THE WORD BECOMING FLESH

An Introduction to the Origin, Purpose, and Meaning of the Old Testament

by HORACE D. HUMMEL

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To Ruth, Joel, and Eve, who might legitimately think of this work as a thief of time due them.

PREFACE

One casualty of essaying a book of this sort may be one's peace of mind. In the months since I turned in my manuscript, I have often caught myself agonizing over such questions as: Should I have included this, or omitted that? Should I perhaps have nuanced the argument a bit differently than I did? Such questions surfaced not only when I read parallel literature, but also as I taught isagogics again this year. (And I should stress again that, for better or for worse, this book is intended to be a fair facsimile of what actually goes on in my isagogics classrooms, attended mostly by seminary juniors.) Nevertheless, there comes the point, where somewhat like Pilate, one must simply say, "What I have written, I have written," and leave the ultimate verdict to the tender mercies of the readers.

One difficult decision that had to be made early on was to omit chapters on "general introduction" topics: geography, history, canon, or text-criticism. Their omission implies no disregard whatsoever for their crucial and foundational importance (and, in my judgment, typical seminary curricula often fail in these areas even more consistently than in the "special introduction" to which we have limited ourselves). Hence, these general topics have not failed to receive some discussion when considered necessary in connection with the book-by-book treatment.

Another source of concern is the proper acknowledgment of sources. The early decision not to include footnotes or detailed documentation meant that credit could be given only in general terms or in the rare instances of direct quotations. Even some of what might technically be called plagiarism may have slipped through, because I often depended on my own class-lecture notes, and in many cases I no longer remember precisely what my sources were. Indirectly, however, please allow me to express my indebtedness to all from whom I have learned (sometimes negatively as well as positively) and upon whom I have drawn.

My ultimate concern, however, is that the effort will really succeed in

"introducing" and confronting, as I hope, not only in general the special problems the Old Testament poses and the widespread neglect from which it often suffers, but specifically the dominant "higher criticism" of the current academic establishment. To that end this work delineates criticism's intrinsic negativism (from which many often seem to be sheltered) and indicates positive aspects that may be salvaged from it.

"Come, Holy Spirit."

Pentecost 1978

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PART I

Introduction to Introduction

What is "Introduction"? The question might seem superfluous. "Introduction" is not only a common word, but also part of the title of many books on the Bible.

Nevertheless, misunderstandings or ambiguities persist. These seem to be especially two overlapping types: (1) the level of the study, and (2) the amount of theology included.

The first misunderstanding seems to confuse "introduction" with mere "survey" (or *Bibelkunde,* in German idiom). Introduction does not exclude survey of contents, but, in the main, it *assumes* basic Biblical knowledge. On the other hand, it probably will list as one of its subsidiary goals the deepening or extending of that knowledge. On the whole, however, that goal will have to be left to the next stage of study, namely "exegesis" (the detailed exposition of the text on the basis of the original languages, not to be confused normally with mere English language "exposition" either).

"Introduction" thus occupies somewhat of a *middle* position *between* Bible survey and exegesis. Misunderstanding at this point would be greatly lessened if we could revive the more technical term, "isagogics" (derived from the Greek rather than the Latin). "Isagogics" concerns itself primarily with questions of date, authorship, occasion, and purpose of writing. That definition of isagogics does not speak of the level or difficulty of the investigation but only of the nature of the investigation. Neither does it imply anything unique as such about the Bible, because "isagogics" belongs to the study and understanding of all human literature. Nevertheless, both because of the importance we attach to the Bible and because of its antiquity, it deserves not less, but much more isagogical examination than ordinary literature. Within the Bible itself, this is in principle true of the New Testament too, but because of both its cultural and theological greater distance from us, it applies *a fortiori* to the Old Testament.

The second misunderstanding or ambiguity concerns the amount of

theology to be included in Introduction. The problem appears in two opposite manifestations. Academic "introductions" tend to do their best simply to prescind from theological questions and to cultivate the "cult of objectivity." In a way this is not surprising, because "historical-critical method" took shape by transferring the major context of the investigation from the church to the secular university (and, in another form, it persists with a vengeance in the present proliferation of departments of "religion" in our tax-supported schools). Hence, one of the most pervasive criticisms of higher criticism has been its irrelevance to the church and to the pastor. Introductions and commentaries explore exhaustively questions of background, date, authorship, development, etc. But just when one expects to hit paydirt—the message, theology—the matter is dropped like a hot potato.

