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PSALMS AND THE LIFE OF FAITH: A SUGGESTED TYPOLOGY OF FUNCTION

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This paper addresses the question: What has been the function and intention of the Psalms as they were shaped, transmitted and repeatedly used /1/? What was the purpose of "doing them," albeit in highly stylized fashion? What was being done when the Psalms were done? Such a way of putting the question moves in a somewhat constructive direction, in contrast to the more analytic questions of form and setting. To ask about the function means to move away from direct textual evidence and to engage in some tentative reconstructions. Our consideration of function must of course be based on the best judgments we have about form and Sitz im Leben /2/. The present discussion assumes and fully values both the methods and the gains of form critical study. In no way does it propose a criticism nor a displacement of form critical work. Rather, it explores the possibility of a move beyond form criticism that necessarily is concerned with hermeneutical issues.

The main questions and conclusions about form in relation to the Psalms have largely been laid down by Gunkel. As the reviews of Clements /3/ and Gerstenberger /4/ make clear, we have not moved very far from Gunkel's five-fold classification even though there is still room for refinement, especially with reference to those that do not fall in Gunkel's major categories /5/. Westermann /6/ has attempted some consolidation of Gunkel's classification, and we will have more to say about his way of putting the matter.

Questions of Sitz im Leben for the Psalms are much more unsettled /7/. Concerning the hymns, there has been some uneasiness with the festival hypothesis of Mowinckel, perhaps because it has been judged too comprehensive, explaining too much in too singular a way /8/. On the other hand, Westermann has largely dissolved the question of Sitz im Leben, so that it is meaningless. Thus he says of the hymn, "The life setting is the experience of God's intervention in history," /9/ a judgment that has no interest in the sociology or social function of the hymn. So we are still left mainly with the festival hypothesis concerning the hymn in one of its variant forms /10/.

Concerning the Sitz im Leben of the lament, and especially the individual lament, the judgment of Hans Schmidt, /11/ made already in

1928, has led to a major strand of interpretation which sets the lament in the temple, in a juridical context of the innocently accused who seek vindication and plead for acquittal. Schmidt's general understanding has been refined by Beyerlin /12/ and Delekat, /13/ but not greatly advanced. An alternative hypothesis by Gerstenberger /14/ breaks the linkage with the temple and with the juridical frame. He proposes that we have in the individual lament reflections of a domestic ritual of rehabilitation conducted by the legitimate and recognized, though lay, leaders in the community. They deal with those whose lives, for whatever reason, have disintegrated. Gerstenberger removes the ritual and the Psalms from the temple and thinks they may have been used in the home. On the question of Sitz im Leben (and derivatively of function), Gerstenberger is more helpful than Westermann, for even with his acute analysis of form and structure, Westermann is not in fact interested in the institutional setting. By contrast, Gerstenberger suggests a cogent sociological situation /15/.

I

While form critical work, especially with reference to setting is not dormant, we may regard the present consensus as fairly stable. It is in any case firm enough to provide a basis from which to consider the future question of function. One can of course answer the question of function, that the function was to lament and praise. But in addition to being simply tautology, such an answer stays in the realm of religion, where interpretation has stayed too long. However, to ask about function permits us to approach the matter from other, more pragmatic perspectives. We may consider the issue of the social usefulness of the Psalms which impact the character and quality of social existence. Two purposes may be served by asking the question this way. First, it may advance our understanding of Israel's intention in transmitting the Psalms. Second, it may help contemporary users to know more clearly what resources are available in the use of the Psalms and what may be "done" in this "doing" of them. I suggest a convergence of a contemporary pastoral agenda, together with a more historical exegetical interest.

Thus the question of function is put as a hermeneutical issue. The question concerns both the use in ancient Israel which admits of some scholarly analysis of the Psalms and contemporary religious use of the Psalms by practitioners of faith /16/. The hold that the Psalms have on the contemporary practice of faith and piety is a legitimate part of our concern. That hold is evident liturgically, with regular and sustained use of the Psalms in the daily office, generation after generation. It is evident devotionally in those free church traditions which are not so keen on liturgic use but which nurture persons in their own prayer life to

draw guidance and strength from the Psalms. And thirdly, contemporary use is evident pastorally, for many pastors find in the Psalms the most remarkable and reliable resources for many situations, for which the hospital call is paradigmatic. Thus liturgical, devotional and pastoral uses are dimensions of the contemporary function of the Psalms.

In this discussion, we hazard the provisional presupposition that modern use of the Psalms and ancient use shared a common intent and function even though other matters such as setting and institution may be different /17/. We may anticipate a commonality of function even when other matters diverge. That commonality, I suggest, is probable because the Psalms (and especially the most poignant of them) present human persons in situations of regression, when they are most vulnerable in hurt, most ecstatic in naive joy, most sensitized to life, driven to the extremities of life and faith, when all the "covers" of modern rationality or ancient convention have disappeared or become dysfunctional. The hermeneutical possibility of moving back and forth between ancient function and contemporary intentionality exists because the use of the Psalms in every age is for times when the most elemental and raw human issues are in play /18/. The intended function and resilient practice of the Psalms reflect their peculiar capacity to be present to those elemental and raw human issues.

In what follows, I make special appeal to the work of Paul Ricoeur /19/. He has for some time studied the role of language in the life of faith. Out of the juxtaposition of the Psalms and the work of Ricoeur, fresh suggestions come concerning the function of the Psalms. It is the peculiar merit of Ricoeur's work that he is party to none of the current ideological divisions in hermeneutical discussions.

II

Ricoeur understands the dynamics of life as a movement, dialectic but not regular or patterned, of disorientation and reorientation /20/. The human organism struggles to maintain some kind of equilibrium in his/her life. That sense of holistic orientation, of being "at home," is a gift which is given and not forced, yet we struggle to it, fight for it, resist losing it and regularly deny its loss when it is gone. Two movements in human life are important: a) deep reluctance to let loose of a world that has passed away, and b) capacity to embrace a new world being given. These themes in Ricoeur's study will be important to Psalm interpretation as suggested here.

Human experience includes those dangerous and difficult times of dislocation and disorientation when the sky does fall and the world does come to an end. The figure of disorientation may be taken psychologically and sociologically. It includes all facets of our common life and experience. The times of disorientation are times when persons

are driven to the extremities of emotion, of integrating capacity and of language. In the company of Isaiah, we are "undone" (Isa. 6:5). There is no speech and there is no safe reality about which to speak. The loss of an orderly life is linked to a loss of language, or at least a discovery of the inadequacy of conventional language /21/.

Human persons are not meant for situations of disorientation. They will, as able, struggle against such situations with all their energies. Insofar as persons are hopeful and healthy, they may grow and work through to a new orientation. But as Freud has seen, human persons are mostly inclined to look back, to grasp for old equilibria, to wish for them and to deny that they are gone. Ricoeur, in his study of Freud, is clear that it is situations of dislocation which evoke the dangerous language of extremity which may express hope but more likely resistance.

The countermovement of reorientation comes, says Ricoeur, through a representation of reality which is genuinely new and has the mark of gift /22/. The reorientation has both continuities with and discontinuities from what has been. But the accent is on the new. It is a surprise. In our resistance, we do not expect to be surprised. The new situation is not an achievement or a working out of the dislocation, but it is a newness that comes to one. Equally, it is not a "passage," as though it were automatic or inevitable /23/. It comes as miracle wrought from outside the situation. And it is only when that newness meets the human person or community convincingly that an abandonment of old orientation may be fully affirmed.

I propose that the sequence of orientation-disorientation-reorientation is a helpful way to understand the use and function of the Psalms. Very likely, the overview suggested here has been intentional in the practice of many believing people, even though they have not recognized or articulated it in this way:

1. The Psalms of Orientation. The Psalms we include here are not the most interesting, for there is in them no great movement, no tension to resolve. Indeed, what mainly characterizes them is the absence of tension. The mind-set and world-view of those who enjoy a serene location of their lives is a sense of the orderliness, goodness and reliability of life. Thus they might be especially reflected in creation Psalms that reflect the coherence of life:

> These all look to thee,
> to give them their food in due season.
> When thou givest to them, they gather it up;
> when thou openest thy hand,
> they are filled with good things (Ps. 104:27-28).

Or reference may be made to the Psalms that teach clear, reliable retribution, in which evil is punished and good is rewarded (e.g., Pss. 1, 119). Reference to creation and retribution suggests that Psalms of

orientation especially relate to sapiential tradition which, as Gordis /24/ and Kovacs /25/ have suggested, reflect a class orientation of those who enjoy and appreciate much of life's material goodness /26/.

