



BIBLICAL STUDIES SERIES

DISTRIBUTED BY THE COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD, 210 NORTH BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63102

CRITICAL STUDY AND THE EXODUS PERICOPE

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Biblical Studies Series #3
May 1973

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CRITICAL STUDY AND THE EXODUS PERICOPE

INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to say what is the best way to proceed in treating all the problems which cluster around the Exodus accounts. We have to try to do some justice to the texts themselves in their historical particularity as well as to focus on the issues currently under discussion in our synod.

We propose to develop the subject under the following headings: I. General remarks on the documentary hypothesis today; II. Cursory exegesis of the pericope, attempting to highlight problematic and crucial points; III. Concluding and summary remarks concerning higher criticism, including pertinent issues which do not explicitly surface in the Exodus accounts.

A typical source analysis of Exodus 13:17 - 15:26 is supplied at the end of the article. The adjective "typical" must be stressed but also qualified. The appended analysis, reproduced from W. Harrelson, Interpreting the Old Testament, 1964, is relatively restrained. Others, especially earlier ones, tended to indulge in far more minute dissection.

Archaeology and other factors have often forced severe modification of earlier hypotheses about Israel's history and the evolution of her religion, but the documentary hypothesis itself, in one form or another, has not generally been abandoned. Perhaps the greatest constant has been the consistent anti-supernaturalism. Archaeology, however, cannot speak one way or the other to such theological or confessional matters, where, of course, the real issues lie.

A good strictly historical evaluation would be: John Bright, "Modern Study of Old Testament Literature", pp. 13-31 in G. E. Wright (Ed.), The Bible and the Ancient Near East (Doubleday, 1961). Let Bright himself summarize (in the new edition of A History of Israel; Westminster, 1972, p. 69): "The documentary hypothesis still commands general acceptance, and must be the starting point of any discussion. Though the reconstruction of Israel's history and religion developed by Wellhausen and his followers would find few defenders today, and though the documents themselves have come to be regarded by most in an entirely new light, the documentary hypothesis itself has not been generally abandoned. Even those who announce their abandonment of the methods of literary criticism for those of oral tradition still feel obliged to work with blocks of material corresponding roughly to what is designated by the symbols J, E, D, and P."

Attention is also called to Norman Habel's Literary Criticism of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

I. GENERAL REMARKS ON THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS TODAY

As the quotation from Bright indicates, it is not easy to generalize about the documentary hypothesis today. Sometimes assertions are made which suggest that virtually no one accepts it any longer. That, however, is defensible only if one adds "in precise Wellhausenian form" or the like. Others leave the impression that nothing has really changed since Wellhausen's classical presentation, and that is scarcely true at all. The truth lies somewhere in between, but precisely where depends upon with whom you speak. It may well be true, as is often asserted, that some version continues to be maintained as much because of inertia as for any other reason. Potshots have come from all directions from within criticism itself, but no alternative has really been offered. (Especially H. H. Rowley is often quoted as declaring his willingness to accept something more satisfactory, if that option were available.) These generalizations hold both with respect to the relatively technical aspects of the theory and to the broader theological or hermeneutical context within which it is deployed.

Hence, we should speak of historical-critical method with great reserve. There can be no communication, let alone a meeting of minds, if we are using different dictionaries.

It is probably safe to say that Harrelson and Bright, quoted above, represent the conservative end of the critical spectrum. They were chosen deliberately in order to avoid the charge of having set up some unrepresentative straw-man, or of having otherwise indulged in caricature (although, because of the bewildering variety that inheres in "liberalism", that is by no means easy to do).

Another recent middle-of-the-road discussion of the book of Exodus in general is: Dewey Beegle, Moses, The Servant of Yahweh (Eerdmans, 1972). A more radical version is easily accessible in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. II, p. 193 (taken from: J. Carpenter and G. Harford, The Composition of the Hexateuch, 1902). G. E. Wright's accompanying remarks add much perspective. Attention may also be called to an equally radical presentation, but from a somewhat different "traditio-historical" perspective (attempting to penetrate behind the literary sources to earlier oral and cultic roots), by the noted German scholar, Martin Noth, whose influential 1948 work has just been rendered into English:

A History of Pentateuchal Traditions (Prentice-Hall, 1972).

The basic evidence and argumentation can be found in Old Testament introductions, pro perhaps best in Driver, Eissfeldt, and Fohrer; con in Harrison, Unger, and Young.

There seems to be general critical agreement that the isolation of sources is much more difficult in Exodus than in Genesis (especially in chapters 32-34 and 19-24). Chapters 25-31 and 35-40 are readily attributed to "P", but in and of itself that may only be belaboring the obvious because of the almost exclusively rubrical (i.e., naturally "priestly") nature of the material.

One may perhaps venture some summary by subsuming the usual argumentation (also outside of the Pentateuch) under three headings: (1) literary; (2) historical; and (3) theological. However, the three types often overlap. All three also easily present spurious "evidence" or an "argument in a circle", if some evolutionary or developmental axiom is allowed free sway without positive reinforcement from "hard" external evidence or truly scientific research. In none of the three is it a priori evident that the movement must have been from simple to complex, as is often assumed, and increasing evidence often points in precisely the opposite direction.

A. Literary Clues

Nevertheless, some signs of favorite usages in certain clusters of material - for whatever reason - seem undeniable. There are the well-known different preferences for the name of the deity (as also in Books I and II of the Psalter), and many others. For example, in our pericope, one can scarcely deny that the "P" and "J" columns can be read independently as basically complete, coherent accounts. Especially in the "P" column it is easy to note the repetition of certain phrases. The three main ones ("harden", "get glory", "know") all appear for the first time in 14:4. They have parallels also in other "P" material and in the book of Ezekiel. Especially "glory" is a concept of first-rate importance in biblical theology (into which we, regrettably, cannot enter here). It plainly was especially at home in cultic contexts (whence its prominence also in Ezekiel). The only issue is whether it is also a sign of a "P" source. Whether one is convinced or not, it would appear that no theological issues as such need arise in such observations. All depends upon the interpretative superstructure in which such conclusions appear and in the accompanying value judgments, where the Gospel and the authority of Scripture may, indeed, be de facto denied at the very outset, as was the case with the classical, Wellhausenian "documentary hypothesis".

Under the "literary" heading of literary analysis come also the isolation of "doublets" or parallel accounts. It is not inconceivable that, somewhat as in the Gospels, more than one version of the same event has sometimes been preserved. The theological issues concern whether those versions are construed as basically contradictory or complementary. In many cases, of course, it can be challenged whether they really are "doublets". A certain "spiral" character, or tendency to recapitulate or repeat itself, often with minor variations, has long been recognized as characteristic of ancient Near Eastern poetic or epic style in general. It is also true that certain experiences are basically repeated in history and in individual experience. A classic example of this phenomenon may be the accounts of three men desiring a patriarch's wife (of Abraham twice in Gn. 12:10 ff. and 20, and of Isaac in 26:6-11). One certainly need not think here of varying accounts of one tradition. For better or for worse, it certainly is not true today that, once a woman marries, no man besides her husband ever looks at her again, and one suspects that it was not all that different three thousand years ago.

B. Historical Data

Under the caption of historical investigation come attempts to determine out of what situation and to what situation a given unit was written. On the one hand, this type of concern is at the very heart of anything worthy of the name "exegesis". On the other hand, unless the writer himself was explicit or one has other clear evidence, it is notoriously difficult to arrive at definite conclusions. The general confession that the uniqueness of the biblical faith is inextricably bound up with its rootage in empirical history should not be confused with the precise way in which the biblical writers made that confession, which was by no means always ours. "Kerygma" and facticity dare not be divorced. But the Bible's own accent on the redemptive significance of its history obviously often leads it to stress precise historical connection, chronological sequence, etc., much less than the modern reader might assume. Each writer must be investigated separately, and his ancient idioms need not be construed as any sort of "error". Beyond a certain point, then, excessive concentration on historical detail, so common in atomistic criticism, may lead one away from the Bible's kerygmatic intent rather than contributing to our understanding of it.

C. Theological Implications

Axioms of Religious Experience

Gratuitous axioms about how history had to develop have always plagued scholarship, and still do. Nearly always they are applied to the history of religion as well. That is, the "historical" and "theological" lines of investigation intertwine to a large extent. The mere dating of documents or sources may be as theologically neutral as the detection of them to begin with. Usually, however, that is not the case. Not only must the final date of the completed putative document be carefully distinguished from the date of its contents, but various value judgments must again be eliminated, at least within the context of a confessional understanding of Scripture. For example, it is hard to see how one can still confess one common divine authorship behind the multiplicity of human authors (in a way, no matter how many of these one postulates!) if their products are not construed as ultimately compatible and unifiable, especially in their respective theologies, but ultimately in other respects as well. Such a basic unity cannot finally be "proved" any more than it can be disproved. One either begins with the confessional axiom of unity, or (as is much more common in criticism) one does not. In practice, real theological unity, the traditional basis for a corpus doctrinae based on all of understanding of the Bible as a miscellaneous "record" of fallible, human attempts to articulate their religious experience ("revelation" understood as "encounter").

Specifically, the major axiological culprit has been the tacit assumption that "earlier = purer". Whether in Pentateuchal studies or in the "search for the historical Jesus", the assumption has generally reigned that the real authority is to be located somewhere behind the canonical text in some "pure", "natural" positivity which the researcher allegedly could (or at least should try to) isolate. Romantic, idealistic, and existentialist philosophies all tended to urge the assumption that the basic thrust of later development was in the direction of increasing institutional objectification and ossification via theology and ritual. The idea of divinity was allegedly brought under control by increased accent on transcendence, by "heightening" the miraculous element, etc. Obviously the liberal understanding of "revelation" as the emotion of subjective religious experience is the underlying axiom here. We are dealing not so much with the results of scientific research as illustrations of a dogma present at the outset. Were it not for the value judgments involved, one might not object to a mere "evolution outward", that is mere varying accents at various times and places, but rarely is that all one encounters in these investigations. If the final authority continues to reside in the canonical text, certain of such conclusions might be "baptized", but their overall importance is vastly diminished.

