

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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An attempt has ^{been made} in this thesis to examine the concept of God and the natural order in the Book of Psalms. The investigation is made in the wider context of the ancient Near Eastern world and the O.T. Modern approaches to the interpretation of the Psalms also have been taken into account.

The nature-religions of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and Canaan throw light to illuminate the distinctive elements of the O.T faith in God and His relation to the natural world. The nature-religions hardly maintained any distinctions between gods and nature-powers. For the order of the universe and for the safety of man, the adherents of these religions desired to maintain the status quo by keeping the harmony between man and the powers of nature.

It was in this context that the O.T emerged as a great breakthrough in the concept of God and the natural order. Nature has been liberated from the powers of capricious deities and brought under the purposive rule of a creator who reveals His moral purposes to His devotees. The creator-God is above and beyond the world of matter. He is independent and free in His decisions. This concept of the absolute transcendence and freedom of God was another volte-face in the ancient world of nature-religions.

In the Psalms we find a cross section of the faith of Israel. The poets represent the faith and aspirations of the rank and file who led largely an agricultural and pastoral life. The Psalmists make no apologies for sharing the literary patterns and thought-forms of the ancient N.East. It was in this cultural matrix that the religion of Israel was born and brought up. Since the people of Israel was part and parcel of this ancient culture, the question of borrowing patterns and ideas does not arise in this context. The common Semitic culture does not obliterate the distinctive features of the faith of Israel.

Among the psalms, the Hymns of Praise should be mentioned first as the eloquent witness to the concept of God and Nature. They are followed by the Royal psalms, the Psalms of lament, the Wisdom psalms and the Psalms of mixed type. A large number of these psalms have either been originated or used in the cult of Israel. Their language springs from the agricultural or pastoral needs of the individual or the community.

The main interest of these psalms is the praise and glory of God under whose shelter one can confidently take refuge in times of crisis.

Use other side if necessary.

The Psalmists saw the reality of God through the tangible events of the physical world, in the gift of rain and the fertility of the land. The unexpected events in Nature have been seen as the signs and wonders of the divine government. Nature, in a sense, revealed the power and authority of the living God. It declared the majesty and glory of its creator.

Nature has been interpreted in personal terms and thus the Psalms develop a love for the phenomena of Nature which according to these poets were fellow workers in creation. Man and the natural order participate in the continuous process of creation which is always on the move at the behest of its creator. Creation is not just an event 'once upon a time', but a process constantly continuing at the command of the Lord.

These psalms, perhaps for the first ~~ix~~ time in the O.T., declare nature as an orderly cosmos governed and guided by a personal God who has moral purposes. A secular understanding of nature devoid of God's relation to it is foreign to the thinking of the Psalmists. A scientific explanation of the origin of the physical universe or its working is not found in the Psalms. The concern of the Psalms is pragmatic and theological. They try to answer how in the order of the physical universe man can work for the glory and purposes of God. They answer where man can find shelter in times of crisis and catastrophe. They do not speculate about the origin or the end of the universe. But they declare the present working of the physical world from a theological stand point. Since God is the creator and sustainer of Nature, the Psalmists show no diffidence or fear about the present or the future. No chaotic powers have any final sway over the order of the universe because God is at the helm of its affairs. This optimistic outlook of the Hebrew poets imparts confidence to the people of Israel to work creatively for the glory of God.

Man is no unique creature by birth. He stands along with the world of phenomena. They are called to be His obedient servants and work for the continuity of creation. Here, the Psalmists note a point of discord and disharmony between man and His creator. Man is prone to disobey while the natural phenomena show implicit obedience to the inviolable laws of God. The Psalmists wish for the extinction of this malicious cancer from the order of the universe. Only through obedience and loyalty to the King and Creator of the universe that man achieves the full end of his position as the vicegerent of God. His chief responsibility is to acknowledge gratefully the talents and privileges from the Suzerain and in dependence on Him, co-operate with the phenomena of nature and work for the greater glory of his Maker.

GOD AND THE NATURAL ORDER
IN THE
BOOK OF PSALMS.

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P R E F A C E.

There have been men and women in the world whose names are not known, but whose words have enlightened their generation and the generations which they have not seen. Such are the men behind the Book of Psalms. Occasionally they transcend clime and culture and echo the heart-beat of man as he encounters the reality of God in the beauty of nature. Then they sing in a language universally known before their creator. But what do they sing? To discover the meaning of their song and especially their concept of God and nature, is the purpose of the present work.

The kindness and generosity of many have made it possible for the author to undertake the present task. Where so many have been so kind it is difficult to make full acknowledgement of their individual contributions. However inadequate this may be, I venture here to mention the names of those people without whose unstinted support and encouragement this work would not have seen the light.

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CHAPTER ONE.

i. The Enquiry.

The subject of the present enquiry is 'God and the Natural Order in the Book of Psalms'. What we aim at in this thesis, is to discover the Psalmists' understanding of God and of how His authority and power are exercised in relation to the order of nature, and how that understanding is related to the teaching of the rest of the Old Testament and its ancient Near Eastern background.

ii. Its Scope.

The scope of our investigation is limited to the Psalter. In the Psalms of the O.T. we see a cross-section of the faith of Israel. The Psalms reflect not merely the religion of an anonymous elite but that of the rank and file of the community for a period of several centuries.¹ The faith of Israel was maintained and expressed in the cultic worship of Israel in which the Psalms had a unique place. The Psalms contain the hymns of praise, the petitions and prayers which the community brought before the presence of the Lord. The Psalter is a collection of collections.² Luther calls it 'a miniature Bible'. According to Mowinckel, the piety of the Psalmist is the key to the understanding of the prophets.³

For our particular theme of enquiry the Psalms have great relevance and significance. 'The Psalmist has a profound sense of nature, and the grand spectacles of the cosmos are often described in all their magnificent and awe-inspiring splendour. In admiring Nature and describing its phenomena the Psalmist admired the greatness of God who had made regions so contiguous and yet so different in character. There are also scenes of quiet, tranquil and pastoral happiness on the banks of cool rivers, on verdent fields and among shady trees and by the side of pleasant fountains and peaceful water,' writes Rappoport.⁴ Therefore, although our enquiry is limited to the Psalms, that does not in any way reduce the scope of our investigation. On the other hand, our study of the Psalms which is a representative document of the faith of Israel, will reveal to us the most significant elements of the concept of God and Nature in the Old Testament.

1. Terrien, S. The Psalms and Their Meaning for Today. pp.31-32.

2. Anderson, G.W. 'The Psalms' in Peake's Commentary on the Bible. para.357a. Henceforth cited as PCB.

3. Mowinckel, S. 'Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1935', VI, V 1955, p.20. Henceforth cited as 'Ps. Criticism'.

4. Rappoport, A.S. The Psalms. pp.37ff.

iii. The Method.

We propose to deal with our subject of enquiry in five chapters. First of all, the following points may be noted so far as the use of the terminologies are concerned.

For the sake of convenience, the terms Psalmist and poet are used interchangeably to refer to the author of any given psalm. The term 'psalm' with a small 'p' has been used to designate the individual psalms. The Book of Psalms in general is denoted by either the term 'Psalms' or 'Psalter'. The names of the deities and festivals of the ancient Near East, have been given, on the whole, in the forms found in the Ancient Near Eastern Texts, edited by J.B.Pritchard. Any exception to this is particularly noted in the foot-notes.

The importance of ancient Near Eastern studies for a better understanding of the O.T. has for so long been realised that it may now be taken as axiomatic. Therefore, the second chapter has been set apart for a survey of the concepts of God and nature in ancient Sumer, Babylon, Egypt and Canaan. The purpose of the chapter is to introduce the ancient Near Eastern concepts of God and nature before we begin the study of the O.T. view. This will help us to see the O.T. faith in its contemporary setting and to discern the distinctive aspects of the understanding of God and nature which we find in the O.T. generally and in the Psalms.

In chapter three, we will discuss in a comprehensive manner, the O.T. understanding of God's power and authority over the physical phenomena. What is the early evidence for such an understanding in the Old Testament? What are its salient features of the concept of God and nature? These are some of the questions which we will pursue as we examine the O.T. witness to the concept under discussion.

Without an understanding of the modern approaches to the study and interpretation of the Psalms we cannot really make an attempt to know what the Psalter says about the concept of God and nature. Therefore, in the fourth chapter we will study and evaluate some of the most significant methods of interpretation of the Psalms including that of Hermann Gunkel, Sigmund Mowinckel and the 'Myth and Ritual School'. At the end of the chapter, we will indicate the method of interpretation which we are going to follow in the detailed examination of the Psalms.

An exegetical study of the relevant psalms will be undertaken in the fifth chapter. For the convenience of detailed examination, we will divide them according to their particular literary forms (Gattungen)

and interpret them from the specific setting-in-life of the individual psalms. But the particular examination of the psalms will not include a discussion on the date and title of the psalms, except where it is relevant for our study. In our exegetical study we will follow the verse order of the Massoretic text.

In our final chapter we will endeavour to present the conclusions which may legitimately be drawn from the investigations which we have undertaken in this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO.

A Brief Survey of the Concept of God and Nature in the Ancient Near East.¹

Introduction.

In this study, it is hardly possible to exclude an examination of the A.N.E concept of God and nature. Scholars assume that perhaps, the entire A.N.E shared a common culture and basic religious concepts.² In this connection Albright says, 'It is now certain that the religion of Canaan was of the same general type as that of Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and the Aegean in the 2nd millennium B.C.'³ Israel is moulded in this A.N.E cultural matrix. Therefore, a short introduction to the concept of God and nature of the A.N.E is not out of place. However, the preliminary character of the survey and the lack of adequate materials compel us to be brief in this introduction.

1. The Religions of Mesopotamia.

a) The Sumerians.

The archaeological findings confirm that the Sumerians who settled in Mesopotamia towards the end of the 4th millennium B.C. constitute the earliest cultural layer.⁴ Their society was organised under the king whose office, they believed, was descended from heaven.

Since the Sumerians do not distinguish the realms of gods and nature it is difficult to separate the concept of gods from the concept of nature. However, we will try to present their various concepts under the following headings:

- i) The Concept of gods, (ii) The Concept of Cosmogony and
- iii) The Concept of Nature.

1. Henceforth the Ancient Near East is cited as A.N.E

2. cf. Kapelrud.A.S. 'Research in the Psalms after Mowinckel', ASTI, vol.iv, 1955, p.81. Henceforth cited as 'Research in the Pss.'

3. Albright.W.F. History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism. p.149, now on cited as HACH.

4. Brandon.S.G.F. Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East. p.67. now on cited as CLANE.

i) The Concept of gods.

The following seven gods constitute the Anunnaki, the divine assembly.

Anu	- the heaven
Enlil	- the atmosphere
Enki	- the earth and the nether-world
Nanna	- the moon
Utu	- the sun
Inanna	- the love and fertility
Ninhursag or Ninmah	- the feminine aspect of the earth. ¹

Anu, Enlil and Enki form a system of triads in the divine realm. The gods are known by the term Dingir. They guide and govern the phenomena of nature to which they are associated with established rules and regulations called Me. The gods may be regarded as the principles of vital power behind the natural phenomena. The 'Wills' behind the natural phenomena are known to the ancient Sumerians as 'Zi'. It is possible that the 'Zi' which may be called the 'numen' and the concept of the divine coalesce in the thought of the Sumerians. Thus, the gods manifest themselves through the natural phenomena to which they are associated.²

Since the world of nature has been redundant with life, in addition to the divine assembly, the 'Anunnaki', the Sumerians accepted the existence of other gods. But the cosmic realm was governed by the unanimous decisions of the Anunnaki. The gods originated through the conjugal relationship of different gods.³ Nammu is described as 'the mother, the ancestress, who gave birth to all the gods'.⁴ She represents the primeval ocean.⁵ Although Anu has been the supreme god

1. Frankfort and Others. The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man. p.137. Henceforth cited as IAM. Saggs.H.W.F. The Greatness that was Babylon. p.331.

2. cf. Jacobsen. The Bible and the Ancient Near East. P.268.

3. Kramer.S.N. Sumerian Mythology. -p.39

4. Kramer.S.N. op.cit.p.114 and note 41.

5. Kramer.S.N. op.cit.p.39.

for a period, we see him retiring and giving way to Enlil.¹ Enlil's sphere of activity embraces both cosmic and historical realm. He is, to the Sumerians, a god who acted in history.² The executive duties, that is the task of carrying out the decisions of the divine assembly, seem to have rested with Enlil.³ As far as the evidence goes the character of these deities are not dependable and it always creates a state of suspense and fear in the realm of religion.

ii) The Concept of Cosmogony.

'The most significant myths of a given culture are usually the cosmogonic, or creation myths'.⁴ In the Sumerian creation myth it is hardly possible to separate gods from the nature-phenomena. This is very evident in the creation poem which runs as follows:-

'After heaven had been moved away from earth,

After earth had been separated from heaven,

After the name of man had been fixed;

After An had carried off heaven,

After Enlil had carried off earth,

After Ereshkigal had been carried off into Kur as its prize;⁵

According to this poem, the heaven and the earth were once united and they were separated later. Man was created after they were separated. But we do not know who did the act of separation. In the myth of 'the creation of the Pickax' Enlil is described as the one who separated and removed heaven from earth.⁶ We have no explanation in this poem of how the heaven and other phenomena originated. But in the list of the Sumerian gods, Nammu, is described as 'the mother, who gave birth to heaven and earth'.⁷ Thus, Anu and heaven are identified, so also the other gods with their respective natural phenomena.

1. Kramer.S.N. op.cit.p.83. Falkenstein.A/von Soden. Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete. pp.33.

2. Kramer.S.N. The Sumerians. p.121. Nötscher.F. Enlil in Sumer und Akkad. pp45f.

3. Frankfort and Others. IAAM. p.137.

4. Kramer.S.N. Sumerian Mythology. p.30.

5. Kramer.S.N. op.cit.p.37.

6. Kramer.S.N. op.cit.p.40.

7. Kramer.S.N. op.cit.p.39.

7.

We may be able to summarise the cosmogonic concepts of the Sumerians in the following way.

- a) At the beginning of creation was the sea, perhaps conceived as eternal and uncreated.
- b) The primeaval sea brought forth a united heaven and earth.
- c) The heaven and earth were separated by an expanding atmosphere which in Sumerian language was known as 'Lil'.¹
- d) The air or atmosphere brought forth the moon and the latter consequently made the sun.
- e) After the separation of the heaven and the earth, plant, animal and human life became possible on earth. The life on earth was made possible by the combined effort of air, earth, and water. The sun, too, probably participated.²

According to Kramer, the Sumerians believed in creation by the 'word' of the deity. 'All that the creating deity had to do, according to this doctrine, was to lay his plans, utter the word and pronounce the name.'³ The evidence is found in one of the hymns to the moon-god.⁴

'Thou! When thy word settles down on the earth green vegetation is produced.

Thou! Thy word makes fat the sheepfold and the stall;
it makes living creatures widespread.' etc. etc.

Although the text belongs to the 7th century B.C., scholars believe that it is based on an earlier text. Here, the word is employed not for the first act of creation but for the ordering of the physical phenomena. We have no evidence of the use of the 'word' in the creation epic. The Sumerians have witnessed the power of the word of their king. Therefore, it is no wonder if they apply the same to the words of their deities.

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1. Kramer.S.N. The Sumerians. pp.112f.
 2. Kramer.S.N. Sumerian Mythology. pp73f.
 3. Kramer.S.N. The Sumerians. p.115
 4. Pritchard.J.B. ANET. p.386.

iii) The Concept of Nature.

The ancient Sumerians did not know of an inanimate world. To them the entire nature was throbbing with life. Natural phenomenon was not 'it' but 'thou'. They understood them in a 'personal' way.¹ 'To understand nature, the many and varied phenomena around man, was thus to understand the personalities in these phenomena, to know their characters, the direction of their wills, and also the range of their powers'.²

To get a fair knowledge of the Sumerian concept of nature we have to demythologise their understanding. If we do that we cannot do justice to their ideas of nature. The material world was clothed in mythical language. An-ki was the 'universe'. To them the earth was flat.³ The universe consisted of 'the great above', the sky, the atmosphere, the earth and the 'great below'.⁴ In the atmosphere they observed the moon, the sun, the stars, 'the little ones' and the planets, 'the big ones'. Under the exalted rule of Enlil, the Sumerian poet brings the mountains, the rivers, the sea, the fish, the birds, the clouds, the plants, ^{the} herbs, ^{the} meadows, ^{the} trees and every other natural and historical phenomena.⁵ This is evidence of the Sumerian interest in the material world.

b) The Babylonians.⁶

There was a transitional period in between the Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations. The Babylonians inherited the cultural legacy of the Sumerians. We will say 'in all probability, therefore, the religion of historic Mesopotamia was in its essentials an original Sumerian contribution'.⁷

Here again we face the problem of clearly distinguishing the

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1. Frankfort and Others. IAAM. p.130.
 2. Frankfort and Others. IAAM. p.134.
 3. Kramer.S.N. The Sumerians. p.112.
 4. Kramer.S.N. Sumerian Mythology. p.41.
 5. Kramer.S.N. The Sumerians. p.121.
 6. For geographical terminologies of Mesopotamia see Saggs.H.W.F. op.cit. p.3
 7. Speiser.E.A. The World History of Jewish People. Vol.1. p.234.
Henceforth cited as WHJP.

religious concepts from the concepts of nature. However, we will try to make out the concepts of religion, cosmogony and nature respectively.

i) The Concept of Religion.

All the major civilizations confront two important issues namely, the relation of the individual to the society and the alignment of society with nature.¹ The one is the essence of political system and the other is the foundation of religion. The Babylonians were no exception in this regard.

The gods of the Babylonians were powers which they recognised in and behind the various phenomena of nature. Therefore, the centre and meaning of existence always lay beyond man and his achievements', beyond tangible things in intangible powers ruling the universe'.² Man had to maintain the harmony with these powers of nature. Perhaps this concept of harmony was a powerful support to his endeavour and acted as the very condition of success.³

The Sumero-Akkadian mythology is not consistent as to the precise relationship of the various gods. The various religious texts have preserved the names of an enormous number of gods.⁴ The importance of these gods depends upon the prominence of the cosmic elements to which they are associated. In Babylon, the Sumerian hierarchy of gods was basically followed. The difference is found mainly in the Semitic names given to the Sumerian gods. Some of the gods were replaced by regional deities. We may divide the gods into three groups:-

a) The gods of Chaos.

Apsu - Mummu⁵ - Tiamat represented the sweet water, mist and salt water respectively.

Lahmu - Lahamu represented the silt.

Anshar - Kishar represented the horizon.

1. Speiser, E.A. WHJP. Vol.1. p.233.

2. Jacobsen. The Bible and the Ancient Near East. p.137.

3. Frankfort. Kingship and the Gods. p.103.

4. Hooke, S.H. Babylonian and Assyrian Religion. p.12.

5. According to Speiser 'Mummu' is an epithet for 'mother', in ANET, p.61 and note 2.

b) The Great Triad.

Anu - Ea or Nudimmud or Enki - Enlil or Marduk or Ashur represented the heaven or sky, the earth and the atmosphere or the storm. Ninmah or Aruru was the feminine counterpart of the great triad.

c) The Lesser Triad.

Utu or Shamash represented the sun.
Nanna or Sin represented the moon.
Adad or Hadad represented the weather associated with Shamash.
Innin or Ishtar the feminine aspect of the lesser triad.¹

Among these deities the most significant ones were the great triad. 'In the later period, probably beginning in the second half of the second millennium, the national gods, Marduk in Babylonia and Ashur in Assyria, achieved a position of supremacy in the pantheon.'² Anu and Marduk together wielded, on a cosmic level, authority and legitimate force. The life on earth was perpetuated by the joint effort of Ea and Ki.³

ii) The Concept of Cosmogony.

To understand the cosmogonic thoughts of Babylon our main source material is the creation epic, Enuma elish.⁴ Scholars attribute cosmogonic, theogonic and political motives to the formulation of this epic.⁵ It falls roughly into two sections, one dealing with the evolution of the universe and the other narrating how the present world order was established. Marduk is the hero in the second section.

The primary triad of chaos existed as the first of everything. This is evident from the Enuma elish which begins as follows:-

When on high the heaven had not been named,
 Firm ground below had not been called by name,
 Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter;
 (And) Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all,
 Their waters commingling as a single body;⁶

1. For the pantheon of Babylon see Hooke.S.H. op.cit.pp.12ff, Saggs.H.W.F. op.cit.pp328ff, Frankfort and Others. IAAM. pp.137ff,170ff.

2. Saggs.H.W.F. op.cit.p.338.

3. Frankfort and Others. IAAM. pp.138,140,145.

4. Jacobsen. gives the approximate date as the middle of second millennium B.C., IAAM. p.169, Heidel.A.dates Enuma elish to circa. 1894-1595 B.C., The Babylonian Genesis. p.12.

5. Voegelin.E. Order and History. Vol.1., Israel and Revelation. p.42.

6. ANET. pp.60ff.

The primary form of the universe was water which consisted of sweet water, salt water and mist. The Neo-Platonic philosopher, Damascious, interpreted Mummu as the 'mental world' corresponding to the 'word'.¹ This seems to be a far-fetched interpretation. Mummu might better be regarded as corresponding to 'The Spirit of God' in Gen.1.2.² The primary stuff or the gods are self-created and eternal. The other gods including the creator of the present world take their origin from the first watery substance.

The creation of the present world seems to be purely accidental and is a test of the authority of Marduk which has been conferred upon him by the heavenly assembly. After the fight with Tiamat and his victory,

Then the lord paused to view her dead body,
That he might divide the monster and do artful works.
He split her like a shell fish into two parts:
Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky,³

This poem clearly shows that the struggle with chaos was no integral part or purpose of creation. 'The motif of a fight between a god and a serpentine monster, as found in ancient Babylonian and Assyrian art, does not necessarily connect with the Enuma elish myth. For example, the seal, showing Ninurta slaying a seven-headed dragon (reproduced in Biblical Archaeology by Wright.G.E. p.102) is a heroic motif which stands by itself and has nothing to do with Marduk's combat'.⁴ In Enuma elish the struggle with Tiamat is no precondition for the creation of the phenomenal world.

However, behind this mythical fight there must be a kernel of some realities of life. Jacobsen attributes it to the annual flood that takes place in the Spring season. The flood recedes only when the wind blows and brings back the dry land.⁵ Although we cannot be certain about the true basis of this myth we can assume that the myth has its origin from some of the most perplexing realities of life.

1. Heidel.A. op.cit.p.76.

2. Heidel.A. op.cit.p.3.

3. ANET. p.67, Tablet.iv.135f.

4. Anderson.B.W. Creation Versus Chaos. p.20 and note 12.

5. Frankfort and Others. IAAM. p.180.

The Babylonian community continued to re-enact the struggle against the chaotic forces and the establishment of the world order through the annual New Year festival called the Akitu festival.¹ The triumph of Marduk and the fixing of the destinies for the New Year gave the community an assurance of victory over the powers of chaos in the realm of nature.

iii) The Concept of Nature.

It is hardly possible to assume that the Babylonians has a true concept of nature as we understand it today. The universe, according to them, did not show a fundamental bipartition into animate and inanimate, living and dead, matter.'² Everything in nature was living and animate.

Man was an integral part of this living universe. His main motive was to maintain the harmony between the realm of gods and the realm of nature. It was through the Akitu festival that he realised the harmony between the realms. The physical realm of nature embraces the realm of Gods through the cultic representative, the king. Through the sacred marriage the powers of nature assure new life and fertility to the inhabitants.

The Babylonian concept of nature taught the people to deal with the objects of nature with reverence. This religious outlook on nature continuously reminds them of the spiritual heritage of their lives and helped them to have a 'comprehensive' view of life.

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1. Some of the high lights of the Akitu festival are the following:-
 Humiliation and exaltation of the king,
 The Struggle and Victory or the death and resurrection of Marduk,
 Acclamation by the Pantheon,
 Sacred marriage,
 Fixing of the destinies for the New Year. cf. Hooke.S.H. op.cit.pp. 51f,105f. Frankfort. Kingship and the Gods. pp.518f; Saggs. op.cit. pp.385ff.
 2. Frankfort and Others. IAAM.p.149.

2. The Egyptians.

According to Speiser, the word Egypt is a derivative from Aiguptos or Hi-ku-ptah which probably means the 'house of the spirit of Ptah'.¹ It occurs in the Amarna Tablets as Hkpt.² The word Miṣrain refers to the dual physical nature of the lower and upper Egypt. Although Egypt has a long recorded history we will consider only from the period of the Protodynasty to the end of the New Kingdom, that is, from circa 31st to 12th century B.C.³ The religious concept of the land was never the same during this long span of time. The cultural centres shifted from place to place such as Heliopolis, Hermopolis, Thebes, Memphis and Elephentine. To give a brief account of the concept of God and nature of the Egyptians is really difficult in this background. Realising the limitations we venture to present a short introduction to the concept of religion, cosmogony and nature.

i) The Concept of Religion.

Two major factors affected the religious thinking of Egyptians namely, the life-preserving Nile and the powerful Sun. The fertile Nile delta and the arid desert of Egypt bore witness to these contrasting phenomena. According to them, religion did not rise as 'a purposive functioning of an inherent type of thought and emotion; but as the result of the human speculation of the physical world'.⁴ Examples of such religious thinking are not rare in the ancient Orient.⁵

The people shared the 'Ka' of the divine beings who manifest themselves through the different phenomena of nature.⁶ They saw

1. Speiser, E.A. WHJP. Vol.1. p.268.

2. Albright. Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan. p.120 and note 69.
Now cited as YGC.

3. Voeglin. *op.cit.* p.53.

4. Schmidt. Ursprung des Gottesidee. p.492.

5. cf. Farquhar, J.N. Primer of Hinduism. p.25.

6. Wilson, J.A. 'Egypt' in IAAM. pp.53f, 97f, 107f.

everything as ultimately belonging to one whole thing. Therefore, their religion might be called 'Monism' which in the realm of lower nature revealed as 'Monophysitism'.¹ In this sense their religion showed polytheistic characteristics. It is interesting to note that Egypt, Greece and India showed similar characteristics in the concept of religion. A poem from Thebes runs as follows:-

Mysterious of form, glistening of appearance,
The marvellous god of many forms.²

Frankfort quotes a Greek saying:-³

πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μορφῇ μία.

Radhakrishnan quotes from the Veda:-⁴

'Ekam Sat vipra Bahudha vadanti', that is, Being is One, but the wise men speak of it in different ways.

The many forms were restricted to a system of divine triad.

One text from Thebes reads:-

All gods are three: Amon, Re and Ptah,
And there is no second to them
Hidden is his name as Amon
He is Re in face, and his body is Ptah,
Their cities are on north, abiding for ever;
Thebes, Heliopolis and Memphis unto eternity.⁵

We see a tendency in Egypt to acknowledge the local deity as the all-embracing god and to him is given all powers and authority, for example, Amon at Thebes, Re-Atum at Heliopolis, Ptah at Memphis and Knum at Elephantine. This preference to a deity can be called the concept of 'Ishta Devatha' - favourite deity - as in Hinduism.

In the 14th century B.C. Akh-en-Aton declared the worship of the Sun-god as the only valid religion of the land. The adherents of this new religion wanted to establish a 'one god, one world, one Egypt' faith in the whole of the land.⁶

1. Wilson.J.A. op.cit.p.66.

2. Wilson.J.A. in Before Philosophy, by Frankfort and Others, Penguin Books, Harmondworth, 1949, p.75.

3. Frankfort Kingship and the Gods. p.40.

4. Radhakrishnan.S. Indian Philosophy. p.94.

5. Voegelin. op.cit.p.86.

6. Voegelin. op.cit.p.95.

Yet the champions of the new religion could not think of a God who is beyond and behind the mighty natural phenomenon, the Sun. In the light of true monotheistic concept we cannot acknowledge this new religion as monotheistic. For, true monotheism, according to Vriezen, 'is not a matter of acknowledging a particular phenomenon in nature as having prior place over and above all others, but of a wholly peculiar and underived spiritual being or essence of Godhead, qualitatively of a different character from anything in nature.'¹

The gods of Egypt may be divided into three groups in accordance with the place of origin, place of worship and function.

Natural gods. Re, the sun-god; Nut, the sky goddess; Orion, the star-god.

Regional gods. Neith worshipped at Sais, Ptah at Memphis.

Functional gods. Ma'at of justice; Hat-Hor of love; Anubis of death.² There is no rigid system in the Egyptian Pantheon. Freedom and flexibility are the conspicuous characteristics of their religion.

ii) The Concept of Cosmogony.

