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THE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE, Their Form and Content.
(Presidential Address)

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HEBREW POETIC STRUCTURE AS A TRANSLATION
GUIDE

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NEW LIGHT ON THE PARABLES ?

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The Prayers of the Bible: Their Form and Content

The main concern in this paper is naturally with the Book of Psalms; I am a teacher of the Old Testament. If the Word of God is contained in the Law and the Prophets (in the Law for the Jew, in the Prophets for the Christian), and if the Psalms are devout men's response to the holy, friendly Presence, then my inquiry is for the relation of the Psalms to Hebrew history and theology; *lex credendi lex orandi*. And before I am done I shall have a little to say about the New Testament.

I. FORM

The most significant work on the Psalter in the last generation was done by Hermann Gunkel and some of his disciples. Though much of it is well known, I hope you will allow me to recall a few points from his discussions.

(1) The vast body of Psalmody outside the 150 pieces in our book—psalms scattered through the historical and prophetic books, psalms in the Apocrypha and the New Testament, the so-called Psalms of Solomon, psalms in the Wisdom literature, and prayers of the ancient Jewish liturgy, besides hundreds of Babylonian, Assyrian, and Egyptian psalms. The study of this body of praise and prayer has helped us greatly to an understanding of the Psalter.

(2) The likelihood that Hebrew psalmody was rooted in the Hebrew cultus. The cultus consisted of actions; the actions were commonly accompanied by words which declared their meaning or added to their efficacy.

(Read Dt. 26:1-11)¹

Thus words of prayer (in poetic or rhythmical form) had in the cultus what Gunkel calls their *Sitz im Leben*. These cultus-songs acquired a well-defined structure, and idiom of thought, which they retained for a thousand years. As time went on they outgrew at many points the limitations of the cultus, but they never quite lost the marks of their cultural origin.

(3) Gunkel's four primary categories are:

- (a) The people's hymn, or song of praise,
- (b) The people's cry of distress,
- (c) The individual's cry of distress, and
- (d) The individual's song of thanksgiving.

Some of these gave rise to daughter-categories which attained independent form; and there are some little groups that may have had a different origin. But the four primary categories take us a long way.

1.—To save space, Biblical passages referred to are not printed in full.

(4) The normal beginning of the *people's hymn* is a verb in the 2nd person imperative plural: "Praise ye", "Give thanks", "Sing ye", etc. The object of the verb is always God: The gem-cell of such a psalm is Hallelujah ("Praise ye the Lord). The body of the psalm enumerates the reasons for which God is to be praised. Almost invariably it is for something he has done; and his great and praiseworthy deeds belong to one or other of two spheres, nature and history. If the psalmist is moved to sing of the world of nature it is of the doings of the great Creator and Orderer of the world that he sings; if he is moved by God's doings in history, he sings of the marvellous events of the Exodus. Two chapters, Genesis 1 and Exodus 14, echo and re-echo through the halls of Hebrew hymnody.

(Read Psalm 136:1-22)

It is the people's hymn that shows us what the cultus meant at its best—when men gathered from far and near to the festivals. At these times men felt in highest degree how strong and glorious, how gracious a God Jehovah was. They were lifted up with gratitude and joy; they were humbled with a great awe. Enthusiasm and reverence, praise and humble gladness were the dominant notes. At such times petitions were rare; piety was disinterested. In these songs of praise there is a magnificent objectivity; even the *terrible* aspects of a pure theism are cherished.

(5) The *people's cry of distress* belongs to a day of calamity, drought, famine, pestilence, locusts, invasion. Men humbled themselves and fasted; young and old gathered at the sanctuary, offered sacrifice, rent their garments, wailed, blew the trumpet, as if to storm heaven and move God to intervene (Joel). The people's cry opens with a vocative: "O Lord", "O God", etc.; setting a "thou" clearly over against a "we". The appeal to "thou" is repeated again and again through to the end. On the other hand it is "we" who tell the distress, often in great detail, who cry for deliverance, and all the while "we" bring considerations to his notice that should move him to action.

(Read Psalm 79:1-13)

A heavy calamity has befallen Jerusalem: despoiled by an enemy, her people massacred, her shrine desecrated. Surely Jehovah cannot be insensible to insult: it is *lèse-majesté*. "We are brought very low"; surely he will have pity. So faith reaches through calamity to salvation: "So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever" (13).

(6) The *individual's cry of distress* would also be originally the accompaniment of a sacrifice, by words and deeds together imploring divine help. It was sickness more than anything else that sent up the shrill cry to God. As in the previous category God is called on at the beginning, and repeatedly throughout the Psalm. The body of the psalm is likely to be a narrative and description of the sickness, but the language used is so vague that

in no case can a particular disease be indentified; the language rather takes on a pictorial quality and we hear the details of the sick man's going down to Sheol.

(Read Psalm 88)

(7) The *individual's song of thanksgiving* grows out of *deliverance* from sickness, danger, or persecutors. The grateful man comes to the sanctuary with his friends, recounts the story of God's goodness, and presents his offering. Both offering and song bear one name, *Tôdah*.

