably at cross-purposes with love, life, freedom, and creation […]. [T]here is no power and no condition that God’s grace cannot penetrate with love.”\textsuperscript{16}

In another approach, Mercadante explains, “[s]in,” as it relates to addiction, “is holistic, affecting body, mind, and spirit.”\textsuperscript{17} She is clearer than May by providing a working definition of ‘sin’ that challenges the behaviouristic and moralistic criteria for its determination:

> Sin is not primarily about right and wrong behavior, that is, morality. Sin is first about orientation. One’s telos, direction, primary attachment—rather than beliefs or behaviors—is what is most radically affected by sin. One continually has the choice to turn toward or away from God, the source of our being. There is a cumulative effect, however, in persistently turning away. Over time, it becomes harder to change.\textsuperscript{18}

Mercadante explains that the relationship between sin and addiction is found within the distortion of the human will since the will functions to express “one’s telos, direction, and primary attachment.”\textsuperscript{19} Simply stated, “[i]f one does not direct the will toward God, it will be directed toward something else.”\textsuperscript{20} As a universal concept and in reference to the Fall, sin affects

\begin{itemize}
\item 13 Ibid., 115.
\item 14 Ibid., 115. Emphasis original.
\item 15 Ibid., 115-116.
\item 16 Ibid., 118.
\item 18 Ibid., 28. Mercadante’s argues that ‘sin’ is best understood by considering one’s orientation (i.e. whether the will is directed toward God) rather than by beliefs or behaviours. However, I find her proposition problematic. It seems she is arguing that, in the case of ASA, it is not sinful but is instead a bad habit. Her rejection of a moralistic understanding of sin is just as behaviour-oriented as her own argument. For instance, individual actions (i.e. behaviours) are evidence of person’s character. How does one gauge “one’s telos, direction, or primary attachment” if not by analyzing behaviour patterns? Furthermore, individual actions do have a moral weight, especially when they become repetitive.
\item 19 Ibid., 29.
\item 20 Ibid., 29.
\end{itemize}
“[a]ll creation—including our bodies.” According to this argument, the sufferer in ASA becomes dependent on a mood-altering substance because his or her will is not directed to God.

Mercadante explains that this relationship between sin and addiction does not fit neatly within a theological framework. She argues that ‘sin’ is a religious concept and ‘addiction’ is not. To understand the relationship between a religious and a non-religious term, she contends that we must consider the origin of addiction. Addiction “may begin relatively spontaneously, when inherent vulnerability inadvertently encounters [a] problematic substance.” Specifically, “[t]he source of […] addictions are not actual sin in themselves […] but they can lead to sin.” She titles these sources as “pre-sin actions.” By a person’s response to the human predicament (e.g. destructive behaviour), behaviour can become sin when compulsion becomes ultimate in the process where one determines an action. Cook describes the extent to which compulsion can degrade the sufferer’s hierarchy of needs:

In the alcohol dependence syndrome the desire for alcohol becomes salient over other desires, goals and objectives in life […]. On the one hand is the desirability of alcohol, now appearing to be magnified by the subjective compulsion to drink which is so characteristic of the syndrome in its fully developed form, and this is reinforced by the relief that alcohol provides in relation to the withdrawal symptoms that are experienced if even brief periods of abstinence are unavoidably encountered […]. On the other hand are the harms and complications of heavy and unremitting alcohol consumption […]. Health is impaired, social and personal obligations are unfulfilled, constructive interests and occupations are neglected, and life becomes focused on alcohol; alcohol is the bio-psycho-social goal in life which increasingly assumes priority over other goals.

To review May’s and Mercadante’s arguments concerning addiction and sin, neither directly state whether addiction proper is sinful or not. They do, however, note that a person’s actions

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21 Ibid., 40.
22 To be clear, if a person does not direct his or her will toward God, this does not universally imply that he or she will develop a SDS. Mercadante’s point is that a person, like all others, develops negative vices because of a misdirected will. We are all sinners and the development of a SDS is only one of many vices a person can turn to.
23 Mercadante uses the term ‘therapeutic’ to describe ‘addiction.’ However, this designation is confusing, and she provides little comment on her justification for the use of this terminology. It would make sense that ‘addiction’ is therapeutic if the sufferer is acknowledging or accepting his or her ailment, i.e. that the term ‘addiction’ only exists because one seeks to recover. Even if this was the case, it would be better considering modern research to designate ‘addiction’ as a medical term used for diagnosis. What is clear is that she does not consider ‘addiction’ to function synonymously with ‘sin.’ Ibid., 39.
24 She continues, “although the numbers are probably small, addiction for some persons can be quite close to natural evil or inherited corruption. It can be a biological predisposition or vulnerability that is unexplained, yet powerful.” Ibid., 40.
25 Ibid., 40.
26 Ibid., 41.
27 Cook, Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics, 177-178.
that are consequential of his or her ASA can be determined as sinful. The emphasis of each argument, while not on addiction proper but on its origin, concerns the possibility that a person’s SDS may originate or develop in innocence or naiveté. For instance, they explain that a person is always free to choose. However, after the sufferer repeatedly gives in to temptation, behaviours become habits that become compulsions. While the sufferer in ASA still possesses free agency, his or her ability to choose something other than giving in to compulsion becomes increasingly difficult, if not subjectively impossible. I will elaborate in the following section on the relationship between sin and addiction in terms of the divisions of the human will.

### 3.3.2 Augustine, Conscientia, and the Divided Will: On Human Fallenness

To engage further with the moral model, we need to give attention to the practical implications of human fallenness upon the human will. The moral model currently holds that SDS is the result of weakness, evil, or sin. A person who is an alcoholic has given in to temptation and has allowed his or her desires to become habits that become compulsions. This progression is an aspect of and relatable to humanity’s disordered will, according to Augustine.\(^{28}\) However, it becomes problematic when misinterpretation of this notion leads to the conclusion that the alcoholic is in his or her nature more sinful, evil, or morally weak than other people. This is not only an improper understanding of substance addiction but is also discriminatory in its understanding of human fallenness.

On human fallenness, Augustine makes a distinction, although not always a consistent one, between ‘primal sin’ and ‘original sin.’ Primal sin concerns the establishment of humanity’s guilt before God because of Adam and Eve’s first act of turning away from God in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3). Original sin refers to the consequences of humanity’s guilt that is derived from this first turning away, and is now fundamentally the human experience of the disordered/divided will for all of Adam’s descendants.\(^{29}\) Brain S. Powers explains, “[i]n this way, sin enters the world at the level of the will, the locus of agency, which turned from God as its truth and ultimate good in pursuit of one’s own, lesser good as ultimate.”\(^{30}\) Augustine is clear in proposing that because of primal sin and its hereditary influence (i.e. original sin), the human is born


moving away from God. Jesse Couenhoven explains “all human beings are born culpably misrelated to God.”

Counhoven suggests that Augustine does not argue that ‘sin’ is equitable with ‘evil.’ This is a distinction that is contrary to May’s and Mercadante’s arguments. Couenhoven explains: “sin is a particular form of evil, a culpable misrelation to God and the world. Thus, sin is not simply evil; neither is it merely evil to which humans contribute. Rather, sin is a blameworthy evil for which one is responsible.”

Succinctly stated, “[a]ll are now sinners because all were in Adam” (e.g. Rom 3:23). Thus, “Adam’s sin weakened his progeny and exposed them to temptation.”

As previously noted, ASA is in its essence a conflict within the sufferer’s conscience and a division within his or her will. As the sufferer repeatedly gives in to temptation, it becomes increasingly difficult for him or her to choose an action that is not, or does not relate to, the consumption of a mood-altering substance. Here, we see that May’s argument, which is that the sufferer’s experience returns to or finds its roots in his or her action of giving in to temptation, is similar to Augustine’s notion that primal sin has hereditary consequences (e.g. the experience of temptation) for all of Adam’s descendants (i.e. all of humanity). Within the framework of the Augustinian concepts of conscientia (‘consciousness’ or ‘awareness’) and the divided will/disordered will, the sufferer desires freedom but is unable to achieve it because of his or her compulsiveness. Of the existing research that considers Augustine’s understanding of drunkenness, many observe his concept of the divided will but overlook his notion of conscientia as also being of some relevance. Thus, I review Augustine’s concept of conscientia and argue for its increasing significance if one is to effectively move into his arguments concerning the divided will.

