

The International Congress of Old Testament Scholars at Copenhagen

THE International Organization of Old Testament Scholars, formed at the meeting of the Dutch Society for Old Testament Studies held in Leiden from August 30 to September 2, 1950, held its first Congress in Copenhagen from the 25th to the 28th August, 1953. The Congress was attended by over a hundred members coming from almost every country of Europe, from America, from South Africa, and from Australia. The programme included reading of papers, business meetings, short communications, a visit to the Carlsberg Breweries and a reception by Prof. Joh. Pedersen, Chairman of the Carlsberg Foundation, a reception at Christianborg by the Minister of Education, Prof. Hvidberg, who was himself a biblical scholar before taking up other duties, and an excursion to the palaces of Frederiksborg, Fredensborg, and Kronborg.

This is a brief summary of the papers.

Prof. G. R. Driver, of Oxford, led off by a very interesting paper on *Hebrew Poetic Diction*, in which he dealt with the problem of the existence of Aramaisms in the Old Testament and the way of recognizing them. He began by stating the principle that "the diction of Hebrew poetry owes much of its distinctive colouring to the Aramaic language; for, where two synonyms are in use, one in prose and the other in poetry, that used in poetry can often be traced to one or other of the Aramaic dialects". He then went on to define the term "Aramaism" and to point out the difficulty of distinguishing the Aramaic element from the genuinely Hebrew one. A test for recognizing Aramaisms is found in the existence of synonyms of which there is a very large number due to the parallelistic nature of Hebrew poetry. Poets make use of Aramaisms both to enrich their vocabulary and to give an archaistic savour to their compositions.

The next paper, *Josephgeschichte und ältere Chokma*, was by Prof. G. von Rad, of Heidelberg, who brought, or tried to bring, the story of Joseph into correlation with the early Wisdom literature of Israel. The original "Sitz im Leben" of this early Wisdom is said to be the Court, and Joseph is the personification of the ideal high Court official as represented by the maxims of the sages. Consequently, Prof. von Rad concluded,

the story of Joseph has neither a historico-political, nor a cult-aetiological nor a soterio-theological character; it is only a didactic narrative belonging to the early Wisdom literature with strong Egyptian influences.

Prof. Th. C. Vriezen, of Gröningen, spoke on *Eschatology and Prophecy*. Eschatology is the doctrine of the last things, whether it is the end of the world and the beginning of a future life or the end of present conditions and the inauguration of a new era. What was the prophets' teaching about this problem? Prof. Vriezen began by inquiring into the sense in which the word *eschatology* must be taken. Although the prophets speak both of the future in general as well as of the end of the world, it is preferable, Prof. Vriezen said, to take eschatology in a wider sense, that is to say, in the sense of the termination of the present state of things and the inauguration, within the framework of history, of a new era. It is this historical eschatology which the prophets have taught. Prof. Vriezen distinguished four periods in the prophetic teaching: (i) the pre-eschatological, or, we should say, the pre-prophetic period characterized by the expectation of a political renovation bringing back to Israel the splendour of David's age; (ii) the proto-eschatological period, or the period of Isaiah and his contemporaries; (iii) the actual-eschatological period, or the period of Deutero-Isaiah and his contemporaries; (iv) the apocalyptic period characterized by a transcendentalizing eschatology in which salvation is expected to come not in this world but either in heaven or in a new world.

Père R. de Vaux O.P., of Jerusalem, seizing the occasion of the second centenary of the publication of Astruc's *Conjectures*..... (1753), made a brief but lucid survey of Pentateuchal criticism since the time of Astruc. He challenged the classical documentary, or the Wellhausen, theory and laid down the lines of a new theory. The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, according to Père de Vaux, is not to be understood in the sense that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but in the sense that Moses is the centre of the traditions enshrined in it. The four documents of the Wellhausen school are maintained, but they are changed into traditions which originated in different places or sanctuaries, were handed down orally, and were finally put into writing at a much later date. Père de Vaux recognized his indebtedness to the Scandinavian school, which postulates a

period of oral transmission before the written composition of many of the books of the Old Testament. Père de Vaux very wisely proposed his theory not as a solution of a problem which will certainly engage the attention of critics for many years to come, but simply as *reflexions*, following in this respect the modesty of Astruc who called his theory *Conjectures*.