(Read Psalm 66:13-16 or 116:12-14)

II CONTENT

So far Gunkel, who deals with both the form and the matter. I will confine myself from now on to the matter, and indeed to one part of the matter only (though it is a great part), namely, those events in Israel's history that find a place in Israel's prayer and praise. Christian hymnody confines itself to one set of events, those recorded in the Gospels and the beginning of Acts; you will hardly find a modern hymn that refers to anything that has happened in the last 1900 years. But Hebrew hymnody took account of at least three sets of events:

- (1) The Exodus,
- (2) The Kingdom of David,
- (3) The Exile and the Restoration.

If I were adding a fourth it would be the story of Creation, for what Israel had to say about Creation is drawn into the orbit of her history; for her, creation was not of scientific interest. But further, history was for Israel a theology, a theology of deeds, not a theology of speculation about nature and man and God, but essentially the story of the Lord's mighty deeds. Genesis 1 was not science; it was theology. The other three, which are history in the more obvious sense, we shall take in order.

1. THE EXODUS

The deliverance from Egypt was basic in Israel's life. "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage". No other single event is mentioned so often in the Old Testament. Amos thinks that if Israel had understood what the event signified she could never have erred as she did. Prophet after prophet recalls his people to its meaning. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were appalled at the contrast: what Jehovah did, what his people have done. And when the Old Testament took on its present form four large books had a place there, devoted entirely to the era of Moses (five, if you include Joshua; the one series of events extends so far). There is nothing else to match this in the Old Testament. And central among the events of the era of Moses was a great act of deliverance, or salvation. Judaism, like Christianity, is based on an act of God, an act of salvation.

This act was at the heart of Israel's faith from Moses on. For example, it took over an alien cultus and gave it an Israelitish meaning. One by one the agricultural festivals were associated with moments of the deliverance; that is, they took on a theological meaning. Why celebrate "First-fruits"? Because it was their 4th of July (falling in with Passover). Why celebrate "Weeks"? It was in memory of the law-giving on Sinai, they learned to say in late times. Why "Sukkoth"? It was "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 23:43).

We need not be surprised then at the great place the deliverance from Egypt, and indeed the whole sequence of events, holds in Israel's prayers. Sometimes the story is rehearsed at length in *praise* of the great Deliverer (105, 135, 136); sometimes it is rehearsed in *confession*, people getting a fresh look at their age-old apostasy as they review the faithfulness of God (106); sometimes it is rehearsed in the spirit and idiom of Deuteronomy (i.e. of prophecy), that the young may know what their heritage is and may know the good way to walk in it (78). Or a poet takes a few great moments and exults in them; the 15th chapter of Exodus is such a psalm.

(Read Ex. 15:1-10)

Israel's escape at the Red Sea is one unforgettable moment; the other moment seized on by our poet is the panic of the Canaanites when Israel draws near, the heavenly Warrior leading on his hosts.

(Read vv. 14-16)

The two moments are joined together in the grand style.

(Read vv. 11-13a, b)

In both God is straining forward to settle his people in the land of his ancient promise.

(Read vv. 13c, 17)

The tumult and the strain are over; he and they have peace.

(Read v. 18)

This deliverance is the theme of many psalms (114, 81, etc.)

But we may be surprised at facts like these: that when an Israelite brings an offering from the field to the sanctuary he should not talk of the God of nature, as we are likely to do at Thanksgiving time, but should recite the old story of salvation (Dt. 26:1-11); that the prayers of Ezra (c. 9), of Nehemiah (c. 9), of Daniel (c. 9), arising from so many different situations, should all go over the same story; that Achior's warning of Holophernes, (Judith 5) and Wisdom's instruction of her learners (Wisdom 17-19), should also rehearse the same story; that when Stephen preaches (Acts 7) to the length of some 53 verses it is only at v. 45 that he can move on from the Mosaic events; and that when St. Paul preaches at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13) he begins with the same story. Why? Is it not because that old story of Israel's

salvation was pivotal in their theological thinking, and therefore in their praying to, and their praise of, the Great God their Saviour? *Lex credendi lex orandi.*

In whatever situations they found themselves men could turn to those great acts, and see the face of their Redeemer-God; and as they looked the situations were profoundly changed. The miracle of God's deliverance is not wrought in you while you remain wrapped up in your own situation and can talk of nothing else, but when you look away, when you look upon him mightily at work in a supreme act of deliverance. So it is for the Jew; so it is for the Christian. That is why Mass is celebrated at a funeral.

