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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDIES

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Old Testament scholars have welcomed the recent appearance of Elmer G. Leslie's commentary on the Psalms (see review in *C.T.M.*, May 1950, p. 397). In the January, 1950, issue of *Interpretation*, pp. 62—77, the same author makes a supplementary contribution to the study of the Psalter in a monograph entitled "The Book of Psalms." Observing that large areas of the Psalter remain unknown to students and readers of the Bible, Leslie aims to show how an appreciation of the "total spiritual wealth" of this gem of devotional literature may be acquired.

The monograph begins with an analysis of the present division of the Psalter into five books, 1—41, 42—72, 73—89, 90—106, 107—150. The fact that the name Yahweh (Jehovah) is dominant in Psalms 1—41 while the name Elohim is preferred in Psalms 42—83 is construed as evidence that the second group was gathered at a later period than the first, namely, at a time when the Jews hesitated to pronounce the name Yahweh because of its sacredness. At still a later period, it is proposed, a third collection of Psalms was brought together, namely, 90—150. This presumably original threefold division of the Psalms was replaced by the present five-fold division because the Jews wanted the five books of the Psalms to correspond to the five books of the Law.

Concerning the superscriptions which introduce one hundred sixteen of the Psalms (thirty-four are "orphans") it is claimed that they are to be traced not to the author of the Psalm, but rather to the editor or collector. One type of superscription indicates the authorship of the Psalm, another designates the category to which it belongs, a third states the purpose for which it was used, a fourth has reference to liturgical acts, a fifth gives direction to the musician or worshiper. It is suggested that "Selah" means "lift up" and that it served as a cue for the worshiper to raise his voice in the response "His mercy endureth forever." Of the Psalms traditionally ascribed to David, Leslie says: "To attribute to the historical David some Psalms which represent the loftiest peak of religious insight in the Old Testament (for example, Psalm 51) is utterly inconsistent with the primitive, and at the same time far more historical, view of David given to us in the Books of Samuel and Kings. The Davidic authorship of some of the Psalms attributed to him can be maintained only by denying any real

development in religious ideas in Israel between the tenth and fourth centuries before our era."

Because individual Psalms cannot be reliably dated according to their superscriptions, the dating must be based on such internal evidence as "(1) historical allusions the Psalm contains; (2) its language, diction, and literary style; (3) its relation to writings of known date; and (4) the character of its religious ideas."

A German scholar, Hermann Gunkel, advanced the idea that in order to thoroughly appreciate the Psalms it is essential to compare them with similar productions of Israel's neighbors. A comparison of Psalm 19 with Egyptian and Babylonian hymns to the sun god reveals points of similarity; but it also shows that Psalm 19 far surpasses these heathen hymns: They praise the sun as a god, but the Psalm praises the God who made the sun. Similarly a study of the Ugaritic (Canaanite) liturgical literature will reveal striking points of contact with the Psalms of the Old Testament, but at the same time will prompt the student to be the more deeply convinced of the unique superiority of the Hebrew Psalter.

Since the studies of Gunkel and Mohwinckel, less attention has been given to the question "When was this Psalm written?" than to the question "For what purpose was this Psalm written?" Following Gunkel's lead, Mohwinckel claimed that practically all of the Psalms were written for some particular function in the public worship of Israel. Because there is no systematic topical index for the Psalter, the scholar must examine the contents of each individual Psalm and thus determine to which functional type (Gunkel: *Gattung*) it belongs. Having thus placed the Psalm in its proper class, it is possible to determine from what sort of situation in life (Gunkel: *Sitz im Leben*) the Psalm sprang. To stimulate scholars to further intense scrutiny of such Psalm types and life situations is a declared aim of Leslie's monograph.

The rest of the article is taken up with a brief survey of the ten *Gattungen*, or Psalm types, which are discussed in detail in Leslie's commentary.

