

Seton Hall University

eRepository @ Seton Hall

---

The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian  
Studies, Vol. I

The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies

---

1955

## The Exodus, Then and Now

Barnabas M. Ahern

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/jcs-bridge-I>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Jewish Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Barnabas M. Ahern, "The Exodus, Then and Now." In *The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Vol. 1*, edited by John M. Oesterreicher and Barry Ulanov, 53-74. New York: Pantheon Books, 1955.

*Barnabas M. Abern, C.P.*

## THE EXODUS, THEN AND NOW

UPHEAVAL stirred the world of Abraham. Dynastic changes at Ur and vast migrations over the Fertile Crescent clogged the stagnant pool of a world that had died. Babylon in the early second millennium vaunted the boast, "I am rich and have grown wealthy and have need of nothing"; and all the while the bragging corpse failed to see how "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" it really was (Apoc 3:17). All flesh had corrupted its way; God's clean sun shone on a pool full of death.

But life still throbbed at Haran in northern Mesopotamia, for Abraham lived there, a newcomer from Ur in the south. All future history would flow from him; he was to become "the father of us all . . . our father in the sight of God" (Rom 4:17). For one day at Haran, in the middle of the nineteenth century, a merciful God spoke to the heart of this tribal chief (Gen 12:1-3) and broke it wide open with a freshet of mercy, gushing forth and bubbling over to cleanse all hearts by faith.

The divine word promised a blessed future, without telling its precise elements or the time of its coming. Long centuries were to pass before this pledge was fulfilled. But the very sound of God's voice is operative, never returning to Him empty, always doing His will (Is 55:10-11); hardly had He spoken when His promise began to send forth clean water that spread out in ever-widening circles of mercy and loving fidelity until it covered the earth (cf. Ez 47:1-12). The mercy of God touching each generation performs a univocal work of redeeming from death and of invigorating with life, so that all successive moments of history follow the same pattern: the wide outer circle of Christian fulfillment is of the same form as the small inner circle of God's promise to Abraham; and all the circles between bear similar shape. Thus a vital continuity binds fast the story of salvation; far from opposing

the Old Testament, the New Testament, to use the happy word of Père de Vaux, "prolongs it."<sup>1</sup>

It must be so, for God has shaped all to the full measure of His Christ.<sup>2</sup> Through Him the waters of divine mercy were to touch all shores; and so, the vast outer circle of mercy's world-wide expansion gives form to every inner circle, even to the first circle of the water's origin in the heart of Abraham. Christ's redeeming death is at once the cause and the pattern of every previous deed of divine mercy. Typology, then—mighty deeds foreshadowing mightier to come—inheres in the Old Testament as a necessary consequence of the *Christian* quality of all God's work. In His great deeds for Israel, God so kept His Son in mind that Søren Kierkegaard could speak of "the eternal contemporaneousness of Christ";<sup>3</sup> and the Master Himself could say, "Abraham your father rejoiced that he was to see my day. He saw it and was glad" (Jn 8:56).

#### THE INNER CIRCLE—ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT

THIS living bond between the Old and New Testaments is best exemplified in the vital typology of Israel's exodus from Egypt. The event was of supreme importance, for it played a unique creative role in forming the nation, in fashioning its faith and way. Ever afterward Israel commemorated it with the annual Passover feast, when men recounted at local shrines and family tables the stirring tale of their deliverance. Its memory was handed down from father to son in streams of tradition marked with all the divergences and accretions of oral history often recounted. Thus even today the biblical story of the exodus, carefully wrought as it is, betrays unmistakable signs of sundry threads deftly woven into a single pattern.<sup>4</sup> Yet the basic historicity of the

1. Roland de Vaux, O.P., *La Genèse*, in *La sainte Bible de Jérusalem* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1951), pp. 23-24. Cardinal Michael Faulhaber develops this theme at length in his *Judaism, Christianity, and Germany*, trans. George Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1934).

2. This fundamental theme of St. Paul's epistles is crystallized in Eph 1:3-14.

3. "Christ's life on earth is not a past event. . . . It accompanies the human race, and accompanies every generation in particular. . . . His earthly life possesses the eternal contemporaneousness." Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, trans. Walter Lowrie (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 68.

4. The composite style of the exodus story is readily observable in the double account of Moses' call and the revelation of the divine name (Ex 7-12). The literary

narrative cannot be questioned; it is an authentic witness to real events that marked the birth of Israel as a nation and of the worship of Yahweh.<sup>5</sup> Memory is tenacious in the East; and, in this case, its reliability is certified by the fact that Israel was often tempted to forget the story of its origin and the stern exactions of Yahweh, its God.

Here is the story simply told. Some seventeen centuries before Christ, a group of Hebrews driven by famine descended into Egypt where they enjoyed favor under the new dynasty of the Hyksos kings, who had recently swept into power on the wave of a vast Semite migration of which Abraham was part. These sons of Jacob were to remain in the Delta four hundred years, not as a nation within a nation but as an ethnic group, Hebrew in blood but Egyptian in sentiment. Life in the foreign land soiled them with pagan ways and practices. They prospered in this world's goods and in its evils; idolatry came easy and Egyptian manners were to their liking. But at last the long, peaceful sojourn in Egypt changed to a burdensome existence under cruel persecution. Too long had Israel thickened on its lees; and now, through a tyrannical Pharaoh, God poured the oversweet wine from vessel to vessel. A native Egyptian dynasty stripped the Hebrews of all privileges and shackled them with the burdens of an unwelcome minority. This persecution is the first instance of cruel anti-Semitism described in the Bible. Cries of pain and despair rent the air; and God answered. He made ready a man of the hour, whose name was Moses. Native gifts and early training equipped him for leadership. But the forging of bonds between God and men is more than a human task. First, then, God Himself had to temper the mettle of His instrument. Years of exile with the Kenites in the rocky land southwest of the Dead Sea enriched his mind with new traditions and new insights. But, more important still, these years purified his soul for that contact which God would make with him in a flame of fire at Horeb.

