

# Sermons in the Psalms

WALLACE I. WOLVERTON

IT IS NOW a generally recognized finding of Old Testament form-criticism that the sermon emerged, and produced a distinguishable literary type, around the beginning of the seventh century B.C. Some of the more recent *Introductions* to the Old Testament, for example those of Eissfeldt, Bentzen, and Weiser,<sup>1</sup> make note of this type (*Gattung*) among the prose-forms of address. It may have had a poetical past, as Bentzen suggests; but in any case, we see it as a dominating feature in the later prophetic books, e.g. Jeremiah and Ezekiel.<sup>2</sup> It was a form ready to hand for the compiler of the Deuteronomistic Work of History; and Noth has shown how speeches of a parenetic nature were put in the mouths of the main characters to punctuate the chief periods of that history.<sup>3</sup> Indeed *historical perspective* joined with *parenesis* is a characteristic of these early sermons according to Eissfeldt;<sup>4</sup> that is to say, the saving history is their subject matter and a right response to the mighty works of God is their burden. The seventh century indeed was ideally suited to produce this form. "This excited time," says Bentzen, "with its cult-political reforms (Hezekiah and Josiah), arousing opposition and as a consequence creating propaganda, has contributed largely to a transformation of the old poetical, priestly and prophetic types. They were influenced by the *political* speech, and from this union sprang the *prose parenetic sermon*."<sup>5</sup> Even sixth century material in the Old Testament shows, it would seem, the further impact of this form, in the prose sections of Haggai and Zechariah 1-8,<sup>6</sup> in Deuteronomy 1-11 and 29-31, and in the afore-mentioned deuteronomistic redaction of the older historical books, Joshua to 2 Kings.<sup>7</sup> This finding of form-criticism leads Koehler to state with complete confidence: "In about 700 there began in Judah a great preaching activity which leaves its traces in all the writings of the second half of the seventh century. Where we meet with it, the sermon style is already mature and fully developed."<sup>8</sup> He suggests that the fathers of this preaching activity are to be found in the priesthood of Jerusalem. Eissfeldt

1. Otto Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2nd ed., 1956), pp. 17f.; Aage Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1952), Vol 1, pp. 207ff.; Artur Weiser, *The Old Testament: Its Formation and Development* (New York: Association Press, 1961), pp. 45-50.

2. Jer. 7:1-8:3 and Ezek. 20 are examples according to Eissfeldt.

3. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I* (Halle-Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1943), pp. 47f.

4. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung* . . . , p. 18 and Bentzen, *Introduction* . . . , p. 207.

5. *Introduction* . . . , p. 207.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung* . . . , p. 17.

8. Ludwig Koehler, *Hebrew Man* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1956), p. 168.

sees the influence of the Levites in this development;<sup>9</sup> von Rad believes they were indeed responsible for it.<sup>10</sup>

The occasions for sermons, or some form of address, were various. In general a religious gathering of some sort is to be presupposed. Prophets frequently spoke at times of religious festivals, as, for example, Amos at Bethel (7:12f.). Jeremiah's address in the gate (or in the open court) of the Jerusalem Temple was probably on some such occasion (7:1-8:3, cf. 26:2-6). For the most part, in the pre-exilic period at least, these were unscheduled and therefore might be considered interruptions to cult proceedings. But Haggai's address at the temple in 2:1-9, in view of the oracles already given before the completion of its rebuilding, may well have been expected, if not indeed scheduled. Zechariah's so-called night visions issue in oracles delivered to an assembly in the temple, and one gets the distinct impression that these were to some extent prepared and given over a period of time, and the hearing of them anticipated.<sup>11</sup>

Aside from these scheduled or unscheduled *prophetic* oracles there is a tradition for an address at the old amphictyonic gatherings, given by a priest or a leader *pro tempore*. This may have been one of the dominant features of these occasions. Joshua 24 and 1 Samuel 12 preserve this tradition. The charismatic leader in those early times was the one expected to speak. Von Rad's form-critical study of the Sinai pericope (Exod. 19ff.) yielded the following general order of events in a very early amphictyonic ritual:

1. *Parenesis* (Exod. 19:4ff.) with a historical presentation of events leading up to Sinai.
2. Recitation of the law (Decalogue and Book of the Covenant).
3. Promise of blessing (Exod. 23:20ff.).
4. Conclusion of the covenant.<sup>12</sup>

If this is correct the address came early in the proceedings. This was evidently before liturgical practice had become formalized in the manner we may assume was the case in Jerusalem after the establishment of the amphictyonic centre there. In the development of the Zion liturgy we would expect this tradition of an address to have been carried on, although with increased specialization of function, both its place in the liturgy and its content being regulated in some measure, and the delivering of it assigned to an authorized person. Here the speaker was probably a priest, although he might have been a "trustworthy" prophet. The content of this address, if the words of Joshua and Samuel are prototypes, was a recital of the sacral history, joined with exhortation to a right response. (We shall have occasion to note

9. *Einleitung* . . . , p. 20.

10. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), Vol. I, p. 221.

11. Zech. 3:6f and 8:9. Second Isaiah may well be a collection of sermons preached by the prophet of the Exile to a continuing Sabbath congregation. However, their original form was probably poetical rather than prosaic.

12. As presented by Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1962), pp. 27f.

how items out of the sacral history were *selected* for parenetic purposes.) It may also have preceded a recital of the covenant law, although this latter may have undergone a change of place in the proceedings.<sup>13</sup>

It is in a way surprising that we are so poorly informed about the orders of service in ancient Israel and that all we can do is to assemble hints from here and there as to what went on.<sup>14</sup> These, however, do tell us of addresses that took place, scheduled and expected on the one hand, unscheduled and intrusive on the other. A few of the Psalms seem to indicate that a cult prophet was on occasion permitted to speak. In Psalms 50, 81, and 95, for example, there are passages which display the form at least of the prophetic oracle; that is to say, God speaks in the first person to the worshipping congregation.<sup>15</sup> Psalm 50 appears to prepare for the recitation of the covenant law; Psalm 81 combines such a preparation with a brief citation from the sacral history, i.e. the rebellion at Meribah; and Psalm 95: 8–11 also contains a brief reference to the same event. In each case there is parenetic emphasis; and in the latter two cases there is a historical perspective. Now these Psalms are not put forward as examples of sermons in the Psalms but only to suggest that there was a *place provided* for them, or for a related form, in the Zion liturgy.<sup>16</sup> It is reasonable to suppose that in such case some control was exercised on what was to be said, and if an inspired address were to have a regular, or even occasional place in divine worship its contents would be approved for orthodoxy and relevance.

Before we can proceed further in this inquiry it is necessary to clarify what is meant by a sermon in the context of Israel's worship. We have already noted the characteristics which Eissfeldt indicated, namely, historical perspective and *parenesis*. A *liturgical* sermon, however, would have other characteristics. It would need to be a formal and approved utterance of some length dealing with the basic beliefs or doctrine in Israel's faith. And further to distinguish it from other types of utterances, even from the afore-mentioned sermon-like oracles of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah, it should have certain purely formal characteristics: (1) the speaker would have an audience which he would address in his own words, and not as if in God's words; (2) the discourse would have sufficient length

13. Weiser says: "This is the place for the sacral recital and the oral tradition of a brief compilation of regulations and lists of prohibitions collected in groups of ten or twelve commandments, partly for the purpose of impressing them on the memory . . ." (*The Old Testament* . . . , p. 51).

14. Ben Sira in Ecclesiasticus 50:11–21 comes nearest to a description of one of the typical services; but there is no indication of a priestly or prophetic oracle, or of any kind of homily. This, of course, does not rule out the possibility of a liturgical sermon on special occasions.

15. This is not the place to argue the question of cult prophets among temple personnel. Hermann Gunkel in his *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1933) is in any case not convinced by Mowinkel's contention (*Psalmstudien*, III, pp. 30ff.) that prophets gave these oracles. Rather, they were entrusted to the priests (pp. 374f.). He seems not to have convinced Weiser and Kraus (cf. their recent commentaries on the Psalms).