2. THE KINGDOM OF DAVID

The era of David was, in significance for Hebrew thought, second only to the era of Moses. If four (or five) books are devoted to one something like two are devoted to the other (or three, if you take Saul and Solomon with David). The Kingdom of David was the culmination towards which the history of the tribes was from Joshua's time moving on; it was the realization at last of God's purpose in bringing them into Palestine. And personally David made such an impression on his contemporaries that more admiring stories are told of him than of any one else in the Old Testament. In days of disintegration and defeat men looked upon David's as an ideal age; God had once given Israel a glimpse of his own Kingdom and his long purpose. A great hope anchored itself in David and David's house. (2 Sam. 7:1-16); it is just possible that the courtliness of poets and the strong faith of prophets began to make out the shape of the hope while David was still alive. In any case the Davidic dynasty at Jerusalem saw nine dynasties rise and fall in the north; and when Samaria ceased to be, Jerusalem and David's house continued. Then came world-shaking events; Jerusalem and the dynasty were brought low. But even when the enemy did his worst prophetic men held on to the great hope. They saw Jerusalem restored and David's house secure when the Lord should at last have completed his strange doings with the heathen nations and with Israel (Jer. 23:5, 6; Ezek. 34; Am. 9:11-15; Mic. 5:1-9; Isa. 9:2-7; 11:1-9; 32:1-8. When the Lord had completed his doings with all the people there would be a world and a kingdom where his "righteousness" and his "peace" stood fast for ever.

As a kingdom of David, an idealized kingdom of "righteousness" and "peace", was part of Jewish theology so Jewish devotion constantly turned to these ideas. In a time of great distress Psalm 89 presses for the fulfilment of the promise made to David (2 Sam. 7). "How long, O Lord? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? How long shall thy wrath burn like fire? Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy faithfulness?" vv. 46, 49). In quieter days another psalmist (132) lives more than half in the new age.

(Read Psalm 132:13-18)

The 72nd psalm fuses the hope completely with the prophetic ideas of "righteousness" and "peace"; and Psalm 2 gives it a setting in the invincible purpose of the King of kings. Phases of it appear with an actual king in the foreground in Psalms 20, 21, 45. But the essence of the hope remains even when David has completely faded out of the picture (47, 93, 95-100); nothing can be wanting when Jehovah himself is King. It was David who sat for the seer's portrait of the golden age; in the course of time David might be forgotten, but faith continued to claim her kingdom.

3. THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION

The third set of events that have a place in Jewish theology and Jewish devotion are those of the 6th century and after. The house of David had collapsed and Jerusalem and the temple were in ruins. It was a desolating experience. "Is it nothing to you, O ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is brought upon me?" But there were those who stood amid the ruins and raised their voice in hope, defying the facts, men like Jeremiah and Ezekiel to whose eyes it was revealed and in whose hearts God set the conviction that his ways did not end in Babylon and exile but led round at last to Jerusalem and home.

But not yet. The road of chastisement was a long road; one might say seventy years, another forty. In any case it was long enough for most exiles to lose faith in Jehovah's power, or at least in his good-will. Deutero-Isaiah's soaring confidence in the restoration to Zion, in the restoration of Zion, can scarcely lift them out of their unwillingness.

(Read Isaiah 55: 1-3)

But some were raised; and there was a partial restoration. Probably it came about little by little, smaller or larger companies coming back all through the two centuries of Persian domination.

In any case both exile and restoration found a permanent place in Jewish prayer. Psalm 137 shows how one Jew looked back on exile; where else do you find such fierce desire for Jerusalem and home?

(Read Psalm 137: 5, 6)

The thrill of their home-coming is dear to us all in Psalm 126; "We were like unto them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing". "Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad" (vv.2,3). And men prayed sore for the long-awaited rehabilitation of Zion (85, 80, perhaps 102). The joy of achievement rings out in Psalm 147 (and perhaps 65). A whole series of pilgrim psalms tells us of the exhilaration of even a single visit to the home-city, the city of David, the city of glorious memory, the city of their hope, the city of their God.

(Read Psalm 84:1-4)

"Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, The city of the great King" (48:2).

(Read Psalm 48:12-14a)

"Our feet have stood within thy gates, O Jerusalem".

(Read Psalm 122:6-9)

Jerusalem became the centre of all loyalties, the mother-city of all Jewry (Psalm 87), "The Lord will count, when he writeth up the peoples, This one was born there". It was a citizenship in heaven.

Jerusalem had become the home of the Jewish soul. But not just the city that stands there some 2600 feet above the Great Sea; eyes were already being lifted up to the other Jerusalem, "the Jerusalem that is above," "a heavenly Jerusalem". a "new Jerusalem." The desolation of those centuries taught men they were made for God, and could be satisfied with none of God's creatures. Not an earthly city, but God himself, was the home of man's soul. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:23, 26).

Josiah Royce once said, "Great ideas have long sorrows". I have watched Jews at the Wailing Wall on a Friday afternoon, towards sunset, men and women, mostly old, leaning against the stones and weeping, uttering words of dejection through their tears:

"For the city that lieth desolate

We sit in solitude and mourn;

For the glory that is departed

We sit in solitude and mourn." And much more.

There the Jew pours out the sorrows of many generations; and lo, the poison is drawn out of his own. It is an act of faith and an act of healing. The Christian, too, at the foot of the Cross, knows how the ills of life yield to this homoeopathic therapy.

I have been concerned to indicate some ways that lead to a better understanding of many psalms. If some outsider were to wave me aside with the charge that what I have been saying is merely devotional and theological, I should have to accept his words: "What you say is right, but what you imply is wrong, for to understand the psalms theologically and devotionally is to understand them."