Time and again God had manifested Himself to the great patriarchs of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This time, however, God's word

analysis of these narratives would require going into the vast problems of Pentateuchal authorship. See, for instance, J. Coppens, *The Old Testament and the Critics*, trans. Ryan and Tribbe (Paterson: St. Anthony Press, 1942).

5. Some writers have attributed the *entire* religious significance of Israel's exodus to the literary efforts of a later prophetic school which enriched an obscure incident with new religious meaning. This thesis, however, cannot be sustained in view of our certain knowledge of Israel's literature and history. See W. J. Phythian-Adams, *The Fullness of Israel* (Oxford, 1938), pp. 103-120.

pulsed with new meaning. Truly it was still the great El Shaddai of the fathers who spoke to Moses. Yet now this most high God, the God of heaven and earth, asked for a special bond with Israel. Later the prophets were to liken this bond to the tie that binds husband and wife; in their eyes this blood covenant made Israel the people of God and God the spouse and master of Israel (Jer 3:1-12; Ez 16).<sup>6</sup> But for Moses on Horeb God's command involved the here and now. For at Horeb God charged him to lead the people out of Egypt, to shepherd them through the desert, and to bring them into the land He had promised to their fathers.

It was a mammoth task to ask of any man. Yet God, who was both solicitous and powerful, promised to help Moses. His new name was a guarantee. For He would no longer be called merely the great El Shaddai of the nations; He would be Yahweh, the faithful God of their own covenant. Whether Moses first heard this name among the Kenites, or whether it was newly revealed to him at Horeb, matters little. Its meaning is what counts. "I am what I am," God assured Moses. He is always the mysterious "I am," an alien to the shift of human gods from past to future. And so Yahweh—"He who is"—would always be His name.<sup>7</sup>

It required centuries for Israel to taste the full flavor of the Horeb revelation and to understand how the name Yahweh was at once the source of all fear and of all hope. Suffering must first chasten God's people to wisdom; the prophets must first see their visions. Then, at long last, the Horeb revelation of God's unfailing mercy would become a conviction. Whatever Israel might do, Yahweh will never turn from the mercy and promise of Horeb. He will always be faithful and true; pity and fidelity will rule all His works (Ps 24:10). When Israel ceased being a child and grew to spiritual maturity it came to see that, even from the beginning of the world, God had always been the selfsame, cherishing His creatures, as a nurse her little ones, with mercy and fidelity. Then it could appreciate the full meaning of Hosea's urgent plea, "Yahweh, the God of hosts, Yahweh is His name. But do you return to your God, practice kindness and justice, and wait for your God constantly" (Os 12:5-6).

6. Even in the great love song of Israel, the *Canticle of Canticles*, exegetes as eminent as Canon Ricciotti find innumerable reminiscences of the exodus.

7. The divine name is briefly discussed in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), col. 165a, b, c.

It was the memory of the exodus that did most to convince Israel of God's power and pity. At the time men saw it simply as a liberation from the hard oppression of Pharaoh; but later they came to appreciate it also as a liberation from the worse evil of defilement by Egyptian infidelity and idolatry.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the prophetic school looked upon this deliverance as a true redemption, with God as a warrior, struggling in desperate conflict with Pharaoh and the dragon power of his gods (Is 51:9-10).<sup>9</sup> One after another Yahweh hurled His ten plagues against a king's proud heart that only hardened like mud under the burning heat of the divine bolts. But the last plague was a master stroke, not softening Pharaoh's heart, but splitting it wide open in helpless defeat. Where flood and storm and hail had failed, the death of the first-born cleaved the rock.

All through the terrors, the sons of Jacob were spared; the plagues struck all around them, but they were untouched. Their preservation from God's final blow involved the elaborate ritual of the Paschal supper and a ceremony of smearing blood on the doorposts. The incidents of this last night in Egypt burned a lasting memory in the soul of Israel. The contrast between their security and the anguish of the Egyptians, the change of heart in obdurate Pharaoh, and the urgent pleadings of their Egyptian neighbors that the Hebrews enrich themselves from previously hoarded treasures—all this forced upon them the recognition of Yahweh's special favor. Ever before, Egypt had shared its riches with Israel's patriarchs, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. But the sons of Jacob came out of the darkness of the Paschal night with something far better than Egypt's gold and fine linen; they departed from the land under Moses' leadership with a new consciousness

8. Louis Bouyer, *Orat.*, emphasizes that Israel's deliverance from Egypt "was not only a material deliverance. . . . Egypt was no ordinary enemy. It was the land of magicians and idols, the country where Satan reigned openly. . . . So, the slavery in which Egypt kept Israel was not only a misfortune but a defilement. By their dependence on an infidel people, to which until the sending of Moses Israel had resigned itself, and by their acceptance of Egyptian idolatry and magic, the sons of Jacob had alienated their God" (*The Paschal Mystery*, Chicago: Regnery, 1950, p. 58). Cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Is. propb.*, I, 2 (PG 70:77B).

9. The exodus was a divine intervention that created the people of God. But this very creation involved redemption. The God of Exodus is a warrior (Ex 15:3-6), and such He will always be all through Scripture. Thus Jeremiah looks back on the exodus as a mighty deed of God's "strong hand and outstretched arm" (32:21); Isaiah envisions the creator of the new Israel as a warrior incarnadined by the blood of his foes (63:1-6); and the people of the new Israel, redeemed in the blood of the Lamb, sing forever in heaven the victory song of Moses and Mariam (Apoc 15:3).

that God had carved them out from the heart of an alien race to become His own special people. Yahweh was with them as their God, and the fiery cloud of the Shekinah leading them was His symbol.