The church, however—pastors, theological students—usually manifest the opposite wing of this misunderstanding by tending to *divorce* exegesis, homiletics, and theology from specifically isagogical issues. As such it's not very preachable—and we're *so* busy! There is an old joke (?) that most pastors suffer through their isagogics courses at the Seminary and do their best to forget about the subject as soon as they graduate. Like most jests, this one obviously contains no little truth, or no one would laugh.

One can only stress that functional neglect of isagogics is in principle *allegorical,* essentially that hermeneutics which was rejected by the Reformation. In practice, it is often indistinguishable from the neo-Orthodox principle of divorcing scientific and religious truth, faith and fact, history and theology. By analogy with Christology, it could be called "docetic," or, at best, "Nestorian." Call it what you will, in practice it often makes conservatives strange bedfellows with those whose theoretical theology they would reject out of hand.

At the same time, if isagogics is to remain isagogics, and if it is remotely as important as we have just insisted, there can be no question about where the *accent* must lie in a work of this sort, namely on "external," historical, literary questions. Indispensable as these are, there is a real sense, however, in which it must not be forgotten that they are only *means* to theological ends.

To use a German distinction, our effort here will be more in the nature of an *Einführung* than an *Einleitung.* Both translate quite indistinguishably into English as "introduction." However, the former implies something more than *mere* questing after date, authorship, etc. It indicates some attempt also to convey some of the theological depth and direction of the contents. Thus, it moves perceptibly in the direction of not only exegesis, but also of "Biblical theology."

This work opts for that alternative because of the conviction that there

A Brief History of Higher Criticism

Some in-depth overview of the history of critical investigation in general is necessary, in part merely to understand the terminology involved. The initial concentration will be primarily on the Pentateuch, but it is virtually impossible to limit the survey to the Pentateuch alone, because the critical reconstruction redistributed the date of its various parts over much of the rest of the Old Testament period.

Semler

Our concern at the moment, being "isagogical," is more philosophical than theological. Nevertheless it is almost mandatory to begin with reference to the fateful role of J. S. Semler (d. 1791) in the development of the theological or hermeneutical underpinnings of higher criticism. The paternity of historical-critical method or aspects of it is often disputed, but if by "method" we understand *theological* method (hermeneutical presuppositions, prolegomena), Semler is the one who must be credited (?) with first influentially articulating what to this day defines the parting of the ways between conservative and liberal Bible study.

Two slogans summarize Semler's position. The first is the insistence that the Bible merely *contains* the Word of God, that is, it cannot simply be said to *be* the Word, as conservatives, ancient and modern, confess. That inevitably means that it is up to the critic to judge what is and is not true in the Bible—as well as, ultimately, to define *what* that truth ("Gospel" or "Word of God") actually is.

The other slogan is "Treat the Bible like any other book." Since the Bible is given in history, no one will deny some validity to this maxim. However, to the conservative mind, it loses validity beyond a certain point precisely because the Bible is *not* "like any other book." That means that the method is theologically not appropriate to its subject. It is universalistic *von Haus aus,* and thus lacks empathy with the "scandal of particularity."

Just as rivers do not rise above their source, so the historical-critical method necessarily limits the inspired Scriptures to its own secular level.

Wellhausen

Our main concern at the moment, however, is the particular critical results which ensued from that hermeneutical orientation, beginning in the 18th century, but maturing and triumphing in the 19th century.

It can scarcely be stressed too much at the outset that Wellhausen's reconstruction pertained not only to the Biblical literature but also to the history of Israel's religion which that literature purported to describe. In fact, it is often hard to say which was cause and which effect, and, as a result, one is not infrequently justified in charging "argument in a circle." At any rate, it was especially in the area of the history of religion where the evolutionistic axioms of the early critics found their first and most immediate application. Once that had been fixed, largely according to prior assumptions, the literature reflecting each alleged stage could be fitted in accordingly. The literature was (and is) commonly held to be a valuable source for the *ideas* about religion held at the time of alleged composition, but of minimal value as a source for the actual history of the period described. Furthermore, there has always been the widespread assumption that the Biblical writers were culturally incapable of expressing theology in the abstract, doctrinal form we are accustomed to. Instead, they allegedly must have expressed their theology in story or historical form, and we must understand their products accordingly.