III THE NEW TESTAMENT

Christianity, like Judaism, is founded on a great redeeming act. And even more than the Old Testament, the New Testament was shaped by the worship which celebrated that redemption. The temple, and still more the synagogue, had no small part in moulding much of the Old Testament to its present form. But in a true sense the whole New Testament was moulded in worship—the Gospel matter in the preaching, the Epistles in the preaching and the praying. If you are looking for the beginnings of liturgy in the New Testament it is trivial to gather up Apostolic references

to "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs", the benedictions of the Epistles and Revelation, the hymns in the third Gospel. You should begin rather with the noble Blessings (Berakôth) with which Apostles open their letters, and see if you can tell (say, in Ephesians or Colossians) when Blessing (Berakah) ends and exposition begins. You should ask yourself how an Epistle differs from a first-century act of worship. You should consider the Gospels and Revelation as liturgical matter from the beginning. And you may come to think that whether a man were speaking to Christians, or writing to Christians, or praying to the Christian God, the matter of his thought was much the same. I close therefore with the suggestion that as I have been discussing the matter of Jewish prayer in the psalms, we Christians may well treasure the New Testament as the Church's primary book of prayer as well as of theology. *Les credendi lex orandi; lex orandi lex credendi*: both are true.

RICHARD DAVIDSON.

Hebrew Poetic Structure as a Translation Guide

The task of the Old Testament translator is by no means an easy one.¹ There are a thousand and one things that he has to keep in mind as he translates and one of these is the poetic structure of the original Hebrew. It is the purpose of this paper to show from a few illustrations that more careful regard for the poetic structure of a passage will often lead to a translation quite different from the accepted one.

We take as our first illustration Mic. 7:18. In the best of the standard translations, the only one that sets the verse up as poetry, that of the Jewish Publication Society of America, the verse reads as follows:

Whó is a Gód like unto Théé, that pardonéth the iniquity,
And passeth by the transgressión of the remnánt of His herítage?
He retainéth not His angér for évér,
Because Hé delightéth in mercý.²

This is the way the verse is set up in the original Hebrew and the way in which the Massorettes read it, but it is wrong nevertheless. It is prose and not poetry. The most characteristic feature of Hebrew poetry, parallelism, is lacking, and there are too many feet in the first two stichoi (lines in the English translation) and too few feet in the second two. In the effort to correct this situation scholars have been accustomed to delete everything after "transgression" as secondary and to read the first stichos with three beats,³ to make the meter 3:2 (the qinah meter), which is universally regarded as the meter characterizing the chapter. This is drastic treatment and as unwarranted as it is unnecessary. To correct the situation all we have to do is to recognize three facts: (1) that the 3:2 meter can have 2:3 as a variant,⁴ (2) that a line in Hebrew poetry can have an additional stichos, either prefixed or appended to the usual two, to make a tristich instead of a distich⁵ and (3)

1. For some of these difficulties see the present writer, "Translation Difficulties in the Old Testament," *Religion in Life*, III, 491-506; "Lapses of Old Testament Translators," *JAOS*, LVIII, 122-129.

2. Since this article has to be written without the use of Hebrew type, I have attempted to indicate by accents on the English words where the stresses come in the original.

3. See, e.g., Smith, *Micah (ICC)*, p. 155; Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch*, p. 203; Nowack, *Die kleine Propheten*, p. 238.

4. See the present writer, "The Structure of Hebrew Poetry," *Journal of Religion*, IX, 545 f.

5. See the present writer, *op. cit.*, pp. 533 f., 544, 546 ff.; Torrey, *Second Isaiah*, pp. 154 f., 158 f. Torrey's conclusions were arrived at quite independently of others because he shows himself unaware of the same conclusions by others; see pp. 155, 158.

that the preposition *lamedh* before "the remnant of his heritage" is not to be translated "of" or "for," as it is universally, but "against," expressing the dative of disadvantage. Accordingly, the correct translation should run as follows:

Whó is gód like thée,
 forgíving iniquity,
 and passing ovér transgressión?
Against the remnánt of his heritáge,
 he will not hólđ his angér forevér,
 because hé delíghts in kindnéss.⁶

Here we have two tristichs, 3:2:2 and 2:3:3, in the qinah meter, with its characteristic echoing rhythm,⁷ and nothing has been added or deleted, but we have shifted the *athnah* pause, which the Massoretes placed under "his heritage," to "transgression," where it rightfully belongs. It is a slight change, but most effective in its result.

Our second illustration is Lam. 2:17^{ab}. Following the standard versions, I previously translated the passage as follows:⁸

Yahwéh has dóné what he plánned;
 he has carríed out his wórd,
Which he decréed long agó;
 he has devastáted without mercý.

But this is clearly wrong; it makes the passage prose and not poetry. Like everyone else I failed to recognize the character of the first clause in the second distich. It is not a relative clause at all, but a clause in the accusative of specification, and hence should be translated literally "in the matter of that which he decreed long ago," or in better English, "as he decreed long ago."⁹ When this is recognized, the resultant translation is perfect poetry, in the qinah (3:2) rhythm, with climactic or ascending parallelism:¹⁰

Yahwéh has dóné what he plánned,
 he has carríed out his wórd;
Ás he decréed long agó,
 he has devastáted without mercý.