16. Bentzen writes: "Original parenetic oracles like Ps. 95 and 81 and 50 were probably joined to *rites* by which the covenant between Yahweh and Israel was renewed" (*Introduction* . . . , p. 160).

to produce an accumulative effect (logic, as such, is out of the question); and (3) the speaker's words would be *concerning* God, his nature, and his works, and not be addressed *to* God.

Be it noted that in Jeremiah 7:1-8:3 and Ezekiel 20 the orientation of God vis-à-vis his people is expressed in the old prophetic I-thou and I-them forms, while what we are now considering in criteria (1) and (3) is a He-them orientation.<sup>17</sup>

The psalms which at one time in their history seem to the present writer to have been liturgical sermons are numbers 78, 105, and 106. In their present form they are admittedly poetry. But they may not always have been poetry; in their present form they may be poetical adaptations of such prosaic presentations of the sacral history as we find in Joshua 24. We would expect to find them in poetical form if they were meant for occasional recital in the liturgy. There is even the possibility that this formal recital of the sacral history in poetic dress took the *place in the cultus* (*Sitz im Leben*) once enjoyed by the older prosaic recitals in the amphictyonic worship of pre-Davidic times. In the ordered worship of the Jerusalem temple we would expect some such arrangement. Be that as it may, we should be no more surprised to see them in poetic form than, say, the "sermons" of Second Isaiah. Let it be remembered also that the very style of poetry lent importance to inspired utterance in Israel. The Early prophets adopted poetry no doubt for this reason.

#### PSALMS 78, 105, AND 106 ANALYSED ACCORDING TO HOMILETICAL CRITERIA

*Content.* A liturgical sermon, we have said, would need to be a formal and approved utterance of some length which deals with the basic beliefs or doctrine in Israel's faith. We are indebted to Anton Jirku for his form-critical study *Die älteste Geschichte Israels im Rahmen lehrhafter Darstellungen*<sup>18</sup> to understand what those basic beliefs were. The longer "didactic presentations" which he studied appear in different forms (*Gattungen*): in a prose address such as Joshua 24, in poetry such as our psalms 78, 105, and 106, in a penitential prayer, Nehemiah 9, in a reported conversation, Judith 5, and in Stephen's sermon in Acts 7.<sup>19</sup> The earlier ones in this list, Joshua and our psalms, probably should not be regarded as simple abstracts of the main events in the Tetrateuch because each of these contains traditions which are not in those books and each makes a selection out of the total paradigm of events which best suits its parenetic purpose. They should be accorded, so to speak, their own life;<sup>20</sup> such didactic presentations did

17. Claus Westermann seems to use much the same criteria as proposed in numbers 1 and 3 to distinguish what he calls the "descriptive praise" (*beschreibendens Lob*) from the "reporting praise" (*berichtendes Lob*) among what Gunkel has generally called hymns: *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1961), pp. 24f.

18. Leipzig: A. Teichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung; Werner Scholl, 1917.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-40.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

not await the formation of the Tetrateuch. Indeed, as von Rad suggests, Joshua 24 represents a kind of credal framework upon which, or in expansion of which, the writers of the Tetrateuch composed their histories. That paradigm of events in its complete<sup>21</sup> outline is as follows, according to Jirku:

God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia to go to Canaan; but he sent Jacob to Egypt.  
 God freed the people from Egypt through plagues, and he raised up Moses as a leader.  
 At the Red Sea God destroyed the pursuing Egyptians  
 In the Wilderness he provided manna and quails for food, and he allowed Moses to bring water out of the rock.  
 The people angered God with the golden calf.  
 Moses sent spies into Palestine, and at their report the people refused to be led into the promised land.  
 There follows the mention of Dathan and Abiram, and sometimes, of the company of Korah.  
 The people were forbidden to fight against Edom, Ammon and Moab; but Sihon and Og were conquered.  
 There follows the episode with Balak and Balaam, the apostasy of the people at Baal Peor, and finally  
 The entrance into Canaan.