The creation myths of Egypt take their origin from different religious centres. It seems that the basic Egyptian concept of the dualism of opposites - the chaos against cosmos, the north against the south and Horus against Seth - affected the cosmogonic speculations. For instance, an Ogdoad of chaotic forces was developed by the Hermopolitan theologians while an Ennead, a community of cosmic forces was formulated by the Heliopolitan thinkers. The first group Ogdoad, the 'Eight' comprised elements of cosmic disorder, whereas the Ennead, the 'Nine' contained progressive steps of cosmic order. The two groups are the following:-³

The Ogdoad.

<u>Nun</u>	- -	<u>Naunet</u>	represented the primordial waters
<u>Huh</u>	-	<u>Hauhet</u>	" the formlessness
<u>Kuk</u>	-	<u>Kauket</u>	" the darkness,
<u>Amon</u>	-	<u>Amonet</u>	" the hidden power.

1. Vriszen.T.W.C. The Religion of Ancient Israel. pp.35-36
 2. Wilson.J.A. in WHJP. Vol.1. ed. by Speiser. p.285.
 3. Wilson.J.A. in IAAM. pp.51ff. Schmidt.W.H. Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift. p.25. Frankfort Kingship and the Gods. p.182.

The Ennead.

	<u>Atum</u>	represented the supercharged vacuum
<u>Shu</u>	-- <u>Tefnut</u>	" air and moisture
<u>Geb</u>	- <u>Nut</u>	" the earth and the sky
<u>Osiris</u>	- <u>Isis</u>	and
<u>Seth</u>	- <u>Nephthys</u>	represented the beings of the cosmic realm.

The first principle is waters, Nun 'The great god who came into being by himself'.¹ Formlessness, Darkness and Hiddenness - perhaps the unseen wind - were conditions simultaneously existing with the waters. Kilian finds a close similarity between the Genesis narrative and the Hermopolitan Ogdoad.² The affinity, however, is interesting but not so convincing as Kilian maintains because the Genesis account diverges considerably from the Egyptian text in the episode of creation.

In the emergence of the cosmos from chaos we do not find any evidence of a struggle between the opposing forces. Brandon discovers a vague reference to the struggle in the 'Instruction for king Meri-ka-Re'.³

Well directed are men, the cattle of the god,
 He made heaven and earth according to their desire
 And he repelled the water monster.

Here the monster could very well be Apophis, the serpent who attacks the Sun daily in the West.⁴ Nun has not been pictured as a violent deity in the Egyptian text.

There is no absolute beginning in the creation myths of Egypt. According to Morenz, sp tpj, 'at the beginning' indicated the beginning of an event.⁵ The event seems to be the sexual union between Nun and Naunet by whom the process of evolution began. The principle of sexuality was accepted for the process of evolution. According to Koch, the Memphite theology opposed this concept of sexuality for the process

1. ANET. p.4,col.1.
 2. Kilian.R. 'Gen.1.2 und die Urgötter von Hermopolis' VT.16,1966,pp.434ff.
 3. ANET. p.417,col.2.
 4. cf. ANET. pp.6ff,11ff.
 5. Morenz.S. Agyptische Religion. pp.175ff, Würthwein.E. Zeit und Geschichte - Chaos und Schopfung im Mythischen Denken und in der Biblischen Urgeschichte. p.320.

of creation.¹ The Memphite theology introduced the idea of creation by the word of Ptah. 'Sia, the 'perception', the cognitive reception of a situation, an object, or an idea' and Hū, "authoritative utterance",² together function along with Ptah in the act of creation. They come as the 'heart and tongue' of Ptah.

'Ptah the Great, that is, the heart and tongue of the Ennead;
(Ptah)who gave birth to the gods;.....

There came into being as the heart and there came into being as the tongue (something) in the form of Atum'.³ This idea of creation by the word need not be regarded as a unique concept because the Sumerians too shared a similar concept. This doctrine of creation by word is not found in the earlier documents of Egypt. It is not improbable that the concept of creation is introduced into the religion of Egypt by 7th century B.C. from either Babylon or Greece. The document in question belongs to this period. Logos, according to the Egyptian concept permeated the objects of the world of phenomena as 'the heart and tongue of Ptah'. In fact the realm of nature was the manifestation of Ptah. Therefore, we cannot take the Logos of Egypt as 'the incipient germ of the later logos-doctrine'⁴ of the New Testament. According to John, 'Logos is really the creator (along with God) of all things'.⁵ Johannine Logos is not immanent in nature as the 'heart and tongue of Ptah.'

iii) The Concept of Nature.

Here again we face the problem of separating the sacred from the secular. According to the Egyptian concept, society was a part of the cosmic order. The divine permeated the natural and human realms. Existence for the people was not contained in sealed compartments. One's own environment manifested the divine reality. 'So the gods entered into their bodies of every (kind of wood), of every (kind of) stone, of every (kind of) clay, or anything which might grow upon him, in which they had taken form'.⁶ In the realm of nature the people could not escape the presence of gods.

1. Koch.K. 'Wort und Einheit des Schöpfergottes in Memphis und Jerusalem' ZTK, 62,1965,pp.259f.

2. IAAM. p.57.

3. ANET. p.5,col,1.

4. contra. Breasted. A History of Egypt. p.358

5. Schnakenburg. The Gospel according to St.John.Vol.1. pp.487f,236ff.

6. ANET. p.5,col.2.

The king had a unique place in the social structure of the community. He was god-incarnate, Horus in life and Osiris, the god of vegetation, in death. Through the annual Sed festival the king brought guarantee for the prosperity and security of the land. 'The powers of nature flowed into the body politic through the channel of kingship'.¹ Through the new growth of vegetation which comes at the change of season the king continued his immortality.

Man shared with nature and gods the 'Ka', the essential substance of all. Thus a sense of 'consubstantiality' with the realm of nature and gods elevated the position of mankind.

The life in the realm of nature began from sun and earth, sky and air, and water.² But they were all divine. 'The immanence of gods in nature, far from diminishing their significance for the Egyptians, enabled a correlation of human and natural life which was an inexhaustible source of strength. The life of man, as an individual and even more as a member of the society, was integrated with the life of nature.'³

The laws of nature, the laws of society and the laws of gods, all belonged to the Ma'at. The king, the son of god, furthered the integration of nature and society through the Ma'at.

The observation of natural phenomena led the ancient Egyptians to have an all-embracing view of gods, society and politics.

3. The Canaanites.

The word 'Canaan' is believed to have derived from Kinahna, possibly means the purple dye.⁴ Canaan, according to Albright, was exposed to the cultural influence from Mesopotamia, Egypt and perhaps from the Indo-Aryans.⁵ When the Hebrews came, the Amorites were already a settled community in the hill country. (Num.13.29, Josh.5.1,10.6) They must have entered Palestine towards the end of the 3rd millennium B.C.⁶

1. Frankfort Kingship and the Gods. p.79.

2. The Upanishads recognize these five elements as earth, water, fire, air and ether. Hiriyanna.M. Outlines of Indian Philosophy. p.64.

3. Frankfort Ancient Egyptian Religion. p.29.

4. Kenyon.K.M. Amorites and Canaanites. p.52. Gray.J. 'Israel's Neighbours-111' in FCB, para,88a.

5. Albright. YGC. pp.96ff.

6. Kenyon op.cit.p.76. Albright 'The Role of the Canaanites in the History of Civilisation' in The Bible and the Ancient Near East. ed. by Wright.G.E. p.556 and note 50, henceforth cited as BANE, cf. Kenyon Archaeology in the Holy Land. pp.159f.

The Canaanites or the Phoenicians¹ might be a mixed race of the early Amorites and the later Philistines who came to the land.

Here we are concerned about the Phoenicians and the people of Ugarit. The source materials which throw light on the life and culture of these peoples are not very many, a few Phoenician ones and the Ras Shamra Tablets. First of all let us examine the Phoenician concept of gods, and nature.

a) The Phoenicians.

The Phoenician culture had been diffused in many centres of Canaan especially in the north.² Our main source of information about this people is the writings of Sanchuniaton who may have lived in the 6th century B.C.³ He has collected his materials from several sources including one Hierambelos, a priest of $\epsilon\upsilon\omega$.⁴ Sanchuniaton's work, originally, may go back to the end of the 2nd millennium B.C.⁵

i) The Concept of Religion.

According to Sanchuniaton, the Phoenicians were worshippers of natural objects. Commenting on this Phoenician practice Jirku says, 'they saw the whole of nature as alive with gods of varying rank. Each tree, each stone, each spring was inhabited by a deity of whom one had to pay occasional tribute'.⁶ The important deities were worshipped in different centres. The names of some of the deities and the places of their worship may be given below.

Eshmun, Ba'al and Ashtartu - Sidon

Ba'alat and Kha'y-taw -Byblos

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1. Scholars generally agree that the Phoenicians and the Canaanites are virtually the same people. Albright in BANE, p.337; Kenyon Amorites and Canaanites. p.52; Gray.J. in FCB. para 88a.
 2. Albright From Stone Age to Christianity. p.39, henceforth cited as FSAC.
 3. Albright YGC. pp.194,195 and note 44.
 4. Albright YGC. p.228 and note 155.
 5. Eissfeldt.O. Sanchuniaton von Beirut und Ilumilku von Ugarit. pp.9,16.
 6. Jirku.A. The World of the Bible. p.116.

Ba'al Melcarth¹ and Anat - Tyre

Ba'al Hamman, Melcarth and Tennit - at Carthage.²

Ba'al seems to be the high god, the lord of the sky (Ba'al Sha-me-me).³ The deities were addressed with titles of kinship such as 'Ammu', paternal uncle; Halu, maternal uncle; Abu, father; Abu, brother etc.⁴ These titles reveal the affection with which the deities were acknowledged by the household. According to Albright, the Phoenician pantheon seems to be a conglomeration of gods from Egypt, Mesopotamia and Canaan.⁵ The gods representing the sun (Elioun, perhaps ἥλιος or ἡλίου),⁶ the time (Χρόνος), the sky (ὀὐρανός), the earth (γῆ), and other natural phenomena and abstract concepts such as love, desire, death, fate⁷ etc, were brought into the pantheon. Through these names we get a typical oriental view of gods and natural order. The Greek names do not imply that the Phoenicians were influenced by the Hellenists, perhaps the Greeks were influenced by the Phoenicians. In the Phoenician religion the distinction between matter and spirit was hardly maintained. An adequate assessment of the religious concept of the Phoenicians is not possible due to the lack of reliable source materials. Now we shall turn to their concept of cosmogony.

ii) The Concept of Cosmogony.

The concept of cosmogony is derived mainly from the account of Sanchuniaton, Damascius' account of Eudemos and from the Mochos fragment.⁸ Albright gives us some information about the Taauth cosmogony

1. Albright Archaeology and the Religion of Israel. pp.156ff,219,226f. Henceforth cited as ARI. Sha'y-taw is the patron of the forest of Lebanon. vid. Albright YGC. pp.216ff.
2. Albright ibid., also Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. Vol.111. pp.177ff. Henceforth cited as ERE.
3. Eissfeldt.O. Kleine Schriften, Bd.ii. pp.178-198. Albright YGC. P.199.
4. Gray.J. Canaanite Religion. p.119. ERE. ibid.
5. Albright History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism. pp.149,151.
6. Baudissin.W.W. op.cit.p.299.
7. Eusebius Preparatio Evangelica. ed. by Heinichen 1.10.16,29,44,9. Eissfeldt.O. Sanchuniaton etc. p.19 and note 3; Albright YGC. p.203. Varuna is the counterpart of ὀὐρανός in Rig Veda, vid. Max Müller. India, What Can it Teach us? p.156.
8. Albright YGC. pp.193ff.

of Sanchuniaton.¹ According to this, two elements existed at the beginning, dark breath-like air and muddy pitch black chaos.² From this substance Wind and Desire (*πνεῦμα* and *πόθος*) come out as a result of sexual union. They bring forth a slimy, putrid water containing all germs of life, (*ἠώτ*).³ At this stage some cataclysm occurred. *ἠώτ*, the world-egg bursts and the light and the celestial phenomena came into existence. Waters were separated and clouds were formed. A thunder occurred and the senseless beings in the world-egg 'woke up and began to move on land and sea, male and female'.⁴

According to Albright, Taauth cosmogony is impersonal and atheistic.⁵ There is no theology associated with it. This seems to be the earliest human attempt to explain the origin of the universe from a secular point of view.

The Damascius' account of Eudemos gives three first principles, namely, Time, Creative Will and Infinite Misty Space (*χρόνος, πόθος ὀμιχλητή*). Since the account is short and vague we cannot draw valid conclusions from it. It seems that the account is a condensed form of the cosmogony presented by Sanchuniaton.

The third source is the Mochos fragment which begins with a pair of first principles, *Ἄπειρος* and *ἄψ*. The Highest Intelligence, *ὀυλοποιός ὁ νεώτερος θεός* came out of it. By masturbation Ulōmos brought forth the first Opener⁶ (*χουσαπίος*) and the Egg (*ῥέον*). The Opener might be the one who brought order into the universe.⁷ He separated the indistinguishable nature (*φύσις*) and created the heaven and the earth from the top and bottom half of the world-egg respectively.

1. Albright YGC, pp.212ff

2. Albright 'Chaos and the Origin of Light in Gen. 1' JBL.43,1924, p.365. Eusebius. op.cit.1.10.

3. Graf Baudissin.W.W. Studien zur Semitischen Religion-geschichte. Heft I.p.11 Eusebius. op.cit.1.10.1-2 ERE.Vol.ii. p.178.

4. ERE.Vol.ii. p.178.

5. Albright YGC. p.225.

6. Albright YGC. pp.193f.

7. Eissfeldt.O. Sanchuniaton etc. p.22. and note 2. The fem. *χουσαπίος* might mean 'order'. So *χουσαπίος* also might have the function of ordering the universe.

The Mochos fragment shows definite signs of Egyptian¹ and Mesopotamian² cosmogonic ideas.

iii) The Concept of Nature.

So far as the origin of the world of nature is concerned the Phoenicians hold a higher view than the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians. They do not mix cosmogony and theogony in their myths of creation. Cosmogony is viewed from a secular stand point. Water is not regarded as the first principle of evolution. Concepts of *Πόθος* and *Πνεύμα* are introduced to create the life-containing water. The physical world and its various phenomena owe their existence to this water.³

In the physical world, the heavenly phenomena attracted the attention of the Phoenicians. According to Massey the Phoenicians might be the first group of people who observed the universe by means of astronomy.⁴ Perhaps the Watchers of heaven (Zōphē Shemin)⁵ who came out from the Water (*MWT*) were human beings who showed interest in astronomy. Since we know that the Phoenicians were worshippers of sun, moon and other heavenly objects, Zōphē Shemin might mean men in their worshipful attitude looking towards heaven.

In the daily life of the Phoenicians no distinction between the natural realm and divine realm was shown. Natural phenomena and abstract concepts were raised to the realm of the divine. Here we see the typical oriental tendency towards monism.

The concept of world egg shows the Phoenicians' understanding of the physical origin of the universe. The concept might have been a reflection of their observation of how life begins in the realm of nature.

The introduction of *Πνεύμα* and *Πόθος* strongly suggest the profound desire of Phoenicians to associate a spiritual will-power as the source of life-containing water. In this regard they distinguish themselves from their neighbours about whom we have discussed earlier in this chapter.

1. Albright *ibid.*

2. ANET. p.67, Tab.135f.

3. Rust.E.C. Nature and Man in Biblical Thought. p.22.

4. Massey.G. The Book of the Beginnings. Vol.II. p.126.

5. Eusebius *op.cit.*1.10.2; ERE. Vol II. p.178.

b) Ugarit.

The Strategic position as 'a Syrian port with Mediterranean trade, a Semitic region' under Egyptian and 'Hittite overlordship and Canaanite population'¹ within the range of the cuneiform script enabled Ugarit to become one of the most important cosmopolitan cities of the ancient Near East. The religion and culture of the Fertile Crescent met at this commercial haven. They shared and reflected the culture of the Phoenicians.

The source materials of our study mainly consist of the Ras Shamra Tablets and the Amarna Letters of the 14th Century B.C.

i) The Concept of Religion.

The Ras Shamra Tablets show us that the religious concept of the people was mostly based upon their view of the natural phenomena. The general pattern of their myth and ritual resembles the myths and rituals of Mesopotamia, Egypt and other A.N.E. regions. The religion reflects the faith and needs of an agricultural community. Fertility rites existed from an early period. Magic was practised to ensure the fertility of the land. A poem runs as follows:-

Set mandrake (?) in the ground, pour a peace offering
In the heart of the earth, honey from a pot in the heart of
the fields.²

Stone phalli and signs of the practice of circumcision were unearthed during the excavation. These bear witness to the practice of fertility rite on the land.³

There were a number of deities in the land. The most significant were:-

El - the supreme god
Asherah of the Sea, possibly the consort of El
Ba'al, the most popular and powerful deity,
Anath, the consort of Ba'al.

El. He was the father of the gods and the creator of the creatures (bny bnwt).⁴ He was the king and the eternal Father, mlk ab snm.⁵

1. cf. Gordon. Ugaritic Literature. pp122ff.

2. Schaeffer. C.F.A. The Cuneiform Text of the Ras Shamra-Ugarit. p.46.

3. Schaeffer. C.F.A. *ibid*.

4. ANET. p.150, col.1. Patton. J.H. Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms. p.16.

5. Bissfeldt. C. El im Ugaritischen Pantheon. p.55; Driver. Canaanite Myths and Legends. p.76. illic line 5, also cf. ANET. p.157, col.2, E.

He abode at 'the course of the two rivers, (at the midst of the streams) of the two deeps'.¹ This might mean that El was regarded as the giver of water to the land. He was mild, kindly, never in a rage interfering the activities of nature. This retiring character of El gave prominence to Ba'al. According to Eissfeldt, El was venerated as the god, at least by some people, in the 14th century B.C.² The Phoenician writings too support the importance of El in the Canaanite pantheon.³ Ashera of the Sea. She was the chief consort of El and the 'mother goddess of the earth'.⁴ She was the supreme goddess.⁵ However, she did not take active part in the same way as Anath has done in the Ugaritic religion. With El, she shared the title 'the Creatress of the gods' qnyt.ilm.⁶ Her name 'Lady Ashera of the sea' reminds us of the possible connection with the Tiamat of Enuma elish. According to Albright she was the Lady who traversed the Sea.⁷ The name 'Ashera' most probably refer to the same person. Ashera is more frequent, about sixty times it occurs in the Ugaritic texts.⁸ Although she was not active like Anath she maintained her position in the pantheon. We find Ba'al, the most popular deity fighting against the powers of the Sea, probably the supporters of Ashera of the Sea to establish his kingship.

Ba'al. He was known as Dagon's son. (bn.dgn). Dagon was an Amorite god who found a place in the Ugaritic pantheon. (Jg.16.23; 1 Sam.5.2-7; 1 Chr.10.10) He was the lord of the land, Zubulu ba'alu 'arshi.⁹

1. ANET. p.152,col.1.

2. Eissfeldt.O. ibid.

3. In the Amarna Letters we get compound names like 'Milkilu', 'Ilimilku', 'Mut-ba'lu' implying the prominence of El and Ba'al in the pantheon. El-Amarna, No.256,270,286 in ANET. pp.486ff.

4. Schaeffer. op.cit.plate XVI.

5. Kapelrud.A.S. The Violent Goddess. p.112.

6. Kapelrud.A.S. op.cit.p.41.

7. Albright. YGC. p.105.

8. Kapelrud.A.S. The Ras Shamra Discoveries and the O.T. p.63.

9. Albright YGC. p.109; Driver CML. p.106,B1* VI.10.

97 His epithets and insignia suggest that he was the god of fertility and weather. The relevant text reads:-

And thou take thy clouds,
Thy wind, thy storm, thy rains.¹

As the weather god, he was 'the Rider of the clouds', a title commonly found with the names of other weather gods of Mesopotamia and Egypt.² The same title is applied to Yahweh too. (Pss.18.10; 68.5;34;104.3.) Ba'al's active participation in the world of phenomena is quite evident from the following text.

He gives forth his voice in the clouds
He flashes lightning in the earth (51.iv.70)
I am alone am he who will rule over the gods,
Yea, command gods and men,
Even dominate the multitude of the earth. (51.vii.50)³

His other title 'Bull' which he shared with El also emphasises his function as the fertility deity. He lived in the heights of Zaphon in the north. Scholars identify it with the mount Casius or Jebel-el-Aqra.⁴ His abode is the source of rivers, snow and clouds. He defeated the powers of the Sea and established his kingship. His fight against the deity of drought, Mot, is also found in the Ugaritic text. Probably it signifies the change of seasons in the land.

Anath. She was the consort of Ba'al and was very active with him. She was the virgin principle of the land and its fertility. Nominally Ashera was ahead of Anath. Nevertheless, she was the most dominating goddess in the pantheon. She was a violent, fighting deity. She and Ba'al worked together, perhaps representing the male and female principles of fecundity.⁵

Among the minor deities Mot has a significant place. He represented death, waste, drought and barrenness. In the text we read about his fight against Ba'al. He was able to kill Ba'al who was

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1. Gordon.H. Ugaritic Literature. p.41
 2. Jacobsen in BANE. p.140; Massey.G. op.cit.Vol.11. p.100.
 3. Gordon.H. op.cit. pp.32,36; cf.ANET. pp.133,col.2;135,col.1.
 4. Albright.YGC. P.102.
 5. cf.Kapelrud. The Violent Goddess. pp.133,115ff.

later revived with the help of Anath. Anath took vengeance against Mot and killed him.

With sword she doth cleave him.
 With fan she doth winnow him -
 With fire she doth burn him.
 With hand-mill she doth grind him -
 In the field she doth sow him.¹

This description reminds us of some harvest rite delineated in mythical language. In the text, the evidence for the fight between Ba'al and Mot is found only once. In the light of the evidence in the other regions of the A.N.E., it is reasonable to conclude that in Ugarit too, the ritual fight between the god of fertility and drought took place annually.²

Along with Yamm we may include Nahar and Lotan the powers of destruction representing the Sea, the River and the Writhing Serpent. They challenged the authority of Ba'al, the lord of the land. We find in the text Ba'al fighting these forces and establishing his authority.³

Besides the deities mentioned above there are a number of gods and semigods found in the Ugaritic text.⁴ They represented the natural phenomena and sometimes the nobles of the land.

ii) The Concept of Nature.

We have no explanation in detail about the origin of the natural world. The people of Ugarit believed that El and Ashera brought forth the divine beings and the natural phenomena. El was the creator God. There is no creation myth in Ugarit. If Lady Ashera of the Sea corresponds to Tiamat of Enuma elish, Ba'al corresponds to Marduk. We have a struggle between the Sea and Ba'al. But there is no creation account following the fight. Since we do not find the creation connected

1. ANET. p.140, col.2; DOTT. pp.130-131.

2. Gordon.H. op.cit.pp.4-5; Driver. Canaanite Myths and Legends. p.20. argue for a 'seven year cycle' of the fight between Ba'al and Mot. Kapelrud. Ba'al in the Ras Shamra Texts. pp.128-30; The Ras Shamra Discoveries and the O.T. pp.43ff; Albright YGC. pp.110-111 and note 39, argue for the annual cycle of Ba'al's death and resurrection. The Ugaritic text is not very clear and helpful in this regard. cf.Gray.J. 'Kingship of God in Prophets and Iss.' VI, XI, 1961, p.28.

3. DOTT. pp.129ff; ANET. pp.130f and 138, col.2.

4. For detailed list of gods see ANET. pp.129ff. Some deities are mentioned in Albright YGC. pp.120f; Gray.J. Canaanites. pp.116f.

with the struggle, we cannot associate the concept of creation whenever we find reference to the mythical struggle.¹ Fisher argues that 'creation' in a wider sense includes 'preservation'.² But this does not mean that Ba'al, the preserver of the life in the natural realm, is the originator of the world of phenomena. We have no evidence in the Ugaritic text to prove the creatorship of Ba'al.³

A concept of nature detached from the realm of the gods is hardly found in the Ugaritic text. The religion based on the agricultural needs of the people led them to have a nature-bound theology.

The people of Ugarit noticed the change of seasons. However, it is depicted in the language of myth as the struggle between Ba'al and Mot. When Ba'al descended into the womb of the earth, 'the Olive produce of the earth and the fruit of the trees are subjected to the heat of the sun.'⁴ The life in nature languishes and hot summer prevails. But when Ba'al is revived:

The heavens rain oil,
The wadys run with honey,⁵

Life in the realm of nature becomes alive. The cattle wealth increases and the people are happy.

The poets of Ugarit have occasionally transcended the realm of myth and viewed the life in nature as an objective reality. The poet sings:-

I've a word I fain I would tell thee,
A speech I would utter to thee:
Speech of tree and whisper of stone;
Converse of heaven with earth,
E'en of the deeps with the stars;
Yea, a thunderbolt unknown to heaven,
A word not known to men,⁶

1. Schmidt.W.H. Königtum Gottes in Ugarit und Israel.

2. cf.Fisher.L.R. 'Creation at Ugarit and in the O.T.' VT. 15,1965, pp.313ff.

3. cf.Anderson.B.W. op.cit.p.25.

4. Schaeffer. op.cit.p.70.

5. DOTT. p.131.

6. ANET. p.136,col.2.

In this poem the poet hears the language of the natural phenomena. He takes them to the world of personal imagination. They are freed from the grip of divine beings.

In another context, the poet writes:-

She draws some water and bathes
 Sky-dew, fatness of the earth;
 Dew that the heavens do(su)ed,
 Spray that is shed by the stars.¹

This style and beauty of the language is superb. The natural phenomenon, the dew from the sky, is splendidly delineated in poetical language. These are examples which show that the poets of Ugarit could think of the phenomena of nature as a separate entity from the realm of the divine beings.

4. The Significance of the Concept of God and Nature in the Ancient Near East

First of all, we should take into account the particular mode of Oriental thinking. The people of the ancient Near East accepted an essential correlation between nature and man.² Their thinking was, therefore, based upon their understanding of nature. Albright calls this outlook 'physiocentric'.³ What we may call 'a philosophy of life'⁴ was built by the ancient people of this region on the foundation of this 'physiocentric' outlook. Their poets express profound views of gods and Nature through the medium of a particular language which we may call 'myth'. Although the modern thinkers may not appreciate the 'myth' of the A.N.E., they themselves use it in a different form. The complex character of this particular mode of thinking may be summarised in the following definition. 'Myth is a form of poetry which transcends poetry in that it proclaims a truth; a form of reasoning which transcends reasoning in that it wants to bring about the truth it proclaims; a form of action, a ritual behaviour, which does not find its fulfilment in the act but must proclaim and elaborate a poetic form of truth'.⁵ The main concern of the people of the A.N.E. was to integrate reality and

1. ANET. p.137, col.2.

2. Frankfort in IAAM. p.363.

3. Albright. IACH. pp.86,265.

4. Barr, J. 'The Meaning of Mythology in Relation to the O.T.' VT, IX, 1959. pp.5ff.

5. Frankfort in IAAM. p.8

appearance, symbol and what it signifies.¹ According to them, 'the individual is a part of society, and society is imbedded in nature, and nature is but the manifestation of the divine'.² This doctrine has been 'universally accepted by the peoples of the ancient world with the single exception of the Hebrews'.³

There is no doubt, that the wealth of human experience in the socio-political field is made use of in the process of integrating reality and experience. But we cannot think that the political order has been the main stay of their outlook on life. According to Voegelin, although cosmic analogies are used, the symbolisation is made on the basis of a political order.⁴ Since the people of the A.N.E. did not make the distinction between the symbol and what it signified, we cannot accept the position of Voegelin. Moreover, their cities and political life were not completely cut off from the land and its natural environment. Even 'in the great metropolis of Babylon the outstanding annual event was the New Year's Festival celebrating the renewal of the generative force of nature'.⁵

The phenomenal world appeared to man throbbing with life. Nature had been to man a 'thou' rather than 'it'. The 'thou' in nature represents various 'wills' or divine beings. The people of the A.N.E. wanted to foster a harmony with these various wills in nature, in other words, with the gods that manifested themselves through the different phenomena of nature.⁶

The unified vision of gods and nature was the heart of the Nature-religions of the A.N.E. According to Lehmann, 'In all its phases religion stands in a relationship to nature and is especially determined, among other factors, by the conception of nature. It can truthfully be said that the religion of the primitives consists entirely of a conception of nature, a certain manner of considering the processes of reality and of adjusting oneself to them.'⁷

1. Frankfort. op.cit. pp.11ff.

2. Frankfort. op.cit. pp.366ff

3. Frankfort. op.cit. p.367.

4. Voegelin, Order and History. Vol.1. p.26.

5. Frankfort. op;cit. p.364.

6. Wright.G.E. God Who Acts. pp.14,39.

7. Quoted by McKenzie. in Myths and Realities. p.254 and note 3, of ch.6., from Edvard Lehmann, in Chantepie de la Saussaye, Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte (Tübingen, 1925), 1, p.29.