6. In order to indicate the metrical structure of the original I have indented the second stichos of each line, and likewise the third, when there is one. In the case of the 3:2 meter the stichos has been deeply indented and begins with a small letter, thus differentiating between this meter and the 3:3, where the stichos is slightly indented and begins with a capital letter.

7. On this see Gray, *Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, pp. 131 ff.; *Isaiah (ICC)*, pp. lxiii ff.; the present writer, *op. cit.*, p. 534.

8. *The Bible: An American Translation* (1935 edition), p. 756.

9. Rather strikingly Lam. 2:17 contains two other clauses in the accusative; "what he planned," in the accusative as the object of the verb "has done," and "without mercy" (literally, "and he did not show mercy"), in the adverbial accusative, expressing the manner in which the action of the preceding verb "he has devastated" was carried out. For this kind of clause in Hebrew see the present writer, "The Coordinate Adverbial Clause in Hebrew," *JAOS*, XLIX, 156 ff.; *AJSL*, XLVII, 51 ff.

10. On this see the present writer, *Journal of Religion*, IX, 531.

Another passage where the usual translation makes prose out of what is poetry in the original, is Ps. 90:1:

O Lórd, thóu has béen our dwelling-pláce
 Throughóut the agés.

Not only does this translation fail to bring out the parallelism in the original, but it makes the meter quite wrong, 4:2, when it ought to be 3:3. To correct both of these defects requires nothing more than a simple adjustment in translation:

O Lórd, thou árt a dwelling-pláce
 Thou hast been oúrs throughóut the agés.

Another passage in this same Psalm 90, that has been universally mistranslated, is verses 9 f.:

For áll our dáys are pássed in thy wráth;
We bring our yeárs to an énd like a sígh.
The dáys of our yeárs are séventy yeárs,
Or by reason of stréngth éíghty yeárs.

The objection here is that the meter is 4:3, which is not only a very questionable meter, but it is completely out of accord with the dominant meter of the Psalm, which is 3:3, as everyone has recognized. In order to get the proper meter all we have to do is to disregard the incorrect Massoretic punctuation and divide the stichoi differently, to get the following translation (including verse 11):

For áll our dáys do declíne,¹¹
 In thy wráth we bring our yeárs to an énd,
 Like a sígh are the dáys of our yeárs.
In thém are séventy yeárs,
 Or by reason of stréngth éíghty yeárs,
But their extént is traváil and tróuble,
 For it is quáckly góne and we fly awáy.

Here we have one tristich (3:3:3) and two distichs (3:3), all in the regular meter of the Psalm, while the parallelism is improved and the translation in every respect is much truer to the original Hebrew.

A few illustrations may now be given where proper attention to the poetic structure of the original Hebrew will indicate some rearrangement of words or slight emendation. In Lam. 1:21, for example, the stichoi are arranged in our present text in the following manner:

11. This translation is much to be preferred to "are passed." The verb means literally "to turn," and has reference here to the decline of later life; cf. Jer. 6:4.

They heár how I móan,
 with nóne to comfort mé;
 All my enemíes have heárd of my plíght,
 they rejoíce that thóu hast dóne it;
 How thou hast bróught the day which thou didst annóunce,
 but they áre like mé.

It is apparent at once that there must be some disarrangement in the stichoi here, because the sense is not good and the meter is quite irregular (3:2, 3:3, 2:2). To make the meter regular all we have to do is to transpose the second stichos of the second line and the first stichos of the third line, with the result that we get not only a perfect meter agreeing with the rest of the chapter (3:2, 3:2, 3:2), but a greatly improved sense and parallelism:

They heár how I móan,
 with nóne to comfort mé;
 All my enemíes have heárd of my plíght,
 how thou hast bróught the day which thou didst
 annóunce;
 They rejoíce that thóu hast dóne it,
 but they áre like mé.

Another example of disarrangement is Jer. 2:14 f. The text as it has come down to us traditionally reads as follows:

Is Isráel a sláve,
 or is hé a home-bórn sérf?
 why has he becóme a préy?
 Against hím the young líons roáred,
 they gave vént to their cry;
 And then túrned his lánd into a desolátion;
 his citíes are laid wáste,
 withóut inhabitánt.

The difficulty here is that the passage is arranged in an irregular number of lines, three lines, with an irregular number of stichoi and an irregular meter, viz., 2:3:3, 3:2, 3:2:2. All we have to do to make everything regular is to take the second stichos from the third line, add it to the third stichos of the first line, and thus make an additional line in the regular meter, 3:2. This also greatly improves the sense and parallelism, as follows:

Is Isráel a sláve,
 or is hé a home-bórn sérf?
 Why has he becóme a préy,
 his citíes laid wáste?
 Against hím the young líons roáred,
 they gave vént to their cry;
 And then túrned his lánd into a desolátion,
 withóut inhabitánt.

An example of a difficult passage where proper regard for the poetic structure of the Hebrew suggests a few slight changes with most important results is Ps. 74:5 f. As the text now stands, the passage seems to make no sense at all. The best translation is that in the Jewish version:

It séemed as when men wíeld upwárds,
 Axés in a thicket of trées.
 And nów all the carved wórk thereof togéther
 They strike dówn with hatchét and hammérs.