As is common, we have already mentioned the name "Wellhausen" as a sort of summary symbol of the classical critical approach. One must remember that, in one sense, it is only a symbol, but it is an apt one. Wellhausen's accomplishment was not so much an original theory as it was a successful popularization, which "sold" the theory to the vast majority of his contemporaries. When his *Prolegomena* appeared in 1878, a good century of skirmishing and of competing hypotheses had already passed.

Eichhorn, about a century earlier, is often credited with the title, "father of the *old* documentary hypothesis" (the details of which we need not recount here). In the meantime, stiff competition had come from "supplementary," "crystallization," and "fragmentary" hypotheses, as well as from many variations on the main theme. Wellhausen's promulgation of the "*new* documentary hypothesis" incorporated the labors of especially Graf and Kuenen, whose names are often associated with it.

Two features were especially pivotal in the new theory. Most significant of all was the transfer of what critics today know as P, the "priestly code," which structures the Pentateuch as it stands, from its previous position as the earliest source to the latest. What had previously been assumed to be

Pentateuchal Criticism

By friend and foe alike, the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch, displacing the traditional assumption of literal Mosaic authorship, has always been regarded as one of the major results of Old Testament higher criticism. By no measure is that judgment unwarranted, seeing that its adoption involves, as we have noted, a total reshuffling of Israel's entire history, literary, religious, and perhaps political as well.

Probably we should add "assured result" as well (at least from the critics' own standpoint). The hypothesis has undergone major revisions and mutations; repeated (usually short-lived) attempts have been made to transcend its intrinsic atomism and centrifugality; even some critics from within have pronounced it passe and dead; but for all practical purposes Wellhausen's reconstruction is still very much alive and kicking. Assertions to the contrary are either wishful thinking, or else confuse minor surgery with lethal blows.

Types of Critical Argument

To a large extent, the main *types* of critical argumentation are the same, whether the subject is the Pentateuch or some other Biblical book. These may be summarized under three headings: historical, religious, and linguistic. These three inquire respectively about the historical circumstances which occasioned the composition of the pericope, about the stage represented in the history of religious thought, and about the phase in the development of the language into which the document fits.

Let it be stressed that, if we were reasonably fully informed about those cirumstances in ancient Israel, and if the Biblical data which we do have were credited with being basically true on its face, those would be extremely useful criteria. In principle, matters would differ little in this respect, at least up to a point, from any historian's study of his sources. In actual practice, however, in the application of these criteria, the critic often does *not* "treat the Bible like any other book" (a major historical-critical slogan).

The Pentateuch Book by Book

The name "Pentateuch," meaning "five-volumed" or the like, is technically Greek, of course, and hence of Septuagintal derivation. But the idea plainly has Hebraic roots. In the rabbinical tradition we hear of the "five-fifths of the Law." Furthermore the five books are plainly delimited in the Masoretic tradition, although there they receive their name from the opening words of the books (technically *"incipits"*), following ancient Oriental usage. It is quite possible that the division is not original—indeed, on critical premises it cannot be. In any event, it is not possible to determine for certain how ancient it actually is.

"Torah"

The Hebrew name for the totality is *"Torah,"* instead of Pentateuch, a more functional title than the purely formal "Pentateuch." The conventional translation of "Torah" with "Law" is most lamentable, however. If it were possible to turn back the clock and expunge fateful and misleading renditions from our Bibles, this would surely be the place to start. It indisputably is one of the major culprits in reenforcing the stubborn prejudice that somehow the Old Testament is more "legalistic" than the New, or at least contains proportionately far more "Law" than "Gospel."