Manfred Svennson explains that “Augustine restricts the use of conscientia to moral conscience and to different kinds of knowledge involving a relation to the Creator.” For Augustine, “conscience is conceived as an act of reason” that exists as a unification of “the spirit of man”

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33 Ibid., 369.
36 Ibid., 46.
and “the presence of the Holy Spirit.”

Consciousness for the believer is “immediately illuminated by the Holy Spirit.”

Thus, it is the person’s ability to reason that is “immediately illuminated.” Even if the Holy Spirit has illuminated the person’s ability to reason, there still exists a tension between his or her desires of the human spirit and the immanent presence of the Holy Spirit. Svensson describes this as a “conflict between improper delight and reason if reason is illuminated.”

He explains: “[c]ommenting on Romans 7:15 ‘I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate,’ Augustine rhetorically asks Paul: ‘What is it that you are doing? I am desiring (concupisco). But I do not consent to this desire.’”

While Augustine argues that the supreme end of the human being is to contemplate the unchangeable and eternal truths, this often is not the object of human desire. As the will is free and the “will inclines the soul toward a desired object […] reason has turned away from eternal truths” toward its own governance by a sensual reality (i.e. the vices of the world). This is related back to original sin as it affects a person’s daily practices, customs, and conveniences.

However, even though the human soul is bound to a desire for temporary goods because of original sin causing it to lose sight of eternal truths, “the human being still wants to act in the right way.” As such, if an Augustinian concept of the divided will exists within conscientia, it is more than a simple conflict between “willing” and “not willing,” but rather is a struggle within the human conscience when the Holy Spirit is the illuminator of human reason.

Augustine relates the concept of the divided will to his own journey in Confessions, when he “tells the story of his long, winding, and often tormented path to the church,” and “[h]e recalls his feelings, motivations and conflicts at every stage and interrogates better to understand the human condition in relation to God, in whom he eventually finds peace.”

The strength to command lies in the strength of will, and the degree to which the will is not engaged. For it is the will that commands the will to exist, and it commands not another will but itself. So the will that commands is incomplete, and therefore what it commands does not happen. If it were complete, it would not need to command the will to exists, since it would exist already. Therefore there is no monstrous split between willing and not willing. We are dealing with a morbid condition of the mind which, when it is lifted up by the truth, does not unreservedly rise to it but is weighed down by habit. So there are two wills. Neither of them is complete, and what is present in the one is lacking to the other.\textsuperscript{45}

As Augustine’s concept of the divided will is explained within the context of his journey towards belief, he describes the nature of his ‘new’ will, coming from the joyful experience of freedom found within God, as existing in conflict with the ‘old,’ defined as his own will.\textsuperscript{46} This conflict within the will is a “tearing apart of his soul.”\textsuperscript{47} Augustine describes the following progression in which the person’s will leads from being a will to a behaviour: will → desire → behaviour. In this progression, when behaviours are repeated, they become habitual. Mercadante takes this progression further by relating it to ASA and argues that behaviours can become habits, which Augustine maintains, and habits can become compulsions.\textsuperscript{48} ASA is best described as a compulsion. Augustine derives biblical support for his understanding of the divided will from Paul in Rom 7:22-25. Cook explains, “Augustine particularly draws here on Paul’s tension between the law of God in the inner man (or mind), and the law of sin in his ‘members’. He explicitly understands the latter law as the ‘tyranny of habit’ which brings the mind into captivity against its own will.”\textsuperscript{49} Although it may seem that Augustine describes the law of sin to be limited to an operation within physical desires, in fact he explains that “the will is brought into captivity by means of its own complicity with, and failure to resist, the formation of habit.”\textsuperscript{50}

Augustine explores the issue of drunkenness as it “was understood primarily as [a] failing to contribute to the ultimate Good […] and it represented a failure to strive to please God alone.”\textsuperscript{51} Augustine categorizes drunkenness alongside other vices as being a “work of the flesh,” viewing drunkenness as a “‘pleasure of the flesh’ or a ‘desire of the body.’”\textsuperscript{52} Cook summarizes the position of early Christianity in the Greco-Roman world on drunkenness and states,
“[d]runkenness was seen to be the result of a desire which exerts a power over an individual, which competes with the call of God, and which results in a life which is inappropriate to, or unready for, the coming kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{53} To relate the early Christian position to that of Greco-Roman philosophers, drunkenness was still seen as a form or manifestation of foolishness that revealed the true likeness of a person. For the Greco-Roman philosopher, a person’s true likeness was often seen as compulsive, immoral, or aggressive.\textsuperscript{54} For the early Christian church and especially Augustine, however, the true likeness of the person was that he or she did not desire God.

Augustine clearly relates the action of becoming drunk and the state of drunkenness to sin.\textsuperscript{55} However, as Couenhoven concludes, sin, for Augustine, is not equal to evil.\textsuperscript{56} Considering the nature of sin and the corruptibility of the flesh as another concept related to the divided will, Augustine writes: “[f]or the corruption of the body, which weighs down the soul, is not the cause of the first sin, but its punishment. And it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful; it was the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible.”\textsuperscript{57} “Sin’ for Augustine is more than a person’s desire for evil things, for nothing is evil as it exists according to its intended nature; rather “sin is […] concerned with the misuse of that which is good.”\textsuperscript{58} With regards to the specific issue of drunkenness, Cook summarizes Augustine’s argument “[d]runkards were considered sinners, because they allowed their will to follow their sinful desire to drink excessively and did not sufficiently desire, or act upon their desire for, the virtue of

\textsuperscript{53} Cook, Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics, 132.
\textsuperscript{56} Couenhoven, “St. Augustine’s Doctrine of Original Sin,” 360
temperance.” Put within the confines of an Augustinian concept of sin, the consumption of alcohol is not in itself a sinful action, for wine is part of a good creation. What is sinful is to consume alcohol excessively as a compulsive action that inevitably causes a person to lose his or her desire for the virtue of temperance. Thus, a person who suffers a SDS is a sinner because he or she gives in to temptation. However, such a person is no more a sinner than any other. His or her sin is simply more public than the sin of someone who does not experience a substance dependency. Furthermore, although the sufferer may be considered a sinner, this does not imply that he or she is evil. Succinctly stated, “sin is a particular form of evil, a culpable misrelation to God and the world.” Drunkenness is then a person’s misrelation to alcohol, something that God in fact created as good.

3.3.3 A Clarification within the Moral Model: Sin and Evil

As previously stated, there is agreement between those who draw on medical and scientific research in the conclusion that it is incorrect to assert that the sufferer’s SDS is the result of evil, sin, or moral weakness, and that it is equally wrong to classify the sufferer as sinful or evil because of his or her ASA. Previously, I attributed this critique of the moral model by the disease/scientific model to an incorrect perception of what the moral model argues. At least, there emerges an incorrect perception of what the moral models suggests by designating the sufferer as sinful. As such, the present section serves to argue that a moral approach to ASA that is shaped by an Augustinian theology posits that SDS/ASA and sin are related, but that this relationship does not imply that the sufferer is evil because sin and evil in addiction are less related that one may initially perceive. By this argument, I clarify the founding point on which the disease/scientific model dismisses the moral model. Furthermore, in this section, I place the notion of sin in ASA within my theological framework.

59 Cook, Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics, 133.
It is best to begin this exercise in clarification by addressing a terminological problem. Mercadante recognizes a tension within the theological framework of SDS, as she reconsiders ‘sin’ as the proper term to describe the nature of negative action in ASA. She explains,

Much that theology says on sin is interpretive. The church as a whole has never formally adopted one definitive doctrine of sin. While there are certain defining parameters to the doctrine, it has remained controversial over the entire history of theology […] The doctrine of sin has consequently been the aspect of theology perhaps most sensitive to cultural influence. The current tendency to redefine sin in terms of addiction only illustrates this situation.62

While Mercadante does not change terminology or offer much of a solution, she rightly describes the problem as it stands: is ‘sin,’ as it is presently defined, the correct term to describe the sufferer’s compulsive behaviour in ASA? Furthermore, should the defining parameters of ‘sin’ be adjusted to better account for the problematic nature that SDS presents theology?