We should remember that it is in this background that the poets and writers of the O.T. formulated the concepts of God and nature.

Now we shall take up one by one the specific concepts of the A.N.E. which have direct relevance to our study.

a) The Concept of the Deity.

When we say 'deity', in the particular context of the A.N.E., we cannot conceive of an all-embracing one god. The concept of deity is expressed through what we may call 'pantheism', 'monism' and 'polytheism'. These three modes of thinking do not, in any way, exhaust the means of expressing the concept of gods in the A.N.E. The concept of deity is very closely associated with the concept of nature. The nature-religions of the Fertile Crescent maintain the unity between gods and phenomena of nature. These nature-religions interpret the visible world as the manifestation of the divine. Deity has never been detached from the world of phenomena. The concept of a spiritual deity completely free from the phenomenal world is inconceivable to these religions.

Gods and the natural world originate from the same source, the primeval waters. Gods come first followed by the world of nature. The deities that appear first from the primeval waters may be called, for the sake of convenience, the cosmic deities. They bring forth the gods of creation. In this regard we cannot make generalisations. In Phoenicia and Ugarit, we have no evidence for such cosmic deities. Sanchuniaton's account of creation cannot be brought under theogony. Water is not the primeval stuff, according to his account. El and Ashera of the Sea might be regarded as cosmic deities. They bring forth other gods.

We may call the second group of deities, again for the sake of convenience, nature-deities. They are brought into existence by the creator-gods. They manifest themselves through the phenomena of nature. They are the minor gods. They share the essential substance of the cosmic deities. In Mesopotamia they appear as 'Zi' or 'wills' of natural phenomena and in Egypt they appear through 'Ka' of the creator-god. All the deities, whether cosmic or natural, exist in relation to some phenomena of human experience. This leads us to the next point about the actual reality of these gods.

None of these religions claim any revelation from a supernatural power. The concept of the deity does not go beyond the order of nature. The reality and character of these gods are limited by the understanding of the men who worship them. The gods are 'anthropopathic', subject to human emotions. About the gods of Ugarit, Gordon says 'if you have a lofty concept of divinity, you will not find these gods behaving as gods should.'¹

Occasionally 'theriomorphic' gods also appear in the religions of the A.N.E. The character of these deities reflects the milieu in which they are worshipped. In fact, gods and goddesses are projections of human aspirations, men and women in cognito.² Since the poets and writers of these religions do not claim any supernatural authority we cannot expect them to delineate their gods in a language other than their own world of experience.

We do not have evidence that these deities demanded moral response from the worshippers. In the A.N.E., society, ethics and morality depend on one's own relation to his neighbours. The absence of a collective moral conscience is conducive to maintain the status quo in the social order. 'Revolution of any sort was abhorrent to the inmost nature of such religions says Wright.'³

The forces of nature are not altogether friendly. The mythical struggle between the opposing forces in the cosmic and natural realms confirm this belief. This also indicates that the people of the ancient Orient did accept the fact of dualism. The annual New Year's festival witnesses the drama of the fight between these forces. In the cultic drama we get a note of optimism which affirms the victory of the force of goodness over the forces of evil. Both gods and mankind rejoice over the triumph and their destiny is safe for another year. Thus, the concept of deity plays a very prominent role in the total life of the ancient people.

b) The Origin of Becoming.

The Becoming commences with a primeval being, the waters.

1. Gordon. The Living Past. p.136.

2. In India, on festival occasions, gods and goddesses are made in large numbers. Some of them are cut in the image of modern film stars and apparalled with costly costumes and ornaments. In fact they are the products of the Artists, gods in the image of man. This is a modern example of what may have taken place in the ancient N.E.

3. Wright. G.E. The O.T. Against Its Environment. p.45

4.

Water is the beginning of both gods and natural order. In the Canaanite myths we have no clear evidence confirming water as the primeval substance of origin. In the process of evolution, however, water does play a significant role in the Canaanite myths. We find two stages in the process of Becoming.

i) A Process of Evolution.

In this stage gods come out from the Waters. The principle of sexuality is acknowledged in this process of evolution. Although Atum in Egypt is described as above sexual polarity, he acts as if in him both sexes unite.¹ Ulomos in the Mochos fragment also acts as if both sexes unite in him.² The first principle is regarded as a 'being'. Therefore, the process of evolution may also be called a process of emanation. Eventually in this process one god becomes supreme in power. Marduk or Enlil in Mesopotamia, Ptah or Atum or Khnum in Egypt are such gods who have received excessive power from the divine assembly or have made prominent by their worshippers. In Ugarit El is the creator but Ba'al becomes prominent in the pantheon. The most powerful god becomes the creator-god.

ii) A Process of Ordering.

This second stage is the act of creation. In this second stage the world of natural phenomena is brought into existence, the heaven and its host, the earth and all in it come into order. This is the work of a god who has already been emerged as the supreme one of the pantheon. Under his direction the process of ordering takes place. The lesser gods also participate. In Egypt and Ugarit the creator god acts independently through the process of ordering. For the people of the A.N.E. believe that everything in nature manifest the reality of the divine. That is, the visible natural phenomena are gods made visible for mankind. Man himself is a part of the divine manifestation.

The idea of creation by the word is found in Sumer and Egypt. This concept is most probably a projection of the authoritative word of the king who brings order in the society. His command has power to bring order in a state of confusion and chaos. But this doctrine cannot be active and effective in the context of the theological concept of the A.N.E. The creator who is divine is co-existent with the creation.

1. cf. ANET. p.3, col.1.

2. Albright YGC. pp.193f.

tr.) In Egypt, Ptah exists in everything as its 'heart and tongue'. Neither distance nor distinction is maintained between the creator and the ordered world. In this situation how the word can be effectively active in the process of ordering?. The creator, the word, and the creation are all the same. Thus in a world of immanentism and monism the word has no significant role to play as in the O.T. The concept of the 'word' in creation is introduced, not for the purpose of explaining the ultimate relation between the creator and the creation, but to affirm the authority of the creator who has invariably been acknowledged as ruler and king.

c) The Struggle with Chaos.

We have already mentioned above the concept of 'dualism' which the people of the A.N.E cherished. This is the dualism of the forces of evil and good. We see them active from the early beginnings of evolution. There are two realms of struggle with the powers of chaos, namely, the realm of cosmic beginning and the realm of natural world. We shall discuss them in order.

i) The Struggle against Chaos in the Primeval Beginnings.

As far as the nature and purpose of the primeval struggle are concerned there is no unanimity in the ancient texts. Enuma elish associates the fight between Marduk and Tiamat with the creation of the phenomenal world. In both Babylon and Ugarit, the struggle is described as one to establish the authority of the deity to whom kingship has been conferred upon by the divine assembly. The struggle takes place not on the question of creation but on the question of authority and sovereignty.¹ In Enuma elish Marduk is the creator but in Ugaritic text Ba'al is not the creator. Before Marduk has been appointed to meet the threat of Tiamat, Ea and Anu have been sent to confront Tiamat. They use 'magic' and 'authority' against her and they were not able to prevail over her. As a last resort, the Anunnaki confer kingship and supreme authority on Marduk and appoint him as the avenger of the gods.² Marduk fights and wins the battle. After the fight Marduk 'returns to the fallen body of Tiamat, he conceives the idea of giving concrete form to the new law by first creating a new heaven' says Kinnier Wilson.³ Marduk does

1. Gaster.T.H. Thespis.p.151

2. 'The Epic of Creation', IV.13-14 in DOTT.p.9

3. Wilson.K. in DOTT, ed. by D.W.Thomas, p.10

not fight that he might create the heaven and the earth from the carcass of the vanquished Tiamat. He fights to establish his sovereignty. Therefore, we cannot say that the conflict was a necessary prelude to the act of creation. Moreover, whenever we see the conflict motif we cannot assume that creation is necessarily associated with it.¹ Neither in Egypt nor in Canaan nor in Sumer have we evidence of a struggle with chaos just before the order came into existence. In Sumer and in Egypt the primary substance, the water, is not reported as violent or unsubmitive. The 'Opener' in Phoenicia creates the heaven and earth from the top and bottom half of the shell of the world-egg. But we have no record of a struggle prior to that event. 'The idea that a conflict precedes creation can be criticised in detail as concerns the Babylonian stories' says Gadd.² So far as the account in the Enuma elish is concerned, the main purpose of the struggle has been to establish the authority of Marduk. Creation takes place soon after his victory over the rival as a test to prove the newly conferred authority and power.

ii) The Struggle against Chaos in the Natural World.

The primeval struggle has its continuation in the realm of nature. The struggle between the powers of life and death, of drought and fertility has been recognised by the agricultural community of the A.N.E. The agricultural and pastoral communities face a number of friendly and unfriendly forces in nature. The sea, the tidal rivers, the flood, the drought, the waste, the death etc. have been regarded as menace to the life of the community. These are the remnants of the chaotic force that challenged the rule of the creator god. They should be defeated in the realm of nature.

Many nations of the A.N.E. and the Orient in general accept the fight between these two forces.³ But there is no uniform account about the nature of the struggle or the end of it in these various myths. The struggle is not universally reenacted on the New Year festival either.

1. Anderson, B.W. Creation Versus Chaos. p.25.

2. Gadd, C.J. Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient Near East. p.1. and note 3.

3. Gaster, T.H. Thespis. pp.141,152.

We have no clear evidence in the Ras Shamra text for such an annual rite.¹ According to De Vaux, in the ancient Assyrian and Hittite texts on New Year festivals dating from the 2nd millennium B.C., there is no proof of a mythological drama on the pattern of the Babylonian ritual. He continues 'if this mythical and cultic scheme is to be extended to the entire N.E. including Israel, further arguments are needed.'²

In the Babylonian Akitu festival, there is one element in which Marduk is regarded as a dying and rising again deity. We do not know how this is originated. There is no reference in the Enuma elish to support this custom. In the 'Sagmuk' festival of Sumeria Dummuuzi is the hero. According to Gurney, 'there is no trace in the Sumerian mythology of a poem about Dummuuzi's resurrection'.³ Although Inanna does go down to the under world, she does not revive Dummuuzi.⁴ Albright quoting a Sumerian tradition says, 'now we know that both Tammuz and his sister consort Inanna (Ishtar) were to spend half of every year in the underworld'.⁵ The Sumerian tradition does not prove the resurrection of Dummuuzi. Nevertheless, in the light of this analogy and other A.N.E. parallels of the struggle between the chaotic forces on the realm of nature, we can reasonably assume the existence of the annual fertility rite in Ugarit and other A.N.E. regions. The essential purpose of the fertility rite is the renewal and conservation of life of both man and nature.⁶ Through the annual cult the nature-religions affirm the concept of dualism which prevails in the realm of nature. Victory of good over evil has been the emphasis of the cult. It is this message that upheld the peoples of the Ancient Near East before the unpredictable chaotic powers of nature.

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1. Gray.J. 'Ugarit' in Archaeology and O.T. Study. ed.by Thomas.W. pp.148f,158f Canaanites. p.128.
 2. De Vaux. Ancient Israel - Its Life and Institutions. p.505.
 3. Gurney.O.R. 'Tammuz Reconsidered: Some Recent Developments' JSS, Vol.vii, No.2,1962, p.153.
 4. Jacobsen and Kramer.S.N. 'The Myth of Inanna and Bilulu', JNES,xii,1953 pp.160f. Pedersen.J. Israel. iii-iv, 1959, p.794.
 5. Albright.YGC. pp.110-111 and note 39.
 6. Moscati.The Face of the Ancient Orient. p.300.

d) The Concept of Nature.

The people of the A.N.E., although ^{they} cherished a different concept of nature, have been perhaps more serious about the phenomena of nature than ^{we} us. Nature has been thought in terms of personal beings and has been treated with reverence and respect.

They accept a three-decked world of heaven, earth and underworld. Before these phenomena and their hosts men look helpless and remain as mere spectators as in Mesopotamia or occasionally participate in the mythical cosmic rites as in Egypt or in Canaan. The heavenly phenomenon, sky, sun, moon, stars, clouds, wind, rain and the earthly phenomenon sea, rivers, mountains, trees, plants, animals, birds, fishes and every other conceivable object come under their observation. Their observation of nature first takes them to the distant celestial objects and then they come down to the phenomena on earth. The Egyptian Wisdom literature bears witness to this fact.¹ Among the cosmic elements sky, air or wind, water, fire and earth dominate their observation. Here for the sake of brevity we examine only the concept of the heaven, the earth and the waters.

i) The Concept of Heaven.

The distant spacious sky has always been the object of man's admiration and wonder. The people of the A.N.E. are no exception. Speiser says, 'as we reckon our years by the sun, our weeks by the moon, and identify our days after the planets', in fact we are walking in the footsteps of the ancient Mesopotamians.² Their astral theology and the attempt to observe the rhythm of nature lead our way to the concept of time. We might say that the Taauth cosmogony of the early Phoenicians followed by the Greek thinkers, provides us with the first concept of an impersonal and almost atheistic idea of the universe.³ Although the views on celestial phenomena have been presented in mythological language the idea they held still remains valid.

The Orientals have realised the complexity of space. The plural word for heaven suggests the incomprehensible character of the vast and spacious heavens. The deities who represent the heavens also show the character of distance and incomprehensibility. For example, the El of Ugarit and Anu of Mesopotamia have been regarded as unapproach-

1. von Rad. 'Job xxxviii and Ancient Egyptian Wisdom' in HICE. pp.281f,282-283.
Schmidt.W.H. Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift. pp.37f.

2. Speiser. in WJJP. Vol.1. p.266.

3. Albright YGC p.225.

able and retiring by nature. The Anunnaki of Mesopotamia and Ugarit, the Ogdoad and Ennead of Egypt, imply the multiplicity and complexity of the heavenly phenomena. Dayus and the Sad, the divine assembly constitute the celestial deities in the early Aryan religion.¹ The heaven is not, thus, regarded as a single being. It represents an assembly of beings intimately active with the life of the earth. According to the Mesopotamian view, the heaven was once a part of the earth and later separated by the god who represented the atmosphere. The celestial beings are so real to the entire Faithful. Hence naturally they develop a religious sentiment in their attitude to these beings, although the beings manifest themselves through natural phenomenon. The wonders of the world above, give the people a feeling of simple dependence.² The heaven appears to man as a community of powerful beings before whom man becomes helpless. The heaven always appears to man as a place of mystery and wonder. Man is unable to penetrate the depth of the celestial mystery. So he addresses the heavens as the Most High, Father and Creator.

The celestial hosts include the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets. Thunder, rain, wind, lightning, hail, mist, dew are all gods' manifestations. They are associated with the sky-god. Since man is completely dependent on these powers, it is no wonder that they are regarded as worthy of adoration and reverence.

ii) The Earth and its Phenomena.

The earth is the home of man. It provides everything necessary for the sustenance of his life. It receives him back when he finishes his course, into its bosom. Therefore, man in the ancient world regarded the earth as the Mother-goddess.³ This view is true even today in India. In ancient Egypt the people regarded the earth not as a Mother but as a Male deity.⁴

1. Griswold. The Religion of the Veda. p.14.

2. Wissowa Georg Pauly. Real-Encyclopadie. Vol.16. p.1813.a.30.

3. Frankfort. IAAM. p.365.

4. Frankfort. ibid.

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At the dawn of civilisation when people were nomads and were beginning to settle down, there was a great craving for land useful for pastoral and agricultural life. This was particularly true where waste and desert dominated the surface of the earth. So in man's early life the earth got a prominent place. If the heaven was the object of wonder and reverence, the earth enjoyed man's affection and regard. The heavens suggested mystery and transcendence while the earth revealed knowledge and nearness.

However, the phenomena of nature were not so simple as they seem to appear before the ancient man. Some of the nature-phenomena were too profound and mysterious to him. The high mountains soaring above the plains and steppes, the vast unbound desert, the huge winding rivers, the changing seasons and the unpredictable calamities posed problems and caused anxiety and terror. Before them men realised his limitations and lack of power to face them. He was forced to fall upon his knees acknowledging their powers and paying homage to them. He began to worship the high mountains, the great rivers, and the weather phenomena. The mountain-peaks, the hillocks and artificial mounds were chosen to worship the celestial and terrestrial deities.¹ The heights provided him an opportunity to speak closer to the mountain and celestial deities.

Man, birds and animals were also regarded as the manifestations of gods. The deities appeared in the forms of bull, cow, hyena, falcon as in Egypt and Ugarit, or monkey, snake, kite, buffalo as in India. The animate and inanimate things in nature conveyed to man the reality of divine beings. The people of the A.N.E. could not see and realise a God who is above and beyond, and is absolutely free from the powers of nature. The whole natural realm was deified and revered. Reverence for life and nature was the very essence of the religions of the A.N.E.

1. eg. Zaphon of Ugarit, Ziggurat of Babylon and primeval Hillock at Heliopolis.

iii) The Concept of Waters.

The phenomenon of water plays a significant role in the thought of the A.N.E. Water has been regarded as the primary substance which gave life to the gods and the world of nature.¹ None of the myths in the A.N.E. explains the origin of waters. Water has certain particular characteristics. It has the characteristics of change and mutation. It is flexible. These are the essential conditions for becoming. Water shows a ubiquitous nature by manifesting itself in various forms, as clouds, mist, frost, snow, rain, springs, rivers, ocean etc. It acts as the life blood of animals and plants. Life on earth becomes impossible in its absence. Chaos, confusion and waste prevail where there is no water. Water is not static, it flows. It can fly as the clouds. The vapour rising above the clouds, the rain rolling down through the forest and upon the mountains, the fountains gushing forth from the plains, the torrents flowing fast through the valleys, the fast flowing current of the rivers, and the roaring waves of the ocean, all these confirm the living nature of the waters. Perhaps, these qualities of water persuaded the early thinkers of the Orient to regard it as the primary substance, the 'great mother goddess of the universe'.²

The people of the Fertile Crescent show different reactions to this natural phenomenon. Chiefly two attitudes have been developed in the A.N.E.

The people of the arid and dry regions of the A.N.E. regarded water as a great boon. In Egypt the river Nile has always been a sign of blessing. The nearness to the sea was a great advantage for them for trade and commerce. In Phoenicia the water contained the germ of life. The progress and prosperity of the land depended upon the availability of water. The Phoenicians were famous sea-farers.

On the other hand the people of Mesopotamia had a different attitude to water. The unexpected floods in Tigris and Euphrates

1. eg. Nammu in Sumer, Apsu-Tiamat in Babylon, Nun in Egypt, Mot in Phoenicia, El-Ashera of the Sea in Ugarit, Okeanos in Greece, Pralaya in India and Tehom in the O.T.

2. Noth, M. Die Welt des A.T. p.221; E. Trans. The O.T. World. pp.280f.

brought innumerable sufferings upon the people and the land.¹ The myths of the land contain fierce memories of the deluge and its havoc which came upon the land. In their texts 'we hear overtones of anxiety which seem to express a haunting fear that the unaccountable and turbulent powers may at any time bring disaster to human society!'.² The ferocity of the flood was in the subconscious mind of the Mesopotamians. Wherever their culture spread, the story of the flood also accompanied. Thus, in Mesopotamia and the places where their influence spread, water meant sufferings and death for the people.³ We should remember that against this background the poets of Mesopotamia composed the Marduk-Tiamat fight. The struggle against Chaos, the primeval watery monster, reflected, thus, the actual experience of the people in the realm of nature.

The concept of God and the concept of Nature in the A.N.E. are the same. Both have the same source. The speculations of the nature-religions do not separately conceive the ideas of God and Nature. In the next chapter we shall turn to the O.T. to examine its concept of nature and God.

1. Jacobsen in IAAM. p.126.

2. Frankfort in IAAM. p.366.

3. Wachter, L. Der Tod im A.T. pp.46ff; May, H.G. 'Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbim', JBL, 74, 1955, pp.9ff.

CHAPTER THREE.

The Concept of God and Nature in the Old Testament.

Introduction.

In the previous chapter we saw the concept of God and nature in the A.N.E. Here our task is to examine the O.T. evidence for the concept of God and nature and thus prepare the ground for our investigation of the concept in the Psalter.

Before we begin the investigation we have to clarify certain problems. The idea of 'nature' as an ordered realm of cosmos is not found in the O.T. This is a concept introduced by the Greeks.¹ The Hebrew vocabulary does not contain a word to correspond to our concept of 'nature'.² If by 'nature', we mean, 'the creative and regulative physical power which is conceived of as operating in the physical world and as the immediate cause of all its phenomena',³ then the only way to translate the definition into the Hebrew way of thinking is to introduce the concept of God.⁴ The Hebrews bring God into association with the natural realm and believe that He directly guides its course.⁵ They hear the 'voice of God in thunder' (Ps.29.3,5,7,9) 'the hand of God in the pestilence' (1 Sam.5.6) and, the presence of the Lord in the pillar of fire and the clouds (Ex.13.21). It was God, not nature, who persuaded the writers of the O.T. and inspired them when they observed the natural phenomena.

In describing the natural phenomena the O.T. writers use a theological language sometimes couched in myths, whereas we would have used a secular mode of expression. As far as the intrinsic constitution of nature is concerned, the modern Christian view of nature is similar to the secular view.⁶ But the O.T. does not follow this way of separating the natural from the divine, or secular from the sacred.

1. McKenzie.J.L. Myths and Realities. pp.85-86

2. Robinson.H.W. Inspiration and Revelation in the O.T. p.1.

3. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Henceforth cited as SOED.

4. Robinson.H.W.R. ibid.

5. Welch.A.C. The Psalter-Four Essays. p.9.

6. McKenzie.J.L. op.cit.p.85.

According to Robinson, 'there is a realistic extension of anthropomorphism to Nature as well as to God, and both types, the lower as well as the higher, are much more than arbitrary figures of speech or mere poetic licences'.¹

However, the particular extension of anthropomorphism to the realm of nature does not transform any of the natural phenomena as a personal being. The language of personification is found in the O.T. but that does not mean personalisation.² The understanding of nature is always guided by the understanding of God. According to the Hebrews, Nature has no separate entity apart from God and it is governed by the word of God.

The interpretation of events in nature and history also is dependent on the particular Hebrew view of nature and God. The events are interpreted as the acts of God.³ But this is different from the understanding of the nature-religions which saw deities as manifestations of natural phenomena. The God of the Hebrews is above nature and controls the events as a personal being. (Gen.14.19,22; Ex.14.21; Amos.4.13,5.8,9.5; Is.40.12,26,44.24 etc)

1. The Evidence for the Hebrew Concept of God and Nature.

The source materials are scattered throughout the O.T. They are found in various literary categories; in myths, sagas, cult-legends, early poems and poetic fragments, historic documents and prophetic and wisdom literature of the Old Testament. We will examine the evidence under the following headings:- The Exodus, the Sinai Pericope, the Settlement, the Evidence in the Prophets and the Evidence in the Wisdom literature.

i) The Exodus.

The Exodus is the most significant event in the religious history of Israel. It is 'for the O.T. and Judaism what the life, death and resurrection of Christ are for the N.T. and Christianity', says Stalker.⁴ The narrative of the Exodus cannot be regarded as strictly

1. Robinson.M.W. . o.p.cit.p.16.

2. Moore Judaism. Vol.1. p.415; Schnakenburg.R. The Gospel According to St.John. Vol.1. p.485.

3. cf.Collingwood. R,G. The Idea of History. p.11.

4. Stalker.D.M.G. 'Exodus', in PCB. para.175a.

historical in accordance with modern historical method.¹ The event is so important that its echo is frequently heard in the O.T. (Dt.26.3,5-9; 1 Kings.8,16,21,53; Is.11.16; Jer.2.6ff and in several Psalms etc)

The actual crossing of the Red Sea occurs in Ex.14.19-31. The Song of Moses and Miriam Ex.15.1-18, and v.21 also contain references to the triumphant crossing. As we examine Ex.14.19-31, the following facts revealing God's relation to nature, emerge.

- a) The natural phenomena have been used to protect the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptians. (Ex.14.20)²
- b) The Lord does a timely act in nature. He 'drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided'. (v.21) The Yahwist, in this verse, undoubtedly bears witness to the mighty hand of God at work in the realm of nature. Marsh says, 'the Bible gives us no clue to any judgment upon history that does not have God's activity as its conditioning ground'.³ This is true with regard to the realm of nature too. No event in the Bible is left out as if it is outside the power and authority of God.
- c) The sea, the mythical enemy in Babylon and Ugarit, is here a mere natural phenomenon. God uses it to destroy the enemies of Israel. (vv.27ff) In this context, according to Ps.77.17-19, God uses rain, thunder, lightning, and earth-quake to confound the enemies.
- d) 'The first result of the deliverance was, ^{that} the Israelites gained a conviction of Yahweh's power and of Moses' authority', says Stalker.⁴ But we should remember that Moses had no authority except the authority of God executed through him as the obedient and faithful servant of God.⁵

The Song of Moses and Miriam. Ex.15.1-18 and 21 have been regarded as the earliest cultic response to the Exodus event. Scholars differ

1. Anderson.G.W. 'The Religion of Israel, in PCB. para.175a.

2. Ex.14.20b is uncertain, RSV follows the LXX, cf.Josh.24.7, the Syriac rendering attempt to include the idea of the pillar of fire, cf.BH footnote.

3. Marsh.J. The Fullness of Time. p.45.

4. Stalker, op.cit.para.187e.

5. cf.Hooke.S.H. 'Introduction to the Pentateuch', in PCB. para.141e.

widely on the question of the date of these poems. From 13th century to 5th century B.C. dates have been suggested.¹ However, there is general agreement that the Song of Miriam is contemporary with the Exodus event.

All the elements of the traditions of the Exodus and of the occupation of the land have been included in this poem.² Therefore, we might take it as the earliest evidence to the event. It is significant to note that this poem too emphasises the power of Yahweh. The expressions, 'triumphed gloriously' (vv.1,21), 'my strength' (v.2), 'Lord is a man of war' (v.3), 'right hand, O Lord, glorious in power' (v.6), 'greatness of thy majesty' (v.7), and 'majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders' (v.11) are the key phrases which bear witness to the mighty power of Yahweh.

VV.4,5,7,8,10 confirm Yahweh's commanding authority over the realms of nature and history.

It is this power and authority which have been revealed in the realm of nature and history that persuaded the cultic community to acclaim the eternal kingship of Yahweh. (v.18)

In this connection we have to examine some of the cultic creeds found in the Hexateuch. First of all we shall take Dt.26.5b-10 which von Rad holds as an old cultic credo.³ 'The materials in Deuteronomy may be dated from the days of Moses to Manasseh.'⁴

In the creed, the worshipper says, 'And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and ^{an} outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and He brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey'. (Dt.26.8-9, cf.6.22-23) Here, the worshipper acknowledges that the Lord saved Israel from Egypt; the saving act is done with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with terror, with signs and wonders; and the Lord is the owner of the Land. Although no explicit reference to the creation-faith is given in the cultic credo⁵ Yahweh's power and lordship over the land is acknowledged.

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1. Albright assigns a date soon after the 13th century B.C. Archaeology of Palestine p.235; Driver.S.R. supports an early date. The Book of Exodus pp.130-131; Pfeiffer.R.H. Introduction to the O.T. p.281.
 2. von Rad. 'The Form-critical Problem of the Hexateuch', in PHCE. p.10
 3. von Rad. op.cit.p.4.
 4. Davies.H.G. 'Deuteronomy', in FCB. para.231d.
 5. von Rad. OTT. Vol.1. p.156.

Obviously this is the result of the Landnahme. (cf. Lev. 25.23; Hos. 9.3; Dt. 32.43) The 'signs and wonders' in the cultic context meant the plagues in Egypt.¹ They declare Yahweh's power to do the extraordinary in the realm of nature as a sign of his marvellous power. According to Titius, the account of miracles originated from a faith in a creator God and His power.² Von Rad's approach, emphasising the historical aspect of salvation, failed to emphasise Israelites' faith in a Creator and His power and authority over nature in connection with the Exodus event.³ The ownership of the land implies that the Lord is the creator of the land. The Creator is the possessor.