If it were possible, it might be better not to translate, but simply to transliterate "Torah," as is the common Jewish practice. Short of that, it must be shouted from the housetops that, to the extent that we must settle for a single-word translation, "Gospel" would be far more accurate than "Law." But that must be immediately qualified: Torah means "Gospel," not in its narrow sense of the obverse of "Law," but in its broad sense of *both* Law and Gospel. (For the less theologically sophisticated, the substitution of "judgment" and "salvation" might often be helpful.) It relates both the impossible demand of God upon fallen man as well as the good news of God's own meeting of His demand in the covenant—and in

the promises attached to it. Of course, it also *includes* "law" in its more popular political ("first use") and ethical sense ("third use," "sanctification").

Alternatively, "Word of God" would often be a superb "dynamic equivalent" of Torah, because God's Word always confronts us in both Law and Gospel. The synonymity of the two is evidenced by their occasional parallelism in Hebrew poetry (e.g., Is. 2:3 = Micah 4:2, and *passim* in Ps. 119 and in Deuteronomy).

More technically and perhaps etymologically, the root meaning of the word appears to be "instruction," both in individual instances as well as in a more comprehensive sense. From there it is a short step to the sense of "revelation," which again can be a very comprehensive concept.

These passages are also important *sedes* for the proposition that "the Bible *is* the Word of God." Hence "Torah" comes to be applied to the inscripturated Word, especially the Pentateuch, but sometimes by extension to the whole Old Testament. In one sense, the Pentateuch is the *heart,* the quintessence, of the Old Testament, and all the rest is a sort of commentary on it. Jewish synagogal liturgy gives expression to this by the primacy accorded readings from the Torah (the *parashah*).

All of this is very parallel to the derived Christian use of "Gospel," applied to the accounts of the four evangelists and the major liturgical pericopes excerpted from them. If the reading of Old Testament lessons in Lutheran services ever becomes common again, the parallelism of "Torah" and "Gospel" would constantly be expressed in the very liturgical structure of our worship and might more readily be expounded by the alert and conscientious shepherd.

GENESIS

The broad outline of the book is very simple. Chaps. 1—11 report the primeval history of the entire human race, and chaps. 12—50 the beginning of the history of election in the patriarchs. The latter may be subdivided into: chaps. 12—26, Abraham and Isaac; 27—36, Jacob and Esau; 37—50, Joseph. Chaps. 1—11 set the stage for the patriarchal covenant and promise, as chaps. 12—50 lead up to an initial fulfillment in the Exodus and Sinaitic covenant. Hence the title of the book is appropriate in many respects: "Genesis" or "beginning" in various aspects.

Genesis 1—11

We, of course, believe and confess that Gen. 1—11 reports real, empirical history, just as much as the rest of the Bible. Yet it is also pre-empirical in the sense that we are generally not yet able to investigate its history as readily as later epochs. However, the difference is one of degree,

The Latter Prophets

As we noted above, the Hebrew canon reckons four of these, matching the four "former prophets" (many of our historical books). Four can be counted because Daniel is not included (but classified among the "Writings," the third part of the canon) and because the "Twelve" (what we know as the "minor prophets") are considered one. Thus, with the exception of Daniel, "latter prophets" corresponds to what are usually simply referred to as the "prophets" or prophetical books.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS

No one disputes the importance of the prophets. Precisely how and why they are important, however, will draw widely varying explanations. Perhaps it is true to say that Christianity rates them higher than Judaism, and that this is one of the historic differences between the two religions, but one must be cautious. In one sense, as we noted earlier, Judaism does accord the Pentateuch (Torah) a certain priority, and regards the prophets as only commentary on it (a view to which, as such, also the Christian can readily assent). However, the danger lurks that Christians prematurely hear such statements as implying Jewish "legalism" or disfavor toward the prophets. That would be as much of a misrepresentation as to assert that Christian regard for the prophets implies disregard for the Pentateuch.

But even within Christianity, expositions of the significance of the prophets will vary drastically. To a fair extent, the major differences will follow liberal-conservative lines. No doubt, much of the traditional Christian importance attached to the prophets arose from their interpretation as primarily predictors and heralds of Christ. Even in this respect, however (as an analysis of New Testament citations of the Old will readily demonstrate) prophecies and/or typologies are usually adduced with equal ease from virtually all the rest of the Old Testament.