This is the basic material to draw upon for covenant-forming ceremonies such as we find in Joshua 24, or for covenant-renewal ceremonies implied in Deut. 29 and expressly stated in Neh. 9 at verse 38. *Selection from the total scheme was dictated by the purpose or central theme of a given didactic presentation*; enlargement or elaboration of certain items also served this purpose; and there was extension of the outline to include events following the entrance into Canaan in later sermonical or confessional formulations.

We shall undertake first an examination of Psalm 105. The present division between it and the psalm following is probably wrongly drawn; Psalm 105 should embrace the first three verses of Psalm 106, according to many commentators, as they do not suit the latter's mood. The *Halleluia* at the end of 105:45 was inserted after this wrong division had been made. Psalm 105 in its present form has as introduction an invitation to the elect people, "the offspring of Abraham," "the sons of Jacob," to praise Yahweh for his wondrous deeds (1-6). Its basic theme is Yahweh's covenant faithfulness in giving them the land which he promised (7-11; cf. 42-44, which is a restatement of this theme by way of conclusion). Those wondrous deeds by which he made his promise good are enumerated in 12-45. The following parts of the total paradigm are presented:

Abraham (12-15)  
 Journey to Egypt (16-25); (He inserts the Joseph story)  
 Choice of Moses and Aaron (26)

21. *Ibid.*, p. 3. It will be apparent from the following versions of the "didactic presentation" that Jirku omitted *the appearance of the cloud-and-fire-pillar* from this scheme. It should have been included.

The plagues (27-36)  
 Exodus (37-38)  
 Appearance of the cloud-and-fire-pillar (39)<sup>22</sup>  
 Provision of quails (40*a*) and of manna (40*b*)  
 Water out of the rock (41)  
 Entrance into the Promised Land (42-45).

The writer of Psalm 105 had a relatively simple task. By an accent upon the positive, so to speak, and by passing over that part of the canonical scheme which represents Israel's bad behaviour in the Wilderness period, he was able to emphasize without complicating his theme (7-11) the gracious, promise-fulfilling acts of God. *He made his selection to suit his purpose.* This psalm's close relation to Joshua 24 should be apparent. Of Joshua 24, Deuteronomy 6:20-24; 26:5-9, G. Ernest Wright says: "They are recitals of the great saving acts of God, and they provide the clue to the typical confession which the Israelite continued to make in later ages (cf. Ps. 72:12ff.; 78; 105; 136)."<sup>23</sup> Now concerning our psalm Lamparter is of the opinion that it had secured a firm place in the liturgy, probably in connection with the pilgrimage festivals.<sup>24</sup> But for the moment it is sufficient to note that with respect to content it makes the same kind of choice from the sacral tradition as was made by Joshua 24. Its parenetic emphasis is largely by implication, yet is expressed in verse 45. Yahweh did all these things for his chosen people "To the end that they should keep his statutes, and observe his laws," the recitation of which may be, we might say, the next thing on the programme.

The composer of Psalm 78 makes use of a large part of the basic outline, elaborates upon a few of its items, adds some material of his own, and extends the outline to include Yahweh's choice of Judah, Zion, and David. *The psalmist arranges the material to serve his homiletical purposes.* There is an introduction which invites his hearers to pay attention to his words about "the glorious deeds of Yahweh" which constitute a testimony to guide future generations (1-8). Then he comes to his special theme which, in an early statement (9-11) and final elaboration (56-72), forms a framework for the recital of the salvation history. That theme is the repudiation of Ephraim and its shrine at Shiloh, and the choice of Judah and Jerusalem. The items selected from the sacral traditions are as follows:

The plagues (12, 43-51)  
 Exodus and passage through the Red Sea (13, 53)  
 Appearance of the cloud and-fire-pillar (14)  
 Water out of the rock (15f.)  
 Provision of manna (17-25) and of quails (26-31)  
 Entrance into the Promised Land (54f.)

His additional material comes after the entrance into Canaan (56-72). This was forecast, as we saw, in verses 9-11. Verse 9, "The Ephraimites,

22. See preceding footnote.

23. *God Who Acts* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1952), p. 72.