Prof. S. Mowinckel, of Oslo, read a paper on *The Hebrew equivalent of Taxo in Ass. Mos. ix*, in which he successfully tackled an important textual and exegetical problem in the apocryphal book *Assumptio Mosis*, which has been preserved in a Latin translation, but was, very probably, originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic and translated into Greek and from Greek into Latin. In ch. 9 mention is made of a pious Levite called Taxo, who exhorts his seven children to withdraw in the desert and to be prepared to die rather than transgress the commandments of the Lord. The identity of this mysterious personage and the interpretation of the name Taxo have been, for a long time, a matter of keen discussion. Prof. Mowinckel proposed the following interpretation: Taxo is a Latinized form of Greek *tacsón*, a future participle of the verb *tasso* 'to order, to regulate'. For the dropping of final *n* cp. Platon = Plato, Zenon = Zeno. But as the Greek text is a translation of a Hebrew original, the word *tacsón* must represent a Hebrew word meaning 'Orderer'. From the fact that in the Jewish-Greek philosophy there exists a close connexion between the Hebrew *hōq*, *hūqqa* 'laws of nature' and the Greek *tácsis* 'order', Prof. Mowinckel has inferred that the Hebrew word underlying the Greek *tacsón* is *mehōqeq* which means 'commander' and 'commander's staff'; in Sir. 10, 5 it implies the idea of spiritual leadership. There is, therefore, every reason to believe that Taxo is not a proper name but a title of one who enjoyed authority among the members of his sect on account of his learning and piety.

Prof. B. Gemser, of Pretoria, dealt with a very interesting problem of Hebrew Law, *The importance of the Motive Clause in Old Testament Law*. Starting from a consideration of the fact that many of the Hebrew laws are motivated by some religious or ethical reason and comparing the Israelite law-codes with those of other neighbouring peoples, Prof. Gemser arrived at the following conclusions: the motive clause is a peculiarity of Old Testament law and does not occur in any of the law-codes of the Ancient Near-Eastern peoples. The motive of the law

may be explanatory, ethical, religious, including cultic and theological motives, and historico-religious. The reason of this peculiarity of Hebrew law must be sought in the nature of the law-collections which were intended for the people rather than for jurists. Sometimes the motive clause is phrased as a proverb, as in Ex. 23, 8, and it is well known that among certain peoples proverbs have the force of legal maxims. Therefore, Prof. Gemser concluded, the occurrence, in the Book of Covenant, of a proverb cannot be considered as a gloss but as a survival of ancient legal procedure.

Dr. I. L. Seeligmann, of Jerusalem, dealt with the problem of early Midrash exegesis, *Voraussetzungen der Midrasch-exegese*, contrasting the modern approach to the Bible with that of the ancient interpreters. Modern exegesis endeavours with all the resources at its disposal to bring back to life a world that is both distant and different from ours. On the contrary, ancient interpreters identified the world of the Bible with their own, transferring the biblical thought to their own age and in their own writings. The purpose of this paper was to demonstrate this assertion by a close examination of some aspects from the early history of the Midrash or, more correctly, by means of some considerations of the transition of the biblical thought in that of the Midrash. In Dr Seeligmann's own words, the paper was intended "to bring out the relations between the origin of Midrashic exegesis and biblical literature and thus to make a contribution to a better understanding of both".

The Midrashic material is extraordinarily great. Besides the Midrash, one has to examine the New Testament writings, the apocryphal and pseudo-epigraphic books of both Testaments, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Midrashic exegesis is rather artificial than logical. Sometimes a single literary motif is differently elaborated into different narratives. This fluidity of motifs and narratives has developed two different classes of literary devices, namely association of ideas, double meaning of words, assonance and word-plays, and adaptation i.e. the transference of a thought or narrative from its original setting to a later and different one. All these literary and exegetical factors are common to both the Bible and the Midrashic writings.