The creed summarises Israel's sacred history and it is significant to note that the formulation of the creed has taken into account the faith in Yahweh's power over nature along with the salvation faith. God's power and authority in the creation and over the natural phenomena have been again emphasised in the speech of Moses in Dt. 4.32-40.

Here, the speaker acknowledges his faith in Yahweh as the creator of man upon the earth. (4.32) He recollects God's manifestation in fire upon Sinai. (v.33) He refers to the Exodus event in which God has revealed his mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and delivered the people with signs and wonders, by war and by great terrors. (v.34) The speaker affirms that there is no other God except the Lord who is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. (v.39) This passage is a great witness to the fundamental faith of Israel in God and His mighty power in the realm of creation. 'This theocentric art underlies many parts of the O.T. and comes to clear expression in several places'.⁴ (Dt. 6.23) Joshua repeats the same faith of Israel in his speech at Shechem. (24.5ff)

The Exodus event has no significance in itself. The event has been interpreted in the light of Hebrew faith. It is this theological interpretation of the event that makes it meaningful. In the Israelite view of the Exodus, the event has been regarded as a miracle

1. Noth.M. Exodus-O.T. Library. p.69.

2. Titius.D.A. Natur und Gott. p.125.

3. cf. Barr.J. Old and New in Interpretation. pp.75ff.

4. Davies.H.G. op.wit.para.253g.

done on behalf of the people of Israel. The frequent mention of the 'signs and wonders' emphasises this aspect. Therefore, let us now see the significance of miracles in the concept of God and nature in the O.T.

The Miracles. Implicit faith in the power of God affirms the faith in miracles. The Hebrews never doubt its possibility. 'The fundamental principle in the world-outlook of the primitive man is that everything is possible'.¹ The Hebrews also accept this, especially because they affirm the power of God. According to Baudissin, the Semites generally believed in a being that is 'übermächtig'.² The belief in a living and powerful God help the Hebrews to accept the possibility of miracles.³ By miracle, they do not mean, 'a marvellous event exceeding the known powers of nature, and therefore supposed to be due to the special intervention of the Deity or of some supernatural agency'.⁴ There is no separation between the natural and the supernatural as the definition implies, in the concept of nature. 'Nature is already supernatural, though it can be raised to new meaning'.⁵ For example, the rain (Job.5.9-10), the balancing of the clouds (Job.37.16), the child-birth (Ps.139.14) etc. are wonders.

There are three important words which convey the meaning of signs and wonders; they are 'Oth which means a material sign, (Ex.12.13, 31.13) Mophet meaning a portent, an event with extraordinary significance (1 Ki.15.3,5, Ps.71.7) and Niphla'oth, meaning 'wonder', an outstanding event to be distinguished from ordinary occurrences.⁶ (Ps.107.24, Dt.11.10-11) The plagues in Egypt and the Exodus have always reminded the people of Israel about Yahweh's power to do the extraordinary, the signs and wonders. These wonders illuminate the Hebrew concept of nature and are an important feature in the method of divine revelation.⁷

1. Mowinckel.S. Ps.St.ii. p.224.

2. Graffen Baudissin.W.E. Studien Zur Semitischen Religions-geschichte. Heft.1. p.292.

3. cf. Vriezen.Th.C. 'The Study of the O.T. and the History of Religion' in Congress Volume, VTS, xvii p.4.

4. SOED.

5. Robinson.H.W. op.cit. p.37.

6. Robinson.H.W. op.cit. pp.34ff.

7. Robinson.H.W. op.cit. p.34.

The Yahwist attributes the following as the chief purposes of the miracles in Egypt.

To show that the God of Israel is the true Lord, (Ex.7.17, 8.22,10.2)

To show the power of the Lord, that His name¹ may be declared throughout all the earth, (9.16)

To show that the earth belongs to the Lord, (9.29)²

This witness of the Yahwist is the earliest testimony to the Lordship and power of the Lord.³ The belief that the earth belongs to the Lord is frequently mentioned in the O.T. (Ex.19.5, Lev.25.23, Dt.10.14,32.43, Ps.24.1,50.10-12, Hos.9.3.)

Since the Hebrews believe that the earth and its fulness belong to the Lord nothing that happens in the realm of nature or history belongs to the realm of the supernatural. All belong to the realm of God who has no separate compartments of action. The events that take place in the realm of nature or history convey to the eyes of faith meaning and significance as some purposeful acts of God. Such events are signs or portents or wonders to the believers. 'Nature and history are simply different aspects of the continued activity of God, and miracles are the representative occasions on which that activity specially impresses human consciousness'.⁴ The Exodus, in a sense, according to Westermann, is the basis and proof of Israel's faith in Yahweh as the creator God.⁵ Without such a faith in God as the creator and ruler of the entire realm of nature and history, neither Moses nor the people of Israel would have undertaken a perilous risk as the one which they have taken at Exodus. In the revelation to Moses, God's creatorship of man and His power to do the extraordinary had been revealed to Moses. (Ex.4.1-9,11) The miracles in Egypt convinced the people of God's power and lordship over the land.

1. 'Name' means 'the nature of God as revealed to man', Anderson.G.W. 'Psalms' in PCE, para.362a.

2. Davies.G.H. Exodus. pp.90ff

3. contra. von Rad. 'The Theological Problem of the O.T. Doctrine of Creation' in HCOE, p.132.

4. Robinson.H.W. op.cit. p.39.

5. Westermann.C. 'Das Reden von Schöpfer und Schöpfung im A.T', in Das Ferne und Nahe Wort, Festschrift für L. Rost, 1967, pp.240ff.

We may summarise the main concept of God and nature emphasised in the Exodus event as the following:-

- i) God has absolute power over the natural phenomena.
- ii) The natural phenomena have been used for the sake of His people.
- iii) The early cultic creeds of Israel acknowledge Yahweh's power and authority over the world of phenomena which He had revealed through 'signs and wonders'.
- iv) The revelation of Yahweh's authority and power over the world of nature and history enables the cultic community to acclaim His eternal kingship.

ii) The Sinai Pericope.

The events connected with Sianai play a significant role in the religion of Israel. The narrative, as we have it in the Hexateuch, 'is a tangle of strands from a variety of sources'¹, mainly from the J,E,P, traditions. The account which is scattered in the Hexateuch is difficult to rearrange. The important section is found in Ex.19-24,33-34. Allusions are found to the event in Dt.5.4,23; Judg.5.4-5; Hab.3.3; Ps.68.7(8)ff and other passages. 'The constitutive element of the Sinai tradition is the coming of God, not the wanderings of the people'.² The theophany at Sinai has made a significant impression in the cult of Israel., Since 'the Sinai narrative in its canonical form, is itself prior to the cultus and the normative for it',³ we cannot accept the view that the Sinai narrative is an account of the New Year festival translated into the language of literary mythology.⁴

Now our task is to examine the theophany⁵ at Sinai in order to find out the concept of God and His relation to the natural world. According to the Yahwist, the purpose of the theophany is the following:-

Firstly, that the people may hear God speaking with Moses and believe in him for ever. (Ex.19.9.)

Secondly, that God's glory and name may be revealed to Moses and to the people. (33.18ff,34.6ff)

1. von Rad. 'The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch', in PHOE. p.16

2. Von Rad. op.cit. p.20.

3. von Rad. op.cit. p.21

4. von Rad makes a reference to Mowinckel's Le Décalogue. p.129, on op.cit. p21, Mowinckel's work is not accessible to me.

5. See on 'Theophany' - Additional notes.

According to the Elohist, the purpose is to see whether the people will be true and loyal to God and continue without sin. (20.20)

The actual theophany is described in Ex.19.16-20,20.18,24.15-18 33.18-23,34.5-8. The transcendent God descends upon mount Sinai with the accompaniments of natural phenomena and reveals His glory. The theophanic description is not very much different from the language and concept of the contemporary nature-religions.¹ However, the Hebrew account of theophany shows some distinctive theological ideas.

In the Sinaitic theophany we find the weather and volcanic phenomena, such as clouds, thunder, lightning and mountain-quake,² smoke, darkness, and fire. But these two groups of phenomena need not be regarded as totally opposed to each other. They can be included in one narrative. The presence of these two groups led some scholars to assume that the weather phenomenon represents the agricultural and the volcanic phenomenon represents the nomadic background of the people.³ According to them, the two traditions are fused into the O.T. theophanic narratives. But we have no reliable means to verify the validity of this view. The Sinaitic account does not present these two backgrounds. The presence of the natural phenomena in theophany led some other scholars to associate Yahweh originally with a storm-deity.⁴ Since we have no evidence in the O.T. to support this view, we cannot uphold its validity. Moreover, the O.T. never identifies Yahweh with a nature-power.

In a strict sense God does not reveal himself in the nature-phenomena which accompany a nature-theophany. God is invisible. He is not identified with any of the nature-phenomena. No one can see Him and live. (Ex.33.20; Dt.4.33, also cf.Ex.24.9ff) God speaks from the fire (Ex.3.2; Dt.4.33) with a thundering voice. (Ex.19.19) The word kol means both 'thunder' and 'voice'. God is identified with none. The 'pillar of fire' (Ex.13.21-22) in its tradition suggests the glorious presence of God. (Ex.24.16,17; 1 Ki.18.38) In 1 Ki.19.11-13 God speaks to Elijah in a 'still small voice'. Here is a clear evidence which shows the reluctance of the O.T. to identify Yahweh with any of the nature-powers.⁵ Welch says, 'the very variety of events with

1. Schmidt.W.F. AGSU. p.150.

2. LXX reads meaning the people quake as in v,16, differing from MT.

3. Schmidt.W.H. op.cit. p.41.

4. Stade Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments. pp.17,94ff.
Anderson.B.W. Creation Versus Chaos. p.97.

5. Eichrodt. TOT. Vol.11. p.19.

which He can be brought into connection is the sufficient proof that He is identified with none'.¹ What is seen and experienced in the nature-theophany is the reality of Yahweh's presence and power. The most effective way to affirm the reality of God is to show His control and authority over the powerful natural phenomena. What the Exodus has proved by way of revealing God's power and authority over nature-powers, is confirmed and ratified before the presence of Moses and the people of Israel. In a sense, the theophany brings 'to a focus the general miracle of all Nature as the handiwork of God'.²

The theophany is not merely an exhibition of nature-powers. They may provide the material coincidence, not a theophany. The religious faith of the observer and his theological interpretation make the material coincidence, a theophany. Here, we have to distinguish theophany from the continuous revelation of God in nature.³ The theophany occurs at a particular time for a particular purpose. Its aim is not to awaken one's amazement but to evoke and confirm faith.⁴ The theophany affirms that the power behind nature is not a blind force but a righteous God who wants to communicate with man. The Sinai theophany ends with a revelation of God who enters into a covenant relationship with Israel.

The other theophanic accounts in the O.T. either look back to Sinai as a pattern (Jg.5.4ff; Hab.3.5; Ps.68.7(8)ff) or follow the pattern from Sinai. (Pss.18.6(7)ff,50.2f; Is.6.1-6) In all these accounts, Yahweh's supreme transcendence is maintained. His absolute freedom and power over the natural phenomena to reveal His glory and to repulse His enemies and the enemies of His servants, are affirmed. (Jg.5.4-5,20; Pss.68.7(8)ff,29.3f; Hab.3.5ff; cf.Pss.144.5-7,77.16ff)

The prophets describe theophany in the realm of history emphasising God's power and righteous anger against the rebellious people. (Mic.1.3-4; Nah.1.3-5; Is.30.27-28,66.15-16 etc.) The thought is carried on to the realm of eschatology. (Jl.2.10ff; Amos.8.8f,9.5) The strongest and the mightiest in nature cannot stand before the day of the Lord. (Is.2.13-14,13.10f)

1. Welch.A.C. The Religion of Israel under the Kingdom. pp.11-12.

2. Robinson.H.W. op.cit. p.39.

3. Robinson.H.W. ibid.

4. Rust.E.C. Nature and Man in Biblical Thought. p.94.

Now we may sum up the important concept of God and nature found in the Sinai narrative.

- a) God is transcendent, He makes His manifestations through the natural phenomena.
- b) God is not visible in nature, but the nature-theophany in which the material coincidence are provided enables the believer to see God's glory and hear His voice.
- c) The Sinai events are the confirmation and ratification of the power and authority of God over nature which have been revealed in ^{the} Exodus event.
- d) We may assume on reliable grounds, that the revelation of God's power and authority over the natural phenomena has been carried on in the cultic life of Israel and they continuously acclaimed God's lordship over the realm of nature and history through the cultic realisation of His kingship.

iii. The Settlement and the Confrontation with the Nature-Religions.

The third stage of the historical traditions of Israel begins with the settlement in Canaan. Certain new factors confront the religion of Israel at this stage. The most significant of them is the confrontation with the Canaanite religion. As a result the traditions of Israel have been collected and Israel's religious beliefs have been given a kind of formal clarification in literary forms. (The various traditions have been collected by the J,E,D,P and other sources.) First of all, we shall examine the traditions found in the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings.

a) Historical Books.

In these books Yahweh has been acknowledged as a war God. (Josh.5.14) He fights for Israel. (Josh.10.42,3.10; 2 K.7.6,19.35) The powers of nature have been sent to support the army of Israel. God sends hornets (Josh.24.12; Ex.23.28; Dt.7.10) and tumors (1 Sam.5.6.), He thunders (1 Sam.7.10) and confounds the enemies of His people. Even the sun and the moon cooperate in the holy war. (Josh.10.12-13) We cannot be certain about what happened on the day of Israelites' fight against the Amorites. (10.6ff) However, we can be sure



In the same battle Yahweh sends the hailstones to destroy the enemies. (10.11) The traditions of the holy wars, thus, depict Yahweh's power over nature which He uses for the benefit of His people.

The victory over the various nations convince the people of Yahweh's supremacy over other peoples and their gods. He has been addressed as the 'Lord of all the earth' (Josh.3.11), 'God in heaven above and on earth beneath'. (2.11; 1 K.8.23) The living nature of God is established by His acts. (3.10; Dt.5.26; 1 Sam.17.26; Hos.1.10) He has laid the foundation of the world. (1 Sam,2.8)

The power of Yahweh over the natural phenomena has been further established through the miracles, the crossing of Jordan through the dry land (Josh.3.14ff; 2 Ki.2.8,14), bringing fire from heaven, (2 K.1.10f) purifying the water at Jericho (2K.2.19f) and withholding rain from the land. (1 K.17.1) The event described in 1 K.18 has been a decisive test whether Yahweh as the lord of the land could bring rain upon the land. Here, Elijah does establish the superiority of Yahweh over Ba'al and proved before the cultic community that Yahweh Himself is the giver of rain. (cf. 1K.18.1,36-39,41-45)¹ In these miracles, God acts through His servants, the prophets and the priests. These reveal the mighty hand of God at work in the realm of nature. (Josh.4.24)

In the historical books of Samuel and Kings Yahweh's bond with Israel has been fully recognised. To the community, His spirit has been the source of energy and inspiration.² (1 Sam.10.6,11.6) He condescends with the powers of nature for the rescue of His servants. (2 Sam.22.8-16)³ Earthquake and storm are regarded as the visible manifestation of divine power. But Yahweh has not been identified with any of these powers. (1 K.19.11ff)

In the prayer of Solomon we get a wider belief in the power of God and His authority. He has been declared as the only God (1 K.8.23) in the whole universe (1 K.8.60) who is the giver of rain (1 K.8.35ff) and who removes the famine, pestilence, mildew or blight from the land at the request of His servants (1 K.8.37ff). He knows

1. cf. Mauchline.J. '1 and 11 Kings' in PCB. para.298c.
2. Kirkpatrick.A.F. Samuel. p.1xii.
3. Since 2 Sam.22 occurs in Ps.18 we will have a detailed examination in the Psalms.

the thought of man's heart. (1 K.8.40) The universal monotheistic concept expressed in these passages need not be regarded as a later interpolation.¹ 'If monotheism connotes the existence of one God only, the creator of everything, the source of justice and mercy, who can travel at will to any part of his universe, who is without sexual relations and consequently without mythology, who is human in form but cannot be seen by human eye or represented in any form - then official religion of early Israel was certainly monotheistic' says Albright.²

One of the immediate results of the confrontation with the nature-religion of Canaan was the clarification of the authority of Yahweh and His jurisdiction. The El of the Canaanite pantheon was the 'Most High, maker of heaven and earth'.³ (Gen.14.19,22) According to J tradition, Abraham acknowledges the El God of Salem, that is, Jerusalem of the Jebusites. By taking over some of the Canaanite epithets Yahweh has been declared as the sole deity of the land.⁴ Yahweh has been acknowledged as the creator of the earth and heaven. The early Jerusalem tradition has made its impact on the Yahwistic cult. 'Jerusalem cult in particular, with its own distinctive heritage, placed a quite exceptional emphasis upon the cosmic and supernatural power of Yahweh, as the king of the universe' says Clements.⁵ In the Palmyra inscription of the Karatepe text we read 'l qn 'rs -El, the creator of the earth, the good god'.⁶ In this background, it is unreasonable to imagine that Israel alone had no early creation-faith. The oral traditions of Exodus and Sinai experience can be taken as a proof and confirmation of God's power and authority over nature.

b) The Yahwistic Traditions.

The Yahwist is the earliest collector and compiler of the oral traditions of Israel. Perhaps by ca.10th century B.C. the Yahwist began to collect and codify the traditions.⁷ His witness is found mainly in the Pentateuch. Now we will enquire his main understanding of God

1. contra. Mauchline.J. '1 and 11 Kings' in PCB. para.294m.

2. Albright Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan. p.180.

3. ANET. p.140,h.1 AB,iii-iv.1-11, Gray.J. 'Legacy of Canaan', VT,V,1957, p.194, Irwin.JBL, lxxx,1961, p.138; Ringgren. Israelitische Religion. p.92.

4. cf.Östborn Yahweh and Ba'al. pp.11ff

5. Clements.R.E. Prophecy and Covenant. p.20.

6. Schmidt. 'Yahweh und die Kulttraditionen von Jerusalem'. ZAW/67,1955 p.180.

7. von Rad. Genesis. p.23; Schmidt.W.H. AGSU. p.15.

and His relation to the natural order from the Yahwist's account of the primeval history and the patriarchal sagas.

The Yahwist believes in the universal sovereign power of Yahweh.¹ His jurisdiction was not limited to the land of Canaan. Obviously the Yahwist's span of the universe was much more limited than that of ours. However, he believes that Yahweh is in control of nations and peoples other than the patriarchs. The guidance of God to Abraham during his sojourn, from Ur to Egypt through Canaan and back to the promised land, is a proof for Yahweh's presence in countries other than Canaan. The Elohist also supports this view of J.

God has been addressed as 'the God of heaven and the earth', (Gen.24.3) 'the everlasting God' (21,33) and 'the Lord God Most High, maker of heaven and earth' (14.22). The title 'God Almighty', (49.25(E)17.1(P)) also affirms the faith of the Patriarchs. Since the Lord is acknowledged as the almighty, the Yahwist affirmed His power too. This is especially revealed in Yahweh's might to do the impossible. Nothing is too wonderful for Him. (cf.Gen.18.14) He gives children to Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel.

The Lord has power over the natural phenomena, such as dew of heaven, fatness of the earth, grain and wine. (Gen.27.28,39,49.25(E)) He brings fire and brimstone upon Sodom. (Gen.19.24(J)) He gives the land. (Gen.13.15,26.3) He manifests himself in fire and flaming torch. (Gen.15.17) In the Flood-saga, according to the Yahwist, God exercises His authority over the rain and flood. (Gen.7.4,12, also cf.2.5) God makes a promise that 'while the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease'. (Gen.8.22)

We cannot say that the traditions collected and compiled by J reflect the faith of the Yahwist who lived long after the events narrated in the patriarchal stories. Archaeological evidence comes to our support to affirm that the patriarchs were really men who reflected the culture and beliefs of their own period. When the traditions were collected and compiled they were not written from actual memory of definite historical events. According to Vawter, *loc*

1. Gemser.B. 'God in Genesis' OTS. Deel,xii,1958, pp.6,21.

the primeval history is written with 'conviction based on Israel's encounter with Yahweh in the time of Moses and the Exodus rather than remembrance'.¹ The Yahwist is not the inventor of these traditions but only a collector and compiler. His saga of creation is very significant for our purpose. So we may examine it.

According to Speiser, the creation saga must have entered the stream of biblical tradition sometime in the latter half of the second millennium B.C. It remained without taking a final shape until a number of centuries later.² When the people settled in Canaan they must have felt the need of defining their understanding of the origin of the natural world. The reticence of the doctrine of creation cannot be attributed to the Hebrew reaction of the mythical view associated with creation beliefs in the nature-religions or the Hebrew intention to shift the creation-centre to the historical redemption in the cultic life of the nation.³ In fact, the concept of creation is not a late belief in Israel. The creation-faith may not have come to the lime light along with the historical events of the O.T. because it is not based on an actual verifiable historical event. The accounts of creation, 'like all basic presuppositions, are beyond proof and explanation and rational explication: they describe the ground of all understanding and action. Implicit in faith, they point to and participate in the mystery of faith's ground, which can be stated only in story and song' says Hartshorne.⁴ We have already seen how the O.T. from time immemorial 'stress the complete dependence of the earthly order on God'⁵. (cf. Ex.15.8,11,14.20-21,23.28; Gen.49.25; Num.16.30; Dt.7.20,33.14f; Jg.5.20; Josh.10.12 etc)

In the Yahwist's account of creation the main points relevant to our theme are the following:-

Yahweh is the creator of the heavens and the earth⁶. (Gen.2.4b)

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1. Vawter.B. 'Studies in Salvation-history' ed.by C.Luke Salm, F.S.C. Englewood Cliffs,1964. pp.57-67, quoted by Anderson.B.W. in Creation versus Chaos. p.40 and note 42.
 2. Speiser Genesis.1. pp.10ff
 3. contra. Anderson.B.W. op.cit.pp.52ff.
 4. Hartshorne.M.H. The Promise of Science and the Power of Faith. p.85, cited by Anderson.B.W. op.cit. p.34 and note 33.
 5. Eichrodt Theology of the O.T. Vol.1, pp.228f, Vol.11, pp.97ff, henceforth cited as TOT.
 6. 'heavens and the earth' is an expression for 'the universe', Frankfort Kingship and the Gods. p.19.

The creation of the earth, according to J, is the act of transforming the waste into habitable land. (2.5-7,8-9a) God is the giver of water, He makes the rivers, plants, trees, animals, birds and man (2.6-7,8-9, 10-14,19, and 21ff). The living beings are created out of the ground. (2.7,19)

The literary characteristics of J in Gen.2.4b-7 is very similar to the opening verse of P in Gen.1 and of Enuma elish.¹ Therefore, we may assume that they share a common source. However, each develops its own distinctive features. The J saga is mainly concerned about man and his earth. The emphasis on earth is very dominant.² Therefore, we might legitimately assume that there is a strong relation between the covenant promise of the land and the creation-faith. Yahweh is the creator and therefore, He alone is able to promise the land to His people. (cf.Gen.12.7,13.14f,15.18,24.7,26.2ff,28.13 etc)

The Yahwist is not speaking of a creation out of nothing. According to him, creation takes place from the waste. God makes it a land, Adama, habitable for man. He controls the mist³ and the rivers⁴ and makes the land cultivable. Here, the water is not a fearful monster but a source of blessing.

As far as their origin is concerned the animals keep an equal position with man.⁵ Man is given a place above the living beings not by right but by grace, by giving him an opportunity to exercise the privilege of a sovereign, viz. the naming of the creatures.⁶ To the Yahwist, the Lord is supreme. Man, the living beings and the natural world, are the result of His sovereign will.

c) The Prophetic understanding of God and the natural order.

In this section we shall have a rapid survey of the Prophetic view of God and nature. We shall divide the section into three, treating the prophetic witness to the concept of God and nature in the 8th, 7th centuries B.C. and the latter prophets respectively.

1. Speiser op.cit. p.13, ANET. pp.60f.

2. von Rad Genesis. p.74; Mowinkel.S. JE in Gen.1-11. pp.17-18.

3. Mist, cf. Job.36.27, the LXX,S,V use a word which might mean 'spring' while T renders it to mean 'a cloud'. In the light of the Babylonian flood-god 'id', Albright assumes 'ed' as 'the subterranean fresh water stream', JBL,58,1959. pp.102f. According to Speiser 'ed' might have been used verbatim from an Akkadian lexical work', Oriental and Biblical Studies. pp.19,22, henceforth cited as OBS. 'ed' is a 'river' according to J.M.P. Smith. 'The Indebtedness of Israel to Its Neighbours', AJSL,xlix,1953,p.108

4. The river of God is followed up as a sign of spiritual and physical blessing. (Pss.46.5,65.10, cf. Ezek.47; Zech.14.8)

5. Herner.S. Die Natur im A.T. p.29; Kempel.J. 'Gott,Mensch und Tier im A.T.' in Apoxyvmata, pp.213,219.

6. von Rad. Genesis. pp.51,85.

1. The Eighth Century Prophets.

Hosea, Amos, Isaiah of Jerusalem, and Micah are included in this group. We shall summarise their ideas concerning our theme under the following titles.

Yahweh is the Lord of the Earth.

Yahweh is the owner of the land. (Hos.9.3) He is the king whose glory¹ fills the whole earth. (Is.6.3, cf.2.4) Nothing that occurs in the world happens without His will. (cf.Amos.3.6,4.6ff) He knows the thoughts of man. (Amos.4.13) He is the creator of the heavens and the earth, the mountains, the wind, the planets, the day and the night. (Amos.4.13,5.8,9.5-6; Is.37.16)² Therefore, He gives the fruit of the land to the people. (Hos.2.8,21-23(10.23-25)) He instructs the farmer in the method of cultivation. (Is.28.23ff) The Lord is the 'Husband' of the land and not Ba'al. (Hos.2.16(18)) Therefore, it is the Lord who preserves the land and its blessings. He makes a covenant with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the creeping things of the ground (Hos.2.18(20)) and continues to give the blessings of nature to his people. By His command the heavens, the earth and their produce will satisfy His people. (Hos.2.21ff(23ff)) God has full power over the phenomena of nature and He is able to use them either for blessing or for punishment. (Is.7.18ff,15.6ff; Mic.3.6, 6.15 etc) The faithfulness to the covenant relationship is the criteria for blessing or for judgement. (Hos.2.9(11),4.3,8.7,9.2,14.15 etc) The Lord is everywhere, in heaven, on earth and in the underworld. (Amos.9.2ff) No one can escape from His presence. When He manifests His presence, the natural phenomena tremble before Him. (Amos.9.5; Mic.1.4; Is.5.25,13.15) Thus, to the Prophets of the 8th century B.C., Yahweh is the lord, governor, creator, and preserver of the universe. He is powerful and His presence is every where and nothing falls out from His jurisdiction.

1. vid. Additional note on 'Glory'.

2. These creation hymns are participial hymns which probably existed in Israel through oral traditions. Similar participial hymns are found in Ancient Mesopotamian literature. Falkenstein/von Soden. Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete. pp.60,83,87.

The Natural Phenomena - A means of Revelation.

Some of the 8th century prophets received their call and further message through the objects of nature. Amos must have heard his call through the roaring of a lion. (3.8,1.2) His further visions come through the summer fruit (8.1f) and the locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth. (7.1f) He sees the vision of fire and great deep (7.4ff). According to Hosea, the languishing of the land, the beasts, the birds, and the fishes are due to man's failure to be faithful to Yahweh's covenant. (4.3) He interprets the change in the natural order as due to a break in God-man relation. (8.7f,9.2f) According to Isaiah, thunder, earth-quake, whirlwind, tempest, fire, smoke - all reveal the might and majesty of His God. (29.6,30.27ff) He sees the visible world as the glory of God. (6.3)

The Natural Phenomena - A means of Judgement in the Present.

In the realm of history God uses the phenomena of nature to punish His rebellious people. Nature is obedient and implicitly carries out the plans, of God. (Hos.8.7,9.2,1.9) Since He is the one who commands the nature-powers to give their fruits to His people (Hos.2.21(23f)), He has right to withhold it too. (Amos.4.7; Mic.6.15; Is.5.9) He sends fire (Amos.1.4,7,10,12,2.2,5), famine (4.6), drought (4.7), blight and mildew (4.9) upon the land. (Hos.2.9(11))

For the eschatological judgement too, the Lord uses the natural phenomena. (Amos.8.9; Is.24.3f,18f¹) In the wrath of God the natural powers themselves will be destroyed. (Is.34.4,9,13-15,13.10,21f)

Nature in Eschatology.