We might better seek examples in the book of Proverbs, which largely reflects life in its coherence and reliability. Apparently, Ps. 37 is a sapiential statement in the book of Psalms which reflects undisturbed, uncritical equilbrium. It offers imperatives and prohibitions about how to maintain and enhance this order. It asserts Yahweh's reliability and makes a didactic contrast with the wicked.

In this grouping, Ps. 145 might be located. It may be regarded as a not very interesting collection of clichés. But in fact, it affirms God's providential care. The unimaginative style makes the confident claim. Such a Psalm comes very close to civil religion, for it sounds like a celebration of the status quo. The other element which easily could be placed here are some of the Psalms of Ascent (e.g., 127, 128, 131, 133) which reflect domestic life which is in good order. They are the voice of genuine gratitude and piety for such rich blessings /27/.

It may be legitimate to place Westermann's descriptive hymns /28/ here, for they anticipate or remember no change. They describe how things are, with the assurance that they are well grounded and with the anticipation that they will continue /29/. The function of such description is the continued reaffirmation and reconstruction of this good world. Thus songs of creation, wisdom, retribution and blessing all function in this same context of good order and well-being.

2. The Psalms of Dislocation. The Psalms of lament, both individual and corporate, are ways of entering linguistically into a new distressful situation in which the old orientation has collapsed. There are various shapes and nuances of distress in different Psalms, suggesting that different ones are appropriate for use, depending on how fully the subject has accepted and embraced the dislocation or how much there is resistance or denial.

Thus some of the Psalms remember better times (Ps. 42:4) back in the old period of orientation. There is a wish to return to that situation. Others are heavy in anger and resentment against the one who has caused disorientation. (It does not greatly matter if that one is thought to be God or enemies.) This mood leaves the impression that the speaker believes that the loss of orientation is reversible and the old orientation is retrievable.

Westermann has most helpfully shown that the Psalms move from petition and plea to praise /30/. And Gerstenberger has argued that the form of Israel's speech is complaint and not lament, i.e., protest and not resignation. There is expectation and even insistence that Yahweh can be moved to act and that he will act /31/. And when Yahweh acts, he will bring things to a new life-order. The break between plea and praise in

the Psalms /32/ reflects an important moment of realism. There is a turn from yearning for the old orientation, a recognition that it is gone and not retrievable, and a readiness for a new orientation. The conclusion of vow, praise and "assurance of being heard" face forward. They have put the old lost world behind. Thus, whatever the spoken or acted device of the "turn," the movement reflects a firm resolve to look in a new direction. There is a turn from resentful remembering to a fresh anticipation of an equilibrium which is a gift from God that is genuinely new and not a restatement of the old /33/. In speaking of that remarkable turn, Ricoeur writes, "Remembrance gives rise to anticipation; archaism gives rise to prophecy" /34/. The turn is a move beyond remembering. But it could not be done without the painful part of remembering. In the various Psalms of lament and in the various parts of these Psalms, the speaker is located at various places in the movement of living into and emerging out of disorientation.

Two specific comments are in order. First, if the Psalms of lament correlate with the situation of displacement, we may have a fresh appreciation for some metaphors often used, e.g., "pit," and the various references to "enemy." This rich array of language in which the words tumble out becomes, then, not an exegetical problem to be solved, but a pastoral opportunity to let the impressionistic speech touch the particular circumstance of dislocation. For the truth of the matter is, the listener to such a Psalm in a time of actual dislocation will have no doubt as to the meaning of the references and will find such exegetical speculation both unnecessary and distracting. To fall into "the pit" is indeed to lose one's old equilibrium. The "enemy" is quite obviously the one who has caused the loss. Clines has seen that of the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah, the identity is not a code to be cracked, but an open-ended statement that allows for and encourages multiple interpretations /35/. Using Clines' insight, I suggest that a person in disorientation is precisely the one who has the freedom and vitality to face the openness of lament language. It is those who are safe and settled in an old equilibrium who want to identify the enemy and all the other figures in this poetry. In using such Psalms, interpreters must be freed of our closely oriented habits of exegesis if the Psalm is to have the freedom to fully articulate the experience of disorientation. That is, the function of the Psalm requires of us a certain imaginative freedom in our interpretation.

Second, special reference may be made to Ps. 88. So far as I know, Westermann nowhere deals with this Psalm as an important exception to the "plea/praise" pattern. Nor does Gerstenberger, to my knowledge, deal with this as a Klage rather than as an Anklage /36/. Perhaps it is the exception that proves the rule. But it is the case that Ps. 88 is unrelieved in its embrace of disorientation. There is no movement away from displacement. It includes "I" statements of trouble (vv. 3-5), three

"Thou" statements of accusation, and a middle section of rhetorical questions (vv. 10-14). But the questions do not linger for an answer. The Psalm concludes in vv. 15-18 in utter hopelessness. I submit that this Psalm has a peculiar and distinctive function and is a resource as precious as it is peculiar.

3. The Psalms of Reorientation. Concerning these, we may provisionally follow Westermann's consolidation of hymns and songs of thanksgiving, to group them together as songs of celebration concerning reorientation. I am aware that Westermann has not been widely followed. And it may be that in terms of form, the two different types cannot be coupled. But in terms of function, declarative hymns and thanksgiving songs do agree in the welcome and amazed recognition that a newness has been given which is not achieved, not automatic, not derived from the old, but is a genuine newness wrought by gift. Thus Westermann's proposal may be open to question in terms of form, but functionally on target.

We may group hymns and songs of thanksgiving together. However, as indicated, we need to distinguish between declarative and descriptive hymns in terms of function. Thus we may be left with two functions as with two forms, but they must be grouped differently with reference to form and function.

a. The two clusters of form may be:
   1) hymns, both descriptive and declarative, and
   2) songs of thanksgiving.
b. The two clusters of function may be:
   1) songs of orientation, including descriptive hymns, and
   2) songs of reorientation, including declarative hymns and songs of thanksgiving.

There is no need to force the issue from function to form. It is sufficient to acknowledge that groupings will be different for function and for form. Thus descriptive hymns, as Westermann has seen, describe an enduring state of things and therefore reflect a continuing secure orientation. By contrast, the declarative hymns and songs of thanksgiving do not describe what has been but assert what has just now been wrought. This function speaks of surprise and wonder, miracle, amazement when a new orientation has been granted to the disoriented for which there was no ground for expectation.

These Psalms reflect a quite new circumstance which speaks of newness (it is not the old revived); surprise (there was no ground in the disorientation to anticipate it, and it is not automatic); and gift (it is not done by the lamenter). For these reasons, this new circumstance evokes and must have a celebration, for reversals must be celebrated (cf. Luke 15:6-7, 9-10, 22-24, 32) /37/. Psalm scholarship has worked hard at characterizing what this celebration is. The three dominant hypotheses are those of Mowinckel, Weiser and Kraus, respectively enthronement

festival, covenant renewal or royal-Zion festival /38/. Each of these suggestions obviously has some warrant. But perhaps the vitality of this celebration is not to be understood in terms of Babylonian parallels (so Mowinckel), in terms of Israel's traditions (so Weiser), or with reference to Jerusalem's institution (so Kraus). Perhaps we may stay with the rich and diverse human experience of reorientation of which more than one language can speak. And while the form or legitimacy of the festival may come from a borrowed phrase such as "Yahweh is king," the power, vitality and authority for celebration comes from the unarguable experience of persons who have discovered that the world has come to an end but a new creation is given. Life has disintegrated but has been formed miraculously again /39/. The enduring authority of these Psalms must surely be found in their ability to touch the extremities of human life, extremities which we have characterized as extremities of disorientation and reorientation. The extremity of reorientation is as shattering as that of disorientation.

Thus Westermann in defending his two-type hypothesis can quote Gunkel: "In the alternation between lament and song of thanks there unrolls the whole life of the pious" /40/. To that it may be added that songs of orientation present a dimension of life not characterized by extremity. Thus Westermann's descriptive and declarative Psalms stand at the far moments of orientation and reorientation and should not be grouped together in terms of function.