To solve these problems, I do not think that the terminology needs changing. I also do not believe that the defining parameters of sin require re-evaluation. Instead, what needs to take place is a separation between the terms ‘sin’ and ‘evil,’ rather than using them as synonymous descriptions for the sufferer’s negative action(s) in ASA. To restate, Augustine argues that “sin is […] concerned with the misuse of that which is good.”63 This description of sin separates the negative action from evilness, at least in the case of ASA. Put another way, “sin is a particular form of evil, a culpable misrelation to God and the world.”64 Cook summarizes quite well the nature of ASA as a division within the human will:

Perhaps addiction […] is best understood, not so much as a medical disorder […] and not so much as a ‘disease of the will’ […], but more as a facet of the human capacity for a self-reflectiveness which desires to be different in the face of the experience of personal imperfection and sinfulness.65

Cook argues that SDS is not as a disease but as a complex conflict within the human will surrounding the sufferer’s imperfection and sinfulness.66

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65 Cook, Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics, 179.
66 Ibid., 179.
The question is, then, where does sin fit within a theological framework for ASA? There is a relationship between ASA and sinfulness, clearly demonstrated throughout the history of the church. Drawing from Augustine, I support the notion that drunkenness manifests itself as a result of a person’s misdirected will. I am unsure that I would deem the act of misdirecting one’s will as being a sinful action, since the act of misdirection is where SDS would fit. What I am comfortable determining as sinful concerns negative actions that are consequential of the sufferer’s ASA. A negative action that is the result of a person’s ASA can well be classified as sinful because the negative action violates a divine law and/or a government’s Criminal Code (e.g. stealing, driving under the influence, sexual vulgarity, etc.). Furthermore, as the sufferer commits negative actions that are classifiable as sinful because of his or her ASA, he or she is then a sinner. However, if the sufferer is designated as a sinner within this context, he or she is not then different from any other person that is a descendant of Adam. All people are sinful, and all people have fallen short of God’s glory (e.g. Rom 3:23). There is no degree of discrimination that can theologically be casted to separate an alcoholic from another person who has also fallen from God’s grace. Categorizing the sinner as evil, then, is a false conclusion, at least insofar as the disease/scientific model suggests the moral model proposes. From the above quotations, Augustine makes the division between sin and evil very clear. Although the alcoholic may be a sinner, he or she is not consequentially evil. I do not explore the matter further here, but I propose that the criteria for determining sinfulness and evil are distinct and only overlap in a few areas.

3.4 The Sufferer’s Negative Spirituality: An Experience of Despair

Turning from my clarification of the moral model, I now consider the impact the sufferer’s negative spirituality has upon his or her experience in ASA. I do not believe that the sufferer’s negative spirituality has received sufficient attention, since most of the current research into the causal factors of SDS concern its biological, psychological, and social aspects. This assertion is even consistent within research that is theologically inclined (e.g. Cook, Mercadante, etc.). This may be a result of the developments within the disease/scientific model requiring a theological framework to account for the new scientific/medical data. What is unfortunate is that by giving so much attention to the biological, psychological, and social aspects of addiction, one’s spirituality, or a lack thereof, as a causal factor becomes lost. To consider this lost aspect, in this section, I explore some of the implications ASA has upon the sufferer’s spirituality, which in
turn impacts the other three aspects of his or her reality. Furthermore, as ASA is in some sense the antithesis to a positive spirituality, there remains some associated activities that possess spiritual traits, even though they are negative.

3.4.1 A Personal Reflection on the Sufferer’s Experience: The Degradation of Spirituality

As stated in chapter 1, the sufferer’s SDS/ASA is in its essence the antithesis to a positive spirituality; ASA does, however, have its own spiritual elements, although they are negative. As the sufferer falls prey to behaviours that have become compulsions by continuously directing his or her will to something that is not God (e.g. the excessive consumption of alcohol), he or she opens him or herself to a spiritual world that is absent from God’s benevolence. To sufficiently engage with and articulate this statement, I reflect on my own journey through six years of ASA via Augustine’s disordered will concept.

To describe the implications ASA has upon one’s spirituality, consider again Augustine’s concept of the divided will. Once more, Svennson summarizes, “[c]ommenting on Romans 7:15 ‘I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate,’ Augustine rhetorically asks Paul: ‘What is it that you are doing? I am desiring (concupisco). But I do not consent to this desire.’” 67 According to this description, the person ‘desiring’ lacks a consent for these desires yet he or she still possess an unsolicited longing for them nonetheless. This unsolicited longing is indicative of a division of the will. Put another way, to desire something other than God is an act of directing the will to something that is not God. Furthermore, as Mercadante explains, “[i]f one does not direct the will toward God, it will be directed toward something else.” 68 As I have stated, to direct the will away from God does not mean that someone will only direct it toward alcohol. A person choosing to consume alcohol excessively only happens in select cases. Concerning ASA, if the sufferer’s SDS has reached maturity, it would be difficult for him or her to direct his or her will toward God. Cook notes that the sufferer’s “desire for alcohol becomes salient over other desires, goals and objectives in life.” 69 If, as Augustine argues, the supreme end of the human being is to contemplate the unchangeable and eternal truths, then a person’s experience of ASA and his or her compulsive behaviours disallow for such contemplation. 70 The sufferer’s “desire

68 Mercadante, Victims and Sinners, 29.
69 Cook, Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics, 177.
70 Stepinova, “Aquinas’ Solution of Aristotle’s Incontinent Man and Augustine’s Two Wills,” 325-326.
for alcohol becomes salient over other desires, goals and objectives in life.”

This unfortunately includes the sufferer’s aspiration to have a relationship with God.

In my journey through ASA, I can confirm that I possessed a misdirected will. I only longed for the means to consume alcohol to excess. When I was not drinking, I was thinking about drinking. When I was drinking, I was thinking about how I could drink more. There was little else that mattered. Although I was raised in a Christian home with an evangelical pastor for a father and given every privilege necessary to develop into a contributing member of society and the church, I effectively went the other way. To be frank, I was even working in full-time church ministry when I acknowledged that I had a problem with alcohol. This realization caused a lot of turmoil within me. While I was guiding others to rely on God when times were rough, I could not conceive of doing anything other than drinking to manage life’s difficulties. Even though I spent every day either at work or undertaking theological and biblical study, I myself could not contemplate an eternal truth. The notion of God’s benevolence was unknown to me at that time. My will was directed elsewhere, even though my professional activities revolved around the contemplation of God.

This in itself presents a complex issue: can a person participate in a lifestyle where he or she occasionally consumes too much alcohol yet still possess a properly directed will? Or, in the case of substance abuse (a classification of substance misuse that is less severe than substance dependency), what is the point of compromise where one’s will is deemed to be misdirected? For myself, having a family history of substance dependency, it was not possible for me to consume too much alcohol only occasionally. My consumption of alcohol always has been an ‘all-or-nothing’ deal. Yet, the question remains, what is the point in substance abuse where one’s will is determined as misdirected? Drawing from Augustine’s divided will concept, if sin is a misuse of or a misrelation to that which was created good, then when one consumes alcohol without moderation is the point where the will begins to becomes divided.

