ON PSALM 93

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Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version updated edition.

There are three basic types of parallelism in biblical poetry.

synonymous parallelism (lines A and B say similar things)

example: Isa 62:1a—

For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,

and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest,

antithetic parallelism (A and B say contrasting things)

example: Prov 13:3—

Those who guard their mouths preserve their lives;

those who open wide their lips come to ruin.

synthetic parallelism (A is completed by B)

example: Isa 45:12—

I made the earth,

and created humankind upon it . . .

Notice that in Ps 93:1-5 the parallelism is largely synthetic. An element from A is repeated in B, then B *adds to* the repeated element. (This creates a surging effect, which was probably amplified by the music of the instrumental accompaniment.)

The Lord is king, he is *robed* in majesty;

the Lord is *robed*, + he is girded with strength.

He has *established* the world; it shall never be moved;

2 your throne is *established* from of old; + you are from everlasting.

3 *The floods have lifted up*, O Lord, | A + B are synthetic parallelism,

*the floods have lifted up* + their voice; | but B + C are synonymous

*the floods lift up* their roaring. | parallelism.

4 *More majestic than* the thunders of mighty waters, | A + B are synonymous parallelism,

*more majestic than* the waves of the sea, | but B + C are synthetic

*majestic* + on high is the Lord! | parallelism.

5 Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.

St Paul said (Rom 1:19-20), “For what can be known about God is plain to them [people], because God has shown it to them. 20 Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.” St Thomas Aquinas called this process—inferring from creation to God—*analogy*. We don’t know God directly, but analogies between creation and God allow us to infer his existence and characteristics.

Which characteristics of God does Ps 93 describe?

Verse 1 describes God’s majesty. (It also refers to God’s “strength,” or omnipotence.)

Verse 2 describes God’s omnipotence.

Verse 3 describes creation’s majesty (the majesty of ocean waves).

Verse 4 describes God’s majesty (he is *more* majestic than the ocean).

(On verse 5: after the Babylonian exile [587-539 BCE], the Mosaic Law [the 613 laws found in Genesis through Deuteronomy] became increasingly important to Judaism. So it’s not uncommon to find, at the end of a psalm, an added verse praising the Law.)