The eschatological restoration of the people include the renewal of nature. Transformation and renewal of nature is part of the salvation experience of the redeemed community. Nature shall bring forth its produce. (Amos.9.13-15; Hos.14.15f; Mic.4.3-4) The desert shall be turned into an oasis. (Is.30.23-26,32.15-20; Ch.25) The primary harmony which existed between man and animals shall be restored, (Is.11.6-9) Here, we have the picture of a new creation. Yahweh shall be the sovereign king, judge, and ruler in the midst of the redeemed community. (Is.33.21-22)

1. The 'Isaiah Apocalypse', (Is.24-27) are not too late as people used to think. Bright.J. 'Isaiah' in FCB. para.458a.

Nature - An Impartial Witness.

According to Isaiah one can call to nature for an impartial witness. Nature does not seem to involve in the rebellion of man. Therefore the prophet calls the heaven and the earth to be his witness to the message. (1.2) Nature is trustworthy because they bear witness to the glory of God.

2. The Seventh Century Prophets.

The Prophets who were active in this period were Jeremiah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Habakkuk. Their main understanding of God and His relation to nature may be summarised as follows.

God Reveals His majesty and Glory through Nature.

When God manifests His power to execute judgment, according to Nahum and Jeremiah, He reveals himself in nature-powers. (Jer.23.19; Nah.1.3f) The manifestation of the Lord's way in nature is particularly emphasised by Nahum and Habakkuk. (Nah.1.3ff; Hab.3.3f)¹ The natural phenomena tremble before His mighty presence. In the theophany, the Lord is not seen in the natural phenomena but the natural phenomena bear witness to the majesty and glory of God.

Jeremiah, by watching simple phenomenon in nature, receives the word of God. (1.11) 'To a mind attuned to the divine it was not difficult to see God in common place of things'.² Nature is a parable of God's working. Similar to the vision of Amos, Jeremiah also sees the vision of the baskets of figs. (24.1-3) As a poet Jeremiah loves the objects of nature and they are very close to his heart. (8.7,12.9, 17.11,22.23,48.28)

God is the Lord and Creator of the earth.

Jeremiah sees Yahweh as the creator of the earth, the animals and the men. (27.5) The natural order is fixed and stable. He compares the permanency of the covenant love with the fixed created order. (Jer.31.35-37. cf.33.2) He is the God of all flesh. (32.27) There is nothing beyond Yahweh's authority and power. He controls the powers of the sea. (5.22) Everything belongs to Him and He is the lord of all. (cf.Pss.65.2(3),136.25,145.21) Since the Lord is the creator, He has absolute freedom to act in His own way. Jeremiah brings 'creation and history' together.³ The creation is attributed to the mighty

1. See additional notes on 'Theophany'.

2. Paterson.J. 'Jeremiah' in FCB. para.469c.

3. Weiser.A. Das Buch der Propheten Jeremia. p.248.

power of Yahweh. Jeremiah says, 'It is thou who hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thy outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for thee.' (32.17) The same idea is continued in 32.27. He is great in counsel, and mighty, His name is the Lord of Hosts. (32.18-19; cf. Amos. 4.13, 5.8, 9.6) These hymnic predications seem to be the expression of the cultic faith of Israel.¹ Some passages which are obviously not Jeremianic,² 10.12-13, 51.15-16 also express the creation faith of Israel. As a corollary to the creation-faith, both Jeremiah and Zephaniah declare Yahweh's universal authority on the nations. (Zeph. 2; Jer. 25.9, 29.1-32 etc)

As the lord of the earth He gives the fertility and the produce of the land. Jeremiah laments that the people do not know that the Lord is the giver of rain and harvest. (5.24; Dt. 11.10ff)

Nature suffers with man.

The land suffers on account of man's wickedness. (Jer. 12.4, 14.1-6) He sees the earth as a Tohuwabohu, heavens without light, mountains and hills unstable. There is no man in the land, no birds in the air. (4.23f) The wrath of God comes upon the whole land, animals, trees and birds. (7.20, 8.13, 9.10; also Zeph. 1.3ff; Hab. 3.9ff)

Natural phenomena are used against His people in His anger, the storm and the whirlwind. (23.19; Hab. 3.4ff) The lion, the wolf, famine and pestilence are some of His weapons. (Jer. 5.6, 27.8, 32.36)

Nature in the day of Restoration.

In the day of restoration nature shall also be restored. Prosperity, healing and security shall return to the land of waste. (Jer. 32.42f, 33.6, 12)

The conflict between the nature religions of Canaan and Yahwism is quite apparant in Deuteronomy and Hosea.³ The concept of Deuteronomist about God and natural order has taken its literary shape in the 7th century B.C. Against the nature-religions of Canaan, D affirms Yahweh's ownership of the land. (Dt. 10.14, 32.43) Yahweh is the giver of the fertility. (Dt. 26.10, 15) The people should look to Him for blessing and not to Ba'al. He gives all the natural produce of the land. (11.14-15, 28.4, 12) The Lord cares for His land, from the beginning to the end of the year. (Dt. 11.12)

1. Weiser. op.cit. p.305.

2. Paterson. J. op.cit. para.468e.

3. von Rad in PHOE. p.132.

The failure of the people to be faithful to the covenant brings upon them natural calamity. (Dt.28.21-24; cf.Hos.4.1-3)

The Deuteronomist reflects the concept of the prophets of the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. with regard to God and His authority over the realm of nature. Now, we shall examine the contributions of the latter prophets.

3. The Latter Prophets.

Among these prophets the most outstanding representative is the prophet of the exile, Second Isaiah. He has made significant contribution to the concept of God and His relation to the natural order. Therefore, a separate treatment is required.

God is the incomparable Creator of the Universe.

The incomparable power of the sovereign creator is the ground of faith in Isaiah, according to Jones.¹ God's power revealed in creation is described in Is.40.12-31,42.5,44.24,45.12,18f,48.12-13,51.13-16. The prophet is not declaring a new faith.² He asks, 'Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?' (40.21,28) The creator is everlasting God, with unsearchable wisdom and power. (40.28) The visible order is the sign of God's omnipotence. Skinner says 'The creator's omnipotence, the idea of the order, adjustment and proportion in nature as deriving from an infinite intelligence which does not overlook a single star, is expressed with a boldness of conception that has nothing equal to it in earlier literature'.³ The concept of creation and God's power revealed in it which Dt. Isaiah emphasises 'become the great confirmation of the sufficiency of Yahweh to carry through His purposes'.⁴

The Creation-faith and the idea of Salvation.

The prophet brings the concept of creation and salvation to the realm of history. (51.9-16) The Lord is the creator of the world and Israel. (43.1,15) At the beginning of creation He overcame the powers of chaos, and brought the world into existence. At Exodus, again God reveals His power over the sea, the remnant of the primeval chaos, and brings Israel into existence. The act of creation extends in curbing the powers of all dangerous chaos,⁵ Rahab, dragon, sea and

1. Jones.D.R. 'Isaiah II and III', in FCE. para.448c.

2. Knudson.A.C. The Religious Teaching of the O.T. 5th ed. pp.126f.

3. Skinner. Isaiah, Cambridge Bible. p.6.

4. Robinson.H.W. The Religious Ideas of the O.T. p.71.

5. cf. Barth.C. Einführung in die Psalmen. p.68.

river. (50.2,51.9-10)

These chaotic forces do not 'possess any intrinsic reality but rather preclude the reference to the conquest of all historical forces which could challenge the salvation of Israel'.¹ In the realm of history God continues the act of creation through the act of redemption. God's act of creation has significance in the present and in the future. The act of creation has been taken 'from its indefinite past to the historical present'.² A sense of actualisation of creation is taking place in the act of God's redemption.³ The prophet, in his message, tries to convince the audience that the mighty power of Yahweh which has been revealed in the creation of the world, is still available to redeem His people from Babylon. The new creation which is redemption is going to be a reality to His people. (48.7ff,43.19ff etc)

In the act of salvation which is a new creation, the natural order also participates. When God leads His people to the promised land He will renew the face of the waste and transform it into a habitable land. (43.19-21,44.3-4,48.20-21,49.8-12) The thought here reminds us of the first exodus and the wandering in the desert and also the creation of the world out of the land of waste in the J tradition. (Gen.2.4b ff) In the act of new creation, the natural order is called upon to rejoice. (44.23,45.8,49.13) The transformation of nature shall be an everlasting sign of the Lord. (55.13)

God is One, He is universal in Power.

The Prophet's concept of God and creation leads him to the legitimate conclusion that the Lord alone is the true God. Monotheism reaches its 'most absolute expression in Israel while the concept of the unity of the beings were just starting in Greece' says G.A.Smith.⁴ Here again, Second Isaiah is not introducing a new faith, on the contrary, he is affirming a belief already existed in Israel. According

1. Eichrodt. 'In the Beginning' in Israel's Prophetic Heritage. ed. by Anderson and Hamelson.

2. Anderson.B.W. Creation Versus Chaos. p.131.

3. cf.Rendtorff. 'Die Theologische Stellung des Schöpfungsglaubens by Deuteriosaja', ZTK,51,1954. pp.3ff.

4. Smith.G.A. Isaiah. p.126.

to the prophet, no other gods exist besides Yahweh. (45.5,7,22, 43.10,11,46.9) The gods of other nations are no-gods. (40.18-21,41.7, 29,44.9ff,45.14,46.6ff) Yahweh alone is the true God who is incomparable. (40.18,25,46.5) His sovereignty extends on the lands other than Israel. (45.1ff,14,47.1ff etc). The entire earth looks unto Him for salvation. (45.22)

Now we shall turn to the other prophets. They rightly emphasise the concepts of God and nature which their predecessors have affirmed. However, we shall bring their main emphasis in the following paragraphs.

The Relation between the moral realm and the realm of nature.

The natural order, according to these prophets is full of life and the prophets sometimes address it as if they listen to their voice. (Ezek.6.3,35.3f,37.9,39.17f; Jl.2.21ff) When man fails to respond to God's will nature withholds its fruits to man. (Hag.1.10-11) Nature cooperates with God in bringing judgment upon man. He sends various kinds of natural phenomena to punish man. (Ezek.5.16f,7.15, 14.13,21; Hag.2.17) Sometimes nature also suffers the consequences of man's rebellion. (Jl.3.15(4.15) cf.Zeph.1.3ff) Nature is active in God-man relationship. It is not merely a spectator.

Renewal of nature is the sign of God's presence.

God sends oil, wine and grain (Jl.2.19; Is.62.8-9; Zech.9.17, 10.1; Mal.3.11) He protects the land from the pestilence. The restoration of the produce and the subsequent prosperity reveal, the presence of the Lord in the midst of His people. (Jl.2.25,27) In Ezekiel, all events in the realm of nature and history, whether good or evil, are meant to affirm that the Lord is the true God. (13.14, 33.27,36.38,37.6 etc) The expression, 'that they may know that I am the Lord' occurs about 54 times, always at the climax of an oracle. This particular knowledge comes as a result of some divine activity, either in the realm of nature or in history.¹ When God is in the midst of His people 'nature will be transformed by the presence of the divine glory'.²

God is active in nature. Whether the mighty wind or the worm, the small plants or the tall trees, the heaven or the earth, everything is created by God. (Jona.4.6ff; Zech.2.6,12.1; Neh.9.6)

1. Muilenburg.J. 'Ezekiel', in FCB. para.496a.

2. Muilenburg.J. op.cit. para.517e.

He brings blessings to His people. (Is.65.10)

God is Transcendent and yet He reveals Himself through natural order.

The vision of Ezekiel delineates God as a transcendent reality living in the midst of great cloud, in brightness and in fire flashing forth continuously. (ch.1,8.2,10.1ff) The lightning, the trumpet, the whirlwind, the rending of the heavens, the mountain-quake - all these reveal the manifestation of the transcendent reality. (Zech.9.14; Is.64.1f) God is God and man is man. (Ezek.34.31) God is present even among the stars. (Ob.v.4)

History and Nature belong to God, the Present and the Future are in His hands.

God is sovereign lord over the history of the nations. (Ezek.25, 26.15f,28.20; ch.29) He is the lord of all the earth. (Zech.6.5; Mal.1.11) In the days to come He will establish His kingship over all the earth. (Zech.14.9) He is the creator of man. (Mal.2.10)

In the day of the Lord, God uses nature for punishment and for blessing. (Is.66.15-16; Zech.8.12; Jl.2.30; Ezek.36.9-11) Utter destruction of the natural realm is also visualised. (Zech.14.6) A creation of new heaven and new earth is predicted. (Is.65.17ff,66.22) In the realm of nature, harmony and peace will reign. (Is.65.25) The blessings of nature in eschatology is the sign of Yahweh's presence with the redeemed. (Zech.8.23) Healing, righteousness and glory of God are equated in the day of restoration. The Lord shall be in the midst of His people. The sun and the moon shall be required no more, for the Lord Himself shall be the light of the redeemed. (Is.60.19ff)

These prophets affirm God's otherness and nearness. God's nearness is revealed through His acts in nature and history. The prophets also bring the future under the supreme power of God. The order of nature enjoys the blessings from God as if it is a part of the salvation economy of God. The physical world owes its existence to God. It is not eternal like Him.

d) The Priestly Traditions.

The literary work of P must have been completed by 5th century B.C. However, the Priestly tradition goes back to an earlier period. In this section we are mainly concerned about the P tradition of creation found in Gen.1.

He begins, 'In the beginning God created the earth'.¹

1. vid.Lasor.W.S. 'Notes on Gen.1.1-2', CBQ, Vol.18,1958, pp.294ff.
Arbez.E.F. and Wissengoff.J.P. 'Notes on Gen.1.1-2', CBQ, Vol.10,1948. pp.140ff; Grunthaner.M.J. 'The Scriptural Doctrine of First Creation', CBQ, Vol.9,1947. pp.488f.

Among the many creation myths of the nature-religions of the A.N.E., a creation-faith opening without a theogony is something unique. The statement declares the faith of the author. It cannot be regarded as a statement of an historical event. The statement cannot be verifiable.

The relation between the first two verses is not yet a settled problem.¹ On the ground of linguistic analysis and in the light of literary parallel found in Enuma elish we should regard v.1 as an dependent clause.² Probably P must have made a literary synthesis of elements from Babylon, Egypt and Canaan.³ However, we need not question the originality of the creation-faith of Israel. Procksch believes that this 'Glaube ist im Gottesvolke autochthon'.⁴

The P account of creation takes place in eight acts. It is not necessary to divide them 'words version or acts version' as some do.⁵ The following are the acts:-

- i) 1. 3-5 Creation of light,
- ii) 6-8 Creation of the firmament,
- iii) 9-10 Creation of the sea and the land,
- iv) 11-13 Creation of the planets,
- v) 14-19 Creation of the heavenly bodies,
- vi) 20-25 Creation of the living beings in the air and water,
- vii) 24-25 Creation of the land animals,
- viii) 26-31 Creation of man.⁶

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1. There are two views about it. a) v.1 is an independent clause. von Rad Genesis. pp.46f; b) v.1 is a dependent clause and should be rendered as 'When God began to create...', RSV margin; Cassuto.Genesi. p.20; Westermann Genesis. pp.132ff.
 2. Speiser Genesis. p.12; Lane.W.R. 'The Initiation of Creation', VT, 13, 1963. p.66; Humbert.P. 'Trois notes sur Genèse 1' in Interpretationes etc. pp.85ff. (not accessible to me.)
 3. Albright YGC. p.80. Whitley argues for Greek influence in P., 'The Pattern of Creation in Gen.1', JNES, Vol.xvii, 1958. pp.35f; Hvidberg argues for Canaanite influence. 'The Canaanite Background of Gen.1-3', VT, 10, 1960, pp.285f.
 4. Procksch.O. Das Bekenntnis im A.T. p.19.
 5. May.H.G. 'The Creation of Light in Gen.1.3-5', JBL, 58, 1939. pp.203ff; Lambert.M. 'A Study of the First Chapter of Genesis', HUCA, 1, 1924. pp.3ff; Morgenstern.J. calls Gen.1-2 'divine fiat version'. 'The Source of the Creation Story', AJSL, xxxvi, 1920. pp.169ff.
 6. Westermann Genesis. pp.119f.

P begins with inanimate and unconscious beings followed by animate and conscious beings which are endowed with sensibility and movement, and beings endowed with speech and reasoning.¹

In the light of vv.1-2, it is hardly possible to affirm that P has a creatio ex nihilo. On theological grounds von Rad and Eichrodt argue for a creation out of nothing.² The P writer, in the light of the text, has no scientific or philosophical motif so that he should begin with creatio ex nihilo, but his sole motif is to declare the creation faith of Israel. According to him, creation is ordering the material world from disorder.

Creatio ex nihilo evidently comes only from the Greek period.³

(2 Makk.7.28; Wisd.9.1,11.17; Sira.43.10f; Judith.16.14f; Mana.v.3)

When creation began, the condition of the earth was tohuwabohu,⁴ darkness and Tehom.⁵ We get a picture of confusion and chaos which is very common in the Oriental creation myths.⁶ The verb bara implies the newness of the things brought into existence and the effortlessness of the act of creation.⁷

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1. Abraham.L. The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis. pp.142f.
 2. Eichrodt TOT.11. p.104, 'In the Beginning' in Israel's Prophetic Heritage. pp.1ff; von Rad Genesis. pp.46ff, OTT,1, pp.142f.
 3. Jewish Encyclopaedia, Vol.iv, p.338.
 4. Skinner Genesis, ICC, p.16 and note 2 Kaiser interprets tohuwabohu a place of 'Schlechthinnigen hebensunmöglichkeit', Die Kythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Agypten, Ugarit und Israel, p.115.
 5. The word occurs about 36 times in the O.T., always without the article except in Is.63.12; Ps.106.9. Seldom we find it personified.
 6. The Vedic hymn 'apraketam salilam sarvam' - everything is water at the beginning of creation - represents the Aryan concept of chaos. Radhakrishnan East and West in Religion. p.76. (5th ed.,1967)
 7. For detailed meaning of bara, vid.Westermann Genesis. p.136; Bohl.F. 'אָרַךְ als Terminus der Weltschöpfung im Alttestamentlichem Sprachgebrauch', Kittel Festschrift, A.T.Studien, 1913, pp.42ff; Jacob.B. Dar Erste Buch der Tora Genesis. p.20; von Rad TOT,1, p.142; Genesis. p.42; Cassuto Genesis. p.69.

The $\Pi\}\Gamma$ introduced in v.2 belongs to God.¹ It is the life-giving agent and stands for the invisible reality of the transcendent God. The concept that God is self-existent, is a new idea which we find in Gen.1, especially in the A.N.E., background.² Since there is no theogony or dragon fight in P, we should regard the account as free from mythical beliefs.³ There is no place for myths where God's absolute power is emphasised.⁴ Tehom, in this context, is depersonalised.

The power of God is affirmed through the concept of creation by the 'word'. 'The wind of God' and the utterance of God's word occur very closely in the account. (cf. Ps. 53.6) In Is. 40.13, $\Pi\}\Gamma$ is parallel with the 'counsellor' who imparts wisdom. (cf. Prov. 8.22f) Thus we find $\Pi\}\Gamma$, $\Gamma\}\Pi$, as parallel terms. At the time of creation, it is this power of God that acted as the agent of creation. According to Johnson, the word and the wind are the 'extension of the Lord'.⁵ The creation by the word is the classical witness to the idea of supernaturalism and it gives no occasion of doubt about the divinity of the organic matter.⁶ The world of matter is completely separated from the God of transcendental existence.

We may summarise the Priestly concept of creation in the following words.

- i) God brings order out of disorder. (This is creation according to P.)
- ii) Since the motif of P is confessional the creation account in Gen.1 does not begin with creation out of nothing.

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1. Wind of God, RSV margin; 'Spirit of God', NEB reads 'Mighty wind'. see also Jansma.T. 'The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis', OTS, Deel, xii, 1958. pp.104ff; Moscati renders it 'the blowing or tempestuous wind', see 'The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmogony', JBL, 66, 1947. pp.305ff; Smith.J.M.P. 'The Syntax and Meaning of Gen.1.1-3', AJSL, XLIV, 1927-28. pp.111f; 'The Use of Divine Names as Superlatives', Review by Hempel.J. in ZAW, xlvii, 1929. p.310; Speiser reads 'an awesome wind' in Genesis.1 p.5; Jacob.B. 'divine might' op.cit. p.28, Gunkel Genesis, 6th ed. p.104
 2. Milos Bič. Biblische studien - vom Geheimnis und Wunder der Schopfung. p.12.
 3. von Rad Genesis. p.48; Hvidberg. op.cit. p.293.
 4. Herman.S. 'Die Naturlehre des Schöpfungsberichtes', TLZ, No.6, 36, 1961. pp.423ff.
 5. Johnson.A.R. The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God. pp.15.17.
 6. Schwalley.F. 'Die Biblischen Schöpfungsberichte', ARW, 9, 1906. p.165.

- iii) The basic divine concept behind the act of creation is God's power and authority revealed through His $\Pi\Gamma$ and word.
- iv) The material world is the result of God's establishing authority over the powers of chaos.
- v) Since chaos is not a personalised antagonistic force, there is no concept of dualism in the creation account of P.

The Priestly writer also shows his concept of God and His authority over the physical world in P version of the flood saga. The P writer must have known the Akkadian version of the flood saga which according to Speiser can be dated to the turn of the 2nd millennium B.C. or slightly earlier.¹ The P version of the flood story was carried on through centuries until it was written down in the 5th century B.C.²

The P writer brings the wind and Tehom under the powerful authority of the Lord. (Gen.8.1-2,7.11, cf.Gen.1.2; Ex.14.21) According to P, the chaotic forces again appear to engulf the order which God brought into existence. The fountains of great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven opened.³ (Gen.7.11, cf.Gen.1.7) The creation was going to be destroyed. Then God remembered Noah. He 'made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided'. (8.1, cf.Gen.1.2) The chaotic powers were subjugated by the mighty wind of God. In this act of God a new creation takes place.

After the flood, God makes an eternal covenant with the natural world. (9.8-17; cf.Hos.2.18f(20f); Gen.1.28ff) He gives the promise that the chaotic powers, the flood will never destroy the realm of creation. A natural phenomenon, the rain-bow, is set in the clouds as a sign of the covenant with nature. 'When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember the covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh'. (9.14-15) The waters are the remnants of the primeval chaos, but the bow, the symbol of God's power and victory ensures the world of nature protection and security from the powers of chaos. The clouds and the bow and even the visible physical realm remind us the presence and power of God.⁴

1. ANET. p.73.

2. von Rad 'Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch, BWANT, No.65, 1934. p.189.

3. Hooke.S.H. 'Genesis' in PCB. p.184. The P account comes very close to the Sumerian account in this respect.

4. Ryle Genesis. p.xxxix.

e) The Wisdom Literature.

'Wisdom represents a distinct category in Israel's legacy, comparable to Prophecy, Law, History, and Psalmody'.¹ The beginning of Hebrew wisdom may be traced to the period of Solomon. (1 Kings.4. 29-34) The O.T. gives evidence that the ancient Israel was aware of the 'wise men' of other nations. (Gen.41.8; Ex.7.11; Is.19.11f etc) In Israel, there were men and women who had the practical wisdom and whose counsels were sought by the king and the men of his court. (2 Sam.14.20,20.16,22,15.12f)

Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are the wisdom books in the O.T. canon. 'The Wisdom Literature may be called the documents of Israel's humanism' says Rankin.² Since its general characteristic is the recognition of man's moral responsibility, his religious individuality and God's interest in the individual life',³ the term 'humanism' applied to the Israel's Wisdom Literature, is unfortunate. Secular humanism which denies all divine assistance for man's development, emphasising the power and majesty of man, cannot be equated with the thought of the Wisdom literature of Israel. Wisdom 'takes God and the meaning of God for human existence very seriously; but it does so in the context of its concern to understand and deal with the human problem'.⁴ Therefore, we may say that the Wisdom in the O.T. is anthropocentric in contrast to the theocentric approach of the other books of the O.T.

The main emphasis of Wisdom with regard to God and nature may be treated under the following headings.

Wisdom and Creation.

The wise men of Israel do not show any interest in the religious history of Israel. Their approach to understand the meaning of nature and its relevance for man may be taken as the first secular approach of the O.T. The classical example is found in Job.28. According to von Rad, the chapter 'presupposes in mankind a desire to know and to dominate, a desire which functions in isolation from, and independently of his religious grasp'.⁵ Through the observation of

1. Rylaarsdam.J.C. 'Hebrew Wisdom' in TCB. para.555a.

2. Rankin.O.S. Israel's Wisdom Literature. p.3.

3. Rankin.O.S. ibid.

4. Rylaarsdam.J.C. op.cit. para.556a.

5. von Rad. 'Some Aspects of the O.T. World-View', in PHCE. p.158.

of natural phenomenon man is trying to achieve true wisdom. But the secret of the phenomenal world recedes from man. The wise man realises that true wisdom is not within his reach nor confined to creation.¹ He can only look at the work of creation from afar. (Job. 36.25-26) Wisdom lies beyond creation with God. (Job.28.23-27, 9.4,12.13)

The wise man discovers the secret of creation as the wisdom of God in Prov.8.22ff. Since this section of the Proverbs is late, perhaps 4th century B.C., we cannot rule out the influence of the Prophets.² Wisdom makes its appearance as the first of God's work.³ (8.22) The Syriac, Targum and Vulgate Versins read וְכִלְמָתוֹ instead of וְכִלְמָתוֹ with which we may render v.22 'when God began to create he created wisdom'.⁴ Here, wisdom is personified. But that does not mean that it is personalised. Wisdom from the beginning has been a 'master workman'⁵ with God. It depends on Him. According to Goodwin, the presence of wisdom with God, means 'God in his work of thinking and planning and ordering of the world'.⁶ The wise man attributes wisdom, that is, 'the technical knowhow',⁷ to use the modern terminology, to God as the agent of creation. He is applying the secular concept to explain the secret of creation.

It leads us to the concept of God by whose wisdom the visible world is created. (Prov.3.19-20) God's act of creation is described in mythical terms. (Job.9.8ff,26.12ff,38.4ff) The popular mythology has been used as a medium of communication. The monsters Behemoth and Leviathan (Job.40.15,41.1(40.25)) belong to the creatures

1. cf. Terrien.S. Job: Poet of Existence. p.173, also Dhorme.E. A Commentary on Job. p.11, translated by H.Knight.
2. Fohrer.S. Einleitung in das altetament. p.348.
3. Albright reads 'His dominion', in VES,3, p.7.
4. cf. Gen.1.1, Enuma elish, Tab.1, in ANET, p.60.
5. RSV margin reads 'little child', also Aq, Lam.4.5, this reading agrees with the rest of the verse. NEB reads 'Darling', a better rendering; see also Whybray.R.N. Wisdom in Proverbs, pp.101ff, von Rad.O.T.T.1. p.447. Scott.R.B.Y. suggests the root meaning of וְכִלְמָתוֹ as 'uniting or binding', by 'which the creation is bound with the creator', Proverbs Anchor Bible. p.72, also see 'Wisdom in Creation: the Amon of Prov. 8.30', VT.10,1960, pp.250ff.
6. Goodwin.J. Divine Wisdom. p.18.
7. MacKenzie.R.A.F. Faith and History in the O.T. p.76.

of God. According to Eissfeldt, the monsters are mere symbols of the evil in the world.¹ But in the realm of nature they are completely under the power and authority of God, the creator. All the natural phenomena, on earth, in heaven and in the sea are created and governed by God. (Job.38,9,36,37,28.26,5.9-10,37.9f,38.25-30) He makes the lightning and thunder (37.2ff,38.25ff), brings snow, hail, dew, ice, frost, and mist. (38.25-38,37.10-12) The sun, the stars, the constellations are made by Him. (9.7-9,38.31-32) In 38.12-39.26 we get the list of about 40 natural phenomena. The Egyptian Wisdom of Amen-em-opet contains in his Onomasticon No.12-23 about 45 phenomena of nature which come very close to Job.38.22-29. Since we do not find any attempt on the part of Job to imitate the Egyptian Wisdom literature, we can be confident of the genuineness of the book of Job.²

God creates the world independent of any external resources. 'He stretches out the north over the void, and hangs the earth upon nothing'. (26.7) He creates the sea with set-limits, and the rain with a decree. (38.10-11,28.26) He controls the movements of the celestial objects. (9.7) He is the preserver of all creatures. (12.7-8,38.39-41,39.1-30)

God is Hidden and Incomprehensible.