In my journey, the spiritual degradation I experienced as a result of my substance abuse impacted many aspects of my life. In terms of my spirituality, for years I lost the ability and desire to pray. In ASA, the sufferer often becomes filled with resentments. More often than not, the sufferer’s resentments are against more than those who he or she perceived to have abandoned him or her, or those employers who end an employment contract because of the sufferer’s unreliability, but

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71 Cook, Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics, 177.
resentment is also directed toward God. It was my thought for years that “God, it is your fault that I was created this way, an alcoholic.” This was a conclusion I was unable to overturn until I was well into my recovery process. As a result of the sufferer’s resentments that are directed toward God, the ability to pray is not only lost but rejected. For instances, why would I pray to the one (God) who created me with this defect of character (alcoholism) for help? It is his fault that I am this way. He cannot help me. Substance addiction is cunning, baffling, and powerful. The nature of substance addiction and its associated thought patterns turn the sufferer against that which can save him or her. To describe succinctly the degradation of the sufferer’s spirituality, it is more than lost, but until the sufferer makes a lament statement, he or she rejects his or her spirituality.

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter set out to clarify several aspects of the moral model’s understanding of SDS. Following a review of May’s and Mercadante’s positions, I addressed Augustine’s theologies of conscientia and the divided will. From here, I began to explore a more accurate understanding of the implications of human fallenness in ASA. Next, I properly presented how sin and evil are not to be considered synonymous terms when describing a negative action that is consequential of one’s ASA. Finally, I discussed the sufferer’s experience of a negative spirituality that is not only consequential of ASA but is a causal factor that is often overlooked.
Chapter 4: A Theology of Lament from the Psalms through the Lens of Active Substance Addiction: Understanding the Sufferer’s Experience

4.1 Introduction

This chapter articulates the aim of the present thesis: to develop a theology of lament from the Psalms through the lens of ASA. I use the psalmist’s lament and the description of his or her suffering to explore the negative experience that is ASA. To accomplish this task, I evaluate two existing descriptions of a theology of lament from a disability perspective, and conclude that neither is entirely able to consider the sufferer’s negative experience in ASA. As SDS is a definable disability, articulated by the OHRC, I argue that a relevant theology of lament from a disability perspective needs to be reformulated in order to include the complexities of ASA.¹

Thus, I develop my own theology of lament that specifically addresses the negative experience(s) of the sufferer in ASA. In this theology, I give attention to (1) human transgression and sinful action as causing the negative situation, (2) the perceived experience of divine abandonment in the lament Psalms and ASA, and (3) the present God as being the sufferer’s salvation.

4.2 A Theology of Lament from a Disability Perspective

Amos Yong and Kathryn Greene-McCreight individually develop in some way a theology of lament from a disability perspective.² Here, I provide a brief review of each theology and note that neither develops a theology of lament that is entirely able to account for the complexities ASA presents for a theological investigation. These two approaches are significant in that they articulate an experience of lament in the life of one who has a disability. I conclude that neither is entirely relevant because they both aim to clarify that a person’s disability is not relatable to or is the result of sinfulness. As the previous chapter explained, there is a relationship between a sufferer’s sinful action and his or her subsequent action that is the result of ASA. In ASA, the sufferer’s compulsive behaviour that can be described as sinful in some cases can cause or construct the context of his or her negative situation.

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¹ My relating ASA to other disabilities is done by my drawing on the OHRC’s conclusion that SDS is “a primary, chronic disease, characterized by impaired control over the use of a psychoactive substance.” Ontario Human Rights Commission, Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Mental Health Disabilities and Addiction (Toronto: Ministry of Citizenship, Government of Ontario, 2014), 4.2.

² I say ‘in some way’ because Yong was less concerned with developing a theology of lament from a disability perspective. While a theology of lament was not the primary aspect of either of his or Greene-McCreight research, its presence is significant there within each argument.
Yong formulates a comprehensive biblical theology on the social implications of disability. His purpose is to formulate a theology of disability that enables those with and without disabilities “to stand in solidarity with each other, thereby facilitating repentance and reconciliation.” To accomplish this task, he gives attention to a theology of lament. On lament in disability, he argues that “the lament psalms record the most forceful and passionate cries of the human heart for divine justice,” as the person seeks “redress for grievances suffered and ask[s] the Deity to remember the chosen/elect people.” His theology of lament deals less with the problems of disability as being biological, medical, or individual, to instead consider “the social dimension of marginalization and ostracism that people with disabilities confront.” His theology of lament is not entirely relevant to the experience of ASA due to the importance he places on the delivery of divine justice. First, he focuses on the corporate lament Psalms, whereas I give attention to the individual lament Psalms. Second, the experience of social injustice is not the fundamental concern for one suffering in ASA. As I emphasize, a theology of lament in ASA primarily addresses the sufferer’s pleading for relief from his or her negative experiences that are the result of his or her doing that which he or she do not want to do (e.g. excessively consuming alcohol).

Greene-McCreight develops a theology of lament that focuses on the implications of disability upon the individual as she reflects on her own experiences as one diagnosed with a bipolar disorder. She holds that as a person suffers from depression, the Psalms of lament can function as a means by which the individual is empowered to pray “God, please enable me to survive.” Greene-McCreight’s theology is more relevant to ASA than Yong’s, although I do not think her summarizing prayer is necessarily one that an alcoholic would pray when he or she is in a state of desperation. What is most relevant concerns her description of the isolating features in mental illness. She states,

[t]he most dangerous thing about mental illness is that it can lock us in ourselves, convincing us that we are indeed our own, and completely on our own, isolated in our distress. Darkness is my only companion. Mental illness can be to us a veil that shrouds

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3 Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 42.
4 Ibid., 1.
6 Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*, 41.
7 While a sufferer may conclude that he or she personally experiences great injustice, I consider it less common that one may develop a compulsion to excessively consume alcohol because of a social injustice unless it is associated with some type of trauma.
our consecration to God […]. Mental illness shuts all windows […] to the soul so that we cannot speak, meditate, or do anything to the glory of God […]. All is experienced as pain. We are locked in ourselves, unable to forget our pain.⁹

In the individual lament Psalms, the psalmist often attributes his or her experience of isolation to divine abandonment, a concept addressed later. When the psalmist perceives divine abandonment, his or her confession of a sinful action is never far away. While this concept needs much more development, I am clear to argue that in many cases sinful action in ASA can cause the sufferer’s negative experience. Greene-McCreight would disagree with my conclusion as sin and mental illness are not related. ASA is in its nature different.

4.3 A Theology of Lament from the Psalms through the Lens of Active Substance Addiction

Following the above review, by focusing on a theology of lament through the lens of ASA, a unique perspective emerges on the nature of a negative situation that a lament prayer describes. While Yong argues that it may be inappropriate to develop a theology of lament from a disability perspective by relating to a personal experience of suffering (e.g. isolation), I suggest that such an exercise effectively captures the reality of the sufferer’s negative experience in ASA.¹⁰ Moreover, to understand the roles a sinful action and/or social marginalization may play in causing the negative situation of the individual lament Psalms, I consider the perspective of ASA to function better as an experiential medium for appreciating the nature of lament theology in a twenty-first century context. I develop a theology of lament from the Psalms through the lens of ASA by considering three aspects: (1) the role sinful action plays in causing a negative situation; (2) the notion of abandonment as a divine reaction to human sinfulness; and (3) the sufferer’s rebirth of spirituality by acknowledging the sufficiency of divine grace as being the force that can deliver relief.

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⁹ Ibid., 117-118.
¹⁰ Yong develops a theology of lament through the lens of disability by giving attention to social-solidarity and divine justice. He argues that the corporate lament Psalms can function in a way to bring people together in reconciliation. Through the lens of ASA, I am more concerned with the sufferer’s experience of isolation from not only other people but from God.
4.3.1 “The Girl on the Train”: Another Narrative on Suffering in Active Substance Addiction

To transition into the articulation of my theology, let us consider one final non-academic narrative that effectively describes the nature of ASA. In the film *The Girl on the Train*, Emily Olivia Leah Blunt, playing the character of an alcoholic named Rachel Watson, attends her first AA meeting. In the scene leading up to the meeting, she is shown to be severely intoxicated to the point of blacking out. In this state, she stumbles around her old neighbourhood where her ex-husband now lives with his new wife. Filled with rage over her painful memories of abandonment, she screams at the figure of a woman who she believes is her ex-husband’s new wife. The scene quickly becomes vague as it cuts out to emulate Watson’s experience of blackout intoxication. She then wakes up back at her friend’s apartment covered in blood; whether it is her blood or someone else’s is unknown until later. After her close friend has an intervening conversation with Watson, she decides that a serious change needs to take place. As a result, Watson attends her first AA meeting.