The exodus was only half of God's work. He had delivered His people from bondage and separated them from the contamination of Egypt. A positive task yet remained: to forge a bond of union and weld Israel to Himself with a covenant of blood. Like all union with God, this could be done only in the desert. ("I will lead her into the wilderness," the Lord was later to say of Israel, the unfaithful, "and I will speak to her heart," Os 2:14.) Therefore the Shekinah diverted the line of march from the *Via Maris*, the direct route to the promised land, and turned southward instead to the region of Sinai.

But Israel's problems with Pharaoh were not yet over; very shortly the king's retainers set out in hot pursuit to bring back the fugitives. And Israel would have gone back readily if God had not intervened with a definitive liberation that once for all swept it out beyond Pharaoh's reach. The story of the miracle is one of the most stirring in the Bible. The fleeing people found itself in a cul-de-sac: on one side the Red Sea, on the other and behind them the mountains, in front the approaching Egyptians. There was no escape save in surrender—or in God. And God intervened. Moses lifted the rod; and a driving wind parted the waters for Israel to march across to safety. The Egyptians followed; but once more Moses lifted his rod; and the waters returned to drown them all. Israel could not miss the meaning of the wonder; they sang and danced to honor the merciful Yahweh, their God. In the happy phrase of Dom Winzen, this jubilant song marks "the hour when the Divine Office was born";<sup>10</sup> it is the seed of the Church's solemn praise of God.

Indeed, Yahweh was always at hand to supply the needs of the child He had found languishing and had mercifully freed. Time and again on this journey He proved to an incredulous people that it was really He who had intervened to point their destiny. When they were thirsty, He struck water from the rock; when they were hungry, He provided bread from heaven. Therefore, when at last this people reached Sinai, they already had ample experience of God's solicitude and power.

10. Dom Damasus Winzen, O.S.B., *Pathways in Holy Scripture*, The Book of Exodus (privately printed), p. 6.

They needed these previous love tokens, for Sinai was the scene of espousals that bound Israel to Yahweh forever. The thunder and lightning of the theophany were terrifying; the ritual of covenant was detailed and impressive; but a love story was the heart of it all. Yahweh bound Himself to Israel and Israel to Yahweh in a covenant of blood. He on His part would love and protect Israel and fulfill the rich promises He had pledged; Israel would ever live and act as His people, faithfully fulfilling the just and holy house rules of a God who was perfect.<sup>11</sup> Just as in Egypt God's word had delivered the bodies of His people from Pharaoh, so on Sinai the word of God delivered their souls from the darkness of unbelief and evil practice. Israel is thus a people created by God's word; moreover, its very continuance depended on divine promises and demands.<sup>12</sup>

Ever after, Israel looked back to the exodus and to the Sinai pact as the birth hour of the nation. Its history was often marred by infidelities, but no weakness of man could obliterate three dominant factors which Sinai burned into the Israelite soul: there is but one God, one chosen people, one country in which to work out its destiny.<sup>13</sup> It was especially the yearly celebration of the Passover feast that kept this national memory intact (Ex 12:12-14). With Israel, the Passover was not a nature feast commemorating the return of spring, as with the surrounding Canaanites. Rather, it was a religious feast, to recall the springtime of God's favor when, through the exodus, He graciously ended the winter of oppression and, at Sinai, entered on the bright joyous days of His espousals with Israel.<sup>14</sup>

All memories of these incidents are steeped in praise and thanksgiving.

11. The law of Israel was not a mere external burden; rather it was the practical way to share Yahweh's thoughts and to direct one's life by the light of His wise word. Hence God sums up the motives for its observance in the recurrent command: "You must be holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2; 11:44; 20:7; cf. Deut 14:21). The sapiential literature that flowered in Israel after the Exile is entirely based on the conviction that observance of the Law provides true communion in the wisdom of God. Cf. Psalms 18 and 118.

12. Israel was truly a people of God's word, a theme fully developed by L. Bouyer, Orat., in *La Bible et l'évangile* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1951), pp. 10-54.

13. Such was the credo which the devout Israelite recited in paying his tithes (Deut 26:5-9). See R. de Vaux, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 34.

14. From the very first, Israel's faith and worship were a vital response to the God who intervened in definite historical circumstances to direct its course. Thus, unlike other ancient religions, whose gods were but a reflection of this world, lost in it, Israel's is a historical religion, and its God, the Eternal One, is the Lord of time. See L. Bouyer, Orat., *La Bible et l'évangile*, pp. 39-56.

ing; later generations will sing of the exodus as of a triumph (Psalms 104, 105, 113) and of the covenant of Sinai as an espousals in which God chose Israel for Himself. As time passed, the importance of the exodus grew to full stature in the minds of men; and its profound meaning was richly interpreted in the sweeping poetry of the prophets and the Deuteronomist. All later laws of the priestly code were traced to Sinai; and the definitive redaction of the Pentateuch after the Exile rested the authority of its laws on the authority of Moses.<sup>15</sup>

But there was a twofold orientation in Israel's faith. It centered in the historical exodus that had passed; but it looked forward also to an exodus yet to come. The reason is obvious. God had promised a full flowering; and the merciful pledge of Yahweh, the faithful One, is without repentance. Yet daily events brought bitter experience that the deliverance from Egypt and the covenant of Sinai were not definitive. Time and again Israel hankered for the fleshpots of Egypt; and only too often, like Gomer, the wife of Hosea, it proved unfaithful to its faithful Spouse. From the very beginning, then, the prophets saw that there had to be a new exodus and a new covenant (see Os 2:14-24). This enduring hope enriched the memory of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and its covenant with God on Sinai. For the prophets, these events of the past were unforgettable historical facts, but even more they were cherished pledges of a blessed future.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE OUTER CIRCLE—THE EXODUS OF CHRIST

IT WAS Christ who fulfilled all the rich hopes of the prophets. His very name held promise; for, as the angel explained to Joseph, this name was at once a symbol and guarantee that, at long last, Yahweh had come to save His people (Mt 1:21). It was but natural, then, that the writers of the New Testament should find in Israel's exodus from Egypt a leitmotiv for their own description of the work of Christ.