Like his commentary, Leslie's monograph reflects a critical and liberal approach to the Psalms. The proposed original division of the Psalter into three books is based on arguments that call to mind the source analysis of the Pentateuch. The theory may be questioned for lack of evidence. That the superscriptions of the Psalms are accurate and reliable, that the "of David" Psalms were composed by David, is a view that is still maintained by conservative scholars. They are not ready to concede that there was a development from the primitive

religious ideas of the historical David to the more refined theological insights of prophetic and exilic times. It cannot be denied that the study of the Psalter's "context" in the hymns of Babylonia, Egypt, and Canaan and the study of the function of the various Psalms in the liturgy of the Old Testament are fields that merit further exploration. Conservative exegetes, however, are thoroughly convinced that the results of both avenues of inquiry will be a more profound appreciation of the fact that the Psalter towers high above any of the other hymn productions of antiquity.

A. V. R. SAUER

THE "WINDOW" IN THE ARK

"A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above," Gen. 6:16. Brown-Driver-Briggs and Buhl (our best Hebrew dictionaries) as well as Meek in the Chicago translation substitute "roof" for "window" in this passage, because the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew צֹהַר means "back"; and the "back" of the ark, it is inferred, would be its "roof." But there isn't a single instance recorded in Hebrew literature in which צֹהַר in any of its forms means "roof"; and usage is the only proof for the meaning of a word. The meaning "roof" fits very poorly into the sentence. As Leupold says, "It seems just a bit too obvious that a 'roof' should be built, and then to suggest that it is to be 'toward the top.' This direction would border on the ridiculous." "A cubit" also is meaningless in connection with a roof.

We may easily get the meaning of the word צֹהַר from its plural form, which is common in the Old Testament. צֹהָרִים is a time between morning and evening (1 Kings 18:26-27, 29; 2 Kings 4:20; Jer. 6:4; Ps. 55:18). It is contrasted with darkness, night, and the groping of the blind (Deut. 28:29; Job 5:14; Ps. 91:6; Is. 16:3; 58:10; 59:10). It is parallel with light (Ps. 37:6; Amos 8:9). It is the time of the heat of the day (2 Sam. 4:5; Sirach 43:3) and for the resting of the flock (Song 1:7). Its brightness is a standard of comparison (Job 11:17). The plural form suggests an intense brightness. Furthermore, in Hebrew the צ in צֹהַר easily changes to ז; the same process is seen in צַעַק, "cry," עֲלֵז, "rejoice," צָהָב, "gold." Now, the Hebrew word זָהָר is used twice in Dan. 12:3 to mean "shine," and in Ezek. 8:2 it stands for a fiery brightness. It is right, then, to take צֹהַר in Gen. 6:16 to mean an opening for light.

The opening is to be אֶלְ-אַמְתָּה, which would be eighteen or twenty inches. Delitzsch took this to mean that the distance from the roof to the upper edge of the opening was a cubit. But there really is

nothing mentioned about such an 18-inch distance from the roof to the opening; the sentence speaks only of the opening. Two meanings of לִּמַּחְסוֹ are illustrated in Gen. 19:3: The angels came *to* Lot and went *into* his home. A measurement is viewed as a distance we go "into" and "through." מִלְּמַחְסוֹ , then, would state that the opening was a cubit high, as Buhl says, "bis zur Laenge einer Elle, eine Elle lang, vgl., gr. εἰς ἐνιαυτόν" (= "for a year"); the LXX has εἰς πηχῦν; compare Paul's εἰς τὰ ἄμετρα (2 Cor. 10:13, 15). This fits Luther's "eine Elle gross."