In the meeting, Watson states:

I am here because I […] woke up covered in blood and I had bruises all over my arm. It is usually from when I’ve fallen, and someone has helped me up. My husband, he used to tell me what I had done the night before. And I learned when you wake up like that, you say you’re sorry. Just say you’re sorry for what you did and who you are and you’re never going to do it again, but you do, you do it again.”

Although Watson’s portrayal of despair brought about by her character’s addiction is theatrical, there remains a truth in it. For someone who suffers in ASA, substance dependency impacts every fiber of his or her being, including the person’s identity. This is seen when Watson states, “[j]ust say you’re sorry for what you did and *who you are*.” Addiction becomes more than just a series of compulsive actions that cause one to consume too much alcohol. A person’s addiction becomes the epitome of his or her identity. Addiction becomes who you are. Consider even the all-too-common use of the descriptive noun ‘alcoholic.’ It is an unfortunate truth that few want to be friends with a person who can accurately be described by or associated with the adjective ‘self-destructive.’

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12 Ibid. Emphasis my own.
4.3.2 Transgression and Sinful Action as a Causal Factor

To readdress what I previously explained, a person’s experience of suffering is subjective. There is no definitive list of factors or situations that describe what constitutes a negative experience (i.e. suffering). What one person would deem to be an experience of suffering, another might not. As the experience of suffering is subjective, its description varies between its commentators. In the case of the individual lament Psalms, the psalmist often does not describe his or her situation directly, but only its implications, unless the superscription provides some context (e.g. Ps 51:1[2]). Concerning the implications of a negative experience in the Psalms, the psalmist’s acknowledgment of helplessness is consistent. For instance, Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Miglore explain that “[t]he weight of suffering […] may be so great that it renders people helpless and speechless.”\textsuperscript{13} To examine the reality that a person’s sinful action may impact his or her suffering situation in the Psalms, the first parallel emerges as this is also present within the negative experience of ASA. Specifically, I ask, is there a similarity between the psalmist’s transgression against \textit{Yahweh} and the sufferer’s sinful action against him or herself and/or against others as being a causal factor for the negative situation?

As stated in chapter 2, the psalmist does not consistently describe the nature of his or her action(s) that induce the negative situation. In fact, a specific reference to a human transgression is non-existent in this select genre of biblical literature other than that found in the superscription of Ps 51 (“A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba [כַּאֲשֶׁר־בָּא אֶׁל־בַּת־שָּׁבַע]” [v. 1(2), \textit{NASB}]). However, in some instances, the psalmist explicitly makes the request that \textit{Yahweh} “not remember” his or her sin: “Do not remember (זָכַר) the sins of my youth or my transgressions” (25:7, \textit{NASB}); “Look upon (רָאָה) my affliction and my trouble, And forgive all my sins” (v. 18, \textit{NASB}); “I acknowledge my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’; And You forgave the guilt of my sin” (32:5, \textit{NASB}). Otherwise, the connection between human transgression and divine hiddenness as the consequence of a person’s sinful action is indirectly described by the psalmist’s progression of thought. For instance, in 143:2, the psalmist states, “And do not enter into judgment (מִשְׁפָּט) with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous” (\textit{NASB}; e.g. Job 14:3; 22:4). The psalmist makes the case that he or she “would be

\textsuperscript{13} Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Migliore, \textit{Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope} (Cleveland: United Church, 1999), 105.
found guilty like the rest of humankind” if he or she was judged. Form criticism interprets such a description as a ‘negative prayer’ because it is like a ‘deprecatory prayer’ where the psalmist pleads to avoid judgment.

If, as the form critic would argue, these remarks are like a deprecatory prayer, why does the psalmist want to evade divine judgment? Furthermore, if the goal of such a prayer is to evade divine judgment, what is the psalmist’s conception/understanding of Yahweh’s delivery of justice for a transgression that it needs avoiding? In psalmic literature, and throughout the HB, divine judgment for human transgression is exact and absolute. The psalmist often acknowledges that he or she would be unable to withstand divine judgment for his or her actions (i.e. עָוֹן, ‘transgression,’ ‘sin,’ or ‘iniquity’): “If you, LORD, kept a record of sins (עָוֹן), Lord, who could stand?” (Ps 130:3, NIV); “And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous” (143:2, NASB). In the Psalms, divine judgment is often equated with or executed by Yahweh’s wrath (e.g. 7:6-8; 11:5-7; 18:7[8]; 56:7[8]; 110:5; etc.). As Yahweh’s wrath is greater than any force within or above the cosmos, it is not surprising that the psalmist would want to avoid judgment if divine wrath is the result.

To address the psalmist’s transgression as causing the negative situation, consider again the superscription of 51:1[2]. If the superscription is accurate, then the context of Ps 51 rests in 2 Sam 12 where Nathan confronts David for his adultery with Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam (2 Sam 11:3), and the murder of Uriah the Hittite (v. 3). To foreshadow David’s punishment for these acts, Nathan delivers an oracle:

Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all of Israel, and under the sun” (2 Sam 12:11-12, NASB).

While this is an oracle concerning the future of David’s reign over Israel, Nathan also delivers a second prophecy concerning the implications of David’s sins upon his and Bathsheba’s unborn son: “because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme,

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15 Ibid., 123. Another instance of a negative/deprecatory prayer is found in Ps 6:2.
16 The theme of humanity’s inability to withstand divine judgment is seen throughout OT literature (e.g. 1 Sam 6:20; Ezra 9:15). Nahum 1:6 best expresses this theology by stating, “Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire And the rocks are broken up by Him” (NASB).
the child also that is born to you shall surely die” (v. 14, NASB). Yahweh keeps his promise and strikes the child with sickness (v. 15), and David enters a period of lament for seven days until the boy dies. David’s purpose for the lament is to petition God for the sake of the child (vv. 16-19).

Turning from the apparent role human transgression plays in causing the negative situations in the lament Psalms, it is time to consider the role a sinful action may play in causing a negative situation in ASA as a parallel. As previously argued, SDS develops because of a person’s divided will. Simply stated, although the sufferer may desire God, his or her will may not be directed toward God. If the will is not directed toward God, it will be directed toward something else. The potential consequence of a misdirected will, at least in matters concerning ASA, is that the sufferer may participate in behaviours that have hazardous outcomes. If not managed, a person’s desire may lead to a habit that can become a compulsion. The compulsion in this context is the manifestation of an (uncontrollable) urge to excessively consume alcohol. There are many factors that can initially cause a person to turn to alcohol. Whether for a temporary relief from psychological, physical, or social distress, the sufferer’s reasons vary for drinking too much. What is consistent between narratives that tell of a sufferer who possesses such a compulsion, and within my own journey, is that with the compulsion comes a pattern of behaviours that in some instances solely function to support the sufferer’s need to consume. In other instances, the compulsion can result in behaviours that flow from the excessive consumption of alcohol. In both case, while neither is exhaustive, they often result in the manifestation of the sufferer’s experience of guilt and shame. An experience of guilt and shame alone can constitute a reason for the sufferer to express a lament.

It is a convoluted task to assign blame or to identify the causal factor of a negative situation in ASA, to assign blame is convoluted. As ASA is in its nature a disease that manifests itself by the sufferer excessively consuming a mood-altering substance, lament in ASA is retrospective. In my journey, on the one hand, when carrying out a sinful action (e.g. stealing, lying, cheating) to secure the necessary resources for me to consume alcohol, I rarely thought of the consequences in the moment. On the other hand, when I was intoxicated and acted out-of-sorts, I was most often entirely unable to comprehend what I had done in the moment. It was not until the effects of the intoxication had passed that I began to realize what had happened because of my actions. When I returned to sound mind, guilt and shame came flooding in. As previously stated, the experience of being overwhelmed with guilt and shame can itself be reason enough for the
sufferer to drink yet again, even though for most to repeat such an action would be counter-intuitive. One may ask, “why would you repeat that which caused you so much pain and suffering the last time?” It is for this reason that I think Blunt’s character Watson explains quite well the sufferer’s reality of ASA and the role a negative action can play in causing the sufferer’s lament: “I learned when you wake up like that, you say you’re sorry. Just say you’re sorry for what you did and who you are and you’re never going to do it again, but you do, you do it again.”