Explainable Faith

Perhaps above all, the confessional scholar has to disassociate himself completely from the typical "historical-critical" assumption that the biblical faith must be totally explainable on purely human grounds accessible to any historian (at least if he had all the evidence). Neither is the common existentialist retreat from the scientific world of space and time (including the biblical text!) into the pure interiority of subjectivity of "faith", "Gospel", "kerygma", etc., a viable option for the confessionalist. Mere "proof" or confession of facticity, like that of verbal inspiration in general, does not make it true for me and certainly does not make it Gospel for me until the Holy Spirit effects it, but neither does one have Gospel truth or true spirituality in the biblical sense apart from what is demonstrable in space and time. To admit, as Lutheranism especially always has, that reality is not synonymous with or exhausted in "substance" (quidditas), is something different from the essentially docetic assumption of much modern existentialism that the "Gospel" can be abstracted from the world of space and time. Similarly, to argue that "faith" will be strengthened if criticism has made it impossible to believe the Bible any more or know for sure what one believes, is not only nonsense on its face, in my judgment, but obviously is a spiritualistic, fideistic, docetic notion of "faith" that is as alien to the Bible as it is to historic Christendom. The biblical researcher may - and probably must - concentrate momentarily on the human or historical "side" or "aspect", and modern techniques may have much to contribute there, but only up to the point of contradiction in terms, a point inevitably reached whenever the integrity and veracity of the Scriptures and the Gospel are called into question.

D. Sources in the Pentateuch

The Yahwist

The "J" or Yahwistic source is generally considered the earliest. To what extent the Yahwist wrote "creatively" or to what extent he was himself dependent upon earlier, mostly oral and cultic, traditions is much debated. Earlier scholarship tended to date him in the ninth century in connection with the rise of the prophetic movement. Today that date is generally raised by at least a century, and he tends to be

read as an apologist for the "secularization" and other changes introduced in the Davidic-Solomonic empire. However, the Wellhausenian criterion that he should be earliest because of his "naturalness", his relatively minimal accent on transcendence, miracle, cult, etc., is still operative. At very least, the case for his date is not airtight.

The Elohist

"E" tends to be dated slightly later, because it is allegedly more "religious" and more particularistic (accent on covenant, law, prophecy, etc.). Partly for that same reason, it is usually seen as the northern (Israelite) parallel to "J", and concerned to legitimize theologically that country's existence. However, it is quite unanimously agreed in critical circles that E has been preserved only fragmentarily, the "JE redactor" allegedly having used it only to supplement J. One might think that, at very least, that might restrain confident assertions about E's theology, etc., but that scarcely appears to be the case. Many contemporary scholars (as e.g., Harrelson in our pericope) increasingly despair of separating J and E, and so speak only of "JE", of the "narrative source of the Pentateuch", or the like. Certainly it can be asserted that real grounds for dating E later than J are non-existent except with the help of evolutionistic criteria already described (and the unfortunate value judgments which usually accompany them).

The Deuteronomist

"D" remains the kingpin in the entire Wellhausenian reversal of the traditional sequence in the history of Israel's religion. The argument focuses on especially the alleged novelties of (1) the requirement in Deuteronomy that worship be centralized in Jerusalem and (2) that it be under the control of the Jerusalem (Aaronide, not merely Levitical) priesthood. Both of these Wellhausenian planks have been stoutly attacked in recent years. In most circles they have been modified somewhat, but one cannot say that they have been jettisoned. Regardless of its date, however, it must be noted that a "D" source is rarely isolated any more in the first four books of the Pentateuch. That is, instead of the Wellhausenian "Hexateuch" (including Joshua), the current tendency is to think rather of a "Tetrateuch", with Deuteronomy regarded as the theological introduction to the subsequent "Deuteronomistic History" (Joshua through Kings). In fact, the latter position has virtually become "critical orthodoxy" in the last decade, but cracks are again beginning to appear (Fohrer, Orlinsky).

The Priestly Source

"P", finally, will also still generally be regarded as the latest source, a product of the priestly originators of "Judaism" in and after the Exile, who also used it as the basic skeleton into which the other sources were incorporated. At the same time, archaeology has forced a gradual, grudging concession in many quarters that much of the contents of P may be as old as that in many of the other sources (sacrifices, priesthood, tabernacle, etc.). Much of P's distinctive vocabulary may, then, also be seen as largely determined by its predominantly liturgical interests.

Not only in P, but otherwise there has been a gradual tendency to find more "Mosaicity" throughout the Pentateuch -- if for no other reason than because of the realization that "committees don't make great decisions", or the like. Form and tradition criticism have pressed the search for the pre-literary sources, although these have by no means necessarily been associated with Moses. Thus Noth finds a "G" (Grundschrift) and Speiser a "S" (Source) behind any sources we can any longer detect. More typically, probably, the ultimate "Sitz im Leben" has been sought in "creative" liturgies or worship assemblies (and this, unfortunately, often pitted against facticity).

An influential theory of this sort which is germane to our discussion is J. Pedersen's hypothesis that Exodus 1-15, considered the core of the Pentateuch, gradually developed out of a cultic ceremony (Passover or its predecessors). Pedersen stresses that our text was not formed "by the mechanical combination of independent parallel expositions", but by the "annual reliving of historical events as it took shape down through the ages." Thus the account is not primarily history at all, but "cultic glorification", "events" on another level in which God is glorified, their continued relevance is proclaimed, etc. Technically, in form criticism, it is then a "cultic legend" (the noun not necessarily implying non-historicity, but usually tending to do so, or at least to reduce it to minimums, as is also the case here).

Other Proposals

A few, generally abortive, attempts have been made to divide the four main sources even further. Thus von Rad divides P into P^A and P^B, and Mowinckel splits J into J₁ and J₂ (similar to Eissfeldt's discovery of a L (ay), Fohrer's of a N (omadic), and Morgenstern's of a K (enite) source. However, these efforts usually have not impressed any but their propounders (and their Ph.D. candidates), and especially outside

of Germany, they have attracted virtually no following.

The mainstream has mostly flowed in the opposite direction. Not only has the literary dissection become much more restrained, as already noted, but a strong case has been made, especially in Scandinavia, for the assumption that the traditions were not written down until the Exile, but remained fluid and oral. While that viewpoint is usually regarded as extreme, the common admission that oral tradition probably continued to operate alongside of written documents has contributed to a more holistic outlook. However, even though the "scissors and paste" have become less prominent, it is doubtful if the general contours of the results of classical criticism have changed much as a result.

Potentially much more revolutionary is Frank Cross' strong argument that P can no longer be proved to be anything more than an editing and supplementation of JE. While few are ready to agree with this thesis, it does at least illustrate the vulnerability of the classical documentary hypothesis and how very far it is from being "proved".

Jewish Scholarship

A word about Jewish (that is, increasingly, Israeli) scholarship is surely in order. Understandably, Jews have been much more reluctant to abandon the Pentateuch to the critics than many Christians and in fact have often responded with the same visceral counter attacks that Christians have tended to reserve for radical form criticism of the Gospels. One might so characterize the labors of Segal, Cassuto, and Kaufmann, all of whom rejected the classical Pentateuchal criticism quite out of hand. However since they substituted other brands of "higher criticism", their labors in a way still make only negative contributions to any orthodox viewpoint. More recently, the tendency, especially in Israel, has been simply to ignore the various literary games and concentrate on more objective (and generally more positive) archaeological research. As relevant to our concerns here, especially the name of the American, Cyrus Gordon, should be mentioned. Although a bit of a maverick in the world of scholarship, Gordon's arguments in favor of tradition, based on Greek parallels in the eastern Mediterranean, have been influential, especially among conservatives.

One might also observe that the traumatic Jewish memory of the close de facto connection between much classical criticism and the anti-Semitism, often endemic also to German intellectualism, has until recently made Jewish scholars far more conscious than most of their Western counterparts of the often hidden, but nonetheless very real role of philosophy in a scholarship which was often not nearly as "scientific" as it liked to think. This was true in perhaps two major respects: (1) the whole Kantian heritage of a dichotomy between ontology and epistemology, one of the major subterranean causes of the subjectivism or historical and theological skepticism usually present to one degree or another; (2) philosophical idealism (especially that of Hegel) with its evolutionary dialectics, its accent on an anonymous "Volksgeist", which did not include Judaism, etc.

Evangelicals

We cannot conclude without a word also about the "evangelicals". Increasingly, their contributions do not consist merely of a ritualistic reaffirmation of traditional positions. Rather while maintaining traditional theological axioms, they also have learned much especially from archaeology regarding the ancient, Oriental character of the Bible and are often able to integrate the two. Perhaps the names of Bruce, Kitchen, and T. K. Harrison should be mentioned here and that we shall hear much more of these men and their congeners in the future.

II. CURSORY EXEGESIS OF THE EXODUS PERICOPE

A. Ex. 13:17-19 (E?)

To the extent that any attempt is still made to distinguish J and E, these verses may be attributed to E. After the long interlude of ritual matters, the basic narrative continues here from 12:39. However, it will be noted that the concern with the itinerary, does not pick up until v. 20. The narrative can be read continuously and coherently if v. 17-19 are omitted.

Divine Names

Other interests and usages often assigned to E are noticeable here. First of all, the generic name for divinity, "Elohim", is used instead of the personal name "Yahweh" (LORD), as in most of the rest of the pericope. It might be noted in passing that, regardless of the name used, the entire pericope strongly accents God's guidance; Moses is only the 'ebed, the servant. Also the interest in the bones of Joseph

expressed at the very end of the book of Genesis, is thought to betray a northern interest in the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two largest and most prominent of the northern tribes, and perhaps even a more immediate aetioloical interest if the alleged site of Joseph's tomb was already then shown to be near Shechem and "Jacob's well".

Does this constitute sufficient evidence for isolating an E source? One certainly does see how such a conclusion is possible, especially when similar couplings of theme and vocabulary are found in other sections of the Pentateuch. At the same time, it scarcely constitutes proof positive. The change in vocabulary may be partly due to a writer's desire for variety (cf. our own interchange of "God", "Lord", "Christ", etc.). In addition, there is ample evidence that the north-south political schism was never accepted theologically, so that one can scarcely assert that Joseph would have been of no later interest to the South. Of course, far graver issues are raised if it is assumed that these traditions have, or need have, no basis in fact. If they are factual, one more easily thinks of earlier sources too. Lateness of writing down relative to the events narrated need not militate against factuality, but in critical practice the two certainly have tended to go hand in hand.