24. Helmut Lamparter, *Das Buch der Psalmen II* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1959), p. 195.

armed with the bow, turned back on the day of battle," alludes to some event of which we cannot be certain. It was probably inserted in order to foreshadow the treatment given later in 56-72,<sup>25</sup> i.e. apostasy from Yahweh in the time of the Judges, judgment by the hands of the Philistines, the choice of David as a leader, and the selection of Zion as Yahweh's sanctuary.

Unlike Psalms 105 and 106, Psalm 78 is not, as Weiser says, "a question of giving an account of the history of early Israel, for instance after the fashion of a chronicle cast in rhymes, comparable with an epic poem. On the contrary, history is here reflected upon in a way which takes for granted that an account of this history has already been given the cult community."<sup>26</sup> The speaker's enlargement upon this provision of manna and quails is *his way of emphasis upon what is typological* in that event and, in a way, adumbrating Israel's apostasy in the richly productive land of Canaan. In his *use* of these and other past events he makes plain his theology of history. The history of Israel is paradigmatic, i.e., it displays a pattern: God's saving acts—Israel's disbelief, rebellion, false penitence—the provocation of Yahweh to wrath—his frequent forbearing and unexpected mercy. However strong the psalmist's Judaean bias may be, his preachment is: Do not presume upon the grace of God, or attempt to deceive him with insincere worship, or rebel against him. His method of development makes for a kind of long-windedness. It is far too long for anything but presentation by an individual. Its content and treatment reflect the Deuteronomistic school of thought which, as we saw, participated in the development of the sermon as a type.

We have already noted that the first three verses of Psalm 106 probably should conclude Psalm 105 as a part of its hymnic conclusion. Leaving 106:4-6 for later consideration, we may consider the historical part, 7-43, and its selection from the paradigm:

- The plagues (6-8 in only sketchy reference)
- Exodus, and passage through the Red Sea (9-12)
- Provision of manna and quails (13-15)
- Dathan and Abiram (16-17)
- The company of Korah (18)
- The golden calf (19-23)
- Dispatch of the spies (24-27)
- Apostasy at Ba'al Pe'or (28-31)
- The breaking of water out of the rock (32-33)
- Entrance into the Promised Land (34-42)

In contrast to the purpose of Psalm 105, this psalm is intended to induce penitence: "Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly" (6). The psalmist does not spare in his

25. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* HAT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1926), p. 342, would amend the text to remove the proper name, Ephraim, making it "unbridled children," but this is scarcely justified. I follow R. Kittel, *Die Psalmen* (Leipzig: A. Deichert Verlagbuchhandlung, 1914), p. 291, in regarding it a later intrusion.

26. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1962), p. 538.

recital of the sins of the fathers. His selection from the canonical outline of past events, primarily from the wilderness and conquest periods, provides him with adequate material for showing Israel's shameful behaviour in the face of Yahweh's saving acts. This dismal recital must have moved the congregation to penitence, the indispensable basis, according to the Deuteronomic theology, for hope in God's help; however, in this case the post-exilic teaching (found in Ezekiel) is present here: "Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power" (8). The parenetic emphasis of Deuteronomy is clear in verse 45:

He remembered for their sake his covenant  
and relented according to the abundance of  
his steadfast love.

They may take hope in the fact that their God has such a record for saving them from their well-deserved distresses. The psalm has also a much fuller treatment of the item "Entrance into the Promised Land" and betrays the Deuteronomic condemnation of failure to extirpate the heathen cults.

It is quite evident that these three psalms meet one of the requirements of a liturgical sermon, that it be a formal and approved utterance of some length which deals with the basic beliefs or doctrine in Israel's faith. There can be little doubt that their content is the canonical doctrine of the dominant school of thought.

*Form.* It is now necessary to examine their purely formal character. Our first criterion is that the speaker has an audience which he addresses, presumably, in his own words (i.e. he does not speak as a prophet in the I-thou form). Here we seem to be in some difficulty. It is necessary to account for the exceptions in this criterion of orientation.