The experience of ASA becomes for the sufferer more than something he or she is compelled to do, but it defines who he or she is.

As such, is it possible to attribute blame to one factor or another for causing the sufferer’s negative situation in ASA? It would seem appropriate to argue that the compulsion itself is at fault. If the compulsion is to blame, then the existence of a person’s compulsive behaviour is a consequence of humanity’s divided will, as Augustine would contend. However, for some, once the sufferer’s SDS has developed, the compulsion can be driven by the memories or experienced consequences that have resulted from the compulsion (e.g. the sufferer becoming intoxicated yet again). Although the compulsion seems to be the initial stage, and certainly it is, the nature of ASA is more cyclical than linear once a SDS is developed.

Both the psalmist’s lament and the sufferer’s lament point to something internal within the person as causing the negative situation. For David in Ps 51, his transgressions against God when he entered an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah could be said to have caused his lament. For the sufferer, I identified two factors that can bring about a reason for lament: (1) the compulsion and (2) the consequences of sinful actions. Concerning ASA, later I discuss the role the sufferer’s lament plays to express a confession for his or her sinful actions.

4.3.3 Abandonment: A Divine Reaction to Human Transgression

The second parallel between psalmic lament and the lament of ASA concerns the alcoholic’s experience of social and spiritual isolation and the psalmist’s depiction of divine abandonment. Fredrik Lindström argues in the case of Ps 13 that the psalmist’s experience of the absence of Yahweh is of central importance to this interpretation of suffering. In psalmic lament literature, 

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18 Lindström, Suffering and Sin, 97.
this motif can be understood as ‘divine hiddenness’ (e.g. Pss 13; 22; 28; 31; 35; 71; 143). In these lament Psalms, the psalmist shows that a person’s sinful action can cause *Yahweh* to be absent (i.e. divine hiddenness). Lindström explains that in Ps 22,

> [s]uffering and sickness is interpreted from a strongly spatial concept that YHWH has taken away his protective presence [*vv. 2, 12, 20: רָחֹק, ‘distant, far’*]. The attacks of the sphere of evil are possible only when YHWH ‘turns away, looks away,’ etc. Then a vacuum arises around the person abandoned by God, a vacuum which is immediately filled by representatives for the evil sphere (enemies, demons, death).

On divine hiddenness as that which creates the vacuum in Ps 22, the psalmist states, “[m]y God, my God, why have you forsaken (עָזַב) me?” (v. 1, *NASB*). Here, Lindström explains, there exists a unity between the absence of *Yahweh* and human sickness, since “[t]he crisis situation […] is presented […] as the devastating consequence of the absence of YHWH (Ps 22:2ff., 12ff., 20ff.).”

In other lament Psalms, the psalmist explicitly notes the absence of *Yahweh*: “How long, O LORD? Will You forget (שָכַח) me forever? How long will You hide (סָתַר) Your face from me?” (Ps 13:1, *NASB*); “In my alarm I said, ‘I am cut off (גָרַז) from Your sight!’” (31:24[23], *NASB*; cf. v. 22a-b[21a-b], Jon 2:5); “They say, ‘God has forsaken (עָזַב) him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will recue him’” (71:11, *NASB*). When this is not explicitly stated, the psalmist indirectly notes the absence of *Yahweh* by prefixing a negative particle (e.g. אַל) to a verbal lexeme: “Do not be far (רָחַק) from me,” (22:11a[12a], *NASB*; cf. 19a[20a], 24c[25c]); “O LORD, do not keep silent (חָרֵש); O Lord, do not be far (רָחַק) from me,” (35:22, *NASB*); “Do not cast me off (ךְשָל) in the time of old age; Do not forsake (עָזַב) me when my strength fails” (71:9, *NASB*); “O God, do not be far (נָנָח) from me” (v. 12, *NASB*); “Do not hide (סָתַר) your face from me” (143:7, *NASB*). It is important to note, and this will be revisited later, that in the Psalms, the psalmist’s notion of divine hiddenness is a consequence of his or her perception. Is it accurate to state that if we do something sinful we are abandoned? Or, are the psalmist’s statements about divine abandonment more emotional expressions than theological statements?

In ASA, the sufferer experiences abandonment in several ways. Concerning its social implications and/or consequences, the sufferer inevitably becomes isolated due to a lack of social interaction. If social interaction does take place, it often involves some form of mood-altering

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19 Ibid., 95-96.
20 Ibid., 96.
substance as the centre-piece to the gathering. The centrality of a mood-altering substance in a social gathering for one in ASA is an interesting phenomenon since some sufferers may initially consume alcohol simply to have the capacity to engage in a social setting. Furthermore, as stated in chapter 3, if a sufferer is asked to remove him or herself from a healthy social dynamic, often for the sake of the others present, isolation is a predictable outcome. In some cases, the sufferer may become unpredictable in his or her behaviour patterns when intoxicated. In a possible scenario, a sufferer may reside with a relative and pay little to nothing for room and board. If the sufferer is not given the responsibility to provide for him or herself, this can be considered a mode of enabling on the part of the relative. As such, if a sufferer experiences isolation from healthy social circles, it can be devastating for the person but it can also be an experience that lays a foundation for the beginning of recovery.

Of greater significance, the sufferer of ASA also experiences spiritual isolation. The sufferer’s perception of divine hiddenness is rather consistent between the negative experiences of ASA, argued in chapter 3. Furthermore, in chapters 1 and 3, I explained that the sufferer inevitably becomes spiritually isolated, from both an experience of the intimate presence of God and from a faith community. According to Augustine, the ultimate end of humanity is to contemplate the eternal truths that originate in God and are about God.21 As the sufferer’s SDS develops and habits become compulsions, his or her ability to contemplate eternal truths becomes salient to the desire for the relief inebriation provides. As a result, the sufferer can easily identify with some of the psalmist’s prayers: “I am cut off from Your sight” (31:24[23]), “God has forsaken [me]” (e.g. 71:9, 11); “Will you forget me forever?” (e.g. 13:1).

In the sufferer’s experience, or at least in my own journey, an experience of divine hiddenness is debilitating and often results in emotional outbursts such as anger. R. Kelvin Moore explains that in the lament Psalms, anger is a common reaction to the psalmist’s experience of suffering.22 In Pss 6, 69, and 137, the psalmist’s expression of anger is associated with sorrow since “[a]nger was a common expression of the poet’s suffering.”23 While different reasons for suffering may inevitably provoke different responses, it was my experience that my response to divine

22 R. Kelvin Moore, The Psalms of Lamentation and the Enigma of Suffering (Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: Meelen Biblical, 1959), 51.
23 Ibid., 52. In Ps 6:7, the psalmist uses the lexeme √יָכע (verb: ‘to be weary;’ adjective, ‘weary,’ ‘wearisome,’ or ‘tiresome’) to describe his emotional experience while suffering. Otherwise, the phrase בַּאֲנָחָשְׁתֵּי (‘in my sighing’ or ‘groaning in distress [physical or mental]’) describes his or her experience (e.g. v. 7). Ibid., 54-55.
hiddenness, or at least my perception that God had hidden himself from me, was frustration and/or anger. In the experience of isolation, even from human interaction, an expression of anger is common. Many times, I could not or would not understand why those closest to me did not want or could not have me around. While I understand their reasoning now, in the moment I could not. Furthermore, I was unable to understand that their asking me to leave was not because I was unwanted or unloved. I could not comprehend in the moment that their helping me was actually detrimental to my chances of recovery. The manifestation of frustration and my expression of anger were consequential to my inability to understand.