Classical Critical Views

Almost simultaneously with the rise of liberalism and higher criticism came a radical change in the estimation of the prophets. They continued to be regarded every bit as highly—possibly even more highly. The prophets (or remnants of them, after criticism) virtually became a canon within the canon, the quintessence of Biblical religion. "Prophetic religion" became the precursor or model of *liberal* religion, as liberalism thus sought to authenticate itself Biblically.

The new synthesis had many dimensions, most of which still retain their influence, although usually in tempered form. The label "Wellhausenian" is once again handy for symbolizing its classical expression. Wellhausen himself, however, never concentrated in this area, leaving others, especially Duhm, to work out the applications of principles he had enunciated.

The first dimension is historical, because the prophets provide the pivot for the entire critical reconstruction of the history of Israel's religion. In "orthodox" critical thought it is no exaggeration to label the prophets the *originators* or inventors of Biblical religion. With Amos in the 8th century had allegedly first come the breakthrough into ethical monotheism, rising above more primitive notions of religion (ritualistic, legalistic—and worse).

The true prophets were allegedly nearly all antiliturgical, and preachers of judgment on those who failed to live righteously according to the newly evolved standards of morality. The prophetic books had to be—and were—edited according to such criteria, and it is only slight hyperbole to assert that, as a result, "prophets" was (and sometimes still is) in practice reduced to only *two* prophets, Amos and Jeremiah—and expurgated editions of those. (A check of the curricular offerings of most liberal theological seminaries will usually readily confirm this!)

Some of the insights of the early prophets were thought to have been refined and advanced as time went on, but all too often there were fatal relapses and compromises with priestly, "legalistic," and institutional forces. As we noted, the deuteronomistic movement usually gets major blame for first accomodating such regressive forces. The relapse worsened and hardened after the Exile as the hierocracy took over. At the same time, people succumbed to pie-in-the-sky, wishful thinking about divine intervention, and these optimistic oracles were added to the genuine prophetic material. All this eventually institutionalized in "Judaism" and its closed canon. Thus, as the "greatest of the prophets," Jesus' work was cut out for Him—only to have the regression repeat itself in Christianity. However, there were occasional heirs of the prophets to transcend the

The Book of the Twelve

This title to the fourth of the "latter prophets" in the Hebrew canon ("Dodekapropheton" in Greek) is superior to our familiar "minor prophets," which inescapably carries the connotation of a quantitative as well as a qualitative judgment. Of course, no theological judgment is implied, and we have no way of knowing whether their shorter books correspond to shorter ministries or lesser output or neither. In some cases, however, it does seem that they were "one-theme" prophets or nearly so, in contrast to the multiformity of others.

Sometimes the "anthological" character of the Dodekapropheton is used to justify critical theories about the alleged multi-authored composition of the larger books, but the parallel does not hold. The names of the individual "minor prophets" and their discrete literary deposits were always distinguished, in contrast to the speculative anonymity of critical hypotheses. (Cf. also the theory that twelve minor prophets were artifically preserved to correspond to the twelve tribes.)

We still have no good explanation for the sequence of books in the collection of the "Twelve." From Nahum on, the books are in chronological order (except for the slight irregularity of Zephaniah) but before that hardly at all. Thus chronological considerations were plainly a factor, but others also appear to have entered in. The Septuagint has a different order which is even less chronological. Whatever the explanation for the sequence, there is little reason to doubt the hypothesis that they were collected to begin with, because together they filled a scroll of roughly the same size as the three preceding "latter prophets." Just when that might have been done (after the composition of the last book) we have no clue.

HOSEA

Hosea was the only one of the prophets, so far as we know, who was both a native of and active in the North (Amos the latter only). Possibly it

is for that reason that he heads the list of the "Twelve." (The proposal that Hosea was placed first because of the use of the word "first" in Hos. 1:2 at best treats the traditionists like dolts). He certainly is not chronologically the earliest, both Jonah and Amos certainly preceding him, and possibly also Joel and Obadiah.