Prof. T. H. Robinson, of London, spoke on *Hebrew Poetic Form* with special reference to *The English Tradition*. Hebrew poetry differs essentially from that of Greece and that of

Rome It was Lowth who, just two hundred years ago (*De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum*, 1753), laid the foundation of metrical studies by recognizing in Hebrew poetry a rhythm of thought, which he called *parallelismus membrorum*, and a rhythm of sound or metre. For over a century there was little advance on Lowth's theory. But metrical studies took a new turn in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Prof. Robinson made a survey of the works of Ley, Budde, Sievers, and Schlögl. But English scholarship, Prof. Robinson remarked, lagged behind. Gray's important work, *Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (London, 1915), has not received the attention it deserved. Gray distinguished three kinds of parallelism: 'Complete parallelism', in which the second part of the line corresponds exactly to the first; 'Incomplete parallelism', in which the correspondence is only partial and incomplete; and 'Formal parallelism' or 'Numerical parallelism', as Prof. Robinson would call it, which corresponds to Lowth's 'synthetic parallelism' and is no true parallelism at all. Prof. Robinson then expressed his own views, which may or may not be universally accepted. He distinguished between sense-rhythm and sound-rhythm. Sense-rhythm consists in a certain balance of thought in the two parts of a line; sound-rhythm is the number of accents or, as they are sometimes called, sense-giving words in each part of the line. Regularity of rhythm does not necessarily imply rigidity of form; and it is most unsafe to amend the Hebrew text in order to reduce a poetic composition to a strictly rigid pattern. Prof. Robinson concluded his paper with the remark that our knowledge of Hebrew poetical forms has considerably advanced since the days of Lowth, and that recent research has at least laid a solid basis for a reasonably consistent system that will help us to read Hebrew poetry as the Hebrew poets themselves meant it to be read.

Hebrew Rhetoric was the subject of a paper by Prof. J. Muilenburg, of New York. Limiting himself to repetition as a feature of Hebrew style, Prof. Muilenburg spoke of various forms of repetition. Sometimes the verbal root is repeated to give a special energy and movement to the idea expressed by the verb, as *galgal* from *gall* 'to roll'. Sometimes a word is repeated for the sake of emphasis, as 'bad, bad' i.e. very bad (Prov. 20, 14); 'holy, holy, holy' i.e. supremely holy (Is. 6, 3), and in order to express a strong emotion more effectively, as 'My God, my God' (Ps. 22, 1), 'My son Absalom, my son, my son) (2 Sam.

18, 33). Besides this sort of repetition, which Prof. Muilenburg called 'elemental or primitive iteration', there are many other varieties of repetition; thus Jotham's fable in Jdg. 9, 8-15 is characterized by the repeated recurrence of the same type of sentences. The same phenomenon occurs in Job's apologia (ch. 31) and in Amos' oracles against the nations (chh. 1 and 2). Refrains, the repetition of the first line of a poem at its end, as in Ps. 8, the repetition of central key-words throughout a poem, as well as repetitive parallelism are other forms of stylistic repetition. Hence it is extremely precarious to delete as additional matter words and verses simply because they repeat what has already been said.

Prof. A. R. Johnson, of Cardiff, read a paper on *The primary meaning of the root "ga'al"*. The verb *ga'al* and its derivatives are generally used in the sense of 'to avenge a kinsman's blood or death, to redeem one's property or person', man and his property being linked together and vitally bound up with the tribe-group. But the basic meaning of the v. *ga'al* is said to be 'to cover', a meaning which is required by the context in Job 3, 5. This has developed another meaning, 'to protect', as in the Song of Moses, Ex. 15, 13. It follows that Yahweh, who delivered his people from Egypt and later from Babylon, is their *Protector* and Israel his *protégés*. Consequently whenever Yahweh is called the Redeemer (*go'el*) of Israel, he should rather be called their Protector.