15. Jean Steinmann characterizes the exodus as "the grain of mustard seed" out of which grew the great tree of later legal, moral, and liturgical developments in Israel. See his "L'Exode dans l'Ancien Testament," *La Vie spirituelle* (March 1951), p. 238.

16. H. Holstein has called this witness to Christ "the christological significance of Scripture" ("La tradition des Apôtres chez saint Irénée," *Recherches de science religieuse*, 1949, p. 248). Jean Daniélou, S.J., describes the full involvements of this Old Testament witness to Christ in his monumental work, *Sacramentum futuri* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950), pp. 1-250.

Steeped as they were in the Scriptures, these men tended to locate the Saviour in the biblical context of the great deliverance. They never use the word *exodus*;<sup>17</sup> but the incidents of this historic event sound a diapason for the harmony of the Gospels' full score.

Often enough there is striking agreement among all the evangelists in handling the elements of this typology; such identifications were probably fixed and made permanent in the oral catechesis which preceded the writing of the Gospels. Yet, at the same time, there is also marked fluidity; Jesus is variously identified with the God of the *exodus*, with Israel itself, with Moses the leader, or with the chief factor in some incident of the *exodus*. Such divergence should occasion no surprise; for all these different aspects merely stress that the basic typology of *exodus* must be sought in the mercy and fidelity of a saving God who, in solicitude for Israel, penetrated every person, event, and thing with His own divine power. Each element in the story of the *exodus* foreshadowed the much greater work of Christian redemption in which divine power penetrated the human nature and human deeds of Jesus, to work a definitive liberation from sin and an eternal covenant with God. Therefore, in pondering the many gospel applications of *exodus* typology, we come to a new, rich appreciation of the perfect deliverance that God wrought in and through Jesus.<sup>18</sup>

Among the Synoptics, the Gospel of St. Matthew is especially rich with this typology. The avowed purpose of the author of the first Gospel was to stress the continuity between the Old and the New Law. It is obvious, then, that he would utilize the widespread Jewish expectation that "in the last days" God must work a new *exodus*. In developing this theme, Matthew like Mark stresses a similarity between the experiences of Christ and those of the chosen people of God. Thus the return of the holy family from Egypt, after the death of Herod, is seen by Matthew as a new *exodus*; and so he captions it with the very words Hosea had used to describe the earlier event: "Out of Egypt I

17. At Jesus' transfiguration Moses and Elijah spoke of the *exodos*. He was to accomplish in Jerusalem (Lk 9:30-31). In this case, however, this Greek word is merely a synonym for death, as in 2 Pet 1:15 and in Wis 3:2; 7:6.

18. It is St. Paul who develops the theology of this fulfillment. In his earlier epistles he envisions the total victory of Christ over satanic power as the definitive triumph of the last days. However, in the Captivity epistles, he insists that this victory is already actual in a realized eschatology. See Donatien Mollat, S.J., "Jugement dans le Nouveau Testament," *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, 4 (1949), 1363-1364.

called my son" (Mt 2:15; Os 11:1). The beginnings of the Saviour's public life are also linked to similar incidents in the history of Israel. As Israel was baptized into its new life with God by passing through the waters of the Red Sea, so Christ inaugurates His ministry for God by accepting baptism in the waters of the Jordan (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11). Thereafter both Israel and Christ live through a period of desert life and temptation. The forty days of Christ in the desert has its parallel in the forty years of Israel; His temptation accords with Israel's testing; His food is the word of God that comes down from heaven, just as Israel's food in the desert is not the bread of man's making but the manna of God's giving (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13). It is especially noteworthy that Christ defeats His tempter with texts from the book of Deuteronomy, all of them summing up the wisdom of God that guided and strengthened Israel.

After this early identification of Christ with Israel, Matthew prefers to emphasize the resemblance between Christ and Moses. Generalizations are, of course, always a risk. But there is some justification for saying that Matthew's chief concern is to represent Christ as a second Moses, greater by far than the first lawgiver of Israel. This identification sounds its keynote in Matthew's representation of Christ's first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). As Moses drafted the law of the Old Covenant, so Christ presents here the law of the New. This law is perfect in every way; and Christ Himself is a lawgiver of divine holiness and authority. As a master He handles the earlier law with deft touch, changing at will, and fashioning to perfection. God had spoken through Moses; but this new Moses is more than an instrument, infinitely more than the mouthpiece of God. And so "the crowds were astonished at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority" (Mt 7:28-29).

This resemblance between the two lawgivers dominates all the later discourses of Jesus in the first Gospel; indeed, the Master draws largely from Deuteronomy for the expression of His own thoughts. Moreover, there is likeness even in Christ's method of teaching. His soul, like that of Moses, was a limpid pool reflecting divine truth without ruffle; in both men passion was controlled; nothing disturbed their tranquil grasp of truth or marred the clarity of its expression.<sup>19</sup> For God said of Moses, "Moses was by far the meekest man on the face of the earth"

19. See Léonce De Grandmaison, *Jesus Christ* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), II, 236.

(Num 12:3); just as Christ said of Himself, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29).