Psalm 105 presents no formal exception as to orientation towards an audience, but verses 1 to 6 appear as an invitatory and contain numerous imperatives which call upon the people to "give thanks!" "sing!" "seek Yahweh!" etc. These are the earmarks of a hymn, as are the similar sentiments and moods of closing verses, e.g., Psalm 106:1-3, which we have restored to their proper place at the end of Psalm 105. It would appear that on the basis of the invitatory alone Gunkel would classify this psalm as a hymn; but it is not difficult to see that behind this later adaptation to hymnody we have a formal liturgical address by an authorized individual to a congregation. This address is represented in the body of this composition.<sup>27</sup> In view of the optimistic content of this declamation one can well envisage a festival setting in which Israel "rejoiced before the Lord" (Deut. 12:7, 12, 18; 14:26 etc.). And if this homily were early in the proceed-

27. 1 Chron. 16:8-36 reproduces parts of Psalms 105 and 106. Although this material is presented as a part of the hymn sung, one may suppose, at the time of the transfer of the ark described in 2 Sam. 6, it in no way corresponds to that occasion. It represents an intrusion between vv. 7 and 37 by a later hand than the chronicler. So A. Szörenyi, *Psalmen und Kult im Alten Testament* (Budapest: St. Stephen's Society, 1961), pp. 348f.

ings it could be regarded as a kind of keynote address for such a happy occasion.

Psalms 78 is in its entirety addressed to an audience. The introduction (1-4) in many ways suggests the orator's appeal for attention which characterizes Old Testament speeches.<sup>28</sup> The opening words show the influence of the wisdom school of thought when Israelite wisdom had become equated with the salvation history as presented in the Torah.<sup>29</sup> In any case *this* introduction may be a relatively late one. It is conceivable that the body of the psalm, the parenthetic address proper, may have once had another introduction more in the Deuteronomic tradition. Its present introduction scarcely warrants Gunkel's classification of it as a wisdom hymn. The orientation of the speaker throughout is towards his audience. We find no prayer-like utterances, or any words which purport to come directly from God as in a prophetic oracle.

Psalms 106 causes us some concern with regard to orientation. It will be noted, however, that the material with orientation otherwise than speaker-to-people comes at the beginning and at the end. Verses 8-46 contain the didactic presentation. Verses 4 and 5 (with which our psalm really begins) is a personal, prayer-like utterance; and verse 47 is a prayer said for the congregation. It is probably upon the basis of verses 6 and 7 that Gunkel has classified this psalm as a Lament of the People.

Both *we* and our fathers have sinned;  
           *we* have committed iniquity, *we* have  
           done wickedly.  
 Our fathers, when *they* were in Egypt,  
           did not consider *thy* wonderful works;  
*they* did not remember the abundance  
           of *thy* steadfast love,  
 but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea.

(vv. 6, 7)

Pronouns are italicized to indicate the orientation as firstly *we-to-Thee* (the second person is not explicit), then *they-to-Thee*, and finally, *they-to-Him* (the Most High). If Gunkel was moved by these verses to call this a public lament he was in error, for it is apparent that they do not represent any recitation by the people. Here is a simple identification of the speaker with his audience, in which it is natural to say *we*. It is true that the body of the address is a dreary account of Israel's petulant and insincere response to Yahweh's saving acts, and Yahweh's final decision to save them simply for the sake of his covenant. Such an account would have *induced* lament by the people; but it is not itself such a lament.

How then are we to regard these exceptions to the orientation that is characteristic of the didactic presentation? We may safely regard them, it

28. Bentzen, *Introduction* . . . , pp. 203f.

29. *Ibid.* Bentzen notes that the "aim of Wisdom literature is among other things to teach men to speak in proper forms and manners, and wisely" (pp. 2-4). The formal opening of Psalm 78 seems to be stylized, in this wisdom tradition.

seems, as successive adaptations to later changed uses of the psalm. Verses 4 and 5 betray a quite late use of the psalm as a *personal devotion*. Verses 6 and 7 represent the introduction proper in which the speaker makes identification with his audience; but it also marks a transition in 7d to the address proper with the words: "but (*they*) rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea." Verse 47 may well be a *congregational response to the sermon*. But it can scarcely warrant classification of the psalm as a congregational lament. Verse 48 is judged by most commentators to be a later literary conclusion to Book IV of the Psalms and is not to be regarded as an integral part of Psalm 106.