Itinerary

The question of the exact route of the Exodus arises already in these verses as also throughout the report of the wilderness wanderings. It scarcely serves our purposes to discuss that issue at any length here. Theological issues arise only when some radical scholars all but assume that there were disparate traditions about the precise route. At very least, that certainly cannot be "proved", and in general our chronological distance and paucity of evidence would seem to demand great reserve in discussing such issues. John Bright's observation (in connection with a good general discussion of the issue, in A History of Israel, p. 121) is more to the point: "The precise location of the exodus was as little central to Israel's faith as is that of the Holy Sepulchre to Christianity." Perhaps the word "precise" in that quote should be underscored. As we stressed above, "historicity" or "facticity" is essential, but both conservative and liberal may construe the concept in some modern, Western way which is not exactly that of the Bible itself. Within confessional perimeters, of course, we should try to work as inductively as possible, allowing the Bible, ancient and Oriental book that it is, to define such terms (including "inerrancy") itself.

Philistines

One minor example may be provided by the mention of the "Philistines" here. If, as seems likely (and the more so if the Exodus is dated early, as some conservatives still prefer), the Philistines were not yet around at the time of the Exodus, their mention here is probably (although some argue otherwise) technically an anachronism (in order to communicate better with a later audience). However, it certainly is no "error", or at least does not have to be so construed, and one may suggest that a large share of the "errors" often alleged in the Bible are of this sort.

The Red Sea

Comment is also required on the "Red Sea" which we meet in 13:18 (as also in 15:4; elsewhere simply "the sea"). The Hebrew, of course, is yam suph, which, no doubt, technically translates as "Sea of Reed" not "Red Sea". The Septuagint is often blamed for having introduced the latter, erroneous translation, thus is often blamed for having introduced the latter, erroneous translation, thus encouraging the reader to magnify the miracle. To cross what we know as the Red Sea would really be a feat like a Cecil B. De Mille production, it is argued, while if nothing more than a marsh or swamp were involved, one could readily understand how a lightly equipped group might have considerable advantage over a highly mechanized army of chariotry. If one is thinking of post-biblical imagination, there might be merit in such argumentation, but scarcely in understanding the original Hebrew text itself, unless indeed one is grasping at every straw to "prove" that there was nothing metaphysically supernatural about the original event, but rather that "miracles are in the eyes of the beholder", that "the real miracle is the miracle of faith", etc. The literal, supernatural description of the miracle in the Hebrew text is there and must be faced one way or the other, regardless of precisely where the yam suph was.

What geographical notations there are in the text certainly do not point to the Red Sea, as we understand that term today, but to one of the smaller bodies of water between Suez and the Mediterranean, more or less along the line of the present Suez Canal. In fact, it is clear that Hebrew generally used yam or "sea" also of much smaller bodies of water than we usually do (e.g., the "Sea of Galilee", which we ordinarily call a lake). More specifically, it is plain that yam suph was used very broadly of the water on almost all sides of the Sinai peninsula, including what we know as the Gulf of Aqabah to the east, but not, of course, the Mediterranean to the north. Presumably the Septuagint translators were aware of the broad usage when they rendered it "Red Sea". Thus, it seems most unlikely that anything exegetically or theologically significant resides in that phrase as such.

B. Exodus 13:20-22

With v. 20 we pick up the mainstream of the Israelite's itinerary as they move toward their confrontation with the Egyptians.

The Pillar of Fire

Major issues arise in vv. 21-22 with their introduction of the "pillar of cloud" and the "pillar of fire" to guide the Israelites by day and by night respectively. When the literary analysis becomes more minute, these symbols are attributed to J in contrast to E's expressions the "angel of God" (14:19) and/or the "darkness" (14:20); cf. also Josh. 24:7 if that pericope is relatable to E, as early criticism had it. Sometimes a "P" description of the cloud as *kabod* or "glory" is further distinguished from these two terms. No doubt God's glory is a major theologoumenon in Israel's cultic language. But it is another question whether all associations with and conclusions about it will pass muster. Related to the issue is the frequent distinction between E's "tent of meeting" with the cloud coming down only to its door when God confers with Moses, and P's "tabernacle" (probably considered a later retrojection of Solomon's temple) which the *kabod* not only "fills", but which also leads them on their trek, as do the pillars in J. However, when such distinctions are so ragged and overlap in so many varying ways, one surely may ask whether they are not simply stylistic variations, or, at most, variations in accent, and scarcely signals of different sources at all.

Miracles

A related but deeper question is whether any of these were concrete objects in the empirical world of space and time or only objectifying "symbols" of "transcendence" i.e. Kantian word-games played with especially the latter expression. Here we confront the general question of "miracle". All sorts of theological and philosophical issues arise, only some of which we can broach now. They will become even more crucial in connection with the nature of the crossing of the sea.

Perhaps we should observe in general that if we are speaking only of the minimums necessary for saving faith (or only of the "Gospel in that sense), one might view such questions with equanimity. Obviously many play a sort of "resurrection minimalism" or a broader "Gospel reductionism", i.e., clearly affirming those minimums, but not much else, or at least asserting that not much else really matters ultimately. But who besides God really knows whether or not anyone has "saving faith" in his heart, regardless of his formulation? Is that all we are supposed to dare to worry about? If one asks also about confessionalism and its totality of doctrine, we obviously cannot be quite so indifferent. While, of course, the Scriptures do sometimes use mere symbols and while it is not unthinkable that that is true also at times when tradition thought otherwise, it still is a sound hermeneutical instinct to understand "one literal sense" (an elementary rule of all communication) to mean that the burden of proof lies with him who would depart from it. The old hermeneutical rule that "miracles are not to be unnecessarily multiplied" no doubt remains valid. But we are just as surely fighting windmills if we think our major problems today with respect to miracles lie in that direction. There usually are far graver exegetical crimes than "literalism", and it is surely preferable to err on the safe side, if err one must. If this is true in ordinary issues, it is all the more true when miracle is the subject, if we agree that we should veto positivism (anti-supernaturalism) and/or the Kantian-existentialist dichotomy of the "phenomenal" and "noumenal" (the objective world of space and time from the subjective world of the mind and/or "faith" and its "interpretation").

Myths

Such faith-constructs are commonly called "mythical" or even, "mythological". It must be stressed that such words can be heard in the neutral sense ("myth" much more easily than "mythological"), i.e., in the sense of "faith", "confession", "theology" or the like without any value judgments of any sort attached. However, one is naive or less than candid, if he is not also aware of the extent to which they usually flourish in the context of post-Kantian dualism. If they merely stress that theology or faith cannot be "proved" in the same way as scientific constructs (as no doubt classical Orthodoxy did sometimes come close to forgetting - but that is water long since over the dam), they may be serviceable in sheltered contexts where everyone uses the same dictionary. But very often it doesn't matter, or even that it is a reprehensible "objectification" of faith to want anything besides subjective "faith". It does not necessarily follow that those who would regard the pillars of cloud and fire as "mythical language" will likewise transmute the resurrection into mere "resurrection faith" or "resurrection experience". But, on the other hand, if one can believe that God really resurrects corpses, why boggle or fudge on a lesser miracle if one may so put it?

Anti-supernaturalist interpreters usually divide on whether these symbols are primarily religious adaptations of natural phenomena or whether they primarily represent the participants' experience of the divine presence, expressed in various images, perhaps derived from natural scenes. The former type of construction was more common in the age of strict philosophical rationalism, but one still meets it. Applied here, it argues that we have a transformation and application to Yahweh of the attested modern custom of Bedouin guides carrying a glowing brazier, before an army or caravan on the march, or in honor of important persons. The latter interpretation of such symbols, generally more popular today, might also appeal to such natural analogies, but views them as very secondary to the "revelation" itself (in existentialist jargon understood as the purely interior "encounter" or the like, of which all external expressions, verbal or otherwise, are quite secondary).

Finally we might also take note of Albright's intriguing hypothesis that the two enigmatic free-standing pillars in front of the temple, Jachin and Boaz, had braziers at their tops, and in Israelite context were supposed to recall the pillars which had guided their forebearers in the wilderness, in contrast to their cosmological meaning in pagan contexts where they apparently represented the pillars which were thought to hold up the earth).

C. Exodus 14:1-4

This section is attributed to P, partly because of its concern for detail, supposedly a characteristic of the school, partly because of the special vocabulary already noted ("harden", "glory", "know"). However, it may be noted that, if one checks a concordance or complete lexicon, the evidence for the use of these words in P and only P, especially outside the Exodus pericope, is singularly weak.

We shall not be distracted by itinerary questions again, except to note the gratuitous theory of some more radical critics that we have here an effort by P to reconcile two different traditions about the route.

Divine Communication

Neither should we get hung up on efforts to explain precisely how Yahweh spoke to Moses as well as in countless comparable situations in the Bible. Sometimes it tells us something of the external, phenomenal aspects of the process; sometimes it does not. Perhaps it needs to be stressed that the theological confession of inspiration concerns primarily the "that", but the "how" hardly at all. Nevertheless, the issue of supernaturalism remains. Do we really have here supernatural communication with Moses, regardless of the details, as held in the traditional understanding of "revelation". Or is this all only retrospective interpretation by later devout Hebrew thinkers, who somehow "by the intercourse of mind and event which is the essence of revelation" (Baillie) merely deduced from the events God's "covenant" with the nation, etc.? The two are not entirely mutually exclusive, of course, if viewed merely as complementary "sides", but the latter is certainly no adequate replacement for the former.