II

Ricoeur has for some time been in dialog with Freud. Behind that has been his attempt to understand the conflict of hermeneutical perspectives and his attempt to find a way to face them both /41/. On the one hand, Ricoeur has tried to take seriously what he calls the "hermeneutic of suspicion," represented by Marx, Freud and Nietzsche /42/. It is the purpose of this approach to expose the dishonesty of interested speech which protests and conceals and controls, to be attentive to the deceptions (especially self-deception) that are practiced in the name of truth. In terms of Marx, it means discerning the distance between appearance and reality. In Freud, it means to pay attention to the ways in which reality is suppressed and driven into the unconscious. In a word, this is an unmasking which is aware that every meaning statement is an attempt to mislead and misrepresent /43/.

The other hermeneutical tradition (to which Ricoeur is more drawn by his interest in language) is that of full symbolization, the overplus of language which permits more to be said than the original articulation intended and which assumes that attentive listening can always hear more in freighted texts. Ricoeur refers to this as "iconic augmentation" /44/. This tradition of interpretation is represented by the Sensus Plenior

/45/ of the Roman Catholic tradition, the New Hermeneutic /46/ and now the obscure possibilities of structuralism /47/. Ricoeur understands the work of this hermeneutic to be re-presentation, to state with fullness the old realities of sacred coherence in ways that are especially appropriate to and run beyond the sober meaning of words in order to do it /48/.

Now it is clear that these two approaches are in some tension. I cite two specific examples. First, Dornisch observes that in scripture study, traditional Biblical hermeneutics is concerned with representation, i.e., restatement of the claim of the text in its full kerygmatic power, whereas historical criticism is a practice of the hermeneutic of suspicion which wants to penetrate back to what was "really there originally" /49/. Presently, it is recognized that this posture of critical, historical study creates new different issues for those engaged in scripture study in the environs of a believing community /50/. And therefore, Childs' title is important, "...Old Testament as Scripture."

Second, and more personally, I have had conversation with a pastor whom I most respect who is an accomplished Freudian therapist. He is aware of the very difficult task of being a therapist of the critical, suspicionist tradition, to practice consistently that no words really say what they mean and must be exposed as deceptive. And on the other hand, at the same time he is a faithful Christian preacher who regularly must speak these large words about the truth of the gospel without turning the same suspicionist eye on those words until there are no words left to speak. The struggle to hold these honestly together is difficult for any who would believe honestly.

Ricoeur argues that these two hermeneutics are both essential and must be seen in a dialectic of displacement and recapture:

> Consequently, the first task - the displacement - cannot be separated from the second task - the recapture of meaning in interpretation. This alternation of relinquishing (déprise) and recapture (reprise) is the philosophical basis of the entire metapsychology /51/.

It is precisely the dispossession of false and deceptive positions that can lead to the recovery of powerful symbols. Thus the two works that must both be carried on are, a) the criticism of idols, and b) heeding the true God who will make all things new /52/.

Ricoeur's discernment of these two hermeneutical positions can be correlated with the paradigm of Psalmic function I have proposed above. Thus the hermeneutic of suspicion is practiced in the lament songs of dislocation and the hermeneutic of representation is practiced in the celebrative songs of relocation. (I leave to one side the settled songs of orientation, but I believe that at times they may assert the new and at times stand in need of the radical criticism of suspicion.) Ricoeur's

model may help in understanding both what is going on in the text of the Psalms and what is going on in the life of the user(s) of the Psalms, for as Ricoeur argues, it is the experience of limit that is important to the expression of limit /53/. The Psalms of disorientation and reorientation may be regarded as expressions of limit. That is, they speak about times when normalcy is sharply in question. The user(s) brings to the Psalms experiences of limit. Thus the use and intention of a Psalm depends on this hermeneutic coincidence between what is at issue in the text of the Psalm and what is at issue in the life of the user(s).

The lament Psalms of dislocation may be understood as an instance of the hermeneutic of suspicion /54/. The lament Psalm of dislocation becomes necessary, usually quite unexpectedly. It is necessary in a situation in which the old world-view, old faith presuppositions and old language, are no longer adequate. Obviously, if one has (in practice or even implicitly) been living out of creation songs about stability and harmony in life, or songs of morality about the equity of life, then one cannot readily receive abrasions and incongruities which provide data that such songs cannot contain and comprehend.

That experience of radical dissonance is what is presented to us in the laments. They are speeches of surprised dismay and disappointment, for the speaker never expected this to happen to him/her. They are fresh utterances, sharp ejaculations by people accustomed either to the smooth songs of equilibrium or of not needing to say much because things are "all right." They are the shrill speeches of those who suddenly discover that they are trapped and the water is rising and the sun may not come up tomorrow in all its benevolence. And we are betrayed!

These Psalms are the voices of those who find their circumstance dangerously and not just inconveniently changed. And they do not like it. These are the speeches of caged men and women getting familiar with their new place, feeling the wall for a break, hunting in the dark for hidden weapons, testing the nerve and patience of those who have perpetrated the wrong. We may observe two features of this poetry in particular.

First, we should not expect the speaker of Ps. 37 or Ps. 145 ever to speak a cross word. But it is likely that the speakers of harsh laments are the same voices as the singers of hymns, but in radically new circumstance. Now the same voices speak venom against God, enemies, parents and everyone else, venom they did not know they had in their bodies. But consistent with the hermeneutic of suspicion, this is because the facade of convention and well-being has at last been penetrated. The beast is permitted an appearance.

The speakers of these Psalms are in a vulnerable, regressed situation in which the voice of desperate, fear-filled, hate-filled reality is unleashed and no longer covered by the niceties of conventional sapiential teaching. As in the freedom of speech in therapy of regression,

any language and any speech is appropriate. So also in lament Psalms and most unmistakably in the laments of Job /55/, anything may and will be said. The juices flow and the animal is loose.

Perhaps the acceptance of the animal role illuminates why the speaker knows himself surrounded by other animals who will devour, for the speaker is now able to face the censured imagery of beastliness in his own person (Pss. 7:3, 22:13-14, 17, 57:5, 58:7, 59:7, 74:19). The speaker discovers that he/she is also a beast once the conventions have been penetrated. So in Ps. 73 when life is inequitable, the speaker is aware of a skewed relationship in which one is less than human.

> When my soul was embittered,
> When I was pricked in heart,
> I was stupid and ignorant,
> I was like a beast toward thee.
> (Ps. 73:21-11, cf. 102:7-8) /56/.

The speaker discovers animal dimensions of life. Only now he/she is not king of the jungle as in Ps. 37.

Second, these complaints are filled with questions:

> Thou has kept count of my tossings;
> Put thou my tears in thy bottle!
> Are they not in thy book? (Ps. 56.9)
>
> In God I trust without a fear
> What can man do to me? (v. 12)
>
> Hast thou not rejected us, O God? (Ps. 60:12)
>
> Wilt thou hide thyself forever? (Ps. 89:47)
>
> Or hast thou utterly rejected us?
> Are thou exceedingly angry with us? (Lam. 5:22)

These questions are usually understood as motivations to get Yahweh to do something. They are clearly rhetorical questions which do not seem to expect an answer. Or perhaps the answer is thought to be so obvious that it needs no expression. They may be only raw expressions of emotion. But they may also be understood as questions now occurring to the speaker for the first time, bold new thoughts, the answers to which are as yet unknown, for the question is now first posed in the mouth of the disoriented /57/. The poet in the collapse of convention permits regression to deep questions never before permitted and until now censured by the community and by self. They are the "ah-has" of a dangerous kind which go to the brink for the first time to ask, "What if ...?" What if the whole orientation is a fraud that can no longer be relied upon? And once asked, such a probing can never be unasked. The disorientation, once brought to full speech, is irreversible.

It is the function of these songs, if seen this way, to enable, require and legitimate the complete rejection of the old orientation. That old arrangement is seen, if not as fraud, at least as inadequate to the new circumstance. The Psalms have the abrasive effect of dismantling the old systems which hide the well-off from the dangerous theological realities of life. It is a key insight of Freud that until there is an embrace of honest helplessness, there is no true gospel which can be heard. Until the idols have been exposed, there is no chance of the truth of the true God. It is telling that these Psalms use the words "pit/Sheol/waters/depths," for in therapy, one must be "in the depths" if there is to be new life /58/. Freud has seen that the utter abandonment of pretense is a prerequisite to new joy. (The loss/finding, death/life dynamic is evident in the three celebrations of Luke 15.)