This opening is in the upper part of the ark, מִלְּמַחְסוֹ . Luther translates: "oben an." The adverb can mean simply "above" (1 Kings 7:11), and so it can strengthen עַל (Ex. 25:21; 1 Kings 7:25; Ezek. 10:19). It can even mean "upward": Ezek. 1:11 speaks of wings stretched upward, and Gen. 7:20 of water rising upward; yet these might possibly be thought of as measured from above downward (compare also Jer. 31:37). The Jewish translation of Gen. 6:16 has "upward." The ASV also has "upward," but it adds a footnote, "Or, from above." The German revision has "von oben her." It is most meaningful to take מִלְּמַחְסוֹ as in Joshua 3:13, 16, where the water is spoken of as coming down from above; accordingly, the opening measured one and a half feet from the roof (ἀνωθεν , LXX) to its sill (הַיָּסוֹד locale). "Bis zu einer Elle fertige es von oben her, d. i., fuehre das Fenster so aus, dass es, von dem oberen Rande des Kastens herab gemessen, eine Elle gross oder hoch ist" (Heiligstedt).

Some commentators think the passage speaks of one simple opening. The verb כָּלָה can mean the finishing of anything either great or small. But when we see the intransitive Qal of this verb used to express the completion of the tabernacle (Ex. 39:32) and of the Temple (1 Kings 6:38; 1 Chron. 28:20; 2 Chron. 8:16) and the transitive Piel to express the completion of Creation (Gen. 2:2) and of Solomon's palace (1 Kings 7:1), it seems that something larger than a simple opening in a limited part of the ark is intended here.

In Deut. 32:23 the Piel of כָּלָה means "to use up arrows to the very last one." In 2 Chron. 24:10 עַד־לְכִיחָה expresses that the people contributed until all had given (Bertheau, Kautzsch, Brown-Driver-Briggs) or until the chest was full (LXX, Vulgate, Zockler, Kittel, I. C. C.); in 31:1 the same phrase means that all idolatrous things had been destroyed. Here in Gen. 6:16 the word might well mean that the casement ran "round the sides of the ark (except where interrupted by the beams supporting the roof)" (Skinner). Leupold says it was "to be

made entirely around the structure. This is implied in the verb form 'make it complete' (*tekhállennab*) which, being in the *Piel* stem, signifies, as we might say, 'run it completely around.'" So Menge translates: "ganz herum." Strack says: "Die Laenge soll (von oben gerechnet) eine Elle messen, eine Elle hoch sein und ueber den ganzen Umfang des Kastens sich erstrecken. Das Dach des Kastens war eine Elle hoch ueber dessen oberem Rande, durch Traggpfosten gehalten." God wanted Noah's family and the animals to have plenty of light and ventilation during their long stay in the ark; they needed an opening all around the ark.

I would translate these words as follows: "Make an opening for light in the ark and let it extend a foot and a half from the top and all around the ark."

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W. F. BECK

CLASSICS IN THE SENIOR COLLEGE

By the time this appears in print the problems of the Senior College will have been debated at the synodical convention at Milwaukee. Of the many problems involved in that much-to-be-desired addition to our educational system, problems financial, administrative, and practical, only the problem of principles and of curriculum can be properly discussed in these pages. No doubt opinions will vary, but one may venture the hope that the three basic aims outlined by the Board for Higher Education will meet general acceptance and will form the basis of further discussion; the Board is of the opinion that "the student in the senior college will need instruction which will enable him to achieve additional competence in the following three principal directions:

- "1. A wider and a better understanding of the Word of God. . . .
- "2. A wider and a deeper understanding of man in society, for whom the Word is intended.
- "3. The cultivation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which will facilitate his competence in bringing together the Word and man."

If these premises be granted for the formulation of a curriculum, we have practically committed ourselves anew to the ancient and time-honored system in which the classics played so large and so honorable a role in our Junior College system. The Board itself may not have had the classics in mind, and there are some who will argue against their inclusion in a curriculum for ministerial students, no matter

what the premises; but the fact remains that if we are to achieve the three objectives, the classics are not only useful, they are indispensable. We shall hardly make shift to do without them if we value the Word, its interpretation, and its proclamation to men—if we expect of our clergy something more than mere Bible-thumping fervor. The reasons therefor are principally three.