The wonders and miracles of Christ also point a likeness between Himself and Moses. Through both lawgivers God wrought mighty works to authenticate their mission and to win for their law a hearing. It is not the meaning of the miracle that interests Matthew, nor its resemblance in kind to the miracles of Moses. Thus he is content to tell the story of the multiplication of the loaves without referring, as John does, to the profound symbolism of bread coming miraculously from heaven. Matthew's concern is with the fact itself. Miracles are God's own work; as He had wrought wonders through Moses, so now He was working in Jesus. Both were lawgivers mighty not only in word but also in deed.

It is especially in describing the transfiguration that both Matthew and Mark bring into focus the typology of Moses (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:1-7). Here the two great lawgivers of Old Covenant and New meet face to face; and the bright cloud that once overshadowed Moses (Ex 33:9-10) now descends upon Jesus. Heaven's authentication of the new Moses follows the pattern of its approval of the old.

The author of the fourth Gospel is even more pointed in showing how Christ fulfilled the typology of Israel's exodus from Egypt. In fact, some have suggested that Exodus provides the whole framework of this Gospel, and that John follows it step by step to prove that Jesus, as a new Moses and a new Lamb of God, came upon earth to lead a new Israel from the oppression of sin to the liberty of a new covenant with God.<sup>20</sup> It is difficult to accept this thesis in its entirety; for in a Gospel of so many composite themes it is an oversimplification to reduce all to a single unity. But the fact remains that the exodus motif is prevalent in the fourth Gospel.

Like Matthew, St. John too marks a resemblance between Christ and the lawgiver of Israel. But his aim is to evoke *all* the richness of the exodus typology; for he is not only a witness to the gospel tradition, but even more its "inspired exegete."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in his treatment of the life and work of Christ, many new aspects of simi-

20. Oscar Cullmann in his *Urchristentum und Gottesdienst* (Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1950), pp. 38-115, represents the Gospel of John as a kind of Paschal catechesis commenting on the mysteries of Christ in the light of their biblical prefigurations.

21. D. Mollat, S.J., *L'Evangile de Saint Jean*, in *La sainte Bible de Jérusalem* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1953), p. 14.

larity appear. Often enough he is content merely to suggest a point of resemblance. Thus four times in this Gospel Jesus appropriates to Himself the divine name first revealed to Moses at Horeb (Jn 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19); but in all these instances the reference to the Horeb revelation is allusive rather than explicit. So, too, there is passing reference to the new espousals that will bring to perfection the Old Covenant (Jn 3:29-30). But after the brief, unadorned words of John the Baptist, this theme too is dropped.

Other points of resemblance, however, are emphasized and developed at length. The chief of these is the Paschal Lamb motif. It was the blood of the unblemished lamb that saved the first-born of Israel from slaughter and made possible the departure for the promised land. In John's eyes, Christ is the true Lamb of God who shed His blood on Calvary to save men from the death of sin and to liberate them for the promised land of heaven. John's first introduction to Christ was the Baptist's salute, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (Jn 1:36). Ever after this typology loomed large in the mind of the evangelist. Thus several times he makes a deliberate effort to connect Jesus' death with the feast of the Passover (Jn 2:13; 6:4; 11:55); the providential coincidence of time between the Paschal celebration and the death of Christ on the cross provided him an opportunity to stress an underlying typology.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps there is also a meaningful play in John's introduction to his account of the last supper: "Before the feast of the *Passover*, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come to *pass* out of the world to the Father . . ." (Jn 13:1). Certainly there is a deliberate allusion to the ritual of the Paschal celebration in John's remark that no bone of the Victim on the cross was broken (Jn 19:36). It is obvious, then, even to a casual reader of the fourth Gospel that John found in the lamb of Egypt a memorable type of the Lamb of Israel renewed.<sup>23</sup>

But he finds also many other resemblances. For him, Christ is the light of the world (Jn 8:12). The conflict between this light and the

22. An interesting Jewish legend holds that Israel's redemption in future days will happen on the night of Israel's redemption from Egypt, attributing to Moses these words: "In this night God protected Israel against the angels of destruction, and in this night He will also redeem the generations of the future." See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1940), II, 373; V, 437-438, note 235.

23. St. Paul also taught this fulfillment in 1 Cor 5:7: "Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed."

surrounding darkness is a favorite theme with John. But this theme is not his own; its source is biblical. He has drawn it from the beautiful contemplative meditations of the author of the Wisdom of Solomon who penetrates the deep truths contained in God's guiding care of His people as He went before them on their journey, lighting the way with the glory of the Shekinah. A cloud of divine light led Israel from Egypt to the promised land; this was the visible sign of God's presence with His people. For St. John, Jesus is the true light of the world, for He is the Word of God dwelling among men and radiating everywhere the "glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).<sup>24</sup> Men must follow this light if they would reach their heavenly home safely; they must come to, and love, this light if they desire divine approval (Jn 3:19-21). Thus the evangelist's witness to Christ as the guiding light of men is hardly appreciated unless one sees it against the biblical context of the Shekinah of exodus.

The manna from heaven was yet another element of Israel's exodus which St. John utilized as a type of Christ's beneficent action. In this identification the evangelist was not original, for Jewish exegesis itself had already given to the manna an eschatological meaning. Devout Israelites were certain that, as God had nourished their fathers with bread from heaven in the desert, so He would nourish them with heavenly food in the "last days"; they were certain that the manna would reappear in messianic times.<sup>25</sup> This Jewish belief is indicated in the questions the crowd put to Jesus (Jn 6:30-31). John himself relies on this tradition when, in his book of revelation, he equates manna and the tree of life as perfect symbols of the divine goods to be shared by the blessed in the world to come (Apoc 2:7, 17). It was the precise object of the fourth Gospel to show that this eschatological food is already given to the Church; it is hers here and now because of the abiding presence of Jesus in the vital and life-giving reality of the Eucharist.<sup>26</sup> If, as some have thought, the component parts of John's Gospel originated as elements of the primitive sacramental

24. St. Ambrose, in his *De Sacramentis*, I, vi, 22 (PL 16:424), writes: "What is that column of light, if not Christ the Lord who has dissipated the darkness of paganism and has spread abroad the light of truth and spiritual grace in the hearts of men?"