These Psalms, correlated with a hermeneutic of suspicion, warn against an easy hermeneutic of symbols and myths or an easy psychology of growth through symbolization. These Psalms mean to empty out the old symbols which have failed /59/. They apparently know that the dismantling must be complete and without reserve. And if the dismantling is not total, the religious building of life likely will be a construction of idols. Thus Ps. 88 stands as singularly important, for it is a word precisely at the bottom of the pit when every hope is abandoned. The speaker is alone and there is as yet no hint of any dawn. Ps. 88 is the full recognition of collapse /60/.

Conversely, a like correlation may be suggested between the Psalms of celebration (declarative hymns and songs of thanksgiving) and the hermeneutic of recollection and representation. The song celebrative of reorientation is a movement out of the disorientation marked by lament. In a parallel way, the critical hermeneutic of suspicion is superseded (in a dialectical fashion, to be sure) by the restorative hermeneutic of representation. The song of celebration is a new song sung at the appearance of a new reality, new creation, new harmony, new reliability (Pss. 33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1, Is. 42:10, Rev. 14:3). Its style and rhetoric must speak of the quality of surprise and newness that are appropriate to the new reality.

The new reality may be variously symbolized. It may indeed, with Mowinckel, be enthronement of a new king, fresh confidence that there is a life-giving order operative among us. It may be articulated with Weiser as new covenant, as belonging to a community bound to and cared for by God. It may be, with Kraus, affirmation of the primal, sacral institutions, dynasty and temple. But the reality of the new experience is something other than and more than can be caught in and confined by any one of these referents. It is the experience that the world has new coherence, that the devastating hopelessness of the lament is not finally appropriate for the way life is. Thus it is telling that the "new song" occurs not only in the great hymns of enthronement (96:1, 98:1) or even

concerning the king (144:9), but also in the thanksgiving of 33:3, 40:3 which may refer to any personal crisis.

As the hermeneutic reflected in the lament is, following Ricoeur's words, "reductive and demystifying," so this hermeneutic is "restorative, recollective of the sacred," daring to represent in fresh form the elemental well-being first articulated by the primal myths /61/. Thus the declarative hymns and songs of thanksgiving speak of a newness not unlike the old assurances expressed in the descriptive Psalms "before the flood." It may be for that reason that the mythic dimension is more explicit, daring and comprehensive in the hymns as distinct from the laments. The songs of celebration wish to take the worshiper not back into the old primal ordering of goodness (as in Gen. 1:31), but into a newness now being given. Thus the hymns look back in mythic categories and out of them assert a promissory conviction /62/. As the laments want to show life in its shattered leanness, as regression to primal chaos, so the celebrative songs tend to be effusive with surpluses of meaning in every metaphor and symbol. It is likely that the hymns can scarcely be overinterpreted. The new song asserts that the waters will not drown and the pit did not hold, that the captor was unnerved and the enemy is shattered. The sky has fallen but is now secured again. The world has ended but begun again. And there is no word for that beyond doxology /63/.

Just as the lament warned against celebration too quickly, and just as the hermeneutic of suspicion warns us against positive symbolization too easily and early, so now our discernment leads us in the opposite direction. Israel has the capacity to exploit the fullness of language in the service of reorientation and new creation. Such a practice affirms that we do not need to be forever reductive, demystifying, critical and exposing. There is a time when this work is done. Unmasking has run its course, when life is shaken from its phoniness and scattered in its deception. Then it is appropriate to turn to the gathering work of symbols /64/. Or to move from hermeneutics to the Psalms, Israel must not forever lament, complain, protest and question. There is a time for affirmation and rejoicing, a time to end the criticism, to receive the gift and sing a doxology (cf. Eccl. 3:2-10) /65/.

Thus our appeal to Ricoeur suggests correlations between functions of the Psalms and two alternative hermeneutics to correspond to two extremities of life.

1. The movement of our life, if we are attentive, is the movement of orientation, disorientation and reorientation. And in our daily pilgrimage, we use much of our energy for this work.

2. This experience is correlated with songs of orientation, especially descriptive hymns, laments as songs of disorientation and songs of reorientation, especially declarative hymns. While declarative and

descriptive hymns may be grouped together form-critically, they stand at the opposite extremes of Israel's experience of life and of God.

3. The poles of descriptive and declarative hymns form an envelope for the closer movement in the lament itself. Following Westermann's analysis, the two parts of the lament, plea and praise, express in microcosm the movement we have been discussing. The plea still looks back to the old orientation, still yearning for it and grudging its loss, while the praise element begins to look forward and anticipate. Thus the two parts of the lament, one of which looks back in anger and chagrin and the other which looks forward in hope, correlate with our two hermeneutical postures. The lament as plea and petition regresses to the oldest fears, the censured questions, the deepest hates, the unknown and unadmitted venom and a yearning, whereas the lament as praise is anticipatory and open to gift. It looks ahead, consents to receive and intends to respond in gratitude /66/. The two functions, as the two hermeneutics, belong together. So Ricoeur can speak of the two together as regressive-progressive in a way whereby the remembrance gives rise to anticipation /67/. He sees the two as linked and the process as "inherently dialectical" /68/.

4. In one other articulation of the same, Ricoeur suggests a difference between the second naivete and the first /69/. The first naivete is the pre-critical. It believes everything, indeed too much. It is an enjoyment of well-being, unaware of oppression and incongruity. It is a glad reception of community, unaware of hurt. It can afford to be uncritical because everything makes sense. But growth and indeed life mean moving to criticism, a new awareness of self in conflict, of others in dishonest interestedness, of God in enmity. The critical dimension of our pilgrimage discovers, with Marx, the slippage between appearance and reality in our social arrangements, slippage poorly covered by ideology; with Freud, the censorship we exercise and have exercised upon us.

But the second naivete is post-critical and not pre-critical. The second naivete has been through the pit and is now prepared to "hope all things" (I Cor. 13:7). But now hope is after the pit. It now knows that finally things have been reduced and need be reduced no more. It knows that our experience is demystified as it must be. But it knows that even in a world demystified and reduced, grace intrudes and God makes all things new. The ones who give thanks and sing genuinely new songs must be naive or they would not bother to sing songs and to give thanks. But it is a praise in which the anguish of disorientation is not forgotten, removed or absent.

III

Implicitly through all of this I have been appealing to Ricoeur's theory of language /70/. Clearly, of all the points I have attempted to utilize, it is this which interests Ricoeur the most. In general, his work is related to the new hermeneutic and its discernment of language. For this, we may refer to the enigmatic statements of Fuchs and Ebeling /71/ and to the extended discussion of Gadamer /72/. More directly, we may refer to the studies of Funk /73/ and Crossan /74/ on New Testament parables. And closest to our concern are the shrewd conclusions drawn by Clines concerning Is. 53. This general movement sees that alongside language which describes what is, there is a language that evokes what is not. Thus this language has a creative function. It does not simply follow reality and reflect it, but it leads reality to become what it is not. So we may appeal to Heidegger's well-known aphorism, "The poet is the shepherd of being" /75/. But we should insist that for Israel, the matter is much more characterized in promissory ways than Heidegger seems to suggest /76/. The relation of language and reality is dialectical. New reality permits new language; language spoken by Israel's Authoritative Speaker calls forth new reality. In his own study, Ricoeur /77/ has illustrated this with particular reference, a) to the proverb, which has been a description of conventional reality, i.e., before the disorientation, but which is now turned to surprise; b) to the eschatological saying, which is no longer interpreted literally but now used to rediscern present reality; and c) to the parable, which is not a teaching of general ethical truth but a surprise which causes a new awareness of reality. Each of these, he has shown, is presented to evoke a scandalous perception of reality which breaks our conventions.

The point of this paper is that this creative evocative function of language is precisely what is at work in the Psalms /78/. In the Psalms, we have transmitted to us ways of speaking which are appropriate to the extremities of human experience as known concretely in Israel. Or, to use Ricoeur's language, we have "limit expressions" (laments, songs of celebration) which match "limit experiences" (disorientation, reorientation). The use of the Psalms in one's own life and in ministry depends on making a genuine and sensitive match between expression and experience. The enduring authority of this language is in the combination that it bears witness to common human experience, but it is at the same time practiced in this concrete community with specific memories and hopes. Thus the openness to the universal and the passion for the concrete come together in these poems.

Without such a view of language, the Psalms of extremity are reduced to clichés, at best a ready-standing supply of words that can be conventionally drawn upon to stylize things. To view the Psalms that way is to trivialize them (as I believe has widely happened), perhaps even

encouraged by our inability to get beyond rather academic categories of presentation.