The first reason might be termed the *hermeneutical*. A large part of the theological student's professional training and a large part of the theologian-parson's professional life will consist in the interpretation of texts which, however relevant to the perpetual needs of man and perpetually "modern" in the face of the persistent despair of man, are nevertheless remote from his own life both in time and in language. It would seem to be the part of wisdom to introduce the student early to just this type of problem, to let him find his way, make his mistakes, and learn his lessons in a field that provides similar difficulties. In studying the classics the budding theologian will learn to submit himself to a mode of thought and expression foreign to him, to enter sympathetically into a world whose norms and axioms are sometimes startlingly remote from his own; he will learn rigorously to exclude himself and to let the text speak to him on its own terms, not on his. That involves hard work—one of the indefeasible advantages of the classics is that Greek and Latin resist the jolly-adventure-in-learning-let's-all-express-ourselves techniques almost perfectly—but since all theology is ultimately exegesis, no course that leads to perfection in its disciplines and techniques can be considered too long or too arduous.

Now, it might be urged in objection that such hermeneutical experience and progymnastics are available to the student in a form less rigorous and more appealing in the field of modern languages. There is no gainsaying this, and no theologian (even if he be, like St. John Chrysostom, inordinately fond of Aristophanes) would urge a concentration upon the classical languages to the exclusion of modern foreign languages, German and French particularly; but for the peculiar purposes of exegetical study, the modern languages are not enough; they are too close to home, for one thing. They do not sufficiently stretch the student's power of adaptation to a new and alien form of expression and thought. In general, it may be said that they do not prepare the student for the inflexional complexity and subtlety of the languages with which he as a theologian will have to deal. The difficulty of the adjustment that must ultimately be made will not be lessened by being delayed. The wise theologian will do well eagerly to frequent doctor and saint of the classic world while young.

Another objection to the classics as valuable pro-hermeneutics that might be raised is the one that is, in fact, most frequently heard in the Church: Since the Greek of the New Testament is to be the field of the theologian's labors, why not begin there at once? Why, say our practical brethren, waste time on the "heathen"? There are two answers to this objection. First, the content of the New Testament is one with which the student is perilously familiar. There is the very real danger that the beginning student, in learning the Greek New Testament, is in reality learning only a Greek rendering of the Authorized Version; there is the danger that his familiarity, or half-familiarity, with the content blinds him to the newness and the freshness of the text he is reading. Unless he comes prepared to approach the New Testament as the *Greek* New Testament, he is in danger of sliding over the unfamiliar words instead of coming to grips with them—he is in danger of losing the exegete's greatest virtue, a disciplined and untiring curiosity, because "he knows it already."

Secondly, against an exclusive concentration on the Greek of the New Testament, we shall do well to remind ourselves that the New Testament, for all its peculiarities, is linguistically a part of the Greek language as a whole. Now, it is almost axiomatic that no one will achieve an adequate comprehension of any one document of a language if he concentrates exclusively on that document. The student of the Elegiac Poets in Greek cannot afford to ignore Homer; the student of Euripides will miss much in Euripides himself if he concentrates on him to the exclusion of Sophocles and Aeschylus. A man learning English for the purpose of reading intelligently newspapers written in English will do well not to concentrate too singly on newspapers; for even the language of newspapers is tinged by English of other levels and other times. The ghosts of the diction of Shakespeare and Milton and of even remoter gentlemen hover over their pulpy pages. Even the comic page will occasionally echo the archaic diction of Edmund Spenser and Sir Thomas Malory. Likewise, to approach the New Testament with no feeling for the history of the words we meet there, no ear for the overtones that usage has given a word, no sense for the contrast between pagan and Christian usage, is to deprive oneself of opportunities for that lively and immediate contact with the Word of God which is the aim of exegesis. It all sounds devoted and devout and practical enough, this demand that we concentrate on the New Testament; but what it amounts to ultimately is this: We, the Church of the *Sola Scriptura*, are willing to lend the New Testament only half an ear.