The evidence for Hosea's northern origins is somewhat indirect (depending on how much politics one reads between the lines), but uncontested. The stance appears to be what we associate with the North: covenant, law, God's love, coolness toward kingship, etc. and conversely "southern" accents are in short supply (Zion, temple, cult, Messiah, etc.). Sometimes Hosea is depicted as antimonarchial in principle (perhaps especially Hos. 13:9-11), but that goes beyond the evidence, at best, and appears to be flatly contradicted by 3:5 (which many critics regard as ungenuine). There are many parallels with Deuteronomy and Jeremiah, usually associated especially with the North (although one must avoid critical entrapments in making the association). "Ephraim" is repeatedly referred to, and in 6:8 and 12:11 we find mention of Gilead as part of Israel before Tiglathpileser II annexed it in 732. In 7:5 there is a reference to "our king," apparently in connection with governmental intrigues. Some have tried to be even more precise and locate Hosea in Transjordan, whence Elijah had also hailed. He himself mentions Gilead (cf. above); one of the highest peaks in Gilead is still known in Arabic as *Jebel Osha* (Mt. Hosea), and there is a predominance of rural imagery in the book, but all of this is inconclusive. Neither does it prove that he was originally a farmer, any more than 5:1 ff. makes him a priest (Duhm, etc.) or 9:7-8 an ecstatic prophet.

The superscription is curious. It lists four kings of Judah under which Hosea labored, but only one of Israel (Jeroboam II), and the latter is contemporaneous with only the first of the Judahite kings listed (Uzziah). The total would give Hosea a fairly long ministry of *at least* twenty-seven years (c. 742-715). There is little direct evidence in his book of activity after the fall of Samaria (722), but, then, his book gives relatively little direct evidence of historical occasion of any sort. Hence, there is no good reason to doubt it.

Apparently, the mention of only Jeroboam in the North is meant to be a general reference. Perhaps a disdain for northern kings, especially their short tenure after Jeroboam's death, is implied by omitting mention of the others. That could betray a purely southern viewpoint, but other allusions in the book suggest that Hosea was not particularly enamored of the short-lived northern dynasties. If the superscription stems from well after Samaria's demise, there would be less point in mentioning all the relevant occupants of a now defunct throne.

The Writings

PSALMS

It is almost redundant to underscore the importance of the Psalter, whether in contemporary life or in the history of the church (or the synagogue—or the temple preceding both), whether in public worship or in private devotion. Anyone who is not already aware of this circumstance certainly testifies to existence on the fringes of, if not outside of, the community of faith. Of course, the different communities employ them differently. Over against the monastic use highlighted in the Middle Ages, Reformed reaction exalted psalm paraphrases over "human" hymnody, while Lutheran use centered on liturgical survivals (Introits, Graduals). The general Protestant accent on individual piety tended to encourage more private use of the Psalter, but as the original anchorage in church and cult often lessened, the private use lost its urgency too—a process of secularization which we have not yet learned how to reverse.

At best, we may lament the fact that often the Psalter is virtually the *only* still familiar portion of the Old Testament (and sometimes only Ps. 23 or a few similar snippets). The frequent practice of printing the psalms as an appendix to editions of the New Testament encourages the tacit *de facto* assumption that little else in the Old is really very relevant. Indeed, psalms may validly be viewed as an Old Testament in miniature, or as a distillation of its entire message. But consistently used in isolation, they aid and abet the crime of our age, the docetic divorce of faith and spirituality from history and the totality of Scripture. Because of its sublimity, isagogical questions about the Psalter readily seem like the dissection of a flower, the intrusion of "science" and reason into the realm of the spirit, but precisely for that reason there is no better place to take up arms against the grave dangers of such "great shame and vice" as fideism, aestheticism, and psychologism.

In the Hebrew canon, the Psalter commands pride of place at the head of the *Kethubim* or hagiographical (third) portion of the canon, and, as a result in later Hebrew literature and in the New Testament (Luke 24:44) "Psalms" is sometimes shorthand for all the "Writings."