The works of God are mysterious, unfathomable and even paradoxical. The speakers of Job share this view. (Job.in 9.4-10, 12.9-25,26.5-14; Eliphaz in 5.8-16; Zophar in 11.7-10 and Bildad in 25.2-5) The Elihu speeches and the speech of Yahweh from the whirlwind introduce the Lord with all His might and incomprehensibility. The use of divine names in Job also is to be taken into account in this context. The more personal name, Yahweh is not found in the poetical section of Job. On the other hand, Job extols the names used by the Patriarchs. Yahweh is too sacred to be uttered. El

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1. Eissfeldt.O. Kleine Schriften, Bd.111, pp.257, and 263; Pedersen. Israel, p.473; cf.Snaith.N.H. Studies in the Psalter. p.106; Terrien.S. Job: Poet of Existence. p237.
 2. von Rad. 'Job xxxviii and Ancient Egyptian Wisdom', in PIGE, p.284.

is used about 55 times along with El Shaddai, Elohim and Eloh. These names basically suggest the might and power of God.

The speech of Yahweh from the whirlwind does not reveal Him. His reality has become more clouded and invisible. According to Terrien, the poet brings Job to God's reality via negativa.¹ As creator and preserver, God in Job, has been pictured as transcendent and imminent. Since He is the creator, He cannot be imminent in the creation. In Job 'Gott ist Verborgen in der Schöpfung' says Sekine.² He is not directly revealed in creation.

The author of Ecclesiastes also affirms the idea of the hiddenness of God. The earth moves, according to him, by natural law. (1.5ff) God is a distant reality. Therefore, the life of man is found miserable, (1.8) and depressing. 'The regularity of natural phenomena becomes a monotonous mechanism, whose course yields no answer to the question of meaning of man's life, but it is in the last resort aimless and leaves questioning man weary and disillusioned'.³ God stands away and hidden behind the cosmic existence.

Nevertheless in 3.17 and 8.12 we see rays of hope. God's intervention in history is implied.

Wisdom and Revelation.

In the Wisdom literature, the key to attain wisdom is the fear of the Lord. (Prov.1.7; Job.28.28) But wisdom, the practical knowledge, has also been regarded as a means to obtain the knowledge of God. (Prov.2.5-8) Wisdom is with God. God teaches man the way of practical knowledge. (Is.28.26,29; cf.Prov.2.6,30.3(LXX)) The man who is keen about wisdom come to its source. So the way to wisdom is the way to the knowledge of God. The wise men of the O.T. believe that man's quest after wisdom will eventually lead him to the revelation of God. For example, in Job.28 the quest of man for wisdom leads him through the phenomena of nature to the ultimate source of wisdom which is beyond the realm of creation.

1. Terrien.S. op.cit. p.227.

2. Sekine.M. 'Schöpfung und Erlösung im Buche Hiob' in von Ugarit nach Qumran. ed. by Bissfeldt. p.216.

3. Eichrodt Man in the O.T. p.32.

Wisdom is the nearest approach in the O.T. to a philosophical unification of nature. 'It is subjective, in the sense that it is God's and proceeds from Him, yet it is also objective, in the sense that He employs it in the creation and conservation of both nature and human life.¹ Therefore the knowledge of the visible world will lead to the understanding of wisdom as well as to the knowledge of God. The wise men of Israel do not take satisfaction in mere knowledge of the physical world. For them wisdom without knowledge of God is folly. Only fools will deny the reality of God.

The 'ways or works' (Prov.8.22; Job.26.14,40.19) of God which are manifested in the realm of nature reveals the reality of God. The author of Job says, 'Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways; and how small a whisper do we hear of him.' (26.14) Wisdom, thus attained through the order of nature brings man to a 'directive intelligence, which maintains order and harmony among so many conflicting and divergent agents'.² The revelation of God through the natural phenomena makes Job humble before Him. Before the wonder of creation³ which is the manifestation of divine wisdom, man becomes helpless and weak. The more he goes nearer to creation the distant it becomes. For God is the creator and man is merely the creature. The true wisdom lies beyond his reach. However, there is a practical substitute which may be epitomised thus: 'Fear God and turn away from evil'.⁴ (Prov.15.35)

To the wise man of the O.T., 'nature is integrated into the moral and religious order'.⁵ His wisdom is the way to moral and religious understanding. It brings to him to a true ethical consciousness and leads him to all good. (Prov.8.6-21)⁶ The awareness of the

1. Robinson.H.W. Inspiration and Revelation. pp.10-11.

2. McKenzie.J.L. 'God and Nature in the O.T.', CBQ, Vol.xiv, No.1.1952, p.31 and now in Myths and Realities. pp.97f

3. cf.Procksch.O. Theologie des A.T. p.455.

4. Snaith Book of Job. p.70.

5. McKenzie.J.L. op.cit.CBQ,xiv, No.2,1952; p.135; Myths and Realities. p.118.

6. cf.Ringgren.H. and Zimmerli.W. Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Sprüche. pp.59f.

source of wisdom, viz. God the creator, inspires man to be just in his relation with the fellowmen. The oppression of the poor is regarded as an insult to the God, the Maker. (Prov.14.31) 'The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all'.

(22.2) 'The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both'. (20.12) Thus we see that the Wisdom literature develops the idea of creation with ethical significance.¹ The revelation of God and nature in the Wisdom literature provides the impetus to have a wholesome life with social, moral, ethical and religious dimensions.

1. Rankin.O.S. op.cit. p.10.

2. Conclusions.

Now we may sum up the Old Testament concept of God and nature.

- i. The various evidence from the O.T. confirm the view that faith in God as the supreme ruler of the universe has been an integral part of the religion of Israel. We may trace its antiquity to the oral traditions which emerge from the period of the Patriarchs.
- ii. We may assume that the cosmic rulership of Yahweh has been a constant theme of the early Jerusalem cult. (cf. Ex.15.18; Gen.14.19,22)
- iii. The Exodus event and the theophany at Sinai bear witness to Yahweh's authority over the realm of nature. What happens in the realm of nature and history as extraordinary has been regarded as the work of God. However, the natural powers have never been identified with Yahweh. In the realm of man, these events in nature and history are 'signs and portents', revealing the power and reality of the true God. The world of phenomena has been understood as the sphere of divine action. The divine character which the nature-religions attributed to nature has been left aside in the thought of the O.T.
- iv. However, nature is regarded as a medium of divine revelation. And that revelation is communicated in God-man relationship and not directly from the natural phenomenon.
- v. The wisdom of man also leads to the knowledge of God.
- vi. The O.T. affirms that God is transcendent and not bound by the world of matter. He is self-existent and has no theogony. This is a unique concept amidst the nature-religions of the ancient Near East where the deity has been a part of the physical world or emerged from it.
- vii. God is not immanent as in the nature-religions in the world of matter. But He is imminent with the world and His reality has been revealed in the act of preservation. He is invisible, but to the eyes of faith His glory fills the whole earth.
- viii. The natural phenomena are the means of redemption and judgement in the realm of history and eschatology. They are living, active and obedient to the divine cause. They suffer with

man and rejoice with him. This does not mean that there is an inherent harmony between man and nature. Both stand aloof from God and under His judgement. They become meaningful only in a positive God-man relationship.

- ix. The material world is created by God. Creation is an act of bringing order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos. We have no answer in the O.T. about the origin of the material world as we find in the natural science. The interest of the O.T. writers is not scientific but theological. So no attempt is made to explain the nature of the universe before it was brought forth or the nature of the elements out of which the world of matter came into existence. The condition before creation, according to the O.T., is chaos which expresses an idea of confusion, darkness and disorder. The O.T. declares that God by His supreme power revealed in Spirit (רוח), Word and Wisdom, makes it possible for the great wonder, the world of matter, to come into reality.
- x. The act of creation is not merely regarded as an act in the indefinite past. Whenever the powers of chaos is overcome in the realm of history and nature, creation continues. In the realm of nature through preservation, and in the realm of history through redemption, such as the Exodus and the exit from the exile, the act of creation continues. Although cosmos is a reality, chaos exists in the realm of matter as waters, darkness, enemies of the land and the people. The conflict between God, the upholder of cosmos and the powers of chaos continues in the world. The preservation of the world means keeping it from falling into the powers of chaos. By the vigilance and power of God, the realm of nature and history, of inanimate and animate things, of unconscious and conscious beings - all are maintained intact without being disintegrated and fallen into chaos.
- xi. The O.T. declares faith in One God whose authority extends to the heavens, the earth and the underworld. Since He is the creator, the earth belongs to Him. Heaven is His abode and He condescends to man in nature and history. This has been

recognised and declared in the cult. (1 KLS) The gods of the nations are no-gods without power to create, redeem and sustain. Yahweh, the God of Israel is incomparable and unique, whose ways are even hidden to His own servants. The knowledge of Him is imparted to mankind through His initiative. Man knows Him when God reveals Himself and when God teaches him wisdom.

- xii. The faithfulness of man to the covenant relationship ~~with~~ God is the basic factor that sustains the order of the universe. Man's failure to be responsive to the claims of God affects the cosmic order.
- xiii. Under the supreme power and authority of God, the O.T. refuses to accept dualism as a recognition of a force which exists simultaneously outside the jurisdiction of God. The existence of chaos is admitted. But they are subject to the authority of God. They are active when God turns His face from man and his world, because of man's rebellion. When man reconciles with God, the powers of chaos disappear. Order takes place as new creation under the rule of God, the Sovereign of the universe.

CHAPTER FOUR.

The Modern Approaches to the Study of the Psalms.

Introduction.

In this chapter we will attempt to discuss the important modern approaches to the interpretation of the Psalms.

Among those who contributed to the study of the Psalms the name of Hermann Gunkel stands first. No serious study of the Psalms can bypass his epoch-making study of Gattungsgeschichte.¹ Therefore, we will, at the outset make a rapid survey of form-criticism initiated by Gunkel.

1. Form-Criticism.

The method of form-criticism has laid the foundation for the modern approaches to the study of the Psalms. What we mean by this method is to analyse and trace the history of various literary genres.²

Gunkel discovers that the basic fact for the study of these psalms is to realise that they spring originally from worship.³ He maintains that in ancient times, the influence of religious customs and practice of the community on the individuals were much greater than it is today. The poets of Israel were no exception. Their songs were originally composed for certain particular cultic occasions. When that occasion is determined, we have the Sitz im Leben of the song. To find out the various literary 'types' or 'categories' (Gattungen) of psalms, Gunkel adopts the following four basic principles. Each 'type' should have their own particular -

- a) setting-in-life;
- b) mood and style of thought;
- c) stock of literary forms, Formensprache;
- d) and motif and expressions.⁴

For the study of the psalms, he takes into account the A.N.E background of the Hebrew literature.⁵ Many of the psalms have taken their origin

1. Gunkel's thesis is developed in Ausgewählte Psalmen, 1904; his article 'Psalmen' in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1913; his commentary Die Psalmen, 1926; and in the posthumous publication Einleitung in die Psalmen, 1933, completed by Begrich.

2. Gunkel, H. 'The Poetry of the Psalms etc' in O.T. Essays, 1927, pp. 118f, 124

3. Gunkel. Die Psalmen. p. ix; Paterson, J. The Praises of Israel. p. 30

4. James, F. Thirty Psalmists. pp. 251ff.

5. Gunkel. Einleitung etc. pp. 6ff.

in private pietistic circles which have inherited the cultic legacy.

Such psalms express a more spiritual outlook.¹

Gunkel classifies the Psalms into the following types.

<u>The Major Types.</u>	<u>The Minor Types.</u>
i. Hymn or Song of Praise.	i. Blessing and Curse,
ii. Lament of the Community.	ii. Song of Pilgrimage,
iii. Lament of the Individual.	iii. Victory Songs,
iv. Thanksgiving of the Individual.	iv. Thanksgiving of Israel,
v. Royal Psalms.	v. Sacred Legend,
	vi. Torah Psalms,
	vii. Wisdom Psalms,
	viii. Mixed Type.

The first of these major types, the Hymn² is significant for our study. They are very old so far as their literary history is concerned. We find similar hymns in the ancient Near East. The Babylonian hymns begin in the same fashion as the Hebrew hymns but end with petitions. The Hymns in the Psalms are wholly theocentric and composed of praise. They are sung on festive occasions of the community. The hymns contain praises to God's greatness and other attributes. They may tell what God has done in the realm of nature and in history. They express the adoration of the individual poet as well as that of the community.

The Hymns begin with a call to praise. The second part is the main section of the hymn which recounts the power and acts of God.³ In the conclusion the elements of the introduction are reiterated and/or concluding prayers recited.

To these hymns, Gunkel adds the Songs of Zion and the Enthronement Psalms. The Enthronement Psalms celebrate the universal kingship of Yahweh and His mighty deeds as the victor over the powers of chaos. His eschatological judgement also is emphasised in these Psalms.

Most scholars value the basic contribution which Gunkel has made to the study of the Psalms. The works published after Gunkel

1. Anderson.G.W. 'The Psalms' in FCB, para.360a; Johnson.A.R. 'Psalms', in O.T. and Modern Study, ed. by H.H.Rowley. p.189.

2. Gunkel Einleitung. pp.33f.

3. Koch.K. introduces 'the thematic sentence' which is a transitional passage that introduces the theme of the hymn. The Growth of the Biblical Tradition. pp.161ff.

show the impact of his contribution.¹

However, a change of emphasis is found in the work of Claus Westermann.² According to him, the types are not primarily literary categories but are based on two fundamental modes of human approach to God, namely, praise and petition. (Loben und Flehen)³ He holds that the Lamentation are the most important category in the Psalms. The hymns, according to him, are the songs of praise for what God is and what He has done for the community or the individual. He does not make much difference between the hymns and the thanksgiving. And together he calls them 'the praise of God'.⁴ The hymn is a kind of formal thanksgiving or prayer. The essential character of thanksgiving is confessional praise,⁵ a testimony to what God has done and a response to His intervention. He divides the hymns of praise into:-

- a) Declarative or Confessional hymns of praise (berichtende oder bekenkende)
- b) Descriptive hymns of praise (beschriebende).

The imperative psalms, the eschatological and the enthronement psalms are included in the second type.

Westermann sees the types of the Psalms not merely from the literary stand point nor from the point of view of an absolute, timeless great cult, but in the light of the worship of Israel which has its inseparable connection with her history.⁶ Here, Westermann is not saying something new which Gunkel has not emphasised.⁷ However, Westermann's plea for the essential modes of human approach to God,

1. For a list see, Stamm, J.J. 'Ein Vierteljahrhundert Psalmenforschung' in *ThR, NF, 23, 1955*. pp.1-68; Johnson, A.R. op.cit. pp.161ff; Mowinckel, S. *PIW, Vol. 11*, pp.220f.
2. Westermann, C. Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen. (Eng. trans. by Crim, K.R. The Praise of God in the Psalms.) His arguments are found in his article 'Struktur und Geschichte der Klage' in *ZAW, 66, 1954*. pp.44-80.
3. Westermann, C. The Praise of God in the Psalms, p.152ff, henceforth cited as PGP.
4. Gunkel also expresses similar views about the hymns. What Remains of the O.T? pp.71, 95, 111.
5. Westermann, C. PGP p.31; cf. Weiser, The Psalms. p.55; von Rad, TOT, Vol. 1. pp.357f; Grimme, H. 'Der Begriff von Hebräischen Hodah und Todah' in *ZAW 58, 1940-41*. pp.234ff; Mand, F. 'Die Eigenständigkeit der Danklieder des Psalters als Bekenntnislieder' in *ZAW, 70, 1958*. pp.185f.
6. Westermann, C. Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen. p.17.
7. Gunkel Die Psalmen. p.ix.

viz. praise and petition should be taken into account in our study of the Psalms.

About the method introduced by Gunkel, Johnson says, 'despite a certain arbitrariness in the delineation of the subsidiary types and the assignment of some of the psalms to the different classes, there should be no question about the value of this approach.'¹ Nevertheless, form-criticism is not to be taken as the last word in the study of the psalms. Gunkel himself realises the difficulty of assigning fixed type to each and every psalm. Some of the psalms refuse to be grouped under any particular type.² According to Szörenyi 'pure Gattungen' are theoretical reconstructions since practically no instance of pure Gattung exists.³ Since the weight of Gunkel's argument is on 'forms' it is doubtful whether he has given sufficient thought to the content and character of the individual psalms.⁴ It is highly improbable that the psalmists wrote their religious poetry with accuracy and systematic thinking so that one could easily classify them in a systematic way. 'Accurate and systematic thinking is no characteristic of the ancient Semites, and least of all the Psalmists' says Cheyne.⁵ Although we have these fears, there is no doubt that Gunkel has led the way to the modern approaches in the study of the Psalms.

2. The Cultic Interpretation of the Psalms.⁶

Gunkel's discovery of the cultic Sitz im Leben of the psalms paves the way for Mowinckel to work out in great details the cultic aspect of the Psalms. Mowinckel believes that a large number of the

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1. Johnson.A.R.'The Psalms' in G.T. and Modern Study. p.180.
 2. Barth.C.Einführung in die Psalmen. p.21.
 3. Szörenyi.A.Psalmen und Kult im A.T. zur Formgeschichte der Psalmen. pp.110-145, 505f; Review by Clines.D.J.A.'Psalm Research Since 1955-68' Tyndale Bulletin. 20,1969. p.115.
 4. cf.Clines.D.J.A. op.cit. p.118 and note 92.
 5. Cheyne The Origin of the Psalter. p.285, cf.Renan.The Book of Job. trans. by A.F.G. and W.H.T. p.xxx; Dhorme.E.A.Commentary on Job. p.lxxxii.
 6. Mowinckel Ps.St.i-vi in two vols.

psalms are composed for, and used in, the cult.¹ This is the basic thesis of the cultic method.

Mowinckel modifies the position of Gunkel with regard to the origin of the psalms. According to him, Gunkel has not given sufficient thought to relate the psalms of private origin to the psalms of the cult. There is no incompatibility between the personal religious note in the psalms and the impersonal character of the liturgical formula. Both belongs to the cult of Israel. The psalms which seem to be cultus-free, according to him, are written by men of prayers, the inspired 'Pneumatics' who may have been closely associated with the cultic officials of the temple.² The earlier psalms have had their setting-in-life in the cult of the amphictyonic shrines at Dan, Shilo and Bethel.³ Mowinckel holds that it is almost inconceivable to suppose that any private lay poetry could find its way into the cult, for the cult is a kind of closed world in which no profane influence should enter.⁴

Nevertheless, Mowinckel admits the presence of non-cultic psalms in the Psalter.⁵ (Pss.1,19A,34,37,49,78,105,106,111,112,127) But he argues that the writers of these psalms, the 'Scribes' and the 'learned' men were originally connected with the temple staff, especially with the singers and the temple prophets. Gradually they became the guardian of the spiritual and literary traditions of the temple. 'There is every reason to think that they also became the last collectors of the psalms transmitted to us and the redactors of the canonical Psalter'.⁶

1. Mowinckel. Religion und Kultus. p.117.

2. Mowinckel. 'Psalms and Wisdom' in Wisdom in Israel and in the N.E. p.210; henceforth cited as WINE.

3. Bernhardt. E.H. Das Problem der Altorientalischen Königsideologie im A.T. VTS, viii, 1961. p.44.

4. Mowinckel. PIW, Vol.1. pp.29f.

5. Mowinckel. PIW, Vol.11. p.111; Quell.G. Das Kultische Problem der Psalmen'. pp.143,146.

6. Mowinckel. WINE. p.216.

The cultic interpretations of the Psalms has certain pre-suppositions taken from the cultic practice of the ancient Near Eastern religions. This is particularly brought out in the interpretation of the Enthronement Psalms.

i) The 'Ritual Pattern' of the ancient N.E.¹

The supporters of the 'Pattern School' assume that in Israel 'a New Year Festival was held in the autumn, at which Yahweh's triumph over the powers of chaos was celebrated; in a ritual drama He defeated His enemies, was acclaimed and enthroned as king, and renewed His covenant with the people'.² Supporting evidence was brought from Mesopotamia and Ugarit. They argue that the 'ritual drama' which is connected with the dying and rising again of the fertility god, associated with the Akitu festival of Babylon and other New Year festivals³ of the A.N.E., must have influenced the rituals of the cult in Jerusalem. The Enthronement psalms are connected with the New Year festival and therefore, are to be interpreted in the light of the A.N.E. 'ritual pattern'.

ii) The King-ideology of the Ancient Near East.

The second presupposition of the 'pattern school' is that the monarchy in Israel is influenced by the king-ideology of the A.N.E.⁴ In the ancient N.E., politics and religion were intimately connected and the king had a unique position in the cult of the land.

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1. The following are some of the relevant literature on this theme. Bernhardt op.cit. pp.42f,51ff; Bentzen.A.'Skandinavische Literatur zum A.T.,1939-1948', in Theologische Rundschau,xvii,1948/49. pp.273ff; Hooke.S.H.Myth, Ritual and Kingship,1958. Johnson.A.R.'Divine Kingship and the O.T.', in ExT.,lxii,1950. pp.157ff.
 2. Anderson.G.W.'The Religion of Israel', in FCB. para152k.
 3. The following are some of the significant New Year festivals in the N.E.
 - i.Akitu festival, Babylon; Engnell Studies in Divine Kingship. pp.53ff.
 - ii.Adonis festivals, Syria, Phoenicia and Canaan; Hooke.S.H. Origins of Early Semitic Rituals. Schweich Lectures,1935. pp.57f.
 - iii.Sed festival, Egypt. Frankfort Kingship and the Gods. pp.79f.
 - iv.Purullias and Nutarias, Hittites, Engnell op.cit. pp.63f; Moscati.S. The Face of Ancient Orient. p.166.
 - v.Thesmophorien and Bacchus, Hellenes; Gaster.T.H.Thespis. pp.7ff.
 4. Anderson.G.W.'The Religion of Israel', in FCB. para.132 l.

In Egypt the king was the incarnate son of god.¹ In Mesopotamia he was the leader, the man essentially had to represent his subjects and their god at the annual New Year festival.² In this festival the king had to suffer vicariously and make atonement for the people whose failures he carried and for whom he was responsible.³ The 'pattern school' believes that for the interpretation of the royal and enthronement psalms, we have to take into consideration the particular king-ideology of the ancient Near East.

The 'Pattern School' has been severely criticised for their extreme views. The 'Uppsala school' has made it clear that the 'pattern' itself does not exist, but is a presumption, like and 'ursemitsch' language.⁴ Most scholars now reject the existence of a 'common original pattern'.⁵ Similarities of customs need not mean that they have an original common pattern.⁶ It is a mistake to think that similar rites and myths, imageries and representations will mean the same everywhere and always.⁷ The different concepts of kingship in Egypt and Mesopotamia themselves prove that in the ancient N.E. there were more than one concept of kingship. 'The alleged universality of the concept of divine kingship in the N.E. is itself a myth', says Speiser.⁸

1. Frankfort. op.cit. p.54.

2. Frankfort. op.cit. p.230.

3. Engnell. op.cit. pp.55ff; Anderson.G.W. 'Some Aspects of the Uppsala School of O.T. Study', HTR,xliiii,1950. pp.251.

4. Bentzen.A.King and Messiah. p.83 and note 8.

5. Bernhardt. op.cit. pp.57f.

6. Frankfort.Problem of Similarity in Ancient N.E. Religions. pp.19f.

7. Bernhardt. op.cit. p.63.

8. Speiser.The World History of Jewish People. Vol.1. p.264.

According to Mowinckel, the cult of Israel is a variation of the cult pattern of the ancient N.E.¹ Individual practices, ideas and phrases are taken over from the A.N.E. and adopted into the tradition of Israel. The cult of Israel does not follow a fixed pattern that is supposed to have existed in the N.E. According to Mowinckel, the 'ritual pattern' school has only a 'provisional thesis' which has to be demonstrated by further research.²

On the analogy of the Babylonian New Year festival, Mowinckel argues for the existence and practice of a New Year festival in Israel annually, in the autumn.³ One of the important features of the festival is the 'enthronment of Yahweh as the king of the world, the symbolic representation of His victory over His enemies, both the forces of chaos and the historical enemies of Israel'.⁴ As a result of His victory 'the renewal of creation, election and covenant' take place. To substantiate Mowinckel's argument he has cited about forty psalms including the Enthronment psalms, Songs of Zion and the Psalms of Ascent.⁵ In this connection he interprets the expression Yahweh malak⁶ as 'Yahweh has become king'. He does not find any contradiction between 'Yahweh has become king' and 'Yahweh is king for ever'.⁷ His basic arguments rest on the N.E. cultic pattern. He also takes into account the analogy of the earthly king. (1 K.1.13,18) Yahweh malak has a cultic significance. Yahweh becomes king not in a temporal sense but in a cultic-supra-historical sense. The events lose their Einmaligkeit in the cult and acquire a kind of timelessness.⁸ Therefore, the kingship of God should not be thought in terms of time. With the enthronment of Yahweh, peace and prosperity prevail

1. Mowinckel. He That Cometh. trans. by Anderson. p.23.

2. Mowinckel. He That Cometh. p.24.

3. Mowinckel. PIW. Vol.I. p.15; Johnson. 'The Psalms' in O.T. and Modern Study. p.190.

4. Mowinckel. He That Cometh. p.26.

5. Johnson. A.R. *ibid*; Mowinckel Ps.St. ii. pp.3-6.

6. Pss.93.10,97.1,99.1, also cf.47.9.

7. Mowinckel. PIW. Vol.I. p.115.

8. Albrektson. History and the Gods. p.116.

in the land. Mowinckel sees eschatological significance in the enthronement of Yahweh.¹

Scholars are divided on the question of the observance of an annual New Year festival in Israel on the pattern of the ancient N.E.² Mowinckel's interpretation of Yahweh malak also has become the target of attack.³ The arguments for and against are so many that we cannot here attempt to give a comprehensive resumé.

However, we may make few comments about the main thesis which Mowinckel advocates.

According to him, the New Year festival is a 'great occasion on which, annually, Yahweh makes everything new, repeating His original triumph over the primeval chaos and His work in creation!'.⁴ This is expressed in a ritual drama. To establish the practice of a ritual drama, we have no evidence in the O.T. Mowinckel's conjecture of the drama is based on the Babylonian Akitu festival. He does not take the the Akitu festival as a perfect pattern for the Jerusalem cult. ^{It} consists variations of several cultic patterns. We cannot be certain as Mowinckel, about the practice of the ritual drama in Israel, since we have no criteria to determine the types of practices borrowed from the alien cults.

Mowinckel's main thesis is based on the view that in Babylon and other ancient Near Eastern civilisations, there was an annual New Year festival in which kingship of god was acknowledged and acclaimed by the cultic community. And there was a ritual fight between the creator and the powers of chaos. But this is a questionable view. The fight between the powers of Chaos and the creator at the time of creation is not so wide as we used to think.⁵ Moreover, the mythical

1. Mowinckel. Ps.St. Vol.II. p.226.

2. vid. Johnson. op.cit. p.192f. Also, De Vaux Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions. pp.106,505f. Kraus Worship in Israel. p.67. Auerbach.E. 'Neujahr und Versöhnungsfest in den biblischen Quellen' VI,viii, 1958. pp.405ff.

3. Stamm.J.J. op.cit. pp.45f; Michel.D. 'Studien zu den Sogenannten Thronbesteigungpsalmen', VI,6,1956. pp.40ff; Eerdmans 'The Hebrew Book of Psalms', in OTS Deel, iv, 1947, p.440; Frankfort. op.cit. pp.343ff Pedersen Israel Vol.III-IV, p.618; McKenzie.J.L. 'God and Nature in the O.T.' CBQ. Vol.XIV, No.2, 1952. p.130; Kraus.H.J. Psalmen.1. p.xliii, Worship in Israel, pp.206ff; Johnson. The Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. pp.56f; Procksch.O. Theologie des A.T. p.587; Weiser. The Psalms. p.62; Snaith.N.H. Studies in the Psalter. p.92; Wilsfeldt.O. Kleine Schriften,Bd,iii,1963. p.263; Mowinckel. PIW. Vol.II. pp.227ff.

4. Johnson. 'The Psalms' in O.T. and Modern Study. p.191.

5. see Ch.2,4.c.i and ii above.

struggle is found both in the cosmic realm and in the realm of nature.