This translation, even though it is the best that has been proposed, is far from happy. It is prose, not poetry, without the faintest suggestion of parallelism; several of the renderings are most questionable, particularly "it seemed as when men wield," which cannot be right; and the sense of the passage is anything but clear.

Now let us see what we can do with the passage by giving more heed to its poetic structure. Even a casual examination of the original Hebrew shows at once that we have partial chiasm:¹² the first distich begins with a verb, while the second one ends with a verb. This suggests that the two verbs should agree. That immediately indicates that we should read the first verb as plural instead of singular, as it stands. A further examination of this verb shows that it is impossible here, *yiwuada'*, "it is known," so that scholars are clearly right in emending it slightly to *yigda'*, and then pluralizing it, as already noted, to *yigde'û*, "they hew down." The next word in the Hebrew is also suspect. It is a combination of a participle and a preposition that is impossible in Hebrew, although it is found elsewhere in Gen. 38:29; 40:10. All three occurrences, however, are suspect, and in the present instance the Septuagint, Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus, Jerome, and the Syriac all read the noun *mabô'*, "entrance", in place of the participle *mebi'*, and with Jerome we should clearly read the preposition as *b* instead of *k*.¹³ In that case the preposition with the next word will have to be taken as possessive instead of terminative, and the preposition that is found with the following word will have to be transferred to the last word of the verse to bring out the parallelism with the following verse that the poetic structure requires. The result of these very slight changes is an entirely different translation, fitting perfectly into its context in sense and poetic structure:

They hew dówn at the uppér entránce
 The wóoden trellis-wórk with axés;
 And nów its carvings alsó
 With hatchét and adzés they smásh.¹⁴

One last illustration is found in the familiar verses, Ps. 90:4-6,

12. On this see the present writer, *Journal of Religion*, IX, 527, 529; Loud, *AJSL*, XLVI, 104 ff.

13. The letters representing these prepositions are all but identical in Hebrew and are accordingly often confused.

14. Occasionally with the 3:3 meter the parallelism is between the lines (distichs), as it is here, rather than between the stichoi.

usually translated somewhat as follows:

For a thousand yeárs in thy síght
Are bút as yesterdáy when it is pást,
And as a wátch in the níght.
Thou sweepest them awáy, they becóme sléep;
In the morníng they are like gráss that shóots up;
In the morníng it flourishes and shóots up;
In the eveníng it is cut dówn and withérs.

The objections to this translation are that the parallelism is not as good as it might be and the third stichos has only two feet when it ought to have three. An examination of the Hebrew text shows that the two words comprising this stichos ought to go with verse 5, but this immediately makes verse 5 too long. A closer examination of the verse, however, shows that "sleep" and "in the morning" are to be deleted, having got into the text through the common error of vertical dittography. "In the morning" is found in the next line, from which it came to be accidentally repeated, while the Hebrew word for "sleep" is all but identical with that for "years" immediately above it. With these few changes the passage reads as follows:

For a thousand yeárs in thy síght
Are like a dáy,¹⁵ yesterdáy when it was passíng;¹⁶
And like a wátch in the níght thou sweepest them awáy.
They áre like gráss that shóots up,
Flourishíng and shootíng up in the morníng,
Cut dówn and withéred by¹⁷ eveníng.

Besides being a more faithful reproduction of the original, this translation has better parallelism and the meter is in perfect accord with the rest of the Psalm, 3:3, but instead of the usual distichs its lines are tristichs (3:3:3).

It is not often that a translation can be better than the original, as would seem to be the case with Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, but it ought at least to approximate the original. Translators have always a heavy responsibility on their hands, and particularly so in the case of a book so highly esteemed as the Old Testament. To the extent that they fail to discover the poetic structure of the original and reproduce it, to that extent they are unfair and misleading. Our illustrations, chosen hurriedly and at random, have shown that this unfortunately is too often true and our plea is for more care in the matter. Nothing less than the most searching analysis and the most meticulous attention to details can do justice to the original and bring out its full beauty.

THEOPHILE J. MEEK.

15. This translation faithfully reproduces the original, as the ordinary translations do not.

16. This translation reproduces the tense of the original, as the ordinary translations do not.

17. This translation brings out the force of the Hebrew preposition here, as the ordinary translations do not.

New Light on the Parables ?

The establishment of a negative is an ungrateful task and I have been in two minds about submitting to you the rather barren results of my investigation. But if thereby a tribute is paid to the insight and thoroughness of the man who almost made further work on the parables superfluous, that in itself is worth doing. I began the undertaking with hope. Having engaged in no intensive study of the parables for some time and having noted the appearance of several lengthy discussions, it seemed reasonable to suppose that some real progress had been made in our understanding of them. Now after having gone through all the more recent literature accessible to me, I regret to have to report that I have found little, if any, new light on the parables. I congratulate myself that when I submitted the title in advance, I had the caution to put a question mark at the end of it.