An expression of anger by the sufferer in ASA as a response to divine hiddenness can also be the result of what he or she perceives as unanswered prayers. Specifically, it is common for the sufferer to pray for some type of miracle that he or she would never drink again. In my experience, I asked, why will God heal others but not me? While there are many stories of people coming to faith in Christ and having an instantaneous ability to put aside their old behaviours, this was not my experience. In the moment, I wanted to recover. I did not want to continue to make a fool of myself or of those around me. I did not want to lose another job or continue to lose even more respect from those I respected. In my ASA, I blamed God’s hiddenness and his lack of love shown me for my continued experience of negative situations. I asked, “why me?”

4.3.4 The Sufferer’s Salvation: The Present God and the Sufficiency of Divine Grace

Turning from the role human transgression plays in causing the negative situation, specifically divine abandonment, in the lament Psalms and ASA, we can now consider the purpose of a person’s prayerful lament. Once we understand that God alone is the psalmist’s and alcoholic’s salvation, two additional concepts become apparent: (1) God is and always has been present throughout the person’s suffering; and (2) the person’s prayerful lament is in a way a rebirth of

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24 It may be important to understand what type of healing a sufferer may pray for. Kristin M. Swenson summarizes this well: “[h]ealing involves the integration of all aspects of a person—physical, psychological, spiritual, and social within that person’s present context. It is no more the return to a previous state than it is the anticipation of a future one. It is rather to be a whole person fully engaged in the very real circumstances of one’s present condition.” Kristin M. Swenson, Living Through Pain: Psalms and the Search for Wholeness (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), 12-13. Throughout the experience of suffering, a person may plead for relief for only one of these areas, but a complete healing involves and impacts the entirety of his or her being—the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual.
his or her spirituality by his or her acknowledgment that divine grace is the sufficient force that can deliver relief.

Lindström explains that in psalmic lament, the psalmist interprets his or her “relationship with God […] through the categories [of] divine presence and absence.”

By placing psalmic lament and the role human transgression plays in affecting the psalmist’s relationship with God in the broader context of OT temple theology, one can see that “man’s relationship with God is not constituted by his sin.” Instead, “the individual’s relationship with God is constituted of YHWH’s freely given foundational gifts of existence, by which the individual is taken up into the saving presence of God.”

In the lament Psalms, and later the suffering experience of ASA, it would be improper for a person to question the “ethical self-qualifications which would give the individual guarantee of admittance to YHWH’s saving presence.” Instead, divine grace is already freely given. By reviewing the key passages in the lament Psalms, it becomes apparent that through a prayerful lament, the psalmist and sufferer secure admittance to Yahweh’s salvific presence via divine grace.

Psalm 57 creates a significant parallel between the psalmist’s suffering situation and Yahweh’s protective presence: “Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You (כִּי בְךָ חָּסָּיָּה נַּפְשִּׁי); And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge (ךָוּבְצֵל־כְנָפֶׁי אֶׁחְסֶה) Until destruction passes by” (v. 1[2], NASB); “I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me. He will send from the heaven and save me (יִשְלַּח מִּשָּמַּיִּם וְיוֹשִיעֵנִּי); He reproaches him who tramples upon me. Selah. God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth” (vv. 2[3]-3[4], NASB).

Concerning the psalmist’s use of כְנף (‘wing’) in v. 1[2], Lindström explains, “[t]he reference to YHWH’s ‘wings’ probably refers both to the (protective) heavens (as an expression of God’s omnipresence) and the roof of the temple (as its manifestation).” The colon of vv. 2[3]-3[4] emphasizes “how the heavenly King sends from heaven and saves the petitioner. This gloss […] accurately actualizes […] the goal of YHWH’s salvific (יִשְעֵנִי) action, i.e., the reception of the man threatened by evil forces into the divine presence […] Here, the sufferer is protected.”

Although the psalmist suffers at the hands of an oppressive enemy, a cry

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25 Lindström, Suffering and Sin, 379.
26 Ibid., 379.
27 Ibid., 379.
28 Ibid., 379.
29 Ibid., 390.
30 Ibid., 391.
is delivered to \textit{Yahweh} even though at times the psalmist’s suffering is attributed to the workings of God’s hand. Despite the origin of the suffering, whether it is the result of advertent or inadvertent sin, the psalmist acknowledges \textit{Yahweh}’s \textit{כבוד} (‘glory’) (e.g. vv. 5[6], 11[12]; also see 22:13, 17, 21; 19:2; 24:1, 10; 29:1-2; 113:4; etc.). In the lament Psalms, the psalmist’s declaration of \textit{Yahweh}’s \textit{כבוד} is a practice of seeking after his \textit{כבוד}. For instance, in 62:7[8], \textit{Yahweh}’s \textit{כבוד} functions synonymously “to the salvation which comes from YHWH”:\textsuperscript{31} “On God my salvation (\textit{יֵשַע}) and my glory (\textit{כָבוֹד}) rest; The rock of my strength, my refuge (\textit{מַחְׁסֶה}) is in God” (\textit{NASB}). \textit{Yahweh} is not only the manifestation of \textit{כבוד}, but he is also the one who gifts \textit{כבוד} to humanity. If the psalmist’s lament mourns the loss of his or her glory (i.e. human dignity), then it is \textit{Yahweh} who is the psalmist’s restoration (e.g. 8:6; 57:3b[4b]).\textsuperscript{32}

Psalm 56 equates the deliverance that comes from \textit{Yahweh} with the psalmist’s salvation from death: “For You have delivered my soul from death (\textit{כִּי הִּצַּלתָּ נַּפְשִּי מִּמָּוֶֽת}). Indeed my feet from stumbling. So that I may walk before God In the light of the living” (v. 13[14], \textit{NASB}). Whether the psalmist is petitioning \textit{Yahweh} against the presence of an oppressive enemy or the experience of a physical, spiritual, or psychological alignment, a prayer for deliverance is often and “immediately followed by the affirmation of confidence.”\textsuperscript{33} For instance, consider Ps 143: “Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; I take refuge in You (אֵלָ֖יךָ כִּסִּיתִ֑י)” (v. 9, \textit{NASB}). The psalmist also expresses his or her confidence in the salvific presence of \textit{Yahweh} by equating \textit{Yahweh}’s imminence with a tool of protection (e.g. ‘shield’ [\textit{מָגֵן}], Pss 3:3[4]; 84:11[12]).

The salvific presence of God as seen in the Psalms emphasizes a significant aspect of lament theology that requires consideration: does \textit{Yahweh}’s presence ever truly leave the sufferer? Throughout the HB, there are narratives that show \textit{Yahweh}’s presence (i.e. spirit) to depart from a person (e.g. Judg 16:20; 1 Sam 16:13; etc.). In the lament Psalms, the psalmist often states that \textit{Yahweh}’s presence has departed from him or her. It is for this reason that suffering in the Psalms equates with the experience of divine abandonment. Yet, taking Pss 23 and 130 into consideration, it becomes clear that the salvific presence of \textit{Yahweh} does not depart, at least not permanently, from the psalmist. While the psalmist may experience a dark night of the soul, the spirit of \textit{Yahweh} remains present as he or she walks through the valley of the shadow of death (e.g. 23:4). Furthermore, in Ps 130, the psalmist equates the coming presence of the Lord (e.g. an

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 394.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 398.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 120-121.
experience of salvation from distress) with the rising sun: “My soul waits for the Lord (נַפְׁשִי לַאדֹנָי) More than the watchmen for the morning; Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning” (v. 6, NASB). As surely as the watchmen know the sun will rise, bringing an end not only to their guarding shift but to all the dangers of the night, so can those who trust in the salvific and intimate presence of Yahweh know that God will respond. The lament Psalms make it clear that dependence on Yahweh is the only means to achieve salvation. Thus, divine abandonment in the Psalms is more of perception than a permanent reality the psalmist experiences.