The second reason for including the classics in the pabulum of growing theologians is *historical*. In studying and tracing the development of the history and culture of Greece and Rome, the budding theologian is studying the approach to, and the arrival of, that period in history which the Bible describes as the fullness of the time. He is following the course of the ancient world to that dead end at which Christ confronts it. These centuries from Homer to Caesar Augustus have a unique importance in God's governance of history, and the Church has shown great wisdom in retaining in its educational structure the study of documents and monuments that gives its theologians a firsthand contact with this unique period. The Church might, of course, rest content with the secondhand contact, with the record of other men's contact with this period—there are histories and handbooks aplenty for that purpose; but, finally, there is nothing to replace that firsthand contact: an evening spent over your friend's photographs of the Canadian Rockies is a pale and paltry substitute for the Canadian Rockies. To take but one example: St. Paul's lurid description of the tragic degeneracy of the pagan world in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans might seem the grotesque exaggeration of the fanatic to one reared among the surface decencies of the twentieth century. The realization that these words record cold and sober fact comes strongest to the man who knows pagan morals and mores from Archilochus downward through Old Comedy, the Amatory Epigrams of the Greek Anthology, the Romans Catullus, Horace, Martial, and Juvenal. This presupposes, of course, that he reads them in an unexpurgated and not-too-carefully-selected form. This can be done at the Senior College age level; the student can meet the ancient world as it was, the world into which St. Paul and St. John preached repentance and faith. Even a little firsthand knowledge of the life, intellectual, religious, and moral, of a Greek city will enable the student to see the problems of a church like that of Corinth with open eyes and to read the Corinthian Letters with quickened sympathies; and even a brief excursion into Greek philosophy, with its dualistic depreciation of the world of matter and sense, will enable him to see what demands belief in the resurrection of the body made upon the Greek mind. As was said before: short cuts are possible here, but it is very questionable whether they are even advisable. Certainly they are not the ideal.

The third argument for the place of classics in pre-theological education is, for the Western Church at least, a *practical* one. It concerns points 2 and 3 of the Board's report quoted above: "A wider and a deeper understanding of man in society. . . . The cultivation of

knowledge . . . which will facilitate his competence in bringing together the Word and man." The Church uttering its proclamation in the Western world is addressing itself to a world whose intellectual and cultural axioms have been decisively shaped by the Greeks. A statement as broad as that needs, of course, restrictions and modifications, but the truth that is at the center of it is hardly contestable. Our terminology in almost every intellectual and cultural domain testifies eloquently to its truth. It is not the business of the Church to propagate or even to defend this Hellenic culture, in fact, at many points, and at decisive points, the Church must oppose it. But in any case, at all points the Church has to deal with it, and it is impossible to deal with an unknown. You may fear it or ignore it, but you can do nothing about it so long as it remains unknown. The classics, then, can render theology a very real service in that they embody, in a simple, yet profound form, in a first and yet classic expression, those ideas and axioms which are the bases for all Western humanistic culture. They can never be, and should not be, a substitute for a study of the culture of the modern world in which the Church is at work, but they are still the best approach to it.

These are the three basic reasons for giving the classics broad room in our pre-theological curriculum. The advent of the Senior College will enable us to do them justice at last. But there is another which deserves at least a word. The Church has no weapon but words, and while it is true that no human rhetoric will enhance the power of the Gospel, it is also true that words addressed to the Western world must become "Western" in the full sense in order by all means to win some. And among the skilled and subtle users of words that have caught the Western world's ear the Greeks and Romans occupy a place of unique pre-eminence. The history of centuries of English literature testifies to the assiduity with which English men of letters have learned of them; and surely no one has known and experienced all that language is capable of until he has known by firsthand contact the austere and subtle literary craft of the classic poets. Many a man has shed a morbidly romantic desire for originality by violence and has acquired a respect for the tradition and discipline of literary craftsmanship by contact with them. For the Church these serene masters of the low relief are, or can be, a much-needed antidote, not to the plastic and vivid boldness which is the Church's Hebraic heritage and will always be needed to give utterance to the still-startling paradox of a holy God's grace to an unholy world, but to the efflorescent sentimentality whose weakly shouts hang so limply and so sweetly over the edges of so many of our pulpits.

MARTIN FRANZMANN