Since there is no agreed views on the cultic practices of the New Year celebrations in the A.N.E., it is not safe to build a theory on the analogy of the Akitu festival alone. If we accept the Akitu pattern, the problem remains as to which struggle between the powers of chaos and god, do we adopt to the O.T. New Year festival, whether the cosmic struggle at the time of creation or the struggle in the realm of nature. Since Mowinckel does not accept the concept of a dying and rising again fertility god in connection with the New Year festival in the O.T., it seems that he maintains the concept of the cosmic struggle at the time of creation as taking place in the festival. But this assumption is not reliable because the idea of conflict need not necessarily presuppose the concept of creation. According to Johnson, Mowinckel 'lays much too great a weight upon the Babylonian counterpart and its supposed influence upon the Israelite festival'.¹ It is important to remember that 'the characteristic pattern of Israel's faith and ritual is derived not from the common myth and ritual pattern of the ancient N.E., but from the events of the Exodus as recorded in Israelite tradition'.² We cannot interpret the festival of Israel in the light of the mythical motifs of the nature-religions. The O.T. actualisation of the traditions cannot be identified with a mythical concept.³

Yahweh malak should be understood in the light of the Hebrew revelation of God. In the midst of nature-religions, the cultic community acclaims Yahweh as the only true king exercising the authority of a universal ruler.⁴ The acclamation has a polemic motif.⁵ In Ps.24.7ff He is acclaimed as king before He is enthroned. To Israel, Yahweh has always been the eternal king and it was not necessary for Him to be radically renewed as a nature-deity.⁶

1. Johnson. op.cit. p.195.

2. Anderson.G.W.'some Aspects of the Uppsala School of O.T. Study' MTR Vol.xliii, No.4, 1950. p.253.

3. Childs.B.S. Memory and Tradition in Israel. pp.81-82.

4. Michel.D. op.cit.VT,6, 1956. pp.40ff; Köhler.'Yahweh Malak',VT,3,1953.

5. Hempel.J. Gott und Mensch im A.T. p.53.

6. Pedersen. Israel. Vol.iii-iv. p.618.

iii) The Contribution of Weiser to the Interpretation of the Psalms.

Weiser follows the cultic method of interpretation. However, he does not accept the celebration of an annual enthronement festival as the setting-in-life of the enthronement psalms. According to him, the 'Covenant festival' is the Sitz im Leben of most of the psalms.¹ The festival was held at the beginning in the amphictyonic centres and later at Jerusalem simply as the 'feast of Yahweh'. The enthronement is only a portion of the liturgy of the covenant festival.² In the light of Dt.31.9ff, it was Alt who first suggested the observance of such a festival in Israel.³ Later, von Rad took up the suggestion and confirmed it.⁴ The prominent elements of the festival are the following.⁵ (Ex.19,32)

- a) The hymnic celebration of Yahweh's theophany on mount Sinai,
- b) The proclamation of the divine name,
- c) The recital of the saving deeds of Yahweh,
- d) The proclamation of Yahweh's covenant demand of righteousness,
- e) The allusions to Israel's communal self purification,
- f) The solemn affirmation of Yahweh's supremacy over all nations.

The element of theophany is prominent in the cult. The cultic theophany is implied in the expressions such as 'face of the Lord, glory, name etc.'⁶ The cult consists of actio dei and reactio hominum.⁷ The praises and confessions (תודה and להללה) are the cultic response of the community before the manifestation of the Lord. The cultic festival is a 'testimony' borne in the presence of God and a 'proclamation' made before the congregation.⁸

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1. Weiser. The Psalms. pp.35ff; 'Theophanie in der Psalmen und im Festkult' in Festschrift für A.Bertholet. p.530
 2. Weiser. The Psalms. p.62.
 3. Alt.A. Kleine Schriften, l. p.328ff.
 4. von Rad. 'The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch' in PHOE.pp.33ff
 5. Guthrie.H.H. Israel's Sacred Songs. pp.17ff; Kraus. Worship in Israel. p.14.
 6. Weiser, in Glaube und Geschichte im A.T. pp.303ff.
 7. Weiser.op.cit. Festschrift für A.Bertholet.p.517; The Psalms.29.
 8. Weiser. The Psalms.p.56.

It is in the cult that 'we find the root of the eschatological way of thinking peculiar to the O.T., which bridges the gap between periods and localities, and concentrates the whole range of events in the single moment of the cultic act, so that the past, the present and the future coincide and Israel together with the whole world and all the nations are summoned to be witnesses of these events'. He continues 'this cosmic and universal perspective is strengthened by the adoption of the idea of creation which has linked up with the range of ideas associated with the kingship of Yahweh within the cultic tradition'.¹ In the cultic context, the myths are either 'demythologised or historicised' and are used in a metaphorical sense to represent the conquest of the historical enemies of Israel.

According to Weiser the Covenant festival had a unique place during the monarchy. 'The cult had remained the real bearer of the genuinely 'Israelite' tradition of Yahweh'.² But von Rad and Rost maintain that the election of the Davidic house and the Davidic covenant had the unique place in Judaic cult of the election /exodus tradition.³ But this emphasis does not contradict the view taken by Weiser. Von Rad admits that by the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (2 Sam.6.12ff) the Israel-covenant and David-covenant began to fuse in the Jerusalem cult.⁴ This is in agreement with the point of view of Weiser.⁵ He believes that the cult of the feast of Yahweh was the native soil in which the tradition concerning the Exodus, the revelation at Sinai and the conquest were formed and cultivated.

Weiser rightly points out the importance of the autumn festival which he calls a Covenant Renewal ceremony. But his emphasis of the covenant renewal is one-sided and lacks adequate biblical evidence. 'Unfortunately the O.T. offers little direct evidence as to the ritual and mythology of this great autumnal festival in any of its forms. and even the little that is available is post-exilic in date'.⁶ Although

1. Weiser. *op.cit.* p.44.

2. Weiser. The Psalms. p.26.

3. Rost.L. 'Sinaibund und Davidsbund', TLZ,72, cols.129ff, 1947; also Kraus. Worship in Israel. pp.188f.

4. von Rad. OTT,1, pp.338ff.

5. cf. Weiser. *op.cit.* pp.26ff.

6. Johnson A.R. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. p.58.

Weiser stresses the aspect of actio dei and reactio hominum in the cult, but that is not something unique with regard to the autumnal festival. This can be applied to all cultic worship. Weiser does not give sufficient emphasis to the aspect of the universal kingship of Yahweh and His blessing of nature which are acknowledged in this festival. (cf. Zech. 14.17-19) Moreover, we do not find in Weiser's treatment of the subject, any development of the subsequent result of the festival in the realm of nature and history.

iv) The Contribution of Kraus to the Interpretation of the Psalms.

Kraus offers criticism of both Mowinckel and Weiser. According to him, both of them have not taken into account the complexity of the tradition of Israel and her cultic life. The all-embracing 'lump' theory proposed by them does not make adequate differentiation of the historical elements. According to him, for the cultic tradition of Israel, at least three formative elements should be considered:-

- a) The Festival of Booths which reminds the people of the exodus and the life in the wilderness.¹
- b) The covenant renewal ante-dating the era of monarchy.²
- c) The tradition of Jerusalem by which the Canaanite myths and the conceptions of kingship emerged in the reigns of David and Solomon.³

Taking into account these formative elements, Kraus develops his thesis about the cultic tradition of Israel. His study leads him to the conclusion that in the seventh month, there was, in Israel 'a royal festival on Zion'.⁴ That was celebrated on the first day of the Feast of the Tabernacles. The taking-out of the Ark into the sanctuary was one of the main acts of the festival. He rules out the celebration of an annual enthronement festival at this time as suggested by Mowinckel.⁵ He is also not happy with the undue emphasis on the 'covenant renewal' ceremony.⁶ On the other hand, Kraus takes seriously the election of Zion and the Davidic covenant. Their importance is associated with

1. Kraus. Worship in Israel. pp.128f.

2. Kraus. op.cit. pp.137ff.

3. Kraus. op.cit. pp.179ff,201f.

4. Kraus. Worship in Israel. p.186, Die Königsherrschaft Gottes im A.T. pp.27f

5. Kraus. op.cit. pp.205ff.

6. Kraus. op.cit. pp.23,209.

the Jerusalem cult. According to him, it is this background that one has to remember when interpreting the Psalms, especially the Songs of Zion, Royal Psalms, Enthronement Psalms and the Hymns.

The significance of the king and the election of Zion in relation to the Jerusalem cult, are relevant for the interpretation of the Psalms. But his assumption of the 'royal festival on Zion' on the first day of the Feast of the Tabernacle, requires further evidence to be convincing. He criticises Weiser because, according to Kraus, he takes 'the "covenant festival" and the "covenant ideology" as the heart of all the religious institutions and traditions in the O.T.'.¹ This seems to be a generalisation of what Weiser stands for. Kraus himself upholds the importance of the covenant renewal in the cult at Jerusalem particularly in connection with God's relation to the king and to the people.² His criticism of Mowinckel, the 'pattern school' and Weiser, as if they all belong to one school of thought, is not justifiable.³ Although Kraus claims that he has taken into account the complex nature of the Israelite cultic traditions, he too falls into the same pit in which others have already fallen, viz. the pit of over-emphasising one particular aspect and in his case, the 'royal festival on Zion'.

However, we should take notice of his concern to safeguard the cultic traditions of Israel from the onslaught of the nature-religions of the A.N.E. He says, 'the only way in which this danger of distorting the cultic traditions in the Psalter can be avoided is by keeping consistently to what the passages really say'.⁴

3. The Method of Interpretation.

Now we may present briefly the mode of approach which we are going to adopt in the interpretation of the individual psalms.

First of all, we will follow the literary types which have been found in Gunkel's classification of the Psalms. But the psalms which cannot be brought under a special literary type will be separately treated. The content and the literary character of such psalms will be taken into account as we interpret them.

1. Kraus. op.cit. p.23.

2. Kraus. op.cit. pp.191ff.

3. Kraus. op.cit. pp.208ff.

4. Kraus. op.cit. p.209; Quell.G. Das Kultische Problem der Psalmen. p.11.

We accept the significance of the cult for the interpretation of the psalms. At the same time we value the importance of historical and eschatological allusions which are found in some of the psalms. In the exegetical study of the individual psalms we do not propose to adhere to any one method of interpretation. Since, the different methods of interpretation emphasise vital and valuable aspects of the Psalms which any serious student of the O.T. should take into account, we, in our detailed study of the psalms, will try to adopt the best possible interpretation in the light of the content and character of the particular psalm.

However, we will always keep before us the cultic tradition of the ancient Israel. A vast majority of these psalms have taken their origin from the Israelite cultic set up and have been in use for the cultic worship of the people. Therefore, the interpretation which we are following in this thesis will largely be based on the cultic beliefs and practices of Israel. The ancient Near Eastern beliefs and cultic practices will be taken into account when it is necessary.

CHAPTER FIVE.

A STUDY OF THE RELEVANT PSALMS.

Introduction.

The aim of this chapter is to make a detailed examination of the psalms which are relevant to our particular study. For this purpose, we will arrange the Psalms according to the literary classification suggested by Hermann Gunkel. A number of psalms which deal with the concept of God and nature are found among the hymns. We will discuss the hymns, the Enthronement psalms, the Songs of Zion and the Thanksgiving psalms under a general title, the Hymns of Praise. The Psalms of Thanksgiving are included in the hymns of praise because they share their basic characteristics. Since the hymn is the important type for our purpose, first of all, we will examine its structure, content and Sitz im Leben. An exegetical study of the hymns of praise and other relevant psalms follows after.

The main outline of the chapter is given below.

1. The Structure of the Hymns of Praise.
2. The Exegetical Study of the Hymns of Praise.
 - a. The Hymns. (8,19,29,33,104,105,113,114,135,145,146,147,148.)
 - b. The Enthronement Psalms. (93,95,96,97,98,99)
 - c. The Songs of Zion. (48,76,84,121)
 - d. The Psalms of Thanksgiving. (65,103,136)
3. The Royal Psalms. (18,72,144)
4. The Psalms of Lament. (74,90)
5. The Wisdom Psalms. (1,37,49)
6. The Mixed Poems. (24,46,68,77,89,102,106,107,115)
7. Other Psalms. (50,78)

1. The Structure of the Hymns of Praise.

The Hymns are one of the most important literary types of the Psalms. To understand the nature and content of the hymn we have to study its structure. Klaus Koch makes a careful study of the hymn

which is found in Gunkel's classification of the Psalms.¹

According to Koch, there are four main divisions in a Hymn.

i.a) A Hymnic Introduction.

As a rule there is a series of imperatives at the beginning, directed to those to whom the invitation is extended. It includes exhortations to praise God, to acknowledge Him as Lord and King and to bow down before Him in worship. (33.1-3, 96.1-2, 98.1 etc) The hortative form also is found in the invitation. (95.1-2, 118.24)

These hymns imply the presence of a congregation. The congregation may be the 'servants of the Lord, sons of Jacob, or Zion, Yahweh's faithful, the righteous, they that wait upon the Lord', the natural phenomena or the works of the Lord. (96.1, 11, 33.8, 98.4, 100.1 etc) The hymnic invitation is addressed to these worshippers. The Akkadian hymns also assume the presence of a congregation. For example,

As for us, by however many names we call him, he is our god!

Let us then; proclaim His fifty names:-

"He whose ways are glorious, whose deeds are likewise,....."²

In this text, the assembly of gods is the assumed congregation. In the Psalms also, we have evidence for the divine beings participating in the worship. (29.1, 103.20f, 148.2 etc) Occasionally, the singer of the psalm addresses himself. (146.1, 104.1, 103.1)

The name of Yahweh is frequently mentioned in the hymnic invitation. His glorious attributes are prominent - the Most High, God of Israel, King, Creator, Our Defender etc (94.1-2, 92.2, 150.1) The glory of Yahweh, His power, deeds, great works, wonders, mercy, faithfulness, etc are also alluded to in the introduction. Ps.149.1-3 is a classic example in which many of these characteristics are found.

b) A Thematic Sentence or Transitional Passage.

Koch points out that Gunkel did not mention this element.

1. cf. Koch, K. The Growth of the Biblical Tradition - The Form Critical Method. pp.161ff.

The latest study of Crusemann in this connection is important. According to him there are three main groups of Hymns.

i. The Imperative Hymns, (96, 98, 100, 136 etc)

ii. The Participial Hymns, (104, 146.6-7; Amos.4.13, 5.8, 9.6 etc)

iii. The Hymns addressed to Yahweh (Der Yahweh anredende Bericht), (8, 66, 67, 89, etc) cf. Crusemann, F. Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel. pp.19ff, 81ff.

2. 'The Akkadian Creation Epic' in ANET. p.69 and col.2.

This is a new element which Koch has suggested. According to him, the element is introduced by 'for' and it gives the reasons for the praise of God. The almighty character of Yahweh (135.5), His kingship (47.3), His election of Israel etc. are the usual grounds for the praise of the Lord. The thematic sentence is the point at which the thought underlying the hymn is concentrated.¹

c) The Body of the Hymn.

The thematic sentence is developed into an enumeration of the various deeds of God. The deeds of the Lord consists of the activities in the realm of nature and history. (33.9,89.11ff,104.6ff,135,146) The particular Israelite mode of speaking about God can be seen in the central part of the hymn. Both the 'descriptive and declarative' forms of praise are found in this section. An important place is given in the hymns of praise for phrases that describe or declare the deeds of Yahweh. The victory over the powers of chaos, the creation, the preservation, the salvation-history of Israel etc. are some of the main themes of the hymns. Quite often the language of the hymn is clothed in mythical terms. However, Yahweh is always the Victor and the object of praise in the hymns.

d) The Conclusion.

This is the fourth part of the hymn. It varies considerably in its form. Sometimes the hymnic introduction is repeated (8.10,135.19), occasionally by means of one brief phrase (146.10) or the hymn can just as well be ended with a thematic sentence. (47.9b) A thematic sentence before the conclusion is not uncommon. (46.10a) A new element also can be introduced as the conclusion of the hymn. (135.15-18)

ii. The Sitz im Leben of the Hymns.

We have already seen that Gunkel and Mowinckel conclusively affirm the cult of Israel as the real Sitz im Leben of the majority of the Psalms. A right interpretation of the psalms largely depends on the real understanding of their setting-in-life. According to Gunkel, the hymns are associated with the great cultic festivals.² But it is rather difficult to connect the different individual hymns with definite

1. Koch.K. op.cit. p.162.

2. Gunkel. Einleitung.... pp.59ff.

festivals. It is possible in certain cases and that can be discussed when we come to the exegetical study of the particular hymns.

One of the most noteworthy features in recent O.T. studies has been an emphasis on the vital part played by the cult in O.T. religion and on its positive value. Scholars generally regard the cult as the particular situation for which these hymns are written. Therefore, we may take the cult as a guide line to determine the possible Sitz im Leben of the hymns.

2. The Exegetical Study of the Hymns of Praise.¹

a) The Hymns.

Ps.8.

The psalm is one of the best examples of a hymn. The greatness of Yahweh, the creator and His grace by which man has been made a fellow-worker with God, is the main theme of the psalm.

The Enthronement festival has been suggested as the setting-in-life of this psalm. But it is difficult to arrive at such a conclusion in the absence of conclusive evidence. Since the content of the psalm is appropriate for the annual covenant festival, it may have been used for that occasion. But we cannot, therefore, affirm that the psalm has its original Sitz im Leben in the cult. In this psalm, we do not find definite cultic expressions. The plural, 'our' in v.2 and 10 has been regarded as a reference to the congregation. But this is not a decisive cultic element. A pious member of the cultic community can use the plural, 'our' without necessarily being a member of the official cult. So a private origin of the psalm cannot be ruled out.² In course of time, the poem may have found its entry into the cult.

The psalm begins and ends with the thought of the glory and praise of God. (vv.2,10) An interesting arrangement of thought is found in vv.2-5. The glory, majesty and power of God in heaven and earth are described in alternate verses.

- v.2a. The majesty of God in all the earth,
- v.2b. His glory above the heavens,
- v.3. God's power against His adversaries,
- v.4. The creation of the celestial bodies.

1. In the exegetical study of the Psalms we follow the verse order of the Massoretic Text.

2. cf. Quell.G. Das Kultische Problem der Psalmen. p.70.

- v.5. God's special concern for man,
 vv.6-9 Man's lordship over the animate nature,
 v.10 The majesty of God in all the earth.

In this psalm, the majesty of God has been revealed to the poet in nature. 'The psalm combines a fine sense of feeling responsive to the sublime beauty of Nature and a profound understanding of the revelation of God expressed and yet hidden in Nature', says Weiser.¹ The truth of this statement will be seen as we proceed further with the examination of the psalm.

v.2a. First of all, the poet recognises the majesty of God in all the earth. Before this revelation, he realises his oneness with his fellowmen and addresses God 'O Lord, our Lord'. 'Our Lord' is a characteristic mode of address to the king.² (cf. 1 Ki. 1.11, 43, 47) 'Name', here, stands for the manifested reality³ of God in nature. 'All the earth' and 'the heavens' (v.2b) together express the Hebrew concept of the universe. (cf. Gen. 1.1)

v.2b-3. These verses have created numerous problems for the exegetes. Various proposals have been made for the reconstruction and interpretation of the verses. Here, we do not intend to line up with the scholars in their divergent views on these verses. However, we may state the problem and try to offer a solution which we deem suitable in the context.

First, the problem is whether one should read v.2b with 2a or 3a. There are supporters for both suggestions. Secondly, the problem of the correct rendering of אֲשֶׁר תִּנְה. The MT is obscure and ambiguous. The interpretation of this expression also affects the division of the verses. We shall take the second problem first.

The LXX translates אֲשֶׁר תִּנְה as ἔστη ἐπιφθῆ. It gives a better meaning than the MT. The older rendering 'hast set' is not possible without modifying the text.⁴ For a better meaning, the Pual perf.

1. Weiser. The Psalms. p.140.

2. Kraus. Psalmen.1. p.67.

3. Anderson, G.W. 'The Psalms', PCB, para. 362a, d.

4. תִּנְה, if it means 'hast set', is Qal perf. and not imperative of תִּנְה. 'hast set' assumes another reading, possibly תִּנְה, cf. BH margin. תִּנְה

תִּנְנָה has been suggested instead of the Qal imperative תִּנְנָה. In the light of Hebrew and cognate languages, an array of words such as 'chant, rehearse, praise, repeat, recount,' etc. have been suggested as the possible meaning of the root תִּנְנָה.¹

We have already mentioned the possibilities of dividing the vv.2-3. RSV reads v.2b with 3a.

Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted

By the mouth of babes and infants,

This rendering has been regarded as conveying a good meaning. But others have taken v.2b along with 2a.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!

Thou whose glory is chanted above the heavens.²

Now we will mention a third rendering suggested by some scholars.

Let me sing thy majesty upon the heavens

With the mouth of the babes and sucklings.³

These are the various possibilities of translating vv.2-3. However, we prefer to maintain v.2 as one unit which conveys a perfect meaning. Neither emendation nor regrouping of the verse is necessary. Moreover, it agrees with the MT text. But we have to change the older translation of תִּנְנָה as 'set' and read it in the passive. אָשַׁר, in this context is to be taken as a mere connecting link with the meaning 'that', approximating in usage to כִּי.⁴ (cf. Ex.11.7; Ez.20.26; Job.9.5; Ec.8.12 etc.) Thus we may translate,

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!

(That) thy glory is recounted⁵ above the heavens.

The first verse may be taken as an exclamation which comes spontaneously from the mouth of the poet as he observes the majesty of God in the universe. (cf. Is.6.3) The poet sees the majesty of God in the earth and the same majesty of God is repeated in the heavens too. (cf. 19.2) He is not visualising a bare heaven and an empty earth. His vision includes the entire celestial and terrestrial hosts. (cf. vv.4ff) Thus the visible world of nature brings before the poet the majesty and glory of God.

1. cf. תִּנְנָה II, in BDB; tny, in Gordon's Ugaritic Textbook, Glossary 2705, also cf. König. Die Psalmen, p.145, Cohen.A. The Psalms, p.18, Eerdmans. 'The Hebrew Book of Psalms', OTS, Deel iv, 1947, p.114, Weiser. op.cit. p.139.

2. cf. Weiser. op.cit. p.139, LXX, AV, RV.

3. Duhm. Die Psalmen. p.26 'Let me sing ...' implies a different reading אָשַׁרְיָהּ, cf. Dahood. Psalms. 1. p.48, Donner. II. 'Ugaritismen in der Psalmforschung', ZAW 79, 1967, pp.324ff, The arbitrary method of emending the text is precarious and has to be taken with caution.

4. cf. BDB on אָשַׁר.

5. cf. Jer. 5.11.11.40.

v.3. Since we have taken v.2a and 2b together, we have to regard v.3 as separate unit.¹ In this verse, the meaning of אֹיְבֵי יָוָי and 'the enemy and the avenger' has aroused much discussion among the scholars. 'Babes and sucklings' have been regarded as 'little children or humble believers'. And the interpretation is that 'Yahweh has ordained that even the feeblest representatives of humanity should be His champion to confound and silence'² His enemies. RSV has taken the children to sing the glory of God above the heavens. But when we regard the third verse as a unit, the 'babes and sucklings' have a part to play in the context. They are to be regarded as representatives of mankind who have become dwarfed before the immensity of the majesty of God in the universe. The poet himself is a member of that weak human society. 'Before the majesty of God the Psalmist can but babble like an infant', says Dahood.³ In this poem, man is confronted with his creator and he realises his insignificance when compared to the vast visible world and its unique creator.

Different views have been expressed with regard to the question who the enemies are. Weiser regards them as 'sceptics and atheists'.⁴ According to Duhm, they are cosmic powers.⁵ Accepting the views of Duhm, DeBoer adds that the enemies in the realm of history are the foes of the faithful.⁶ We see in this verse that God establishes strength on account of His enemies. It has been suggested that יָוָי should be understood as the firmament which God has created to keep the destructive waters at bay.⁷ (cf. Gen. 1.6-8) Two other words, 'a fortress, a stronghold' have also been suggested as possible meanings of יָוָי.⁸ This term occurs frequently with כְּבוֹד as a synonym. (cf. 29.1, 63.3, 96.7; 1 Chr. 16.28) The other words which come regularly with כְּבוֹד are הֵוֶה and הֵוֶה which according to Mowinckel, emphasise the meaning of strength and power.⁹ Since all these words occur in this psalm, we may assume that they jointly affirm the idea of power, strength, majesty, and glory of the creator.

1. cf. MT, LXX, AV, RV, Weiser. *ibid*; Kraus. *op.cit.* p.65.

2. Kirkpatrick. *op.cit.* p.38.

3. Dahood. *op.cit.* p.49.

4. Weiser. *op.cit.* p.141.

5. Duhm. *op.cit.* p.27.

6. DeBoer. P.A.H. 'Jah's Ordination of Heaven and Earth - An Essay on Ps. 8; OTS Deel ii, 1943, p.176.

7. cf. Anderson. G.W. 'The Psalms', PCB. para. 362d.

8. Dahood. *op.cit.* p.50. In v.3b, NAB has read into the text, meaning which is not in the MT.

9. Mowinckel. Ps. St. ii. p.158 and note 2.

For the interpretation of this verse, there is one more expression which is to be explained, viz. 'מִפִּי'. Literally it means 'from the mouth of'. Since the expression frequently occurs in connection with a spoken word we should assume that the expression, here, too, implies 'the utterance of the mouth'. (cf. Dt. 8.3; Josh. 6.10; Num. 30.3; Jg. 11.36; 2 Chr. 35.22; Jer. 36.18 etc.) The meaning of מִפִּי is also significant. It could mean 'because of' in this context.¹ It is not certain whether the utterance of the mouths of the 'babes and infants' were praises or petitions. It has been interpreted as praises of the little ones.² But in this context, before the adversaries 'praises' of the children seem unsuitable. So we may legitimately conclude that they were crying for help. Because of the cry of the little ones God makes a 'bulwark', a fortress. The enemies are the foes of God and His people. Their challenge is a menace to His rule. It threatens the safety of man. So God musters strength against the adversaries. He is the giver of strength to man. He is their defence in time of crisis. (cf. 29.11, 68.34-36, etc.)

v.4. Again the poetic observation of the heavenly sphere leads him to the conclusion that God has set the celestial bodies in their appointed places. (19.2, 33.6, 96.5, 102.26, 136.5) According to Ginsberg, the omission of the sun is due to a scribal error.³ Perhaps the poet has been watching a star-lit sky.⁴ Here, the poet is not admiring the natural phenomena for their own sake. They remind him of the glory of the One who brought them into existence. The experience of the poet is similar to that of the author of Ps. 19A.

v.5. After realising the majesty of God and the littleness of man the poet sings,

What is אָדָם that thou art mindful of him,

And אֶרֶץ-בָּרָא that thou dost care for him?

In this verse too, the poet continues the thought about man. אָדָם represents the frail and weak man, (cf. 9.21) and אֶרֶץ-בָּרָא, the mortal man who is made out of dust, a small molecule of the cosmic realm.

(cf. 90.3ff) These terms represent mankind in a collective sense.⁵ Although
man

1. cf. BDB on מִפִּי.

2. cf. LXX, Barnes. The Psalms. Vol. I. p. 35.

3. Ginsberg. 'Some Emendations in the Psalms', HUCA, Vol. xxiii/i, 1950-51 pp. 97ff.

4. Wutz. F. Die Psalmen. p. 13; Kirkpatrick. op. cit. p. 39.

5. Köhler. 'Ps. 8.5', TZ. 1, 1945. pp. 77ff.

is insignificant and frail, he is the object of God's care and concern. The verbs זָכַר and בָּרַח indicate the act of God that takes place simultaneously. When God remembers, He visits as well. 'God's "visitation" of man is His constant, loving, providential, regard'.¹
(Job.10.12) Here, the poet emphasises the grace of the Creator for mankind.

The verb בָּרַח implies the 'distance' and 'otherness' of God. God is transcendent. He is not immanent in the order of nature. But He is immanent in a personal way with mankind.²

v.6. In this verse, the poet reveals the paradox of man. Man, a mere toddler, frail and mortal, is created by God. He has been created by God 'a little less than' אֱלֹהִים . According to the myths of Babylon, man has been created to relieve the lesser gods from their daily chores. It is not certain whether the passage is being influenced by such mythical ideas. In the light of Pss.29.1,82.1,6,89.7; Gen.6.2 and similar verses, we should regard that the poet had belief in divine beings. The reference to 'angels'³ in the context seems to reflect theological considerations. It is doubtful whether the poet knew about the angels when he composed these lines. 'God' in RSV implies a reference to Gen.1.26,27. Perhaps it is better to take it as a plural of abstract, meaning 'deity' or 'göttliche Natur'.⁴ Man has been created a 'little less than the divine nature'. But he has been given the divine attributes, 'honour and glory'. (v.6)

vv.7-9. The regalia of royalty is conferred upon man and he has been given authority to have dominion over all the creatures of the world. According to Engnell, the primary concept of Adam as the ruler of the cosmos has been democratised to a high degree in v.7.⁵ This is a kind of 'ethico-juridical power' given to man by God, 'perhaps in imitation of God's power over the universe and man'.⁶ Although man is less than the divine, there is no belittling of his person. The divine function of ruling the created world is given to man. This is the supreme grace of God. Rabbi Aqibah says, 'Beloved is the man that he was created in the image, greater love was it that it was made known to him that he was created in the image of God, as it is said for in

1. Kirkpatrick. op.cit.p.39.

2. cf.Snaith.N.H. 'God -Transcendent and Immanent', ET 68,1957. p.70.