Now that we understand that the psalmist considers Yahweh’s salvific presence to be the only sufficient remedy to a negative situation, how then is this also seen in ASA? Since ASA can accurately be described as a form of suffering, Phil C. Zylla explains that “[s]uffering makes us mute.”34 He argues, “[t]his silence is rooted in the terrible loneliness of spirit born from the loss of meaning structures and theological answers that previously held great significance and nurtures the foundations of spiritual life.”35 Again, as Billman and Migliore state, “[t]he weight of suffering […] may be so great that it renders people helpless and speechless. One of the cruelties of suffering is that it is often ‘language shattering.’”36 As such, if and when the sufferer makes a petition to God pleading for relief, it is an act of great significance. When a person’s SDS develops, much of what is meaningful to him or her is lost. Once the sufferer repeatedly gives in to compulsive behaviour and experiences its consequences, determining what is and is not sinful becomes irrelevant. In some cases, including my own, when a person’s SDS reaches the point where determining right or wrong is of no concern, then the sufferer fully identifies with that which he or she suffers. He or she is an ‘active alcoholic.’ This designation become the defining characteristic of who he or she is. This point was eloquently illustrated by Blunt’s statement via her character Watson. The result is that, as Zylla explains, the sufferer becomes mute and, as Billman and Migliore explain, language is shattered. The sufferer becomes mute not only in voice and an ability to request aid, but to the capacity to realistically dream of better days ahead.

35 Ibid., 71.
36 Billman and Migliore, Rachel’s Cry, 105.
The loss of the ability to dream points to an unfortunate reality for the sufferer that concerns the true nature of acceptance. Many addiction treatment models, including the Twelve Step Programs, explain that for a sufferer’s recovery to commence, he or she needs to acknowledge that life has become unmanageable because of substance abuse (in the case of an addiction program). While this is a fair requirement, such an acknowledgement does not fully grasp what is needed from the sufferer if recovery is to commence. Acceptance for the active alcoholic is two-fold: the admission that (1) I am an alcoholic and (2) I can get better. Without the second, the first becomes more a factor of enablement that may allow the sufferer to continue suffering. For instance, it was my thought on many occasions that “if I am an alcoholic and I cannot conceive of getting better, then what is stopping me from having this next drink?” While my thought at such a time was less eloquent, the essence of the statement remains truthful. Regardless of eloquence, this statement of despair captures the unfortunate and bleak reality the sufferer may face in his or her ASA.

The reason a prayer of lament made by a sufferer in ASA is so significant is that unknowingly, it delivers a two-fold acceptance of the sufferer’s alignment and/or desperate reality to God. A sufferer’s prayer of lament need not be as complex or elaborate as those in the Psalms to capture this two-fold acceptance. Like the prayer made by the anonymous author of “My Bottle, My Resentments, and Me” while he wandered into the wilderness seeking death, the sufferer’s lament need only contain the words, “God, I need help.”37 If ASA is a form of suffering, and the sufferer inevitably becomes mute and incapable of imagining better days, then the delivery of a prayerful lament to God is in its essence a rediscovery of the voice and the ability to dream. This is what I consider to be the sufferer’s rebirth of his or her spirituality: days can get better, but only by the aid of something greater than oneself, i.e. God.

When the sufferer discovers his or her voice while experiencing a negative situation, an additional logical question emerges: where does the ability to lament before God come from? By this question, we can describe the origin of lament and the sufficiency of divine grace as the means to receive relief. In ASA, if the sufferer is rendered “mute” and “incapable to conceive of better days,” then how does he or she manage to voice a two-fold acknowledgment (e.g. a lament)? The simple act of stating “God, I need help” is a powerful ‘cracking of the shell.’ However, how is it possible that the sufferer can suddenly discover his or her voice if he or she

is, as Augustine would put it, in bondage to a divided will where action is governed by compulsion? The answer to this logical question is simply and traditionally, “God’s grace itself.” God, somehow, enables the sufferer to lament. There is, as it were, some knowledge within the sufferer to know that when all else fails, divine grace is sufficient to deliver the remedy to the negative situation. This in itself is an enormously complex theological question, one I will not engage with. However, what is clear is that it is by grace that we are saved. It seems, at the very least, that the sufferer’s ability to lament even though he or she is mute is a gift from God, by which God gives the sufferer words to articulate the need for divine grace.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter reviewed several existing arguments that address a theology of lament from a disability perspective to emphasize that these positions do not effectively account for the complexities of ASA. Since the existing models are insufficient to relate to ASA, I articulated my own theology of lament from the Psalms through the lens of ASA. I described the sufferer’s experience according to three parallels between the sufferer’s reality and that of the Psalms: (1) the role played by human transgression in the Psalms and the sufferer’s negative action in ASA in causing the negative situation; (2) that suffering in both is often equated with an experience of divine abandonment; and (3) that salvation from suffering is only available from God, the recipient of the sufferer’s prayerful lament. I concluded that in ASA, when the sufferer delivers a prayerful lament to God, he or she expresses a two-fold acceptance and acknowledges that salvation is only achievable if request is made to something or someone greater (i.e. God).
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Moving Forward

This chapter concludes the present study on a theology of lament from the Psalms through the lens of ASA. In what follows, I discuss ways in which my research can be taken further.

As argued throughout, my research was not concerned with designing or reviewing existing addiction treatment models. Instead, I focused on what I considered to be the initial consideration any effective addiction treatment model must understand, the true nature of the sufferer’s experience. I argued that an effective treatment model cannot exist without fully appreciating and understanding the sufferer’s negative experience that is his or her existence in ASA. I reviewed the moral model on the perception that sin and evil are synonymous terms for describing SDS and a negative action in ASA. I clarified that these two terms are not synonymous, and the sufferer is not by definition evil but sinful. I also reviewed the disease/scientific model. I explained that while it is descriptive and helpful for understanding the complex factors that may cause a person to develop a SDS, this model ignores the sufferer’s negative spirituality as being also causative. Following this review and my clarifications concerning the moral approach, I described the sufferer’s negative experience by engaging with the lament Psalms and allowed these texts to speak into the still-suffering alcoholic’s experience.

Concerning my review and clarification of the moral model, I explained that the development of a person’s SDS is the result of his or her divided will. As Augustine argues that the ultimate end of the person is to contemplate the eternal truths, an experience of ASA causes the person to give little heed to anything other than satisfying the compulsion to consume alcohol excessively. As its consequence, the sufferer experiences a degradation to the entirety of his or her reality. ASA impacts the sufferer’s physical health, psychological wellbeing, social dynamics, and spirituality. The consequence, other than a potentially premature death, is the experience of isolation from others and from God.

Accordingly, an effective treatment model that would take my research forward would have to ask, what is it within the sufferer that requires healing? Kristin M. Swenson provides an effective explanation:

“[h]ealing involves the integration of all aspects of a person—physical, psychological, spiritual, and social within that person’s present context. It is no more the return to a previous state than it is the anticipation of a future one. It is rather to be a whole person
fully engaged in the very real circumstances of one’s present condition.”

Two things become apparent by this description of a person receiving full healing from an alignment. First, if a sufferer is to be healed, one must consider how he or she can receive such healing within the four spheres that constitute existence (i.e., bio-psycho-social-spiritual). Second, as I explained that an experience of suffering can cause the sufferer to lose his or her voice and ability to conceive of better days, an effective treatment model must aid the sufferer in not only regaining his or her voice, but also his or her ability to dream about a positive future once more. In this conjunction of restored voice and ability to dream rests an effective form of acceptance for the sufferer: I am an alcoholic and I can recover.

To close with an illustration taken from the lament Psalms on how a prayerful lament can function to reveal the sufferer’s need for divine grace in ASA, consider references to Yahweh as the psalmist’s refuge (חסה). For instance, in Ps 7, the psalmist states, “O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge (חסה); Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me” (v. 1[2], NASB). Or, in 118:8, the psalmist states, “It is better to take refuge (חסה) in the LORD Than to trust in man” (NASB). Yahweh is not only the sufferer’s salvation, but Yahweh is the only sufficient means of gaining relief from the negative situations that result from ASA. Also, in 37:40, though not a lament Psalm, the psalmist makes clear that Yahweh delivers those who take refuge in him: “The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, Because they take refuge (חסה) in Him” (NASB). Yahweh delivers those who make a prayerful lament to him and seek refuge under his wing.

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