25. See O. Behm, "Artos," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, I, 476.

26. See J. Daniélou, S.J., *Bible et liturgie* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1951), pp. 204-206.

catechesis, then it is obvious that the typology of the manna was widely used in the early Church to describe the riches of the Eucharist.

But in the desert wanderings, God not only fed His people but also provided water for them from the rock. St. John follows St. Paul (1 Cor 10:4) in identifying this rock of Sinai as a type of Christ. This theme of refreshing spiritual water is stressed in St. John even more than the manna. His use of this type reflects its prevalence in baptismal catechesis of the early Church and also in the catechetical instructions on grace and spiritual life. It is true that the baptismal reference made by Christ in His discourse with Nicodemus (Jn 3:5) is probably based on Israel's baptism in the waters of the Red Sea and in the cloud, touched on by St. Paul in 1 Cor 10:1-2; but elsewhere in the fourth Gospel the theme of water seems to rest on the typology of the drink provided miraculously by God in the desert. Christ is the true rock from whom all life and all refreshment must come.

The brazen serpent, too, figures in the fourth Gospel as a type of the healing power of Christ's redemption: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (Jn 3:14). These words of Christ are a bare allusion to the miraculous cure wrought by God for His people (Num 21:9). But, in the light of Wis 16:5-13, this brief sentence crystallizes a rich typology to provide John with a point of departure for his sublime theology of redemption (Jn 3:14-21). In his pages type and fulfillment are so intimately interwoven that they mutually interact to aid the mind in penetrating the wealth of each.

All in all, the story of Christ as told in the Gospels is best understood when it is read in the biblical context of Israel's exodus. For Matthew, Mark, and John were all true Israelites, steeped in the Scriptures and sharing Israel's hope for an ineffable renewal of the divine mercy that led the chosen people out of Egypt, bequeathed a covenant on Sinai, and made good its pledge of loving devotedness by working wonders to hearten Israel during the desert wanderings. Long before the evangelists appeared, the Jews had seen in the events of the exodus shadows cast beforehand by a blessed future. It is the merit of the evangelists that they found in Christ the perfect fulfillment of all the Old Testament hopes—the "substance" that had cast the shadows (Col 2:17).<sup>27</sup>

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

## THE OUTER CIRCLE—THE EXODUS OF THE CHRISTIAN

THE life and work of Christ are not over. Before He died, the Saviour promised to abide with His Church always—ever the same Christ, “yesterday, today, yes, and forever” (Heb 13:8). Strong is the bond between Moses and Israel, but stronger still, intimate as no other, is the union which binds Christ to His people in the Church. For the new Moses and the new Israel are joined together as head and members of one mystical body, as bridegroom and bride of a true marriage. In the mystery of His Church, Christ is personally present to every age and renders accessible to every follower the very substance of His life and work upon earth. As St. Leo the Great expressed it: “What was visible in our Redeemer during His earthly sojourn has now passed into the sacraments.”<sup>28</sup> Though the Church is the Church of pilgrimage, traveling toward the great Day of the Lord; though she moves in time, waiting, hoping, and praying, “Thy kingdom come,” she stands all through time on an atemporal level. She is the tremendous Sacrament that brings the Christ of the first century into every age and into every heart. For “each time the mysteries are renewed, the work of redemption becomes actual once more.”<sup>29</sup> What was wrought in Jesus during His earthly life is renewed in the soul of every Christian. Christ’s mysteries belong to His Church and to each member, not merely to contemplate and to utilize but also to relive.

Therefore the exodus of Israel from Egypt does not exhaust its typology in prefiguring Christ’s redeeming life, death, and resurrection. By the very fact that it foreshadowed the events of His life, it also prefigured the life of His followers, Israel renewed.<sup>30</sup> For the daily life of Christ’s mystical body is but the living reproduction and fulfillment of the saving mysteries in the life of Christ Himself. This is the reason why “the typology of exodus is the most classic and constant in our liturgical tradition and in Christian literature.”<sup>31</sup>

28. “Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transivit.” *Sermo* 74, 2 (PL 54:398).

29. Secret for the Mass of the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

30. The prophets had long looked forward to the Israel of the future, when it would be renewed and glorified and when multitudes would walk in the light of its God; see Is 60; Jer 31:31-34; Os 2:14-24.

31. Henri de Lubac, S.J., p. 79, note 1, of *Origène, Homélie sur L’Exode*, trans.

The patristic catecheses which formed the Christian mind place the origin of a Christian's spiritual life at the moment when, through baptism, he shares in the liberating death of the true Paschal Lamb.<sup>32</sup> Like Israel of old, he is thereby delivered from slavery to the devil; he becomes a member of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Pet 2:9). As the years pass and he journeys through the desert of this life, the Christian finds in the mighty activity of Christ a kindness, a divine mercy supporting him all his days and leading him to the promised land of heaven (cf. Is 46:3-4; Heb 1:3). But this passing from the death of sin to the vibrant life of heaven must be accomplished *in Christ*—through the power of His exodus, in His company, and according to the pattern of His example. For the exodus and desert journey of the Christian involves both a sacramental sharing in the mystery of Christ and a vital imitation of His conduct.