This result may be due to my own obtuseness but the fact that after a fairly diligent search such an opinion can be expressed is, I think, a testimonial to the brilliance and definitiveness of the famous work of Adolf Jülicher completed exactly forty years ago. There are not many subjects in the New Testament field in respect of which it could be said that a book published in 1898 is still the standard and indispensable and almost sufficient treatment. Nothing that I have read seems to me to shake Jülicher's main contentions with regard to the parables. It may be, as some say, that he distinguished between parable and allegory in somewhat too rigid a fashion. It is not in itself inconceivable that Jesus employed allegory on occasion. And it is no doubt true that Jülicher's exegesis needs to be corrected here and there in detail. But that the parables were meant originally to illumine Jesus' teaching and were neither intended nor likely to be unintelligible to any one; that they are illustrative comparisons concentrating upon one point and one point only and not allegories in which there is a one-to-one correspondence between the details of the story and the underlying spiritual meanings; that where esoteric explanations are appended, these are the creation of the primitive community; that there is a progressive tendency in the tradition to allegorize the parables and that where allegorical elements occur, they are almost invariably secondary; that the *de facto* obscurity of certain parables is a consequence not of the nature of parables but of our ignorance of the circumstances in which they were spoken: all that seems to me quite certain. I should add that it seems to me equally certain that the so-called parables of growth, whatever their meaning (which is very obscure—perhaps hopelessly so), at least lend no support to a gradualist and evolutionary conception of the coming of the Kingdom. The most useful thing that has been done since Jülicher is the collecting of Jewish illustrative material from rabbinic sources, notably by Fiebig and Billerbeck. As far as a general view of the parables is concerned, Jülicher's conclusions hold the field. The

latest and to my mind by far the best English book on the subject, *The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels*, by B. T. D. Smith, while by no means a slavish reproduction, nevertheless agrees with Jülicher on the main points. It is, if I may say so, an excellent piece of work and a not unworthy substitute for Jülicher for those who cannot read German.

I propose in what follows to leave the general question and discuss the meaning of the particular passage Mark iv. 10-12, a notorious *crux interpretum*, in respect of which certain interesting and novel suggestions have been made. The Revised Version renders it as follows.

And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables. And he said unto them, Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them.

Understanding the *hina* in verse 12 in its regular final sense and taking "parables" to mean what we usually mean by the parables of the Gospels, viz., the illustrative stories of which Mark gives samples in this chapter, the passage appears to mean that Jesus imparts the mystery of the Kingdom esoterically to the believers while to the outsiders teaching is given only in the form of parables, veiled and enigmatic in character, in order that they may not understand and repent. So understood, and it must be admitted that this is the natural reading of the passage as it stands, it is in radical conflict both with the nature of the great bulk of the parables themselves and with any possible view of the purpose of Jesus. There are not many scholars who try to defend its genuineness on these assumptions. Some of the German "positive" theologians like Feine do not scruple to attribute the purpose of a "judicial hardening" to Jesus, saving the morality of such a proceeding by adding that the hardening was only temporary and partial. Feine's view involves also the contention that the parables are mysterious in themselves. In this he is resembled by a good many conservative English expositors who tend to look upon the parable teaching as an automatic sifting process whereby the receptive distinguish themselves from the unreceptive. But these either slur over the difficulty of the *hina* or explain it away as introducing a result clause rather than a clause of purpose. The Roman Catholics, like the "positive" Protestants of whom Feine is typical, seem to me to see more clearly when they frankly recognize that the passage in its Greek form does contain the "hardening" idea. Some of the Catholics maintain that this hardening is actually punitive, the unbelieving Jews being so punished for their previous rejection of Jesus. An exception is Lagrange whose full and acute discussion is a clear exhibition of the straits to which a first-class scholar is reduced when he feels bound to

maintain the authenticity of so unpalatable a saying. Lagrange admits that the passage is placed in a wrong setting by Mark. He admits the final force of *hina* but argues that it is virtually equivalent to *hina plerothe*, the point being that the situation prophetically depicted in Is. vi is now being reproduced. In this connexion he goes so far as to say that in view of the variants in the parallels it is hard to know exactly what Jesus did say. He is well aware that to no class did Jesus teach only in parables and so says that *ta panta (en parabolais ta panta ginetai)* is not to be taken too rigorously. He sees well enough that the parables were originally meant to illuminate rather than to obscure and argues that the obscurity to the outsiders resides not in the parables themselves (Mark he thinks is too much inclined to take the parables as enigmas) but in the mystery of the Kingdom, an obscurity which even the parables, though intended to explain, cannot fully clear up. For that further direct instruction is necessary and there is no reason why in the counsels of God more should not be imparted to some than to others. Moreover this reserve has an ultimately good result because if all had repented at Jesus' preaching there would have been no need for his death and consequently no full salvation! Lagrange seems to me distinctly unhappy about the whole passage and he does not hesitate to say that Mark has arranged things awkwardly (Matthew does better), and that his presentation here is incomplete and needs to be supplemented by that of the Fourth Gospel.