We have asked about the function of the Psalm. I should argue (in Ricoeur's terms of demystifying and representing) that the function of the Psalms is two-fold. First, the Psalms bring human experience to sufficiently vivid expression so that it may be embraced as the real situation in which persons must live. This applies equally to the movement in the life of an individual person and to the public discernment of new reality. Persons and communities are not fully present in a situation of disorientation until it has been brought to speech. One may be there but absent to the situation by denial and self-deception. Specifically, until the reality of the "pit" is spoken about with all its hatred of enemies, its mistrust of God, its fear of "beasts," its painful yearning for old, better times, its daring questions of dangerous edges - until all that is brought to speech - it is likely that one will continue to assume the old now-discredited, dysfunctional equilibrium which in fact is powerless. Living in the "old equilibrium" which is powerless makes one numb, mute, liable to oppression and easily used by others /79/. But to first speak the words to the disoriented and then to have the disoriented actually speak the words can be a new recognition and embrace of the actual situation which would rather be denied. The censorship of the old orientation is so strong that the actual situation may be denied and precluded. The "language event" of the lament thus permits movement beyond naivete and acceptance of one's actual situation critically.

The songs of new orientation perform a parallel work. Those who have entered deeply into the "pit" may presume that is the permanent situation, when in fact life has moved on and their circumstances have been transformed toward newness. In such times, the songs of celebration may lead the person or community to embrace the context of newness in which they in fact live.

Second, the language of these poems not only helps persons to embrace and recognize their real situation. In dramatic and dynamic ways, the songs may also function to evoke and form new realities that did not exist until or apart from the actual singing of the song. Thus the speech of the new song does not just recognize what is given, but it evokes it, calls it into being, forms it. Thus Israel's hymnic assertion, "Yahweh is king," is not just a description of Yahweh the king, but it evokes him to kingship. It calls him to his throne. Thus understood in a quite different way, the old claims of Mowinckel concerning the creative, evocative function of hymns to bring forth a new reality are reaffirmed.

Ricoeur is repetitious and clear on this point. The redescription of human reality in terms of positive celebration is not regressive, not return to an old, safe religious world where God was on his throne. And therefore a return to the primal symbols must be treated "suspiciously."

The redescription of reality in terms of positive celebration has a lament behind it which decisively cuts it off from the primal. There is no return /80/. The second creation is a new one and not a return to the first one. Thus the hymn of celebration is not regressive, but anticipatory /81/. So we may say of the doxologies, as Ricoeur says of good art sketches, that they are

> not simply projections of the artist's conflicts, but the sketches of the solution. Dreams look backward to infancy, the past. The work of art goes ahead of the artist; it is a prospective symbol of his personal synthesis and of man's future, rather than a regressive symbol of his unresolved conflicts /82/.

Ricoeur follows Ernest Jones in observing that symbols have two vectors. They "repeat our childhood in all the senses, chronological and non-chronological, of that childhood. On the other hand, they explore our adult life" /83/. So it is with the songs of celebration. The hymn (even more than the song of thanksgiving) goes ahead. It goes ahead of the poet, of the worshiper, of the pastor. It calls into being the new creation, and there are glimpses, only glimpses, of life in the new kingdom in which all other gods have been destroyed and we have only to do with the lover of justice (Ps. 99:4). The new song is sung (Rev. 14:3). It is a song about the new king (v. 7) but it is also about the death of Babylon (v. 8). Thus the hymn forms the new world. Ricoeur, in an important theological link, relates this movement to the problem of law and grace. He observes that the dislocation dislocates from our project of "making a whole of our lives," "self-glorification" "salvation by works," and sets us into the world of grace /84/. For good reason, Dornisch /85/ concludes that, "for Ricoeur, the restoration of meaning always moves toward kerygma." The hymn sings good news.

IV

We have appealed to three of Ricoeur's insights in understanding the Psalms:

1. Human experience, which is the name for what we are about, moves in a painful way from orientation to disorientation and in a surprising way from disorientation to reorientation.

2. We must utilize both hermeneutics, the hermeneutics of suspicion which demystifies and disenchants and the hermeneutic of representation which resymbolizes and redescribes our life. (I have no term to describe a hermeneutic for the "Psalms of Orientation" reflecting stable life. Perhaps such a view is a "hermeneutic of convention.")

3. The use and function of this language is not descriptive but evocative. Its knowing use can receive new worlds for the community, given by God.

As concerns the practice of the Psalms in ancient Israel, it makes sense that the lament Psalms are likely to be understood more personally or domestically, /86/ whereas the hymns belong to the festival, for disorientation is much more intimate than is reorientation. It likewise makes sense to follow Mowinckel in the notion that the festival of the cult is creative of the very experience it expresses, but now on the ground of the linkage between language and experience. The Psalms reflect the difficult way in which the old worlds are relinquished and new worlds are embraced.

Hopefully, in this admittedly subjective handling of ancient and contemporary pastoring, we have been as fair as possible to both. For contemporary pastoring, we hope to suggest that if we are attentive to the needs of people where they are, we have in the Psalms resources both for helping persons a) live in the situation in which they in fact are, and b) evoke in their lives new worlds of well-being which we know "dimly" (I Cor. 13:12) and in prospect.

The Psalms of disorientation and reorientation are songs of scattering and gathering. The laments of Israel, like the hermeneutic of suspicion, are an act of dismantling and scattering, for sheep without a shepherd (Ezek. 34:5, Mark 6:34). The hymns and songs of thanksgiving in Israel, like the hermeneutic of symbolization, are an act of recollection, of consolidation, of new formations of wholeness, when the shepherd is with the flock (Ps. 23:1, John 10:10-11) /87/.

As such, the Psalms are very much like our lives, which are seasons of scattering and gathering (Eccl. 3:2-9) /88/. We live always with the Lord of the exile and all our songs to him are in a strange land (Ps. 137:4). This God is the one who has an intention of welfare and not of evil, to give a future and a hope. He is the one who dares to say:

> I will gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile (Jer. 29:14).
>
> He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock (Jer. 31:10).
>
> As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness (Ezek. 34:12).

The Psalms reflect the human experience of exile and homecoming. Partly the reality of exile is made in the stratagems of Babylon. But

partly the matters of exile and homecoming happen in the practice of faithful imagination, in contexts of pastoring and liturgy. And in those contexts where these poems live, songs of disorientation and reorientation do the work which Fuchs characterizes as "world-destroying and world-forming" /89/.

NOTES

1 On the question of function and intentionality, see Hans Werner Hoffmann, "Form-Funktion-Intention," ZAW 82 (1970) 341-346; Kirsten Nielsen, Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge, JSOT Supp. 9 (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1978) 1-4; and Rolf Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered," Interpretation 27 (1973) 449-468. Much of the current discussion of function concerns the extent to which literary forms faithfully reflect and remain linked to their original setting and function. See especially Georg Fohrer, "Remarks on the Modern Interpretation of the Prophets," JBL 80 (1961) 309-319, and "Tradition und Interpretation im Alten Testament," ZAW 32 (1961) 1-30, whom Hoffmann follows, and the more programmatic statement of Martin J. Buss, "The Study of Forms," Old Testament Form Criticism, ed. by John H. Hayes (Trinity University Monograph Series in Religion 2, San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974) 31-38.

2 Brevard S. Childs, "Midrash and the Old Testament," Understanding the Sacred Text, ed. by John Reumann (Valley Forge: Judson, 1972) 47-59, understands the issue in this way:

> One of the fundamental postulates of the form-critical method is the insistence that the form and function of a genre must be held together. The attempt of the form-critical method to analyze the sterotyped form of a literary genre has the purpose of determining the sociological setting within the life of the community which by its recurrent pattern shaped the genre (51).

In this statement Childs may hold the form and function more tightly together than does Fohrer. His statement is especially important because it is attentive to the sociology of both form and setting, a dimension too often ignored in form criticism. Reference to sociological reality affirms that in the use of the form, the community is doing something.

3 Ronald Clements, A Century of Old Testament Study (London: Lutterworth, 1976) 79-95.

4 Erhard Gerstenberger, "The Psalms," Old Testament Form Criticism, ed. by John H. Hayes (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1974) 198-221.

5 In speaking of Gunkel's classification, Gerstenberger, op.cit., writes:

> In general they still stand, or at least they can serve as a point of departure. The same holds true for form critical method (187). Gunkel's fourfold design of complaint psalms and thanksgiving songs still is fundamental to all discussion of the matter today (198).