Our second formal criterion, namely that the discourse will have sufficient length to produce an accumulative effect, seems to have been met by these three psalms. The length is of course discernible, and it is such as to have made unlikely the recitation by the congregation, although in a later liturgical development these psalms may have been presented in large part by a trained Levitical choir. The accumulative effect can only be surmised, but in Psalm 78 it is not pressing the point to see as a result the dedication on the part of parents to undertake the religious education of their children; from Psalm 105 one can readily deduce the spirit of joy and thanksgiving which resulted from the recital of God's gracious acts in behalf of "his chosen ones"; and the result of Psalm 106 must have been actual moaning and sighing in the congregation. These accumulative effects were not reached by any appeal to logic, or by argumentation. "There is something of the *incantation*, a spell, in all OT speech," says Bentzen; and he quotes as follows from Lindblom (*Boken om Job*):

Nous cherchons, dans un débat, à nous persuader mutuellement à l'aide d'arguments réels ou logiques, en Orient on cherche à se convaincre l'un l'autre par la force qu'on peut apporter à ses paroles. Nous nous servons de preuves théologiques ou de faits positifs. Pour l'oriental, la discussion est une affaire de pur dynamisme. Pour lui, il s'agit d'employer la plus grande énergie possible, d'exciter le plus grand enthousiasme possible.<sup>30</sup>

Viewed as declamations or approved sermons it is not difficult to imagine their impact as event after event, picture after picture, made impression upon the assembly.

We have already anticipated somewhat our third criterion of form, namely, that the speaker's words will be *concerning* God, his nature, and his works, and will not be addressed *to* God. The only exception to this we found in Psalm 106 at verses 4 to 7c and 47 to 48, and these we saw were probably later additions when the psalm was given a different use. Introductions by way of address to the congregation to get attention (Ps. 78:1-4 and 106:6-7) might vary with time and occasion and orator. Invitatories such as Psalm 105:1-6 are hymn-like introductions which in the later choral rendition have replaced earlier orators' appeals, or so it

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 204f.

would seem to the present writer. While it is true that this criterion for the liturgical sermon is not decisive, for there is a tendency in the later psalms towards the descriptive type of praise, in psalms which may be dated in the general period when the sermon as a type is shaping up, it takes on additional importance.

#### DO PSALMS 78, 105, AND 106 CONSTITUTE A SEPARATE TYPE?

We have noted that Gunkel assigns them to different *Gattungen*: 78 is a wisdom psalm, 105 is a hymn, and 106 is a public lament in his classification; and the "Legend," which is what he calls the didactic presentation, is a constituent part of these psalms. They make up the seventh of Kraus's type classifications, and he calls them History Psalms (*Geschichtspsalmen*).<sup>31</sup> This is at least a classification by main content and is not dominated by introductory material, or by the outer framework as was the case with Gunkel's types. It would serve no purpose to list the classifications given by the many commentaries although it is interesting to note that Kraus calls Psalm 78 a Levitical homily as does Lamparter.<sup>32</sup> The superscription of one of the Syriac editions of the Psalms calls it "a homily to the people." Indeed it is apparent that of the three, Psalm 78 seems least disturbed by later adaptations. But one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one fairly clear case make a classification. In view of the different things which can happen to a psalm in the course of its history and use, we can see that the question of a single type for these three psalms is beside the point, especially with regard to our main concern, to wit, the evidence *within* these patently related recitations for the existence in the cultus of the formal homily. This indeed seems to be the case because these psalms, albeit now deflected from their original use, still betray the traits of their one-time character, which was the *liturgical sermon*.

If, as it appears, the sermon came into existence around the beginning of the seventh century in connection with efforts to reform the cultus, where else would we expect it to emerge but in close connection with that cultus? And if the present Book of Psalms represents the literary deposit of the cultus, i.e., a corpus of the words used, it should not surprise us to find traces in the Psalms of the sermon, one of the greatest and best forms of human instruction.

31. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen* (Wageningen, Netherlands: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960), Vol. 1, p. liv.

32. *Das Buch des Psalmen II*, p. 43.