Nature of Hebrew Poetry

The more topical, Western reordering made the Psalter the first of the "poetic" books. The Masoretes or their predecessors had already recognized the psalms (together with Job and Proverbs—but only these three) as poetry, and hence had furnished them with a somewhat different punctuation-cantillation system than used elsewhere. Since that system could not be reproduced in translation, the Septuagint's reclassification was, no doubt, a happy means of continuing the implicit advice to shift gears because of the different, poetic nature of the literature. However, until relatively modern times it seems to have escaped attention that far more of the Old Testament is couched in poetic idiom than either of these ancient traditions recognized (especially nearly all of the prophets, and thus—as bears constant emphasis—some 50 percent of the entire Old Testament, and perhaps some 80 percent of those portions in most frequent theological and liturgical use). The typographical distinction between poetry and prose must be reckoned as one of the major pluses in most modern translations, whatever other merits or demerits they may have.

Not all aspects of Hebrew poetry are understood or agreed upon yet, by any means, and this is not the place for any full treatment of the subject. Most details apply to all Biblical poetry, but a discussion is especially apropos in the case of the Psalter, because of the intrinsic "beauty of holiness" (e.g., Ps. 29:2; 96:9), that is, the virtual inseparability of aesthetics from worship. There is, of course, such a thing as "aestheticism," a secular worship of beauty for its own sake, but our major battles are surely on the opposite front.

Fortunately, the one feature which is agreed upon (it is also common in other ancient Near Eastern literature) is also the only one which is really accessible to the reader who is limited to translations, namely "parallelism (of members)." It is a feature which is quite obvious, once pointed out, but since it is not characteristic of Western poetry, it *must* be pointed out! Rhyme is, as such, almost totally absent, but the lavish use of assonance and alliteration (repetition of vowels and consonants, respectively) sometimes has a similar effect.

Basically, "parallelism" is of only two types, synonymous and antithetic. In the first type, the second (or third) "member" of the line (also sometimes called a colon or a stich) repeats essentially the same

thought in different words (cf. Ps. 1:5), whereas "antithetical" parallelism states the opposite or reverse (cf. Ps. 1:6). The exegetical significance of this feature, especially when there are uncertainties or difficulties, should be obvious, but needs to be emphasized. For the same reason, wherever a psalm exhibits one or the other of these two types of parallelism, its antiphonal recitation in public worship should be by *half*-verse, according to the sense, not whole verse by whole verse.

Many manuals, in addition, speak of a third type of parallelism, often styled "synthetic," "formal" or "constructive," but since the parallels are strictly in form rather than thought (cf. Ps. 2:6), it is debatable whether it should still be regarded as "parallelism." Its problematic nature is further indicated by the many subdivisions which are often suggested. Perhaps only one need detain us, what is sometimes called a "stairlike" structure, a repetition of a part of a line with varying additions (e.g., Ps. 92:9, exhibiting an *abc-abd-efg* pattern, which was also familiar at Ugarit).

In addition to parallelism, most (not all) scholars agree that Hebrew poetry was metrical or rhythmical, but no consensus obtains about details. Early scholars often worked with the analogy of the fairly rigid rules of classical Greek and Latin poetry ("quantitative"), but that is today almost unanimously regarded as beside the point. A "caesura" or divide between the two (or three) members is usually evident, but it is not clear how the beats on either side should be counted (if at all). A common solution is to count only the accented or stressed syllables, yielding a sort of "free chant" or "sprung rhythm." The most common scheme (as also at Ugarit) appears to be a 3:3 bicolon or distich (a two-membered line with three beats or stresses apiece), although tricola (tristichs) and even quatrains appear, and sometimes with two or (less frequently) four beats per member. (Assuming the basic correctness of this approach, attention should be called to the "Grail Psalter," the metrical translation of Fr. Joseph Gelineau, which strives to reproduce in English the cadence of the original—also furnished with helpful captions indicating the traditional Christian understanding of the psalms.)

The entire question is complicated by text-critical issues. Especially if and when the ancient patterns fell into desuetude, it is entirely plausible that copyists easily made mistakes or altered in accordance with new idioms, but great caution is imperative. As indicated by the frequent *"mcs" (metri causa* = for the sake of meter) emendations suggested in the Kittel text, early critics were often quite subjective and arbitrary in reconstructing poetic lines according to whim. Greater reserve is common today, but the underlying problems are still with us. Only the specialist is directly involved at this point, but it remains a classical example of the ultimate indivorceability of form and content.

TOPICAL INDEX

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