6 Claus Westermann, The Praise of God in the Psalms (Richmond: John Knox, 1965) 15-35.

7 Knierim, op.cit., has considerably broadened the question of Sitz im Leben away from its original question of institutional origin, to show that setting concerned a variety of matrices, including language, mood and style of an epoch. See also Douglas Knight, "The Understanding of 'Sitz im Leben' in Form Criticism," SBL 1974 Seminar Papers I, 105-125. More recently, Martin Buss, "The Idea of Sitz im Leben - History and Critique," ZAW 90 (1978) 157-170, has welcomed the new discussion broadly concerned with sociological context but has urged the use of other designations for sociological context so that it should not be confused with Gunkel's narrower, more precise meaning of the term.

8 On the hymn, see the suggestive hypothesis of Frank Crüsemann, Zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel (WMANT 32; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969). His proposal, however, appears to be too subtle and refines too much what can be determined by form. For a summary and evaluation of Mowinckel's dominant hypothesis, see the older statement of Aubrey Johnson, "The Psalms", The Old Testament and Modern Study, ed. by H.H.Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951) 189-207, and more recently, Gerstenberger, op.cit., 212-218 and Clements, op.cit., 83-95.

9 Westermann, op.cit., 22.

10 The festival hypothesis has recently been given a full and comprehensive restatement by Aubrey Johnson, The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1979).

11 Hans Schmidt, Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1928).

12 Walter Beyerlin, Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1970).

13 Lienhard Delekat, Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967).

14 Erhard Gerstenberger, Der bittende Mensch; Bittritual und Klagelied des Einzelnen im Alten Testament (Habilitationsschrift, Heidelberg, 1971). See also Gerstenberger, "Der klagende Mensch," Probleme biblischer Theologie, ed. by Hans Walter Wolff (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971) 64-72.

15 In this connection, attention should be drawn to the important work of Rainer Albertz, Weltschöpfung und Menschenschöpfung (Calwer Theologische Monographien 3; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1974) and more recently Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion (Calwer Theologische Monographien 9; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1978), studies not unrelated to the proposals of Gerstenberger.

16 Knierim, op.cit., 466, links form critical analysis to function. In general, form criticism is moving in the direction of sociology and anthropology. Thus I would argue that in general the Psalms are concerned with the social construction and maintenance of reality. See Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966). As one example of how this applies to the Psalms, see Brueggemann, "The Formfulness of Grief," Interpretation 31 (1977) 263-275. Burke O. Long, "Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and the Question of Sitz im Leben," Semeia 5 (1976) 35-49, is especially attentive to the issues of form criticism in relation to wider issues of anthropology.

17 Ivan Engnell, "The Book of Psalms," Critical Essays on the Old Testament (London: SPCK, 1970) 121, concludes: "In the Christian Church, the book of Psalms has regained something of its original Sitz im Leben, although the circumstances are quite different."

18 The recent argument of Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, in placing many of the Psalms in a domestic situation where the daily issues of life and death are alive, enhances this understanding of function.

19 The works of Ricoeur which I have found especially helpful are Freud and Philosophy (New Haven: Yale University, 1970), Interpretation Theory (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976), Conflict of Interpretations (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1974) and "Biblical Hermeneutics," Semeia 4 (1975) 29-148. I have also benefited from the essay of L. Dornisch, "Symbolic Systems and the Interpretation of Scripture," Semeia 4 (1975) 1-21. In what follows, I have tried to take account of some of the major accents of Ricoeur's programmatic work. I have sought to attend to the thrust of his argument and not merely "use" isolated points. At the same time, however, it is clear that I have not sought to fit the discussion completely into his frame of reference. It is exceedingly hazardous to offer a schema about the Psalms because it gives the appearance of imposing something on the materials. It is not my intent that the schema I offer is normative nor that things actually moved this way in any actual experience. Rather, it is an attempt to exploit the heuristic value of Ricoeur's "interpretation theory" to suggest the dynamic interrelatedness of various Psalms in relation to actual human experience. It is clear that form criticism by itself cannot deal with such interrelatedness. And I find the proposals of Mowinckel and Johnson highly speculative. This attempt seeks to work from what I think is unarguable human experience without appeal to such specific,

speculative notions. Thus I have no wish to suggest anything "cyclical," but rather to correlate the Psalms to the dynamic of human life which happens in no schematic way.

20 See "Biblical Hermeneutics," 114-124. This dialectic has been popularly but clearly expressed by Paul Tournier, A Place for You (London: SCM, 1968). See especially 97-111 on "Two Movements."

21 On the failure of language and the formation of new language, I have been helped by Dominic Crossan, whose work is summarized in The Dark Interval (Niles, Ill.: Argus Communications, 1975). See also Robert Funk, Language, Hermeneutic and the Word of God (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

The linkage of the disorientation of life and the loss of language is nowhere more clearly expressed than in Is. 6:5. Isaiah responds to the overpowering sense of the Holy by utter silence. While conventionally translated, "I am undone," Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12 (London: SCM, 1972) 72, renders "I must be silent." In his commentary (80), Kaiser writes, "The presence of the Holy One 'silences' and destroys him." Thus the linkage of being silenced and being destroyed. See Ernst Jenni, "Jesajas Berufung in der neueren Forschung," TZ 15 (1959) 322, on the close connection of the verbs damah and damam, thus linkage of be silent/be lost. The argument of Jenni is not exclusively philological, as he pays attention to the forces of the text. Jenni notes that Hab. 1:3 has damah, but the Habakkuk Commentary has harash, silence. On the verse, see the comments of Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 247-248, indicating the uncertainty of the versions of this point.

22 The new metaphors, says Ricoeur, Conflict 369-370, "grasp more closely than any juridical figure, the relation of concrete fidelity, the bond of creation, the fact of love - in short, the dimension of gift, which no code can succeed in capturing or institutionalizing."

23 We can undoubtedly be helped by an understanding of "rites of passage," on which see Arnold von Gennep, Rites of Passage (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960) and derivatively, Gail Sheehy, Passages (New York: Dutton, 1976) and the developmental approaches of Erikson, Piaget and Kohlberg. However, it should not be missed that there is important tension between such an organismic approach to human personality which finds developmental resources in the organism, and a view more centrally biblical, which affirms newness and gifts given not from within the organism. What is at issue is the matter of "the other" (=God) as agent.

24 Robert Gordis, "The Social Background of Wisdom Literature," Poets, Prophets and Sages (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1971) 160-197.

25 Brian W. Kovacs, "Is there a Class-Ethic in Proverbs?", Essays in Old Testament Ethics, ed. by James L. Crenshaw and John Willis (New

York: Ktav, 1974) 171-189.

26 On the problem of class-ethic, see Crenshaw, Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom, 20-22, as well as his comments on creation, wisdom and order, 26-35.

27 It has been especially Claus Westermann who has grasped the important distinction between blessing and deliverance as modes of Israel's faith, though he has not pursued the sociological dimensions of that distinction. See Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 1-14, and more recently, Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzügen (ATD Supplementary Series 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978) parts 2 and 3, and What Does the Old Testament Say about God? (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979) chapters 2 and 3. The books are closely paralleled but not identical. On the sociology of a religion of blessing, see Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit.

28 Praise of God, 22-30.

29 Westermann's comment, Praise of God, 32-33, n. 20, is telling, that the hymns of the Enlightenment are almost entirely descriptive. By contrast, those of Luther are for the most part declarative. This is exactly what we should expect.

30 In addition to his basic study, see Westermann, "The Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament," Interpretation 28 (1974) 20-38, and Brueggemann, "From Hurt to Joy, from Death to Life," ibid., 3-19, and "The Formfulness of Grief."

31 Westermann, "The Role of the Lament," stresses that the lament is a protest and is to be contrasted with the submission and resignation of much Christian piety under the influence of Stoicism. Cf. also Gerstenberger, "Der klagende Mensch," Probleme biblischer Theologie, ed. by Hans Walter Wolff (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971) 64-72.

32 Still the most attractive hypothesis for understanding the break is that of Hans Joachim Begrich, "Das priesterliche Heilsorakel," ZAW 52 (1934) 81-92, but it has not gone unchallenged. See especially the comments of Thomas Raitt, A Theology for Exiles (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 151-173.

33 Following Westermann, I have argued in my article, "Formfulness," that in the process of the Psalm, something is indeed done which moves the speaker to a genuinely new situation. Gerstenberger on the same Psalms can speak of "rehabilitation."