Prof. A. Dupont-Sommer, of Paris, dealt with the problem of the origins of the Aramaeans, *Sur le début de l'Histoire Araméenne*. The first mention of a people, or peoples, called Ahlamu-Aramaeans occurs in the inscriptions of Tiglatpileser I (1116-1090 B.C.). The relation between the two names is not clear. Mention of the Ahlamu occurs in the El-Amarna letters of the 14th cent. B.C. To-day, however, our documentary evidence goes further back. An inscription of about the year 2006 B.C. mentions a people called *Arami*, and another of the year 1994-1985 has a proper name *Aramu*. Both names are very probably to be identified with the Aramaeans. Mention of the Aramaeans occurs again, at least very probably, in texts from Mari (19th cent.), from Ugarit (14th cent.), and other unpublished texts. The Aramaeans, therefore, must have settled in Mesopotamia 2000 years before our era. The problem of the origin of the Aramaeans is important to Old Testament studies in view

of the relations of the Israelites with the Aramaeans. Abraham's family settled down at Aram Nahrayn (Gen. 11, 31); Bethel, Abraham's nephew, is called Aramaean (Gen. 25, 20; 28, 5); Jacob is described as the wandering Aramaean (Deut. 26, 5).

The last paper was by Prof. J. Lindblom, of Lund, who spoke on *The political background of the Shiloh oracle*. The Blessing of Jacob, which is read in Gen. 49, is a tribe poem, both epigrammatic and prophetic in character. Ruben enjoys superiority over the other tribes. Joseph is brave in war, blessed by God and consecrated to Him. Judah will have a position of superiority over all the other tribes and power over foreign nations, and will continue to exercise his power until he comes to Shiloh. All this points to the first years of David's reign or, more precisely, to the time when David was still in Hebron. At that time Ishbaal, Saul's son, reigned in Transjordan, the territory assigned to Ruben. Joseph had no king, but it had a sanctuary at Bethel, while Jerusalem, in the tribe of Judah, had not yet been made a place of cult for all Israel. Judah had a king, David, whose kingdom was to extend so as to comprise the Northern tribes represented by the name Shiloh. Prof. Lindblom's thesis is "that the poem was composed during the seven years and six months that David was king in Judah and resided in Hebron".

Two more papers, one by Prof. I. Engnell, of Uppsala, *A critical examination of current views on Hebrew prophecy*, and the other by Prof. A. Parrot, of Paris, *Autels et installations cultuelles à Mari* were not read as the speakers were unavoidably absent.

Besides the reading of these papers, some short communications were made. Prof. E. Hammershaimb, of Aarhus (Denmark), called attention to the need of a new critical edition of the Peshitta. His suggestion was unanimously accepted and a committee under the presidency of Prof. D. Winton Thomas, of Cambridge, was set up. Prof. L. Rost, of Berlin, announced the forthcoming publication of the following works: 1. a re-issue, in a new form, of Sellin's *Kommentar zum Alten Testament* (1956-1960); 2. the 6th vol. of the series *Pallästina-Literatur* compiled by P. Thomsen; 3. a Concordance to the Hebrew Bible based on Kittel's edition and prepared by Dr G. Lisowsky and Prof. Rost himself. Prof. C. E. Sander-Hansen, of Copenhagen, spoke of his plans for the publication of Coptic

biblical texts, beginning from the Sahidic fragments of the N.T. Prof. A. Gil Ulecia, of Madrid, drew the attention of all present to an important and unpublished manuscript of the Vulgate that has been found in Spain but has not been utilized in the great Benedictine edition. Père de Vaux, of Jerusalem, gave an informal but extremely instructive talk on the latest discoveries in the Herbet Qumran cave. The literary finds include: another copy of the "War of the Children of Light"; an older form of the "Manual of Discipline"; an anthology of Messianic prophecies; and other documents, some of them in a very poor condition and still awaiting decipherment. Nearly the whole edifice has been excavated in March-April 1953. The edifice was built about the year 100 B.C. as the dwelling-place of a Jewish sect, probably the Essenes. The edifice was destroyed by an earthquake and rebuilt by the same community. It was again destroyed in 66-70 A.D. It was rebuilt a third time, but not for the needs of the community. It was finally destroyed during the second Jewish War and never built again.

Père De Vaux was elected President of the next Congress, which will be held in France at Strasbourg, in 1956.

The full text of the papers may be read in the *Congress Volume*, which is the first of a series of Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*.

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