All this is pretty desperate. It seems infinitely preferable to say that if *parabole* means here what it means elsewhere in the chapter and if *hina* means what it ought to mean, the saying simply cannot be genuine. The question then becomes, how could Mark have come to propound so extraordinary a theory? The answer given is that Mark, like Paul, was concerned to explain how the majority of the Jews rejected Jesus, and that he fell back on the familiar Old Testament notion of a predestined judicial hardening. The unbelieving Jews did not understand because they were not meant to, and the parables were the means by which this was effected. They were dark utterances, the words of which were heard but the inner meaning unperceived. This misunderstanding was facilitated by the fact that in Mark's day some of the parables, through detachment from their original setting, had become *de facto* obscure. So, with only the most minor modifications, Jülicher, Loisy, Weiss, Bousset, Bacon, Klostermann, Bultmann, Rawlinson, Branscomb, Dodd, Smith—an impressive array.

This view, it is true, is not altogether free from difficulty. Lagrange's objection that the early Christians were not inclined to find excuses for Jewish unbelief is not very weighty since in the Bible a predestinationist doctrine is never taken to absolve men from responsibility for their actions. But it may be questioned whether a view which regards the parables as uttered with the deliberate intention of withholding knowledge from the majority of hearers is not too absurd to be credited to any one. On this point I

feel very undecided. It is hardly more difficult than the language used in the Old Testament when God is said to have deliberately hardened Pharaoh's heart, and it is fairly clear from Romans ix-xi that the difficulty would not have seemed so great to a first century Jewish-Christian as it does to us. On the whole it seems to me not impossible that Mark should have arrived at such a theory and I am inclined to feel that the verdict of the majority of critics (Jülicher et al.) is right, so far as the interpretation of Mark's meaning is concerned.

This however does not exclude the possibility that behind Mark's Greek lies an Aramaic saying which is free from the objections hitherto urged and which may therefore be a genuine saying of the Lord's. It should be unnecessary to remark that when once the delicate task of reconstructing a supposed Aramaic original is begun, at the best no more can be achieved than a plausible possibility. One attempted solution along this line is Manson's. He argues (and Torrey agrees on the linguistic point) that Mark's *hina* is a mistranslation of the Aramaic particle *di* which can have either final or relative force, and that in the saying of Jesus it introduced a relative clause: "unto them that are without all things are done in parables, who seeing see, and do not perceive etc." This gets rid of one major difficulty. The other, so far as I can see, remains. For Manson still insists that the parables have this curious property of being transparent to some and opaque to others. No doubt, as he points out, the parables contain an appeal to the conscience and are not merely illustrations of intellectual propositions, and no doubt the moral response of the hearers varied infinitely. But this seems beside the point, for surely it is not correct to say that a man does not understand because he is unresponsive in the matter of conduct. I cannot see how any one could have been so stupid as to fail to see the point of such stories as the Lost Sheep, the Two Debtors, the parables about prayer, and numerous others, no matter how little he proceeded to live up to the implied moral imperative. Manson's view leaves the parables enveloped in a cloud of mystery which simply does not suit the majority of the parables which we find in the Gospels.

Still another solution, to my mind more attractive, is offered by Otto, whose treatment has at least the merit of grappling with both of the two main difficulties of the passage. In the first place he points out that the Hebrew word *mashal* which lies behind *parabole* has also the meaning "riddle". This was the meaning in Jesus' saying. (So also Schniewind). The key to the understanding of Mark iv. 10-12 is its complete separation from the context in which it stands and from the parables as usually understood. This passage has nothing to do with such things as the Prodigal Son, the Talents etc. The mystery of the Kingdom is the fact that it has already come and this an absolute enigma to all except the handful of believers who recognize that with the coming of Jesus the Messiah the powers of the New Age have already broken through into this world-order. They are in the secret, the others are outside. To the

outsiders everything becomes in fact a series of riddles *because* they do not understand the central mystery. And here is Otto's contribution to the *hina* difficulty. The Aramaic had a causal clause, a suggestion strongly supported by Matthew who replaces Mark's *hina* with a *hoti*. On this point Lohmeyer in his recent commentary agrees. Of course the acceptability of Otto's argument depends upon the measure of one's agreement with his main contention as to the "realized eschatology". I feel quite clear myself that he has made out his case and that we must recognize that Jesus taught that in a sense the Kingdom has already arrived. This does not necessitate going further (as Dodd does) and virtually denying that its coming is also future. The visible manifestation of the Kingdom, the coming of the Kingdom *with power* is still future. At the time of the ministry its workings were hidden and secret. That is the mystery of the Kingdom, and those who did not grasp that the Kingdom had come were bound to find everything Jesus said or did a complete puzzle.

That Mark so understood the passage I can hardly bring myself to believe. The fact that he inserted it in the middle of his parable chapter between the story of the Sower and its explanation is strong evidence that he thought he was dealing with the purpose of the parables. But the very artificial way it is inserted allows us to suppose that its original bearing was quite different. It is also rather easier to suppose that Mark misunderstood and misapplied an actual saying that had come down to him than that he manufactured it himself. And since the alleged original saying, as understood by Otto, could quite well have been spoken by Jesus and it is easy to see how the misunderstanding would arise, I conclude that Otto's view, while falling short of absolute demonstration, deserves the most sympathetic and serious consideration.

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