34 Freud and Philosophy, 497. In Conflict, he prefers the language of "arche and telos," "archeology and teleology."

35 David J. A. Clines, I, He, We, & They (JSOT Suppl. 1; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1976). On the recognition that texts bear a variety of meanings (though not unlimited), see Ricoeur, Conflict, 63-73. For him, both points are important, that meanings are multiple and not unlimited.

36 On the distinction made between the two, see Gerstenberger, "Jeremiah's Complaints," JBL 82 (1963) 405, n. 50. In characterizing the move from law to grace, Ricoeur, Conflict, 339, uses language that is helpful: he speaks of the necessity of renunciation which is "no small thing, for we prefer moral condemnation to the anguish of an existence that is both unprotected and unconsoled. All of these traits - and especially the last one - make the demystification of accusation resemble a work of mourning." (Italics in the original.)

The juxtaposition of accusation/mourning in a context of renunciation is telling in light of Psalms scholarship which relates Klage to Anklage. This suggests Ps. 88 may be a step past most lament Psalms on the way to hope.

37 Ricoeur, Conflict, 96, ends his chapter with this terse and enigmatic statement: "You have fathomed that the greatest opening-out belongs to language in celebration." While one wishes he had been less cryptic, the point is helpful for our discussion.

38 On the summary and evaluation of these various hypotheses, see the discussions cited above by Johnson, Clements and Gerstenberger.

39 Gerstenberger, "The Psalms," 199, writes, "Most form critics so far have been overly fascinated by the communal or national aspects of Israel's faith.... A better starting point is individual prayers and their settings." It would appear that Psalm scholarship is now tending to move toward a recovery of personal piety in the Psalms, a matter largely screened out by the dominant hypothesis of Mowinckel. In addition to the two studies of Gerstenberger, "Der klagende Mensch," and Der bittende Mensch, see Albertz, Persönliche Frömmigkeit, M. Rose, "Schultheologie und Volksfrömmigkeit," Wort und Dienst 13 (1975) 85-104, and more fully, Der Ausschliesslichkeitsanspruch Jahwes (BWANT 6; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1975). Unfortunately, the "Volksfrömmigkeit" is in the subtitle and therefore not visible as a theme of the book.

40 Praise of God, 24.

41 Thus Conflict, especially 117, 174-176, 189, 323-330.

42 Don Ihde, "Editor's Introduction," Conflict, p. xvi, sets Hegel alongside Freud as the progenitors of the posture of suspicion. While Ricoeur recognizes Hegel and Freud as the primal articulators (pp. 323-325), it is likely that Marx and Nietzsche are more directly engaged in the issue (pp. 99, 148). See Juan Luis Segundo, Our Idea of God (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1970), 86, on the hermeneutic of suspicion more directly applied to practice. See Dornisch, op.cit., p. 6.

43 See Ricoeur, Conflict, 144. It is of course not only language which is unmasked. For all three, Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, the major concern is a false consciousness.

44 Interpretation Theory, 40.

45 See especially Raymond E. Brown, Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture (Baltimore, 1955) and his summary in the Jerome Biblical

Commentary, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland Murphy (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968) 615-616.

46 The most visible (though not clearest) presentation in English is edited by James M. Robinson, The New Hermeneutic (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) and John B. Cobb, Jr. The recent work of Amos Wilder, Theopoetic (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) and Early Christian Rhetoric: the Language of the Gospel (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1971) is a more representative American way, and without the heavy German casting can be reckoned as part of the same movement, as is the programmatic intent of Semeia. See especially Wilder's own contribution, "The Word as Address and the Word as Meaning," to The New Hermeneutic, 198-218. The philosophical basis of the movement has been well summarized by R.E. Palmer, Hermeneutics (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1969). See the useful orienting statement of A. C. Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutic," New Testament Interpretation ed.by I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977) 308-333.

47 For an appreciative but sharp criticism of structuralism, see Ricoeur, Conflict, 27-61, 246-266. Ricoeur discerns that its danger is that it reduces reality and language to a "closed system of signs" because there is only speech and no speaker. Ricoeur's own inclination toward hope is set against the ideology borne by structuralism. See also the strictures of Wilder, Theopoetic, 17-19, in which he observes that what "too often is missing is rather that of rootedness, creaturehood, embodied humanness."

48 Thus Semeia, 107 and Conflict, 48, 288.

49 Dornisch, op.cit., 7: "Traditional biblical hermeneutics would belong more to this second type while some aspects of biblical historical criticism would be hermeneutics of suspicion, the first type." On the penchant among scholars for "the original," see the shrewd statement of Brevard S. Childs, "The Sensus Literalis of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem," Beiträge zur Alttestamentlichen Theologie, ed. by Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart and Rudolf Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1977) 80-93. Childs' more recent statement, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) is an attempt to move beyond critical, analytical ways of understanding. While he argues in the same direction as structuralists in a concern to get beyond historicizing, Childs' goal is very different from that of the structuralists.

50 See the bold comment of Dennis McCarthy, "Exod. 3:14: History, Philology and Theology," CBQ 40 (1978) 311-322. Dornisch, op.cit., 16 observes, "Hermeneutics of suspicion has led to a lack of faith, lack of meaning and to a feeling of standing alone in the universe." In addition to the work of Childs, see the very different criticisms of method by Walter Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) and Peter Stuhlmacher, Historical Criticism and Theological

Interpretation of Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

51 Freud and Philosophy, 423-424.

52 Freud and Philosophy, 543. On the need for iconoclasm, see Conflict, 185.

53 See his use of the terms, Semeia 127. In Conflict, 384, he urges the important correlation of text and existence. Ihde, p. xv, even speaks of the "text-self." On the dialectic, see Stuhlmacher, op.cit., 83-91, on a "hermeneutic of consent."

54 Here I will be concerned with the plea-petition part of the Psalm which characteristically includes address, complaint, motivation, imprecation and petition. It does not include vow and "assurance of being heard," which often serve to supersede "suspicion."

55 On lament as a primary element in the poem of Job, see Westermann, Der Aufbau des Buches Hiob (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1956).

56 On the metaphor of "beastliness" in the poetry of Israel, James G. Williams, "Deciphering the Unspoken: The Theophany of Job," HUCA 49 (1978) 70-72, has seen the same factor in the poetry of Job which I suggest in the Psalms.

57 Such a function for a rhetorical question as a way of probing a newness is well presented by J. Gerald Janzen, "Metaphor and Reality in Hosea 11," Society of Biblical Literature, Seminar Papers, 1976, 413-445. Janzen suggests that Yahweh's rhetorical questions in Hos. 11:8-9 are not mere rhetoric but new decisions being embraced. So I suggest in a parallel way for the speaker of questions in the Psalms of lament.

58 On the waters as a threat to life, see Luis Alonso Schökel, "The Poetic Structure of Psalm 42-43," JSOT 1 (1976) 4-8 and "Psalm 42-43: A Response," JSOT 3 (1977) 61-65. On the "depths" as the requirement of life from a Freudian perspective, see George Benson, Then Joy Breaks Through (New York: Seabury, 1972).

59 On the breaking of symbols and reusing them with fresh significance, see Ricoeur, Conflict, 458-493.

60 The exposition of Ps. 88 by Artur Weiser, The Psalms (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 586-587, is typical of interpretation which moves too quickly to resolve this unresolved Psalm in religious assurance. The Psalm intends its user(s) to live with the painful lack of resolution.

61 Freud and Philosophy, 460.

62 Gunkel, of course, has seen that the end-time is like the primordial time. As Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955) has shown, conventional religious myth seeks a return to the primordial timelessness as the fulfillment of the end-time. Ricoeur, Conflict, 291, has seen clearly that, unlike conventional religious myth, there is a break in Israel between primordial time and end-time so that the hope of Israel concerns not a return but a genuine newness. Concerning the Psalms, my argument is that it is

precisely the lament that causes and permits the break, so that the anticipatory hymn is genuinely a new song. For that reason, the shattering of the lament must be honored and not quickly resolved by religious or psychological assurances for continuity. The discontinuity is genuine.

(On the matter of mythic structure and "anti-structure" newness, see John J. Collins, "The 'Historical Character' of the Old Testament in Recent Biblical Theology," CBQ 41 (1979) 185-204.)