Typology and History

If we return to the phraseology often attributed to P, we may note that with it, regardless of its precise provenance, the suprahistorical, cosmic, or eschatological dimensions of the text really begin to become explicit. Only too late does Pharaoh realize that his real antagonist is Yahweh. Conversely, throughout these narratives "Pharaoh" is virtually the personification of all forces of darkness. This may well be the real reason why the Pharaoh is never named. Again the suprahistorical dimension of the historical is more important than enumeration of all the historical details. Likewise "Egypt" becomes a type of "all the kingdoms of this world", and this typology, together with the closely related one of "Exodus" becomes virtually constitutive of biblical theology. The prophets (esp. Is. 27:1, 30:7, and 51:9) do not even hesitate to apply to Egypt the name of the monster of chaos in the Canaanite mythology (Leviathan, Rahab) in order to bring out the universal and cosmic significance of the victory. Above all in the New Testament the resurrection is proclaimed as the antitype or fulfillment of the exodus, i.e., the final and definitive exodus from the powers of darkness and death. As St. Paul indicates in I Cor. 10, and as seems to underlie much of I Peter, in baptism the believer enters into the same exodus, not only Christ's in some reductive sense, but also that of Israel from Egypt, which thus, via Christ, becomes redemptive-history for the individual believer too; he "was there", not only when they crucified his Lord, but when God led Israel through the Red Sea, etc.

There can be little doubt that the general loss of that sense of "identification", or better, of its typological (= Christological) scope is one of the major factors inhibiting positive use of the Old Testament in general today, although one notes it particularly in a pericope as pivotal as ours. In this respect, historical criticism, even the most positive, has often robbed us of more than it has contributed by leaving us with a flat, one-dimensional view of "history", which is little more than antiquities, that we scarcely have antennae any more for what the Bible really understands with "history" as "His story", a

Neither does it appear to be much of an improvement if all of this is understood in the post-Kantian sense as only "interpretation". In that case, it is less than clear how, if we are consistent, we can avoid reducing typology to mere analogy or to . . . "sacramental" "types" or symbols of the biblical faith (perhaps even the resurrection itself) to mere models, parables, and examples. We may be very "Christocentric" rather than "Christological", advocating a moralistic action parallel to the biblical models rather than under them, the process by which the sacraments are regarded as mere symbols.

The correspondence then is understood as taking place only in the subjective minds of the interpreters, not on any level of objective reality.

Typology and Humanism

If that is the context of the Exodus account, it is easy to understand why so much liberal "prophetic" "ministry" can use "exodus" and "resurrection" as symbols of "humanization", "liberation" or "freedom" from every sociological or psychological "cross" or "oppression" comes to mind. While such a ministry claims to "serve the whole man", it comes close to denying the scandal of particularity or at least to diluting and confusing it inexcusably with universalistic and humanistic "values". What we would have here then would be only one more example of man's quest for God and/or truth, and if the sincerity of the search is all that "faith" means, obviously one is beyond all criticism, all roads lead to the same place, etc. Thus one sees how closely interrelated the struggle to maintain an objective, ontological (metaphysical) view of inspiration and revelation is to the larger struggle against a subjectivization and spiritualization of "Gospel" and "faith" as a whole. If this is true, then it also follows that accent on typology by no means need be urged as a substitute for "prophecy-fulfillment" of inspired words, as sometimes happened at the hands of the "Heilsgeschichte" movement. The two are the necessary sides of the same coin.

D. Exodus 14:5-7

Little need detain us here. Source criticism judges that we are back to "J" or the main narrative source of the Pentateuch. Rylaarsdam in the Interpreter's Bible provides us with what strikes me as a parade example of critical "literalism" by his hypercritical comment that "the first half of the verse implies an escape without permit, while the last half seems to imply just the opposite." At best, it seems to me, one might concede that the text ascribes to "Pharaoh", understood in the "sacramental" or transhistorical sense discussed above, what was technically an independent action by troops stationed at a frontier post. If so, it is beside the point to criticize the text on the basis of technicalities with which it was not concerned.

In v. 7 we meet for the first time the "all", which at least implicitly dominates the rest of the narrative. We may well have here a species of "heightening" or hyperbole, but we do well to inquire what species. Compare also the oft-cited parallel example in Mark 1:5. What we have here may likewise be purely and simply a literary figure of speech, and no theological considerations enter the picture. If so, it must be clearly distinguished from the judgment that P is guilty of "heightening" the miraculous element in the Exodus event. At the same time we should not overlook the theological dimension which is probably present in the "all": it is another way of underscoring the universal, typological, or eschatological significance of the Egypt that will shortly be definitively worsted.

E. Exodus 14:8-9

Again vocabulary and concern with geographical precision are supposed to betray the hand of "P". Perhaps the only thing which seems to require our attention is the phrase translated "defiantly" in RSV. KJV translates the Hebrew more literally: "with a high-hand:." If the RSV interpretation is correct, one might think of something like an "Israel power" salute. Sometimes the slightly expanded phrase, "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" is used to describe the signal victory which Yahweh gave in the Exodus. It is not impossible that we have here an abbreviated allusion to that theme. But more it also may be that we have the reverse side of it. Here we see Israel with an initial euphoria and bravado - more man's hope than God's promise. If this is the correct understanding, it certainly is the foil to the cowardice and hysteria which they exhibit in the following verses, and that, in turn, is the immediate setting for Moses' "sermon" in vv. 13-14, setting forth some of the major theological significance of the entire episode. Since the following section is attributed to J, one, at very least, sees how the entire narrative has been so integrated that, even if we can detect sources behind the present text, it is the latter as a whole which carries the meaning, and the search for sources becomes, again at best, an exercise in academic gamesmanship. This kind of a point can often be made not only by theological appeal to inspiration but simply on the basis of holistic literary analysis.

F. Exodus 14:10-14

Back, then, to "J". At any rate, in vv. 11-12 we have the desperate, craven outcry of the people in contrast to their jaunty self-confidence a moment earlier (v. 8). It is perhaps no accident that the same Hebrew word is used in v. 10 for "cry out" as was used previously in Exodus to describe their prayer for release from slavery in Egypt. One surely sees here a paradigm of the fickle self-interest of most merely "religious" interest in "salvation" or "liberation", motivated more by fear than by faith, the people knowing neither the full dimensions of their plight nor whence their help really comes. This is the first of many scenes throughout the wilderness wanderings where Moses' trust and stability is contrasted with the people's repeated grumbling.

Prophetic Interpretation

In certain of the prophets we meet a somewhat different picture. The wilderness is described as the "honeymoon" of Yahweh's marriage to His people before they were corrupted by Canaan and began chasing other lovers. Not surprisingly, we have no lack of critics who construe these as fundamentally different interpretations. However, this surely is another example of the all-too-typical critical instinct to magnify and multiply errors and contradictions. One need resort to no artificial or forced harmonism to make a cogent case for the interpretation that we have two different points of comparison, indeed, but no basic inconsistency.

Rylaarsdam in The Interpreter's Bible sees no contradiction, but he raises another issue of ultimately great hermeneutical consequence: "Even though it is assumed that this series of accounts rests on historical fact we may find in them some echoes of the religious struggle which took place between prophets and people from the days of Elijah and onward." These words betray a religious evolutionism which we find totally unacceptable in historical as well as theological grounds. It assumes that anything like real Yahwism did not emerge until the days of the prophets at a much later date. In the first flush of this movement the Yahwist allegedly wrote this account wrote. That would imply that the theological interpretation given in our text is entirely artificial.

Mosaic Faith

If we insist that the Mosaic faith was essentially the same as that of later periods, can we concede any such later overlay in our text? Perhaps we can with great caution -- assuming we can concede any later shaping up our text to begin with. Moses certainly is depicted in Exodus as a sort of archetypal prophet. It is not utterly unthinkable that some of those contours are retrospective from the vantage point of a later prophetism and represent a much more fleshed out form. We probably would be happier to speak simply of the later applicability of our text to what was essentially the same struggle. However, the interpretation that some of that congruence has been built into the text itself need note militate against an objective view of inspiration. "Tradition criticism", to be sure, embarks upon many a wild goose attempting to sort out suspected strands and layers. The point of diminishing returns comes very soon if we believe that the final authority resides in our text, regardless of the vicissitudes of its prehistory, but we need not for that reason condemn the entire enterprise.

If accent on the canonical text is dismissed as eo ipso "biblicistic" or the like, a hermeneutical assumption commonly accompanying tradition criticism will again be analogical (parallel to the Scriptures, not subject to them). As previous tradition continually reinterpreted "creatively", so we must also in the light of our reading of current circumstances. The "new hermeneutic" twist to such methodology is to separate somewhat the "what it means" from "what it meant". Hence instead of applying the old-style hermeneutics (with "what it means to me", what kind of "word-event" it elicits. It assumes, together with other brands of liberalism, that the Bible is merely a record of religious experience, which interacting with my experiences may trigger still deeper experiences. Phraseology like "sola Scriptura" may even continue to be used, but we obviously have an entirely different animal. A recent, popular example of such new hermeneutic procedure from within "Lutheranism" is D. Granskou, Preaching on the Parables; Fortress, 1972.

Holy War

Verses 13-14 are by any reading one of the theological high points of the pericope. If our concerns here were simply those of ordinary commentary, we would dwell on these verses much longer. Here and in v. 31 appear some of the key Old Testament terms for "faith" and "trust" which we also know so well from certain psalms and Isaiah.

It is currently a popular thesis that much of this vocabulary, as well as motifs like God's miraculous intervention, root in Israel's "holy war" traditions. If this is not another case of theology divorced

G. Exodus 14:15-18

Harrelson, as noted in the appended analysis, ascribes this entire section to "P". Given critical assumptions, this is quite obvious in view of the characteristic vocabulary ("harden", "glory", "know") of the rhetorical recapitulation of vv. 17-18. Some commentators even argue that the insertion of this theological synopsis by P anticipates and gives away the climax of the story. P is here understood (and usually criticized) as being so interested in making his theological point that God's power was convincingly demonstrated that he has no antennae for the human drama of the merciful deliverance of the people. It is less than clear why the two have to be pitted against one another, or why underscoring the theological significance of the event at the outset has to be considered anticlimactic. In any event, it is another case where the mere isolation of possible sources might be a quite neutral matter, were it not for the other judgments that all too often are virtually inseparable from it.