It was natural, then, for the early Fathers to emphasize the biblical foundation of the sacramental signs. Just as St. John showed how the redemptive work of Christ renewed and enriched the great wonders of the exodus, so the Fathers taught that the Christian sacraments, as living instruments of the Passion, continue these wonders and apply them, with new divine power and new Christian meaning, to every believer. In this they remained true to the primitive symbolism of the sacraments, which was taken directly from Israel's liturgy and the typology of the Old Testament. Humanly speaking there could be no other source, for Christ and His apostles had been schooled only in the traditions of Israel. Afterwards, it is true, writers of a Greek milieu tried to explain the sacramental symbolism in a new way: new meanings were borrowed from the thoughts and customs of a Greek world. And all this has helped to enrich man's appreciation of the sacraments. But their primitive meaning must still be studied in the light of a biblical context.<sup>33</sup>

The early Fathers of the Church were careful to preserve this biblical foundation of the sacramental signs. Thus their thought on baptism was always controlled by St. Paul's identification of its type in the cross-

P. Fortier, with notes by de Lubac (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1947). Cf. Jean Daniélou, S.J., "Traversée de la mer rouge et baptême aux premiers siècles," *Recherches de science religieuse* (1946), pp. 131-142.

32. See J. Daniélou, S.J., *Sacramentum futuri*, pp. 131-142.

33. See W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925).

ing of the Red Sea (1 Cor 10:2).<sup>34</sup> For him, the exodus from Egypt and the passage through the Sea prefigured the deliverance from evil that comes to the Christian through baptism. The two realities have similar meanings; each marks, in its own way, the end of servitude and the beginning of a new existence.

Again, this thought is not original with St. Paul. For at the beginning of the Christian era, the initiation of proselytes into the Jewish community included not only circumcision but also baptism, in imitation of the exodus from Egypt through the parted waters of the Red Sea.<sup>35</sup> This symbolic act was charged with the redemptive power of Christ to become a true sacrament of the New Law. What was merely commemorative with the Jews became dynamically operative with the Christians. The ritual washing became a vital sharing in the deliverance from sin and birth to new life achieved by Christ's exodus on the cross: "Do you not know that all we who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? For we were buried with Him by means of baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ has arisen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3-4).

With the Fathers, then, the exodus of Israel from Egypt was a type not only of Christ's death but also of Christian baptism. For them the Old Testament contained both a christological and a sacramental typology. The baptismal catechesis of Tertullian is especially eloquent: "When the people, set unconditionally free, escaped the violence of the Egyptian king by crossing over through water, it was water that exterminated the king himself, with his entire force. What figure is more manifestly fulfilled in the sacrament of baptism? The nations are set free from the world by means of water; and the devil, their old tyrant, they leave behind, overwhelmed in the water."<sup>36</sup>

This passage places in focus the primitive perspective of baptism and redemption. Both were seen, above all, as a victory over the demon. On the cross, Christ crushed His adversary's head to liberate all humanity from the cruel yoke of sin; and each Christian shares in this

34. See Origen, *In exod.*, Hom. V, 1-2 (PG 12:325-328); St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Baptismo* (PG 46:589).

35. See G. Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), I, 334.

36. *De Baptismo*, 9 (PL 1:1318). Cf. Didymus the Blind, *De Trinitate*, II, 14 (PG 39:697).

triumph of Christ at the moment of baptism. Its waters annihilate Satan's power as completely as the Red Sea drowned the forces of Pharaoh. The deliverance wrought by God for the Israelites in freeing them forever through water from an earthly tyrant and in leading them out as a new nation into the desert finds its antitype in baptism, which liberates a spiritual people from a spiritual tyrant and leads them from the world to the kingdom of God. This theme is frequent in the baptismal catecheses of the Fathers.

A striking example is this passage by St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "Needs must you know that the type of baptism is found in Israel's ancient history. Indeed, when Pharaoh, the bitter and savage tyrant, oppressed the free and noble people of the Hebrews, God sent Moses to free them from the evil Egyptian bondage. The doorposts were daubed with the blood of the lamb so that the destroying angel would pass over the houses marked with the sign of blood. Thus, against all hope, the Hebrew people was set free. As the enemy pursued the liberated, however, he saw, marvelous to say, the sea divided for them; he was avidly going after them, treading in their footsteps, when he was forthwith swallowed by the floods of the Red Sea and buried there. Let us move now from things ancient to things new, from type to reality. There we have Moses sent by God into Egypt, here we have the Christ sent by the Father into the world. There it was in order to free the oppressed people from Egypt, here it is to rescue men tyrannized in this world by sin. There the blood of the lamb warded off the destroyer, here the blood of Jesus Christ, the immaculate Lamb, puts the demons to flight. There the tyrant pursued that ancient people even to the sea, here the shameless and insolent prince of all evil gives chase even to the very brink of the sacred font. The one was drowned in the sea, the other is brought to nothing in the saving water."<sup>37</sup>

The exodus provided also a sublime typology for the Eucharist. Here, too, the Fathers drew largely from the primitive sacramental catechesis reflected in the pages of the New Testament. The inspired authors had seized on two elements in the exodus story as prefigurements of the nourishing and strengthening presence of Christ. St. John favored the manna; St. Paul, the rock of Horeb. Both symbols were eloquent of the solicitous and operative providence of Emmanuel. It was only to be expected, then, that the manna-rock symbolism would become a

37. *Catech. Mystagog.* (PG 33:1068A).

dominant element in patristic teaching.<sup>38</sup> Time and again, in explaining the reality and effects of the Eucharist, the Fathers return to these types as divinely ordained prefigurations of holy Communion.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, the Fathers utilized all the elements of christological typology in the exodus story as an equivalent sacramental typology. Thus the very liturgy of initiation, because it took place in the Paschal period, is charged with reminiscences of the exodus from Egypt. Each factor in that historical event was identified as a type of the exodus achieved by Christ through His way of the cross and shared in sacramentally by each Christian through his participation in the Christian mysteries.

