

## PSALM METHODOLOGY

It is so easy to categorize them as songs of praise. Take the 150th. What is going on there? Now I'm not sure. There is a prelude and a postlude; and this happens, as you know, in several psalms--maybe all told ten; six of them I think are at the end. I think maybe the psalmist is walking into the center, walking out of nowhere to the center, and the spotlight is down in the deeps, the single spot, is on him as he comes in; and I think he turns something like this and he says: "Praise the Lord!" And then suddenly the lights come up in the arena slowly, very slowly as the group begins something like a chant which becomes wilder and wilder and the lights get brighter and brighter. And as they get brighter in the arena they dimly come on in the gallery and before they finish the whole of the coliseum is flooded in light, and in the midst of the light increasing in intensity the people have risen to their feet and the noise has increased many-, many-fold until finally it is something like an orgy is going on. And suddenly at the end, pitch darkness for a second is there and then the single light comes on the psalmist once again as he walks off into nothing and he gives the postlude, "Praise the Lord!" I don't know. Think on this. I think if you don't get the staging of it we probably never will know what is going on.

Repeat after me: . . . . .

I'm slowly reaching the conclusion that the only conversation you can have on the psalms is the one we piddled with just a little bit, and that is reconstructing--no, that's not right--creating the drama that induced the psalm. Now you will notice that that is exactly the opposite from our Spirit Conversations. You start with the drama, concrete drama in your life--like Mrs. Elizabeth Black who was my sixth grade teacher, and the drama of the relationship of young Joe and Mrs. Black. And you begin that and then push through it to the transparency; push through it, if you please; push into it. With the psalm you start beyond the transparency and then you have to create a play that induced this experience. Nobody ever wrote a play that was not dealing with his own life; but it is his own life pushed into the universal if he knew what he was doing. This is again quite the reverse of the Spirit Conversations in which you begin with the utter particular. Now when you write this play, sure you are dealing with your own life, but the universal in the sense of what it means to be human. Hess brought me this Steppenwolf from Hesse and had underlined this statement or two:

It was not in my power to verify the truth of the experiences related in Harry's manuscript. I have no doubt that they are for the most part fictitious; not, however, in the sense of arbitrary invention. They are rather the deeply lived spirit events he has attempted to express by giving them the form of tangible experiences.

That has said much better what in my stumbling way I have tried to get said about those plays, those dramas we write. I want to say one other word there. I wonder if this is the conversation. Everything else we do is almost direct pedagogy. Maybe I'd better change it: it is direct-indirect pedagogy--other kinds of conversations we have. I'm not quite sure about this, but if we assume that something close to what I've said is correct, then we need to think through the methodology of holding that kind of conversation--I don't like that word.

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I SET THE CONTEXT		II CREATE THE DRAMA		III READ THE PSALM		IV POSE THE QUESTIONS	
A Definition	Poems	A Stage #97	Cyclorama	A Speaker #35	One Speaker	A State of Being #69	What was Going on?
	Songs		Panorama		One or Three Psalms		What was Happening?
	Prayer		Colosseum		Voice		Where was he standing?
	Hymns		Theatre in Round		Put being Into it		What was his State of being
B Recover Psalms	Backbone of Hours	B Speaker/ Audience #145	Psalmist	B Action	Stand	B Polarity of Tension #91	Man-Man
	Luther Taught Psalms		God-Mystery		Sit		Man-God
	Wesley wrote on Psalms		Theatre audience		Bodily gestures		Man-Himself
	3 parts said every 3 hours		Masses		Facial Expression		Man-Enemies
C Types #73	Exhortation	C Setting #18	Spot lights	C Mood #23	Appropriate to Psalm	C Imaging #36	What image did you hear
	Praise		Rheostat		Timing		What images did they invoke
	Imprecatory		Dialog. with 3 audiences		Make Breaks at at role change		What was exper. Psalmist had
	Dependence		Psalmist in Center		Describe Dynamic		Describe the Psalmist
D Description #139	Wild	D Theme #91	Destruction	D Post-Reading	Pause	D Happening within happening #29	Turn to your happenings
	Out of Suffering		God's Sovereignty		Short Course		What happened to you as listened
	Spirit Man		Love of God		Free Response		What holds the Mystery for you
	New literary style		Death		Unstructured		What hurled you to the center

T. 20

P 2