Heightening of Miracles

Especially earlier scholars were not so sure, however, that the entire section belonged to P, particularly not the first two verses. V. 15 has an element of the "natural" and the conversational in it that accords better with the usual picture of J than of P. In passing, we may note that Yahweh appears to respond to some direct appeal by Moses himself. The Syriac version (Peshitto) makes that explicit. However, this may merely be one of those minor details which any good story-teller sometimes leaves to the imagination, or it may be that God here simply breaks in to speak to Moses as the head or recognized intermediary of the people. As we shall see shortly, v. 16 may betray what the critics read as P's maximal "heightening" by stressing a division of the waters. But except for that detail, most of the verse can be read as a sample of E's middle position between J's relative naturalism and P's supernaturalism.

Revelation

At this point, however, probably the major issue of the entire pericope is joined, and we might as well survey it before we proceed with the particularities of the text. Rylaarsdam in Interpreter's Bible has such a readily accessible summary of "critical orthodoxy" that we can perhaps best proceed by interspersing quotations from him with our own observations (italics are also usually mine).

Rylaarsdam (hereafter R.) begins by asserting the axiom or dogma which underlies virtually all "historico-critical" study of the Bible and comes close to summarizing all that confessional orthodoxy finds objectionable in that approach. "The crossing was an event which lay wholly within the nexus of nature and history as these are scientifically understood."

However, this is not simply rationalism, positivism, or naturalism. Rather R. proceeds with the quite typical "neo-Orthodox" understanding of revelation, describing it not as a supernatural communication of truths about anything, but only as the "encounter" with the truth of God, as He has "revealed Himself" in His mighty acts in history, of which experience Scripture is the "witness" or "record". Many issues about revelation and inspiration arise immediately. Perhaps all we can do at the moment is to call attention to the widely circulated and highly readable work of John Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (Columbia, 1956) where the issues are clearly delineated.

In R's words: "But for Israel this was God's 'time' (John 7:8), and became a revelatory event which compelled those who saw it to reinterpret the meaning of both nature and history. . . . It was for Israel not simply a source of objective meaning, but also of abiding wonder." One can only wonder what kind of "objectivity" results if it was Israel's "reinterpretation" which made a natural event into a "revelatory" one. Nor are one's misgivings lessened when R. continues with a Christological parallel: "The event is for the Old Testament which Jesus as Christ is for the New Testament -- the normative redeeming and revealing act of God."

Poetry

Granted R's assumptions, of course, all the supernaturalism of the text must represent a sort of literary "objectification" of Israel's sense of "transcendent" meaning in the external event. Presumably then, that was originally meant "poetically", but later came to be understood literally, especially when the poetry was paraphrased into prose. Thus, allegedly, we can recover the original poetic "intent", if somehow we experience the same encounter with "the Divinity". However, one does not have to think too hard to realize that this alleged recovery of original "intent" is more akin to demythologization. In fact, unless one is prepared to abandon any and all notion of "faith", even in the Kantian sense, some such demythologizing conclusion follows almost ineluctably from the antisupernaturalist premises at the outset. Rivers don't flow upstream!

Stages of Supernaturalism

Typically criticism has gone even further and claimed to be able to retrace and disentangle the stages by which that "heightening" from natural to supernatural took place. The more recent efforts of "form criticism" and "tradition criticism" conceive of a more "dynamic", oral process in cult and community traditions rather than the more mechanical "scissors and paste" conception of the older literary criticism. But it is doubtful if the upshot is significantly different. In both types, it probably can be insisted again that the mere distinctions could be harmless enough if they recognized only possible variations in style and accent without the usual accompanying value-judgments. Perhaps most objectionable of all is the common tendency of parcelling out the presumed stages of the "heightening" to various sources, and then turning around and adducing those sources as "evidence" that the "heightening" took place as presumed. A more pseudo-"scientific" argumentum in circulo is scarcely conceivable, and the procedure is by no means limited to the Exodus account.

In Rylaarsdam's words:

By means of a process of communal embellishment the account was gradually altered and the event lifted out of its setting in the context of natural process. This process of providing the account with a 'supernatural' dress continued after the Old Testament canon was closed, but we can see it taking place in the development of the contents of the canon also. In this brief passage we detect three stages. The first is entirely natural: God uses an east wind to drive back the water, enabling the Israelites to cross over safely. The second account attributes the disappearance of the water to Moses' use of the magic rod and hints that the cloud was a 'supernatural' phenomenon. In the third account the waters are so separated by the rod as to stand like walls.

Harrelson (p. 85) is more cautious about disrupting the degrees of heightening amongst the sources, but the fundamental picture, especially the theological problem, remains very much the same:

In the course of time, the story is magnified, the mighty deliverance of Yahweh assuming more miraculous dimensions. ---The additions are normally assigned to P, but this need not be the case. Such magnification of the original event is entirely common. ---The priestly tradition may have brought the additions, but they might just as easily have appeared as supplements to the JE tradition prior to the blending of JE and P.

H. Exodus 14:19-21

Perhaps more than others in the entire pericope, these verses have attracted minute dissection. When Harrelson attributes them all to JE, it probably is more a testimony to critical failure to arrive at any certainty than to any basic change of heart. The fact that 19b says almost precisely the same thing about the "pillar of cloud" that 19a had already said about the "angel of God" naturally invites a division into two sources by those who are so predisposed. Generally the "angel" is associated with E's increased religiosity, all the more so when, as here, he is called the angel of God (Elohim), rather than of Yahweh. But critical judgments on this topic vary considerably. It is noteworthy that this is the only appearance of the angel in this pericope. However it is not clear what significance, if any, we are to attach to that fact, unless with some critics we regard it as one of those few remnants of E which some traditor or redactor considered too good to drop. The "angel of Yahweh" is a figure of considerable significance in biblical theology, but space forbids our entering into that topic here. If we do not dismiss it as merely a variant theologoumenon by which Israel signaled its sense of the presence of God, the traditional interpretation of the figure as an anticipation of the incarnation (even if we would want to state it with greater sensitivity to historical differences) brings us much closer to the real typological and Christological significance of the entire episode.

Critical Dissection

The mention of "darkness" in v. 20 makes many think of E again, partly because it appears also in the resume of Josh. 24:7. However, while the older criticism commonly attributed "Joshue's farewell sermon" to E, modern scholarship has devoted a lot of attention to that chapter and tends to see it in entirely different light, quite unrelated to source criticism (not to speak of a general reluctance to concede the continuance of the Tetrateuchal sources after Numbers).

Earlier literary criticism was perhaps rougher on v. 21 than any other. All the variations need not detain us, but even Rylaarsdam still tries to distinguish between a "21a~~ab~~" and a "21a~~bc~~". Theologically, some commentators suggest that the report of the unusual east (sirocco?) wind was J's or the tradition's attempt at a naturalistic explanation. More commonly, a sort of immanentistic appeal is made to "providence". It is argued that the prescientific, biblical world knows nothing of naked events occurring in the world of phenomena, but only of God acting in and through those phenomena. This surely is true enough

as far as it goes, but it begs the real question). Furthermore, "parallels" are often pointed out (Scipio's capture of New Carthage; annually in the Persian Gulf in spring, etc.). Even the old edition of the Catholic Commentary (1953) already appears to compromise: "The crossing was not miraculous in itself since the natural force of the wind divided the waters of the ford. . . . But it was miraculous in the intensity and continuity of the wind, in the circumstances of time and place, and in the pillars of cloud and fire by which the Israelites were accompanied."

Naturalistic Explanation

However, we can scarcely talk ourselves out of the dilemma so easily. If "revelation" is only the "intercourse of mind and event" (Baillie), and if this was only a lucky happenstance which became revelatory when Israel so interpreted it, all kinds of questions arise. Let Ian Barbour (no fundamentalist but a champion of process thought!), Issues in Science and Religion, p. 420, pose them for us:

Does God then act in all winds, though only certain people are aware of it? Or does he act in no winds, but only in the religious response of a people? Or does he act in some winds and in the interpretation thereof? If "event as interpreted" is said to be the locus of revelation, how do we avoid emphasizing the interpretative activity more than the event in the world so that the object of our study is Israel's faith rather than God's acts? Is divine sovereignty then reduced to "the inward incitement of a religious response to an ordinary event?" (*Italics original*)

Barbour cites Gilkey's two famous essays in the 1961 and 1963 Journal of Religion, and goes on to discuss the three broad types of answer which he labels: (1) Classical Views: God as Sovereign Ruler of the Created Order; (2) Existentialist and Linguistic Views: God as Transformer of Personal Existence; and (3) Process Views: God as Influence on the World Process.

Rachel King is generally even more trenchant in her recent defense of creationism, The Creation of Death and Life. The parallel problem of revelation, often illustrated with respect to the Exodus, is also discussed passim, especially in chapters 23 and 28. Particularly telling, it seems to me, is her analogy of a woman who receives a diamond, but on the same day discovers an identical diamond in a gutter. She might fantasy and daydream about the meaning of the latter diamond for her, but only the former would really "reveal" anything to her -- because an active, personal will was manifested there. That is, "God cannot be said to 'act in history' without acting specifically."

I. Exodus 14:22-23

For what will by now be rather obvious reasons, these verses have always been quite unanimously ascribed to P. Undeniably, the supernatural element is here at its height. Furthermore, there is no doubt that this precise and maximally "heightened" version of the miracle is really found only here in the heart of the narrative, the sole exception being the retrospective resume of v. 29, which, of course, is ascribed to P too. While it and the following P sections can be read coherently by themselves, they also read naturally and smoothly in their present context without sign of a seam.

Dogmatic Criterion

Again it is plain that the only real evidence for their isolation is the dogmatic one. This "doxological hyperbole" is usually attributed to the P stream of tradition and regarded at best as perhaps an innocent misunderstanding and literalization of hymnic poetry such as we meet in the following chapter.

Perhaps it should be stressed again that if it were only a matter of isolation of the source, reading its maximally miraculous description as totally compatible with the surrounding verses and as merely making explicit what was implicit in the others, our theological problems would probably be small. But it must also be stressed that the above supposition represents a contrary-to-fact condition, at least as far as virtually all commentaries which indulge in such source analysis are concerned. Maybe it could be otherwise, but it is not!