Ricoeur is clear both a) that the hope-symbols are closely linked to the most elemental, regressive symbols, and b) that they are, however, sharply distinguished because they look not to the past but to the future, Conflict, 482-497. Thus in his example of the treatment of the symbol of "father," there is a sharp break between the banal use of the metaphor in every culture and the covenantal use in Israel. The transformation of the metaphor comes only from a "loss" (482) of the figure. While Ricoeur prefers to use the dialectic of "archeological/teleological," on 330, likely under the influence of Moltmann, he replaces teleology with "eschatology."

63 Abraham Heschel, Who is Man? (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966) 114-119, has understood most clearly that doxology is definitional for humanness. See also Hans Walter Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 228-229, on praise as a primary human characteristic.

64 See A.C. Thiselton, "The Parables as Language-Event," SJT 23 (1970) 444-445, following Heidegger.

65 See Dornisch, op.cit., 16. In parallel fashion, Ricoeur, Conflict, 144, is clear about the limits of psychoanalysis. In its "pure" form, it is unwilling to make a constructive statement. That is why Ricoeur insists it must be accompanied but not displaced by a more constructive hermeneutic.

66 While taking seriously both the analytic and synchronic traditions, Ricoeur has worked toward a position of hope which is important for the Psalms. Thus in Conflict, 289, 395, he has been attentive to the language of confession, commitment, consent and avowal, which reflects a radically reoriented life when it "renounces self-determination." He has given major attention to this in Freedom and Nature (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1966):

> To consent does not in the least mean to give up, if, in spite of appearances, the world is a possible stage for freedom. When I say, this is my place, I adopt it, I do not yield, I acquiesce. That is really so; for "all things work for the good for those who love God, who are called according to his plan." Thus consent would have its "poetic" root in hope, as decision in love and effort in the gift of power (p. 467).

> The way of consent leads through hope which awaits something else. Hope says: The world is not the final home of freedom (p. 480).

67 Freud and Philosophy, 494.
68 Freud and Philosophy, 460; Conflict, 330.
69 Freud and Philosophy, 496; cf. Dornisch, op.cit., p. 7.
70 This is evident in all his work, but most directly in Interpretation Theory and his Sprunt lectures of 1978.
71 Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutic," provides a full bibliography.
72 Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Seabury, 1975). Palmer, op.cit., 162ff., has usefully placed Gadamer in historical perspective.
73 Robert W. Funk, "Structure in the Narrative Parables of Jesus," Semeia 2 (1974) 51-73; "The Good Samaritan as Metaphor," ibid., 74-81. In these articles, Funk has moved from explicitly hermeneutical to structuralist questions. But the two cannot be separated. That movement is a tendency of the current American discussion.
74 John Dominic Crossan, In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus (New York: Harper and Row, 1973). A number of his papers are presented in Semeia 1 and 2. His more theoretical work on language is in The Dark Interval and Raid on the Articulate (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
75 In utilizing Ricoeur's theory of language and to relate the Psalms to that tradition of scholarship, we must not proceed without a critical awareness. The discussion of language and hermeneutics has proceeded too much on purely formal grounds as though language per se had evocative qualities. That may be so, but it is not the assumption made here. That is, our formal understandings of language must be informed by the substantive claims made by the content, use and function of quite concrete language. That is, I am helped by Ricoeur's suggestions, but my argument is not about language in general but about the Psalms of Israel in the faith and life of Israel. What gives this language its evocative power for Israel are the memories of Israel and the hopes of Israel and the discernment of the gifts, actions, blessings and judgments of God at work in their common life. Speech has this power because it correlates with the realities in which Israel trusted. The language itself is not the reality but is the trusted mode of disclosure of that reality.
76 Unfortunately, we do not have a careful theological criticism of Heidegger's program as it has decisively affected theological interpretation, though Thiselton has made a beginning in this direction. It is unfortunate that the "new literary critics" seem inattentive to the ideological dangers in the categories of Heidegger, which are not disposed toward the promissory, which is so crucial for Biblical faith. Ricoeur in Conflict seems prepared to move beyond these categories, precisely in a promissory direction.

77 Semeia 108-125. He follows the work of Beardslee, Perrin, Funk and Crossan cited there.

78 A.C. Thiselton, "The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings," JTS 25 (1974) 283-299, has offered a quite suggestive way of thinking about the "power of the word," which avoids the unguarded formal claims which have how been refuted by Barr. Thiselton is clear that the function of language depends on which language and in what context. That is, there is no absolute or universal language. But there are concrete languages enmeshed in and related to concrete communities of historical experience. The language of the Psalms may be closely paralleled in other communities, e.g., Babylonian, but they function and claim differently because of Israel's experience with this shape of reality.

79 On muteness in relation to powerlessness, see Dorothy Sölle, Suffering (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 68-86, and W. Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), especially chapter 3.

80 Ricoeur, Conflict, 291-292, is attentive to the distinctiveness of Israel on this point: "This switch of themes is the expression of an overturning of fundamental motifs. A new category of experience is born: that of 'before God,' of which the Jewish berit, the Covenant is the witness." Eliade, op.cit., 160-162, has discerned what many of his followers ignore and what Ricoeur takes most seriously, that in Israel there is a fundamental break with that common religious future which is a return to primal reality. The reality of newness in Israel is not primal but eschatological.

> Basically, the horizon of archetypes and repetition cannot be transcended with impunity unless we accept a philosophy of freedom that does not exclude God. And indeed this proved to be true when the horizon of archetypes and repetition was transcended, for the first time, by Judaeo-Christianism, which introduced a new category into religious experience, the category of faith. It must not be forgotten that, if Abraham's faith can be defined as "for God everything is possible," the faith of Christianity implies that everything is also possible for man (160).

Eliade then quotes Mark 11:22-24. It is remarkable that Eliade, who characteristically seeks the commonalities, is attentive to this distinctiveness. In his own way, Eliade makes the same point as Ricoeur in his tilt toward hope. Against the structuralists that ignore Eliade's point, Ricoeur, Conflict, 48-52, suggests that the usual examples for structuralism are drawn from religions very different in mode from that of Israel. Thus he contrasts totemistic and kerygmatic modes. The same peculiarity of Israel is acknowledged by Northrop Frye, "The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism," In Search of Literary Theory, ed. by Morton W. Bloomfield (Ithaca: Cornell University,

1972) 107-113, even though he is inclined toward Jungian categories of commonality. It is precisely in Israel that the steady practice of suspicion (on the one hand by the laments, on the other by the prophets) makes new, prospective symbolization possible.

81 While it is beyond the scope of this paper, we should note the judgment of Jürgen Habermas that the practice of criticism is "anticipatory rationality." Cf. Thomas McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978) 75-91. The telling sub-heading of McCarthy's discussion is, "The Emancipatory Interest of Critical Theory." Brevard Childs, Introduction, 513-518 has seen that in canonical form, the Psalms are "highly eschatological." That is, they criticize the present in an anticipatory way.

82 Freud and Philosophy, 175, cf. 521.

83 Freud and Philosophy, 496.

84 Semeia 125. See Conflict, 185-195, on the essential linkage of iconoclasm and grace

85 Op.cit., 8.

86 See the discussions of Gerstenberger, Albertz and Rose cited in n. 39. In addition, George W. Anderson recently has given a lecture indicating this to be the direction of his own Psalm research. In such a move, care must be taken that categories are not used which encourage a kind of a religious privatism, for the experience of disorientation and reorientation concern public as well as personal issues. It is important that Westermann has included both personal (personal lament, thanksgiving song) and public (communal lament, hymn) songs in his interpretation. Mary Douglas, Natural Symbols (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973), has shown the close and reciprocal relationship of public symbols and personal involvement either in embrace or revolt.

87 This is the "new creation" about which Mowinckel has hypothesized. Werner Meyer, Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen 'Gebetsbeschwörungen' (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1976) 331 (quoted by Delbert Hillers, "A Study of Psalm 148," CBQ 40, 1978, 332) speaks of a "newly won 'wholeness.'"

88 Ricoeur, Semeia 94.

89 See Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutic," 318-323, on language and world-formation. This central insight of the "New Hermeneutic" needs to be brought into relation with sociological realism. As it stands, the proponents of the New Hermeneutic seem uninterested in the actual shape of the new world. The practice of linguistic imagination must be coupled with political and economic realities. Thus the new world formed by Israel's new song was one in which the agenda of justice and righteousness were uppermost (Pss. 96:13,97:2, 10-12, 98:9, 99:4). Imagination is not an end in itself. It serves the new concrete human world that is promised and given by God. On the linkage of imagination and politics, see Wilder, Theopoetic, chapter 3, in which he likens early Christianity to "Guerrilla theater."

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