But something more than a sacramental share in Christ's Passover is demanded of the Christian. For the sacrament gives grace; and grace means immanent activity. Therefore, all initiation into the mystery of Christ must be accompanied by a conversion of morals and by vital Christian living, a duty St. Paul never tired of insisting on. After recounting all that God had done for Israel in the desert, he warned his converts: "Now these things came to pass as examples to us" (1 Cor 10:6), and proceeded to apply each example to the conduct of Christians. His conclusion sums up the moral teaching of the exodus narrative: "Now all these things happened to them as a type, and they were written for our correction, upon whom the final age of the world has come" (1 Cor 10:11). The same lessons are stressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews (3:1-4:13). There the typology of the Old Testament points to positive cooperation, demands of the followers of Christ an eager striving for goodness, a hastening toward the promised land.

The Fathers were unanimous in repeating these inspired demands. All were enemies of a sacramentary quietism, with its contempt for the sweat and toil of moral effort and its search for a rest in God that is not for man the pilgrim—a doctrine condemned again by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mediator Dei*. They insisted that the Christian's sacramental share in Christ's Passover brought a new vital power that must be exercised in daily Christian living. Christ's exodus traced the way of the cross; the way of the cross, then, dying to self, is the

38. See St. Augustine, *Tract. Joann.*, 26, 12 (PL 35:1612).

39. Although the Alexandrian tradition of Clement and Origen, following Philo, understood the manna of the word of God (as in Mt 4:4), the early sacramental catecheses, on the other hand, stressed the eucharistic interpretation, resting this application on Jn 6:31-33.

only authentic Christian exodus: "Unto this, indeed, you have been called, because Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in His steps" (1 Pet 2:21). St. John Chrysostom gives pointed expression to this patristic teaching in one of his homilies. This is his thought: The Lord had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and yet, except for a few, they grumbled against Him, mistrusted His might, doubted His love. Therefore they were barred from setting foot in the Holy Land, and the grace of liberation and safe passage through the Red Sea availed them nothing. In like wise, it avails a Christian nothing to have received baptism and to have shared in the spiritual mysteries, unless he leads a life worthy of this grace.<sup>40</sup>

Truly, the exodus is not an event of the past. Though in Christ we are indeed delivered from sin, from idolatry, and from death, we must be ever in exodus, ever passing over, ever leaving behind the servitude of idolatrous Egypt, ever marching through the austerity of the desert, ever doing our utmost to enter the promised land. Till the day of Christ's return, we, God's people, remain as it were in the wilderness. There is still the yearning for Egypt's ease; still the crowd murmurs, still leaders sin. Yet God is faithful and, chastening and forgiving, thrusts us forward without fail toward the new heaven and the new earth which Jesus will usher in when He comes again. Thus to be saved, one must take the road God showed to Israel, one must walk the stations of the cross. For Israel's route is ever the route of the whole of God's people and the route of its every member.<sup>41</sup>

The follower of Christ is a man en route, for Christ called Himself "the Way" (Jn 14:6), and the first name Christians gave to their new life in Him was likewise "the way" (Ac 9:2; 19:9).

#### THE CIRCLE OF CONSUMMATION

CHRISTIAN life fulfills the typology of Israel's exodus because it is a life in Christ and a full sharing in His wondrous mysteries. But the redeeming mission of the Saviour does not reach its consummation in this world; and so life here below cannot be the final fulfillment of the types God prepared in the Old Law. Only heaven can provide that.

40. *Homily 23*, 2 on 1 Epistle to the Corinthians, 10, 1 ff. (PG 61:194).

41. Adapted from Roger Haseveldt, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, trans. W. Storey (Chicago: Fides Publishers Association, 1955), p. 72.

It is the privilege of St. John, then, to speak the last word in the glorious pages of his Apocalypse. There he describes the full flowering of all that exodus typology promised, of all that Christ accomplished. The whole heavenly scene is dominated by the victorious Lamb; it is His blood that has achieved all; through Him the wonders of the first exodus reach their crown. The elect who have crossed the Red Sea of death sing anew the victory song of Moses and Mariam (Apoc 15: 2-3). The covenant between God and His people is final and perfect; the new Israel has become God's bride, and "God Himself will be with them as their God" (Apoc 21:3). To him who thirsts God gives the water of life freely (Apoc 21:6); to him who is hungry He gives "the hidden manna" (Apoc 2:17). Forever the Israel of heaven shall be "a kingdom and priests"; and all shall sing with joy the canticle of the Lamb: "To Him who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us to be a kingdom, and priests to God His Father—to Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Apoc 1:5-6).

#### CONCLUSION

THE exodus of Israel, the exodus of Christ, the exodus of the Christian—all form a vital unity, all compenetrate in perfect harmony. The Israel of old, mindful of God's mercy in the first exodus, prayed ardently for a richer renewal: "Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance. . . . As in the days when you came forth from the land of Egypt, show us wonderful things" (Mic 7:14-15). God heard this prayer, and granted the "wonderful things" of Christ's redemption. This second exodus is greater by far than the first; yet consummation follows the pattern of promise. Both are mighty works of God, revealing His power and His person in the concord of a blended minor and major scale. One cannot be appreciated without the other; both scales sound true only in their mighty harmony.

This fact is fundamental to Christian theology; it is no less essential to Christian spirituality. Pascal achieved his supreme mystical experience in that night of prayer in which he glimpsed how truly the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was his own God.<sup>42</sup> So, too, every Chris-

42. A facsimile of the prayer is found in Abbé Bremond, *Sentiment religieux en France* IV (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1916), p. 368. For the French text and an Eng-

tian who would really live his Christian life must come to realize that the God of Israel at the Red Sea, the God of Jesus on Calvary, the God of every Christian on earth, the God of the glorified Israel in heaven, is always one and the same—"yesterday, and today, yes, and forever" (Heb 13:8).