A Different Theology

Neither is it a matter, as it is sometimes caricatured, of wanting too much precision about the details of the miracle. It certainly is of no moment whether or not the walls of water stood at a perfect perpendicular angle, whether or not the walls were smooth or rippled, or what have you! The only hermeneutical concerns are whether or not the text in its entirety is read in its natural, literal sense, whether all its parts are construed as ultimately compatible with one another or not, etc. As noted above, if that kind of hermeneutics is abandoned, one necessarily and inevitably goes over the hill into a fundamentally

different understanding of not only the prolegomena to theology (inspiration and revelation), but of the heart and substance of the theology itself.

We may also note yet Rylaarsdam's jejune, naturalistic comment on v. 23: "In Palestine, for generations, Israelites in war were guerilla fighters who where canny in turning the technological superiority of their foes to their own advantage". No comment necessary!

J. Exodus 14:24-25

Here we revert to a less overtly miraculous style. This section can be read independently of the preceding two verses, but it certainly seems to me that a much stronger case can be made for its dependence upon them, at least for a smooth, free-flowing narrative.

Anthropomorphism

In v. 24 we have the delightful anthropomorphism of the type commonly associated with J. Yahweh is peeking over the edge of the cloud, as it were, before He "discomfits" the Egyptians. The Hebrew verb, perhaps better translated "confound, terrify, cause to panic", etc., is a standard one in "holy war" contexts in the Old Testament (cf. also Yahweh as a "man of war" in 15:3). Unfortunately, it is often assumed that that motif in a cultic or some other tradition created that feature in the history. However, if we turn the process around, we should not overlook its great theological significance, also typologically for ourselves who still make up the "church militant".

The Morning Watch

Many interpreters make problems for themselves by seeing (or looking for?) a contradiction between the "morning watch" here and the clause "when the morning appeared" of v. 27. A similar - and surely even more artificial - clash is sometimes seen between v. 20's assertion that the protagonists did not come near all night and the following verse's statement that a strong east wind blew all night.) Rylaarsdam opines that "for cultic reasons, notably on account of the Passover ritual, the historic incident may have been crowded into a single night." It is neither unthinkable nor unworthy of the Holy Spirit that a more popular history might telescope certain details, especially for didactic or kerygmatic purposes. Such procedure by no means need be construed as "error", although those who are looking for trouble are always very ready to do just that! However, it is doubtful if we need to have recourse to such an explanation. One might still think of a certain popular element (the overriding concern is not with the stopwatch!), but the difficulty virtually evaporates if we are aware that the "morning watch" lasted from 2-6 A.M., when the morning would indeed "appear."

The difficulty of rendering the phrase in v. 27 into English may conceal its theological overtones. The identical Hebrew idiom appears in the more creedal affirmation of Ps. 46:6 (5 - "right early"), and the same general idea of victory just before dawn appears not only in the tenth plague preceding the Exodus, but also and much more significantly in the resurrection of our Lord and in the related "dayspring" or "morning-star" symbolism in general. Some might view the correspondence as coincidental or even artificial, but I submit that "typological" might be a much better word for it.

Nothing really depends on it, but the RSV is probably correct in both verses 25 and 27 in preferring the report of nearly all the versions that the chariot wheels got "stuck" in the mud or sand rather than the Hebrew version that they "came off". In the Hebrew there would be a difference of only one letter, an 'aleph' which may easily have been dropped accidentally by dissimilation from the two following initial 'alephs'.

A superb confession is placed in the mouths of the panic-stricken Egyptians, which may almost be summarized as "Sola Deo Gloria". It surely is no accident that throughout this central section of the pericope (and equally in all the "sources") Israel and even Moses (except for extending his rod upon command) fade into the background.

K. Exodus 14:26-29

For reasons already noted, these verses tend to be entirely attributed to P, except for 27b, which is judged to be redundant otherwise. In any event, the picturesque verb which RSV paraphrases as "routed" may be noted; the Hebrew suggests that the divine "shaking off" of the dreaded enemy was as effortlessly as when a man flicks off a gnat or other minor pest.

I doubt if we need to trouble ourselves with the "all" in v. 28. As we noted above, nothing more need technically be implied than the annihilation of the immediate army unit pursuing them, but the typical

and typological significance was tremendous - cosmological, in fact! In contrast to the "remnant" of Israel which Yahweh always rescued out of His judgments, "not so much as one" of the children of darkness remained!

L. Exodus 14:30-31

These verses are commonly considered J's summary conclusion, parallel to P's in the preceding two verses. While it is again possible to read them as doublets, they also make sense as examples of the homiletical expansiveness we often meet when the narrator takes care that his audience does not miss any feature of the superlative significance of the event just reported.

Just possibly the same vast typological import as we noted above is signalled here by the use of the singular (or collective) "Egypt" rather than the RSV's "Egyptians". This was the beginning of the end, of the rout of all the forces of evil. The accents of vv. 13-14 too are picked up and confirmed. Here, however, the key and semi-technical Old Testament words for the "fear" of Yahweh (i.e., the true, revealed religion) and for "faith" also appear. One might be given momentary pause by the fact that Moses is parallel to Yahweh as the object of Israel's faith, until one notes that "Moses" is preceded by "His (Yahweh's) servant" - a theme of vast significance, but in broad contours familiar enough that we may excuse ourselves from entering into it.

We cannot leave the theme of "faith", however, without observing that there is not the remotest hint anywhere in our pericope that it was Israel's faith which made the events "revelatory". In fact, even to think of doing so upends the entire text, and, obviously, anyone who feels free to treat the "authority of Scripture" in that fashion may well feel quite free about nearly anything else as well.

These final verses not only theologize, but may well suggest a liturgical or cultic context where that theologizing took place. Terms like "cult legend" which propose to give the rationale or etiology of a rite or sanctuary are almost beyond salvage for positive, confessional use. However, if one agrees that Israel's worship, like her faith in general, had to be grounded in historical fact, not in legend or mythology, the general idea of commemorating God's redemptive acts may be serviceable. What better place than public worship to celebrate them (as also in Christendom)? Humanly speaking, it seems entirely plausible that that setting may also have played some role in the transmission and technical shaping of pericopes such as ours, presuming that is not pressed into falsification. In any event, these verses make an easy transition to the hymn of Chap. 15, which is often thought to be the source of the previous prose account (including, for many critics, its many alleged literalizations).

M. Exodus 15

The Song of Moses and Miriam

The main part of this chapter is often known as the "Song of Moses". If so named, it must be distinguished from another "Song of Moses" in Deut. 32. To avoid confusing the two, this one sometimes is referred to as the "Song of Miriam and Moses". This may be helpful, if the two songs are not pitted against one another in common critical fashion (see below).

Space forbids it, nor does it serve our purposes to analyze this song in the same detail as the previous chapter. However, some consideration of certain isagogical issues should be worthwhile. Its theological importance is in direct proportion to the centrality of the event which it celebrates. Perhaps the major witness to that importance is extensive liturgical use which the song has received both in the synagogue . . . and in the church. Christians sometimes refer to it as Israel's "Te Deum" or "Song of Independence". In The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 121, it appears in abbreviated form as one of the alternate "canticles" without music.

The Age of the Song

Our major concentration, however, must be on the history of critical attempts to date the song. One could scarcely find a better case-study of critical subjectivity and arbitrariness. Verdicts on its date have literally ranged over virtually the whole Old Testament period.

Mosaic Monotheism

Characteristically, early critics tended to date it as late as possible, assigning it post-exilic or at least exilic times. Its association with Moses was assumed to be only another example of the allegedly common practice of literary attribution to ancient worthies or other notables (Lagrange, McNeile,

Beer, also Rylaarsdam to some extent, although he equivocates). Some even indulged in a fair amount of internal dissection of the chapter, but we shall not go into that.

The typical arguments for lateness are revealing. A major argument was based on evolutionistic axioms about the history of Israel's religion. Usually presented in more reserved form today than a century ago, it is by no means moribund. It asserts that the song's teaching of Yahweh's universal rule or real "monotheism" does not appear until the time of Exile. W. F. Albright and his students have strongly championed Mosaic monotheism, but they have remained very much a minority. There also have been mediating positions of various sorts which understood the latter third of the song (vv. 13-18) as, at least in part, a later addition.

Ugaritic Evidence

A second argument, which really looks curious today, was that the song's vocabulary was late. How utterly subjective such a judgment was in the absence of any kind of objective evidence has been fully demonstrated in recent decades by the evidence from Ras Shamra - Ugarit. Today, the song is widely recognized as probably the most archaic example of preclassical Hebrew in the Old Testament. (You might want to test it yourself; even one whose Hebrew is generally still in good repair usually has great difficulty with this chapter!)

More conservative critics prefer a date not later than the early monarchy (Kittel, Driver, Sellin). Their view probably represents majority opinion today. Some would divide the question by assigning the origins of the first two-thirds to the period of the settlement and regarding the remainder as representing an adaptation to the service of the Jerusalem temple after its construction.

Liturgical Creativity

The question of the relation of all of Ex. 1-15 to liturgical creativity tends to focus on this chapter. If any truth were to be conceded to Pedersen's thesis that the entire Exodus account was primarily a liturgical lesson to be read during the Passover celebrations *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (or more recent variations of that thesis), it would be easy to understand this song as the hymnic culmination of such a service. As formulated by Pedersen, such a thesis is almost totally unacceptable to the orthodox Christian. As is the case with so much form in criticism and tradition-criticism, accent on "creative liturgy" is almost the precise opposite of any accent on historicity and facticity. However, if one reverses the sequence and sees the liturgy as responsible for only secondary nuancing of a factual occurrence, the theory may have possibilities. All such questions take on an entirely different coloration if they are posed within the context of a confession of objective and ontological inspiration.

Mention must also be made of the common assumption that verse 21 of the "Song of Miriam" is more or less original and contemporaneous with the event, and became the springboard for the later "Song of Moses", as indicated by its repetition as the opening verse of the latter. Certainly, as the text stands, a more likely explanation would be that Miriam and the other women sang a sort of refrain or antiphony, at least at the conclusion of the longer hymn.

An Ancient Hymn

Arrayed against all of these speculations are the massive arguments of Albright that there is "no longer the slightest reason for dating [it] after the thirteenth century B. C.", i.e. the lifetime of Moses, if the late date for the Exodus is accepted, as it is increasingly also by many conservative scholars. Among the arguments marshaled to support his conclusion are the awareness of the priority of poetry in most early cultures (the opposite of early critical guesses), the archaic Hebrew text in general, and the appearance of the allegedly "late" language of especially vv. 13 and 17 already in pre-Israelite Canaanite (pagan) traditions. In addition, the fact that the conquest of Canaan was already largely concluded by the close of the thirteenth century means that the mention of "edom" and "Moab" poses no problems whatsoever and that "Philistia" and "Canaan" present little difficulty if one is willing to grant a little poetic hyperbole at the prospect of imminent crossing of the Jordan. The term Philistia could conceivably also be an isolated updating by later traditors or copyists of the sort that we have elsewhere occasionally in the Pentateuch. Finally, there is the argument that this literary genre, the triumphal poem celebrating a military victory, was in that period at the climax of its popularity in ancient times.

Albright's claim that the song represents our best (eyewitness!) evidence for the historicity of the Exodus surely deserves to be highlighted. Even though his total position can scarcely be said to represent anything remotely approaching a consensus of scholarship, it certainly does indicate how cogent a case can be made for essentially the traditional position on non-theological grounds, and by one with towering expertise in the area.

It is almost painful not to be able to explore further the tremendous exegetical and theological riches of this beautiful and profound poem. After the ringing creedal affirmation of Yahweh's eternal kingship at the end of the hymn (expressed even more emphatically by the omnitemporal imperfect of the Hebrew verb, it is an anticlimax to observe how v. 19, immediately after the close of the song itself, is commonly interpreted as not only a late prosaic summary in general, but specifically as a miniaturization of the presumed process by which later epigones forgot the original liturgical context of the hymn and interpreted its figures prosaically and literally. With that observation we, in a way, come full circle and must venture some summary and concluding remarks.

III. CONCLUDING AND SUMMARY REMARKS

A. Theological Factors

Obviously we can enter on only certain aspects of the wider issue of the historical-critical method, which bear rather directly on the Exodus pericope but which we have not already considered. Part of our task should be to try to disentangle the genuinely theological from the non-theological factors. This is not easy precisely because, in the almost trite but profound phrase, "Christianity is a historical religion". That is, the focus of revelation is on God's actions in history, not nature or the hearts and minds of men. If "revelation in nature" was of the essence of ancient paganism, "revelation in the heart" might be called the essence of modern liberalism. The primary accent is put on man's religious experience and his resultant "interpretation of external events within an essentially closed natural order. There are both very conservative and very liberal versions of this stance. In conservative Lutheranism that "religious experience" is described as that of "Law and Gospel", and the "interpretation" that follows tends to be quite close to traditional confessionalism, sometimes differing from it more in style than in substance. Other "religious" experiences are different, however, and the various theologies vary accordingly, usually echoing the culture somewhat (at least the liberal-leftist-intellectual subculture).

Subjectivism

Corresponding to this general view of revelation as "intercourse of mind and event" (Baillie) is a subjective attitude toward the biblical text which especially the "new hermeneutic" has elevated into a major interpretative principle. In contrast to the traditional hermeneutical accent on "one literal sense" as the dynamic of biblical authority, here the individual understanding of the interpreter ("what the text says to me") is said to be as much a part of the text's "meaning" as its original, historical significance ("what it meant"). The methodological similarity of this approach with the allegorical method which the Reformation so stoutly rejected must not escape us either: in both cases the meaning is not simply inherent in the text, but is merged with what we would call "application." (Ironically, this accent on subjectivity is often urged, even within criticism, as a corrective to what is called "the historical-critical method" with its more one-dimensional, objective, and positivistic approaches!).

As the subjective and the objective are confused, the classical Lutheran accent on "faith" as a neutral, passive "hand that receives" the objective gifts of God is lost. Faith becomes a work by playing a vital role in the process of revelation if not that of redemption. (Should we call it a "semi-Pelagian" view of revelation?) Functionally, the problem may be stated as a failure to relate to the nature of "biblical theology" itself, where the history and the theology are inextricably intertwined, especially in the Old Testament. To no little extent, history is theology and vice versa. To try to put asunder what God has joined together can only result in one of two extremes: either in the irrelevant objectivism of the study of antiquities or "historical faith" at best or in the subjectivism and spiritualism of "Gospel" or "faith" which is no longer firmly anchored in the "sacramental" externalities of actual history and verbally inspired text. In fact, these dichotomizing solutions seem to be another case of dogmatics (of a liberal type) riding roughshod over exegesis; it is hard to see how an exegete with any traditional dogma in his system could possibly be attracted to them.

Historicity

The account of the Exodus is only rarely viewed with total historical skepticism. It is usually assumed that some little nucleus of historical fact underlies our present story. However we should not forget that the general attitude of criticism has generally been and still is very much of a "guilty until proved innocent" type toward the historical traditions of the Bible. Although archaeology has forced substantial, if grudging, concessions toward facticity, and some philosophical movements in recent years have reinforced that trend, the problem remains very much with us.

Of course, outside of confessional circles, appeal to inspired Scriptures to establish fact is the one common enemy which all the various critical schools unite in opposing! Conversely, it must be admitted that traditionists sometimes appeal to inspiration prematurely in rejecting newer insights when these may

be only different judgments on Scripture's meaning and not challenges to its objective authority, but the distinction of these two is precisely our task.

Miraculous Events

However, the battle is really joined when we move from the question of mere facticity in the everyday sense to that of the facticity of biblical supernaturalism, especially the miraculous. As we noted above, rejection of the miraculous is just about the only constant that could be found in all the various critical endeavors. More conservative versions tend to retain the "gut" miracles of incarnation and resurrection as basically literal, but sometimes few others - by what principle of consistency it is hard to see. What they commonly fail to see is that in a sense the problem is even greater with a miracle like the Exodus than with the Resurrection because the former is reported as having happened entirely in the arena of external history while only believers were privileged to see the resurrected Christ.

Revelation of Fact

This anti-supernaturalism is, of course, only another way of asserting that there can be no such thing as objective, propositional, revelation of fact; it is the obverse of the liberal premise that revelation is constituted also by the faith or "interpretation" of the observer (probably also if there was no factual basis for that "faith!"). Anyone who is knowledgeable is aware that many Lutheran "moderates", especially their major spokesmen, the Elertians, share this anti-supernaturalist bias. This plus their accent on experience ("Gospel") makes it plain that, methodologically at least, they have more in common with Schleiermacher and Bultmann than with Luther and the Book of Concord. That kind of anchorage of faith in mere faith, leaving the Bible to the tender mercies of any sort of critical method, is no Lutheran presupposition!

It should be stressed that the issue is not that of trying to "prove" the Gospel, but rather whether Gospel can in any way be abstracted from the objective world of space and time and the objectivities revealed in the Bible. Whether we confess that both Bible and Gospel are true or not, indeed, depends ultimately upon whether or not we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit. What the Gospel is we know only from the Bible, but that does not mean that efforts to "prove the Bible true" are necessarily misguided. Of course, neither Bible nor Gospel is true for me until I subjectively believe it. However, it is a different matter entirely to assert that I subjectively dare decide, whether on a "Christocentric" or any other basis, what really is "Word of God for me." Nor can Luther really be adduced in support of that position, as is often attempted. If we allow both Luther and his contemporaries who knew him best to interpret Luther, it will be clear that his off-the-cuff ejaculations in this connection (such as abound in Luther) were not meant as any sort of general hermeneutical rules.

If both "Bible" and "Gospel" are put under the sign of the experience or "encounter of faith, of course we cannot speak of "proof." Only God knows what is in our hearts. However, if "Bible" is more than mere record of variegated ancient religious experiences and groping attempts to express them in words, and if "Gospel" is more than just the contemporary experience of conversion or the like, then we ask in doctrinal detail what constitutes "Gospel" and what does not ("the Gospel in all its articles"). We do this on the basis of a view of Scripture (Schriftprinzip: epistemology) that confesses it to be an objectively inspired and hence coherent source from which all doctrinal aspects of the "Gospel" may be drawn.

B. Presuppositions

As we have noted, the entire complex of liberal attitudes, especially this mix of anti-supernaturalism and subjectivism, is primarily what people have in mind when they generalize about "the historical-critical" method. The Exodus pericope, as we have seen in some detail, is about as good a case-study as one can find. Confessional faithfulness plainly requires that we give our hearty assent to such strictures. There are no "presuppositions" which can redeem those approaches. At least from the standpoint of confessionalism, those presuppositions are themselves simply totally wrong, and one cannot long "go limping with two different opinions."

Official Exegesis

Nevertheless, I think some reservations must still be registered, not of the principles themselves, but in their application at times. Generalizations about "the historical-critical method" easily lead to the automatic rejection of any and every departure from traditional exegesis and isagogues as well as from theology. If no "presuppositions" can salvage a fundamentally conflicting method itself, there may still be isolated external agreement with some critical opinions, based on different presuppositions, i.e., without really employing the method at all. The conclusions may be "symptoms" of the underlying disease,

but symptoms are often ambiguous, and one must be cautious about his diagnosis. On its face, it would be strange if historical criticism did not sometimes stumble upon some correct answers, even if in the wrong overall context and sometimes partly for the wrong reasons. Thus external agreement at points by a confessional scholar might signal no more than a more intensive use with modern evidence and tools of the "historical-grammatical" method on which the Reformation based its entire case. As there is ambiguity about presuppositions, so also with the plea that Lutheranism has "no official exegesis". There is the danger, on the one hand, that that appeal be used to cloak fundamental doctrinal disparity especially in divorcing exegesis and "kerygma" or "Gospel, on the other hand that virtually every exegetical variation be labelled "doctrinal".

Biblical Inspiration

As concerns inerrancy or the objective inspiration of the Bible itself, however, if that "exegesis" cannot be "proved", it is only in the sense that precious little of any exegesis can be (witness the vast variety of interpretations, ancient and modern). But this is precisely the type of thing a "confessional" view of Scripture is all about. The question is: do we share that confession of the objective nature of biblical inspiration or do we have a fundamentally different confession?

The celebrated case of Galileo may be relevant. At the time the inerrancy of Scripture was not at issue. Galileo accepted it as unconditionally as everyone else in those days. The question was what the biblical text meant in the light of new evidence, whether "inerrancy" stood or fell with traditional exegesis or not. As the Galileo case indicates, the issues can often not be disentangled glibly, but the question always needs to be faced. The moral of the Galileo case is not a total divorce of religious and scientific truth, as existentialist liberals love to argue.

Solution of Problems

Applied to the issues at hand, that means that the mere discernment of Pentateuchal sources in more or less external congruence with common critical conclusions scarcely in and of itself constitutes acceptance of "the historical-critical method". The question of the date of those sources is much more sticky, but even that may be external - up to the point of contradiction in terms, of course. The same holds true of the issue of liturgical contexts in the transmission and fixing of our text. While such a hypothesis can scarcely ever be more than just that, the theological issues arise, as indicated in the previous examples, when that agency is thought to call facticity into question. and when the confession of objective supernatural inspiration is abandoned. We cannot stress too much that all these questions look different when explored within or without the context of objective revelation. In the latter case, one is theologically outside the confessional pale even if he is technically correct in his exegesis. The confession of objective, propositional revelation does set some clear perimeters beyond which certain exegetical judgments are simply not possible, but neither does it simply confirm all "prehistorical" (Sasse) exegetical and isagogical opinions.

There is danger of lumping all problematic areas together and talking about those who "hold some of the historical-critical opinions. At best, such broadsides do not appear to be well thought out. Either one holds the historical-critical method (i.e., a naturalistic philosophy or theology) or he does not, regardless of his conclusions on a host of particulars. Conversely, one cannot merely judge from certain external agreements whether or not an exegete accepts that "method". Obviously there is the legitimate fear of a "camel's nose", but one cannot tell what animal it is by the mere presence of a nose. Specifically, it is hard to see how issues like the Exodus, the resurrection, Jonah, creation, unity of Isaiah, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and countless others can all be lumped together. The theological or hermeneutical principles remain the same in all cases and cannot be set aside in one instance anymore than in the others. However, assuming that the context of confessional hermeneutics stands unchallenged, the exegetical particularities of each case will have to be confronted separately. No two are alike.

C. Historical Conditioning

Perhaps the difference can be summarized in terms of the difference between historical conditioning and historical relativism. The former is of the very essence of the incarnation, of the "scandal of particularity" that inheres by definition in a "historical" religion. One does that kind of religion no favor by accenting its "timed" quality any less. Its "timelessness", if one can even use the term, is entirely via its incarnation into flesh of our flesh, not via any docetic detour or retreat into the interiority of mere "Gospel".

The latter temptation arises (as it did classically in both Schliermacher and Bultmann) as an attempted defense against the opposite extreme by which historical conditioning is thought to be synonymous with historical relativism (and hence easily the opposite overreaction by the conservative). The historical judgment of the canon's external non-uniqueness easily becomes a confessional or theological assertion that there is nothing unique, also in the theological sense, about the canon. If so, the Bible can be

studied only historically, i.e., it is entirely identical with its historical conditioning, and therefore is only one more (universalistic) example of man's religious "search for God", not the "absolute" religion in any sense. Especially in our "scientific" age, the lure of that new imperialism of historical study (scientism, historicism, positivism) is great, and to a large extent it is synonymous with "historical-critical method." To insist that due weight must be given to historical conditioning without conceding anything to historical relativism is also to assert that the neo-Orthodox, existentialist, Elertian "solutions" which assert that the historical and critical conclusions do not matter as long as we have the "Gospel" (the experience of encounter with the cross) are really docetic, gnostic copouts, and, in effect, say that what God may do in space and time may be abstracted from what he does in my heart.

D. Inerrancy and Literalism

Still another way of saying the same thing is that there can be some difference between inerrancy and literalism. If the former is affirmed, as it must be, as an inevitable correlary of objective revelation, the question will be only of Scripture's meaning, not of its truth. Neither will any kind of philosophical (that is, theological!) axioms of any sort be allowed to determine its meaning. In that respect "Scripture is its own interpreter", and there are no exception. To those who assert that insistence on objective revelation is "philosophical", it may be conceded that indeed it is - in the sense that all such matters are ultimately philosophical, theological, or confessional, so that one sees that the question of which philosophy or confession one adheres to is precisely the point! (Especially Kant is usually given a definitive authority in these matters that will not be granted to the Scriptures!) When it comes to the historical aspect or "side" of the meaning, however, it is simply a matter of evidence as to what the author's intent was. Much new information about ancient, Oriental usages often calls for a reconsideration of traditional opinions.

However, some careful distinctions are imperative. Failure to make them commonly fouls the whole matter of "literalism" and easily makes it a code-word for subjectively searching the Scriptures to see if you can make it fit what you want to say (which the "new hermeneutic" comes close to making a principle). Note first of all that talk of "sides" or "aspects" in a confessional context will be a matter of complementarity and ultimate inseparability, not the subjectivistic and dichotomizing retreat from inerrant Scripture into "Gospel" or the like. Secondly, if theological rather than purely historical matters are allowed to intrude, appeal to "intent" easily cloaks some kind of "demythologization" or other desupernaturalization, and "evidence" of one's theological axioms will soon be manufactured to suit the case, as we noted above often happens with the Pentateuchal sources. In the case of truly "scientific" historical research, the attempt to determine the writer's "intent" in the light of all available, objective evidence is simply of the essence of exegesis. But if one leaves an objectively-viewed Scripture and allows some extrinsic philosophy or theology to judge, the exegesis, by most elementary definition, is no longer truly "scientific".

A major case in point which we must consider finally is the New Testament's (or Jesus') references to the Old Testament, especially the apparent assertions of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Obviously, we cannot hold the New Testament in any kind of error here any more than anywhere else, on the grounds that it is no part of the "Gospel" or otherwise. Neither will it do to understand its theological interpretations, especially its typology and appeal to fulfillment of prophecy as simply the New Testament's subjective "interpretations" which it has really arrived at on other grounds and "read into" the Old Testament). If Moses had nothing substantial to do with the composition of the Pentateuch (not to speak of his actual involvement in the historical events reported) we could hardly do otherwise than actually hold the New Testament in error. However, between that position and the other that makes him responsible for virtually every word there is a vast middle-ground. Precisely where in the middle we stand, may be a theologically neutral matter, assuming that other contradictory value-judgments do not sneak in and that the Holy Spirit's objective inspiration is the context in which we explore such technicalities in order to understand His gift better.

Historical insights seem to assure us that "authorship" was understood and used more flexibly in antiquity than is common today. It easily applied to the main authority behind a tradition as much as to that figure's literal words. Was that erroneous? Scarcely if that was the "dictionary" then used and we do not anachronistically insist that modern usages must determine the definition. We may thus perhaps speak of the Bible's and our Lord's "accommodation" to the usages of the time i.e., historical conditioning ("accommodation" scarcely being the word we would normally use, however,) but of any accommodation to error, i.e., historical relativism - never!

Let it be noted once again that we would be naive, indeed, if we forgot how often other agenda come along with this sort of distinction. But it is our point here that we should not shoot from the hip, but test the spirits! Furthermore, to the extent that there is still uncertainty in the church at large about even such distinctions, in a truly confessional context of concern for "public doctrine" and doctrinal discipline, we will be happy to proceed hypothetically and conditionally until the church at large is convinced. If we really hold these matters to be non-doctrinal in the context just sketched, surely restraint is a minor thing for the sake of the common good. "Dialogue", etc., in that kind of context we can scarcely have too much of, but that is obviously something quite different from the typical "ecumenical" Babel, where everybody "does his own thing", where "professional ideological debate" would be a better term than "dialogue", and where the actual, functional test of belonging is more likely to be whether or not you have the proper leftist, activist posture! From that preserve us, dear heavenly Father!

APPENDIX

TYPICAL SOURCE ANALYSIS OF EXODUS 13:17-15:26

J(E)P

13:17-19 (E; remainder all J)

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest the people repent when they see war, and return to Egypt." But God led the people round by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for Joseph had solemnly sworn the people of Israel, saying, "God will visit you; then you must carry my bones with you from here."

13:20-22

And they moved on from Succoth, and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night; the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

14:1-4

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Tell the people of Israel to turn back, and encamp in front of Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baalzephon; you shall encamp over against it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, 'They are entangled in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." And they did so.

14:5-7

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

14:8-9

And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the people of Israel as they went forth defiantly. The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pihahiroth, in front of Baalzephon.

14:10-14

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the

J(E)P

Egyptians were marching after them; and they were in great fear. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord; and they said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still."

14:15-18

The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go on dry ground through the sea. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

14:19-21

Then the angel of God who went before the host of Israel moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness; and the night passed without one coming near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

14:22-23

And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

14:24-25

And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel; for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."

14:26-27 (" . . . morning appeared")

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." So Moses stretched forth his hand over the

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sea, and the sea returned to its wonted flow when the morning appeared;

14:27 ("and the Egyptians . . .")

and the Egyptians fled into it, and the Lord routed the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

14:28-29

The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not so much as one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

14:30-31

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

15:1-21

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name. "Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea; and his picked officers are sunk in the Red Sea. The floods cover them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of thy majesty thou overthrowest thy adversaries; thou sendest forth thy fury, it consumes them like stubble. At the blast of thy nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.' Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders? Thou didst stretch out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. "Thou hast led in thy steadfast love the people whom thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them by thy strength to thy holy abode. The peoples have heard, they tremble; pangs have seized on the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; the leaders of Moab, trembling seizes them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of thy arm, they are as still as a stone, till thy people, O Lord, pass by, till the people pass by whom thou hast purchased. Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them on thy own mountain, the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for

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thy abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord will reign for ever and ever." For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."

15:22 ("wilderness of Shur")

Then Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur;

15:22

they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" And he cried to the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

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15:25-26

There the Lord made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he proved them, saying, "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord, your healer."

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