3. cf.LXX,S,V,T,AV.

4. Hupfeld. Die Psalmen. p.162.

5. Engnell. 'Knowledge and Life in the Creation Story', VTS iii,1953. p.110.

6. cf.Louis.C. The Theology of Ps.VIII.p.93.

the image of God he made them'.¹ According to the psalm the greatness of man is not derived from his own right, but it, essentially, is rooted in the grace of God which is granted to him at the time of his creation.

The concept of God and nature which is dominant in this psalm reflects the Yahwistic ideas. Man's faulty and weakness have no place in the P's account of creation. According to P, man is the crown of creation. 'Gott und Mensch' zusammen als Herren über das Tier', is the emphasis of P, while 'Mensch und Tier gehören zusammen, nicht Gott und Mensch oder gar Gott und Tier', is what J affirms.² In this psalm, man and the natural order stand together before the majesty of God. He is weak and mortal. But by the grace of God man has been appointed to rule and govern the order of nature. This is the picture of man in J, where we find that although man has been created out of the ground like other creatures, he has been given the special right to name the animals, a right only exercised by a sovereign.³ (Gen.2.19-20) By this specific act God has been giving him a special position among the animal world.

Some scholars have regarded the central concern of this psalm as the divine ordination of heaven and earth.⁴ But this is rather a forced conclusion. 'The psalm illustrates the way in which ancient mythological and cosmological ideas are used and transcended in C.T. though'.⁵ To the Psalmist, the Lord has always been the supreme power who governed His creation as a king. His might and majesty has been the bulwark against all those who challenged His authority. Not only the power of God that is emphasised but also the love and concern of God, for mankind. The insignificant man has been made the vicegerent of God. All the works of God, -the birds of the air, the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea- have been put under the feet of man. Now man is not weak. He is strong by the grace of God. The realm of nature, the abode of deities, has been given to man. Man has been given freedom from all adversaries. This unique picture of man, his independence on God, gracious and benevolent, at the same time majestic

1. Pirkay Avot (Sayings of the Fathers) III.21.

2. Hempel.J. 'Gott, Mensch und Tier im A.T.', in Apoxyismata. pp.219,228.

3. von Rad. Das Erste Buch Mose. p.61.

4. cf. DeBoer. op.cit. p.189.

5. Anderson.G.W. 'The Psalms', in FCE. para.562d.

estic and powerful, is the greatest contribution of the Psalmist. But the poet does not boast in the greatness of man but in the praise of God whose majesty fills all the earth.

2. Ps.19.

This psalm has two main divisions. The verses 1-7 is a hymn describing the glory of God (El) in nature. But the second part vv.8-15 delineates the excellence of the law. These two divisions differ considerably in content, mood, language and metre.¹ Therefore the unity of the psalm is very often questioned.² However, we find a unity in this psalm in the light of its theological content. A clear progress of thought is seen here. The first part, 19A declares the glory of God in nature while the second part, 19B, His will in Torah. 19A bears witness to a secret knowledge, 'ein (Geheimes) Wissen',³ while 19B reveals the secret of knowledge, 'the fear of the Lord'. (v.10) Commenting on 19A Weiser writes, 'The grandeur of Nature reveals to him, (poet) too, as it did to the poet of Ps.8, the majesty of its Creator, but he realises that the created world is at the same time the vehicle of the revelation of the divine wisdom and order ('his handiwork') which it passes on from day to day in an unbroken tradition like a secret knowledge' (v.2).⁴ The poet may have received this revelation through the observation of nature and contemplation. It is possible that a compiler, at a later date, may have observed these aspects of meditation on Nature and on Torah (v15) in the two poems, as a connecting link. The transition from 19A to 19B, shows the attempt of the compiler to relate nature-wisdom to the source of true wisdom, 'the fear of the Lord'.⁵ God of nature is the same God of revelation in Torah. The revelation of God in nature is perfected through the revelation of God in Torah. The universal and transcendent God of 19A has been realised as the imminent⁶ and personal God, Yahweh in 19B. Thus there is a theological unity in the psalm. But we cannot accept the view that Ps.19A and B originate from the

1. Briggs. Psalms. Vol.I, (ICC) p.163.

2. Weiser. op.cit. p.197; Kraus. op.cit. p.153.

3. Gunkel. Isalmen. p.74.

4. Weiser. op.cit. p.198.

5. von Rad. OTL.1. p.447 and note 15.p.362; Tur-Sinai also affirms the Wisdom motif of the ps. 'The Literary Character of the Book of Psalms', OTS, Deel 8, 1950. pp.263ff.

6. Inminent. The concept of a personal God immanent with the creation is not a biblical idea. God is imminent with His people in a personal way. Here, the imminence of God is felt through the word in Torah. cf. Snaith. N.H. 'God, Transcendent and Immanent' Ex.T.68, 1957. pp.68ff.

same hand since we have no adequate evidence.¹

There is no agreed view regarding the Sitz im Leben of the psalm, 19A. The sacred name, Yahweh, does not occur here. On the other hand, it occurs frequently in 19B. This is surprising if we consider 19A as a cultic poem. It is hardly possible for such a poem to have its origin from the cult or find its entry into the cult.² The object of adoration, here, is El who has been one of the Semitic gods³ particularly worshipped in Canaan as the high god. The name El has been taken into the religion of Israel through a process of absorption and assimilation. When the term El is applied to Yahweh, usually it occurs with either a definite article or an adjective. (Gen.31.13,35.1,46.3; Ex.20.5,34.6) or with a suffix. (Ps.18.3,22.2) El is a term chiefly found in the elevated style of poetry. (Job.8.20, 16.11,22.13; Ps.78.19,77.10,10.12,83.2,104.21) Since the name El occurs without reference to Yahweh, it is quite possible that this is one of the earliest Psalms which bears witness to El. The Jebusite city of Jerusalem has been a centre of El worship. The poet might have belonged to this early Jerusalem tradition and has composed the hymn in praise of El. According to Quell, the psalm does not take its origin from the Hebrew cult.⁴ His view requires clarification. We might say that in the light of the general use of the term El, in this context it represents the God of Israel. Therefore, the poet must be regarded as a member of the Hebrew faith, but need not be a member of the official cult of Jerusalem. Had he been a member of the cult he would have used the name Yahweh in his poem. So the Sitz im Leben of the psalm 19A need not be associated with the cult of Israel.

To this psalm, there are literary parallels in the ancient N.E. Some scholars assume that the psalm is originally a hymn to the sun-god.⁵ Later it has been taken into the Hebrew cult with necessary modifications.⁶ The literary style alone is not enough to prove this

1. Cobb,W.F. The Book of Psalms. p.51.

2. Mowinckel. FIW.1. pp.29-30.

3. Vriezen. 'The Study of the O.T. and the History of Religion' VTS,xvii/ 1969. p.6; see the use of the term El in Honeyman.A. 'Epigraphic Discoveries at Karatepe' FEQ,31,1949; Della Vida. 'El Eljon in Gen.14.18-20' JBL 63,1944, pp.11ff; Schmidt.H. 'Yahwe und die Kulttraditionen von Jerusalem' ZAW 67,1955. pp.168ff.

4. Quell.G. op.cit. p.104.

5. ANET. pp.387ff.

6. Dahood. op.cit. p.121; Briggs. op.cit. p.166.

hypothesis. After a careful examination of the Ugaritic parallel, Jirku says, 'Dies zeigt aber auch, dass die Vorlage zu Ps.19.2-7 nicht nur ein Sonnenhymnus war, sondern auch ein altorientalischer Lobgesang auf die den Menschen unverständliche göttliche Sprache in der Natur'.¹ Such a literary style is not rare in the Psalms.

Deep calls to deep at the thunder of thy cataracts;

All thy waves and the thy billows have gone over me. (Ps.42.8)

Neither the use of El nor the poetic style conclusively prove the Canaanite origin of the psalm. It is true to say that the psalm was written from a Canaanite background with a style that was common to the ancient Orient. The poet is definitely sharing a faith in which God is acknowledged as the creator and controller of the powers of nature. But his views do not tally with the religious notions of the nature religions.

Now we shall examine the content of the psalm. Our concern is mainly with Ps.19A which speaks about God and nature. We may divide the psalm as follows:-

vv.2-5b. Nature bears witness to the glory of God.

5c-7 The sun and its circuit.

8-10 The joy in the law.

11-15 Meditation of law leads to penitence and prayer.

v.2. The heavens are telling the glory of God;

And the firmament proclaims His handiwork.

Here, we find a descriptive praise. The heavens and the firmament declare the glory of God. The poet, here, sees the glory of God in His handiwork. The heavens and the firmament include the sun, the moon, the stars and all the other celestial phenomena. (cf. Ps.8.4, 104.1-4, 148.2-4) These are the creation of God. They are in His service praising the glory of their maker. The poet is not praising nature.² In his contemplation of the works of God's hands, the poet simply bears witness to what the creation does in the service of the creator. To affirm that the poem is a hymn of the day, is irrelevant.³ The meditation of the poet on the work of creation is important. Seldom we find in the G.T. such direct witness of creation to the glory of God.

1. Jirku.A. 'Die Sprache der Gottheit in der Natur' TLZ 76,10,1951. p.651.

2. contra. Weiser. op.cit. p.197.

3. cf. Briggs. op.cit. p.162.

Kabod is something visible and external. It is an addition to the majesty of God. (Ex.16.7,10,33,22) Kabod means possession, wealth (Gen. 31.1,45.13) and the splendour of a king.¹ (Ps.24.7-10,102.17) In this context, the creation which is the handiwork of God is His own possession and wealth. The order of creation is the splendour of the creator-king. In this verse we see the realm of creation confessing the royal majesty and authority of the creator. (cf.Ps.145.11-12) Duhm writes, 'Die Nature vergegenwärtig ihm nicht abstrakte Eigenschaften, sondern Thaten Gottes; Yahwes „Ehre“ ist begründet durch die That seinem Hande'.² The visible order of nature is itself the open record of the majesty of God.

- vv.3-5b. 3. Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night declares knowledge.
4. There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard;
5. Yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.

In the imagination of the poet, natural phenomena have been attributed with quasi-consciousness. (cf.Job.12.7-8) They are not regarded as personal beings as in the nature-religions. While contemplating on the phenomena of nature the poet hears their language of communication which is inaudible to the human ear.³ The literary expressions in these verses present before us a scene of worship in which the natural phenomena are participating. They sing antiphonal songs, praising the glory and knowledge of God, the creator. Of course, this is audible only to the ear of the contemplative mind. A similar scene is found in Ps.145.4-7 where the glory and majesty of God which are revealed in His acts, are chanted in the realm of history. In this context, the witness of nature is incessant, inaudible and universal. The day and night are the units of time. Their testimony is to be regarded as a mark of the eternal witness of nature to the glory of God.⁴

Because the witness of nature is inaudible and silent, the testimony which they make to the glory of God is not comprehensible

1. see the additional note on the Glory of God.

2. Duhm. Die Psalmen. p.60.

3. Mowinckel. Is.St.Vol.III, p.26; Vol.V. p.49.

4. Ewald.H. Die Dichter des alten Bundes. Vol.I. p.31.

by ordinary mind. It is given to those who search and take pleasure in the knowledge of God. (cf. Ps. 111.2) According to this psalm, the way to receive that wisdom is the way of meditation (cf. Ps. 104.34, 145.5, 143.5; Job. 12.8) The poet in Ps. 19B also continues the same method with regard to the law of God. (v. 15, also cf. Ps. 1.2, 119)

In v. 5, the meaning of $\square\text{I}\text{P}$ is obscure. The LXX, S and Symmachus read a word which means 'their sound or echo'. In this context, most scholars prefer to read a word meaning 'sound or voice' to give a parallel to 'their words'. (v. 5b)¹ However, there are others who want to emphasise the meaning of the Arabic root *qwy*, 'to be strong'.² Without emending the text, they understand the word in a figurative sense. The words, 'range',³ $\kappa\alpha\upsilon\omega\nu$,⁴ 'line',⁵ have been used. According to Dahood, this should be rendered as 'their call'.⁶ Obviously these suggestions are meant to improve the text and provide the correct meaning of the word. The context demands a word which will convey a message without sound because in v. 4 we read 'their voice is not heard'. Therefore we prefer to use the word reverberation or vibration'.⁷ The idea underlined in the word, takes the witness of nature to the ends of the world. The witness or testimony of nature to the glory of God is silent. But to the vigilant and responsive mind, the witness can be felt like vibrations. They reverberate their impact all over the realm of nature.

- vv. 5c-7. 5c. In them he has set a tent for the sun,
6. Which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
And like a strong man runs its course with joy.
7. Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the end of them;
And there is nothing hid from its heat.

Some scholars emend v. 5c to get a better meaning. Duhm reads $\square\text{I}\text{P}$ as $\square\text{I}\text{P}$ and $\square\text{I}\text{P}$ as $\square\text{I}\text{P}$.⁸ The MT does provide a meaning which

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1. Delitzsch. Die Psalmen. p. 192 reads 'melody'; Barnes suggests 'music' (lit. strain) in The Psalms. p. 93; Hitzig. 'chain of praise' in Die Psalmen. p. 114.
 2. Driver. G. R. 'Notes and Studies' JTS, xxxvi, 1935. p. 150.
 3. Battenwieser. The Psalms. p. 173.
 4. Aquila uses the term in the sense of a measuring line.
 5. AV.
 6. Dahood. op. cit. p. 121.
 7. cf. Eaton. J. H. The Psalms. p. 66.
 8. Dahood reads $\square\text{I}\text{P}$ with v. 6a and renders it 'then' in the light of Ugaritic.
 9. Duhm. op. cit. p. 60., also see Weiser. op. cit. p. 197; LXX omit $\square\text{I}\text{P}$ and read $\square\text{I}\text{P}$ with 3rd masc. sing. suffix.

can be understood without emending the text. (cf.Ps.89.3) The LXX and Syriac rightly understand God as the hero in v.5c ff. The LXX translate $\omega\sigma\psi\delta$ as $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \acute{\eta}\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega$.¹ God is the one who set a tent for the sun. (cf.Hab.3.11) Neither the MT nor the early versions suggest that the hymn was originally a poem to the sun-god. Moreover, we get similar ideas from the LXX version of 1 Ki.8.53a. Albright translates²:-

'Yahweh has created the sun in heaven,
Does he desire to tent in the storm clouds?
Truly I have built him a majestic house,
A dais on which to be enthroned for ever.'

The Psalmist affirms his faith in God who provides a canopy for the sun and who is greater than it. The sun is an object of worship in the other poems which have been discovered as parallel to this hymn. But here, it is merely an object in nature. The poet is only describing its movement in the sky with his characteristic literary style. The O.T. clearly affirms that the sun is created by God and is in the service of His majesty. (Ps.74.16,136.8; Jer. 31.35; Josh.10.12-15; 1 Ki.8.12) Therefore, we cannot accept the view that the hymn was originally a poem to the sun-god. The temple cult would not have permitted the intrusion of such a profane song into the worship of Israel.

The poet describes the movement of the sun in picturesque language. By introducing God as the maker of the tent for the sun, the author discards the pagan character of the simile without destroying its poetic beauty. The poet likens the sun to a bridegroom who comes out from his wedding chamber. Making bridegroom-chamber is a common custom in the Orient. After the wedding, the Bride and the groom retire to the specially set apart bridegroom-chamber. According to the poet, the sun is like that bridegroom who comes out after the night's rest, refreshed and with 'vigour and buoyant happiness',³ The sun is also compared to a man of valour who runs his race with joy. The poet sees the progress of the sun across the sky as a daily race course. The

1. Septuaginta, ed. by Rahlfs.A.x, Psalmi cum Odis, Gottingen, 1913.

2. Albright. Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan. p.201.

3. cf. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.104.

sun runs the course like a young man who has confidence in his strength. But it is God who provides him the place of rest so that he may be refreshed and run his daily course.

'When we read in Ps.19 that "the heavens declares the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork", we hear a voice which mocks the beliefs of the Egyptians and the Babylonians', says Frankfort.¹ To the Psalmist, the natural phenomena were but a witness to the greatness of God, while to the people of the ancient N.E., they were deities. This is the distinctive faith of the O.T.

The revelation of God through nature is universal and available to all mankind. The Psalmist strikes a universal note in this psalm. Commenting on the psalm Delitzsch writes, 'Die Predigt des Himmels und der Veste, des Tages (Taghimmels) und der Nacht (des Nachthimmels) ist kein wüste verworrens Lärmen, keine Winckelpredigt, es ist eine Predigt in allvernehmbarer Rede, allverständlichen Worten, ein *φανερόν*.'² (Rom.1.19) However, the witness of nature is revealed to those who first acknowledge the reality of God by faith. To such, the nature is revealed as the work of its master.³

There are scholars who hold the view that the psalm alludes to the celestial harmony of spheres well known from the time of Plato⁴ and to the hymnic and didactic traditions of creation of the priestly circle in the Old Testament.⁵ Such assumptions are not applicable to this psalm as it is an ancient hymn. On the contrary, it is quite possible that such early psalms have moulded and reflected the early concepts of God and nature in the A.N.E. and in Israel.

The Psalm as a whole imparts the two important ways of acquiring the knowledge of God, the way of nature and the way of Torah. But both demand an attitude of meditation and contemplation, deeply rooted in faith. Weiser writes, 'The comprehensiveness of the poet's belief in God thus enables him to grasp the true meaning and significance of those phenomena to which anxious and prejudiced minds turn a blind eye. This harmonious, uniform vision, achieved by a comprehension of Nature based on faith, poetic insight and deep thought, imparts to the psalm

1. Frankfort. IAAM. p.363.

2. Delitzsch. op.cit. p.192.

3. cf. Weiser. op.cit. p.198.

4. Gressman. H. 'The Development Of Hebrew Psalmody' in The Psalmists, ed. by Simpson. D.C. p.17.

5. Kraus. Isalmen.1. p.155.

a significance which reaches far beyond the scope of the Old Testament.¹ The message of these poems leads the individual to a realisation of God as the Creator who demands obedience and love through the revealed word, the Torah. 3. Ps.29. This is considered as one of the early psalms probably dating from the 10th century B.C.² The literary style of the psalm resembles that of the Canaanite literature and therefore, it has been suggested that the psalm is a Yahwistic adaptation of an older Canaanite hymn to the storm-god, Ba'al.³ Dahood writes, 'virtually every word in the psalm can now be duplicated in older Canaanite texts'.⁴ The following text may be quoted as an illustration.

Ba(al gives) forth his holy voice,
 Baal discharges the ut(terance of his li)ps.
 His h(oly) voice (convulses) the earth, ... the mountains quake,
 A-tremble are ...
 East and west, earth's high places reel.
 Baal's enemies take to the woods,
 Hadd's enemies to the sides of the mountain. (Ug.II; AB.vii.29-36)⁵

However, the arguments of the scholars are not convincing in this matter. Similarity of literary style and even thought-forms are not adequate proofs to establish the psalm's origin as a Canaanite hymn. The literary works of the St.Thomas Christians of S.India offer a plausible parallel. Engulfed in the midst of a vast Hindu majority, these Christians developed a literary style which looks like Hindu literary style. A modern poetic version of the Bible has been composed on the pattern of the famous Hindu epic Ramayana. This does not mean that the Christian epic is an adaptation of a Hindu religious theme. The Christian use of the divine name also has been taken from the names of the Hindu pantheon. But the Christian usage of the divine name has its distinctive Christian meaning. This is an analogy applicable to the writers of the O.T. too. Sharing the literary style need not persuade us to believe that they shared the religious faith as well.

1. Weiser. The Psalms. p.200.

2. Albright. Archaeology and the Religion of Israel. p.129.

3. Johnson.A.R. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. p.54 and note 2, in 2nd ed.1967, p.62; Hermann.W. 'Die Gottersöhne', ZRGG xii.3,1960, pp.224f, referred to by Cooke.G. in 'The Sons of (the) God(s)', ZAW lxxvi,1964, pp.22f.

4. Dahood. op.cit. p.175, Albright. 'The Psalm of Habakkuk', in Studies in O.T. Theology, ed.by H.H.Rowley,1950,p.6; F.M.Cross Jr. 'Note on a Canaanite Psalm in the O.T.', BASOR,117,1950, pp.19-21; Gaster.T.H. Thespis. p.74-77, 2nd ed. pp.445f.

5. ANET. p.135.

Weiser has well-said when he wrote, 'In spite of the formal Ugaritic parallels we must not simplify matters by classifying the song as a Canaanite Psalm'.¹

The psalm in its present form is a hymn praising the power, glory and majesty of God in the natural phenomena. The reference to in the LXX title of this psalm supports the view that it was used in the Second Temple, on the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles. It is possible that the LXX may be quoting an early tradition. According to Weiser, the psalm 'is a hymnic response to the appearance and revelation of God as the climax of the festival cult'.² The Talmudic Tractate Sopherim (xviii.5) assigns the psalm to the Feast of Pentecost.³ It also belongs to the Sabbath liturgy.⁴ But according to Mowinckel, the psalm is assigned to the annual Enthronement festival.⁵ In the light of these various views, we may ascribe the Sitz in Leben of this psalm to the annual autumn festival. The content of the psalm - the kingship and the rule of Yahweh over the powers of nature - is suitable to the occasion of the festival.

Now we may examine the content of the psalm. It has three main divisions.

1. vv. 1-2. The heavenly beings are invoked to acknowledge the glory of God.
2. vv. 3-9. The majesty and power of the voice of Yahweh in Nature.
3. vv. 10-11. Yahweh, as eternal king, blesses the people with strength and peace.

vv. 1-2. These opening verses assume a heavenly scene. The heavenly beings who are in the assembly of God are called upon to ascribe glory and strength to the Lord. Various interpretations have been put forward concerning the meaning of the expression 'bene elim'.⁶ An exhaustive study of the various views is not possible in this context. However, the important points may be discussed.

The LXX has misunderstood the expression and renders it to mean 'young rams'. And that too, is given in an additional line

1. Weiser. *op.cit.* p.261 and note 1.
2. Weiser. *ibid.*
3. Thackeray. The LXX and Jewish Worship. p.56; Taylor. W.R. 'The Psalms' in IB, p.155.
4. Anderson. G.W. 'The Psalms' in FCB. para.367a.
5. Mowinckel. Ps.St.ii. pp.3-4, 47ff.
6. Kirkpatrick. *op.cit.* p.148 and RV. Margin reads 'sons of God'; On the analogy of (1 Chr.4.17(18)) 'bene bitya', Delitzsch interprets it as 'the sons of the house of Yah'; Robinson. R.W. 'The Council of Yahweh' JTS xlix, 1945, pp.151-57, Inspiration and Revelation in the O.T. 1946. pp.167f; Cooke. G. 'The Sons of (the) God(s)' ZAW lxxvi, 1964, pp.22-47. Gaster. T.H. 'Ps.29' in JQR, xxxvii, 1946-47, p.57.

which is not in the MT. G.E.Wright makes a careful study of this expression¹. Four prominent views are given.

- i. Bene elim are judges of Israel²
- ii. " " are patron angels of the nations.³
- iii. " " are Hasmonean kings.⁴
- iv. " " are foreign gods.⁵

According to Peters, the bene elim are 'Die Glieder des Gottesvolkes'.⁶ Albright, on the other hand, interprets it as 'stars of heavens'.⁷

In Ugarit, the members of the divine council are designated as bn 'elm.⁸ The terminology, bene elim is understood by Johnson as referring to 'kin-group'.⁹

In the light of these different interpretations, it is clear that the Psalmist, here, accepts the existence of beings other than God in the heavenly court of Yahweh.¹⁰ (cf. Pss. 82.1, 89.6; Job. 1.6, 2.1) But on no account they deserve the worship of man. Yahweh alone, is exclusively exalted. According to Wright, 'the ascription is simply borrowed from a pagan context and used of Yahweh, any definite comparative notion having fallen into the background'.¹¹ Monotheism, in Israel, is developed not from a philosophical speculation of the one and the many, but from an understanding of the power of God, expressed in mighty acts; not from the concept of an embodied power in Nature, but as the personal Numen of the people, their refuge and shelter.¹²

The first verse also presents us another picture, the scene of a royal court, where the ministers are called upon to pay homage to the glory and power of their king. (Ps. 96.7) The members of the royal court are the first, who should acknowledge the power and majesty of the king. They should also ascribe glory to His name, as He reveals

1. Wright.G.E. O.T. Against Its Environment. pp.30ff.
2. cf. Delitzsch.F. Die Psalmen. 3rd ed, pp.66f; Cohen.A. The Psalms. pp. 270f.
3. Welch.A.C. The Psalter, 1926. pp.41f; von Rad. Genesis. p.110.
4. Duhm. op.cit. 2nd ed. pp.317f; Buttenwieser. The Psalms. p.769.
5. Gunkel. Ausgewählte Psalmen. pp.129f; Schmidt. Die Psalmen. pp.156ff; Oesterley.W.O.E. The Psalms. Vol.II. pp.373ff; Leslie.E. The Psalms. pp.120ff
6. Peters.N. Das Buch der Psalmen, p.62; Arens. Die Psalmen im Gottesdienst des Alten Bundes. p.190.
7. Albright. From the Stone Age to Christianity. p.226, (cf. Job. 38.7 Ps. 148.2ff)
8. Driver.G.R. CHI. p.95.
9. Johnson.A.R. The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God. pp.22ff; Pedersen. Israel - Its Life and Culture, 1-11. pp.53f.
10. cf. Cooke.G. op.cit. p.45.
11. Wright.G.E. op.cit. p.34 and note 49.
12. cf. Hehn.J. Die Biblische und Babylonische Gottesidee. p.275.

Himself in the world of nature¹ and fall upon their faces **בהדרת־קדש**

The AV translates **בהדרת־קדש** as 'in the beauty of holiness' while RV margin and RSV read 'in holy array'. The LXX translation is **ἐν δόξῃ ἁγία αὐτοῦ** - in his holy court. 'But it is unlikely that either 'holy garments' or 'the holy place' is meant in this passage', says Barnes. According to him, the gods of the heathen are called to prostrate before the Lord in respect of His majesty and holiness.² In the light of 'hdrt' which comes as a synonym to 'hlm' - vision (Keret.1.iii.51), a new translation has been suggested.³ We may, then, render it 'when He appears in holiness'.⁴ This translation seems to represent the original meaning.

In the hymnic introduction the poet affirms **כבוד, נץ**, the radiant splendour of the Lord and **שד** which makes the Lord 'the wholly Other'. The poetic vision of theophany introduces to the cultic community the celestial abode of Yahweh, their king. The rest of the poem continues the main theme inaugurated by the opening ascription. **vv.5-9**. The thoughts, here, move in the same direction as in the opening verses of ascription, but they contrast strongly. The scene is shifted to the realm of nature. The exhibition of the glory and power of Yahweh in thunder⁵ (**זק**) and its devastating effects in nature, are the topics of description. The emphasis on the miraculous and the destructive aspect of Yahweh's relationship with the world, according to von Rad, is a general tendency of the older hymns.⁶ The attributes of God of which the heavenly beings are called upon to extol, are now visible and audible in the terrestrial realm.

In this psalm, the voice of the Lord occurs seven times. We cannot rule out a possible influence of mythical concepts in the

1. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.148.

2. Barnes. op.cit. p.144.

3. Cross.F.M. *ibid*; Donner.H. 'Ugaritismen in der Psalmenforschung' ZAW 79,1967. pp.324ff.

4. Weiser. op.cit. p.259; Kraus. op.cit. p.233; Anderson.G.W. 'The Psalms' in PCB, para.367a; Bahood translates 'when the Holy one appears', seems dubious in this context, op.cit. p.176.

5. **זק** means 'voice or thunder', (cf. Job.28.26,38.25; Ex.9.23,20.18). It means 'hark' when used as an exclamation or at the beginning of a clause, cf. BDB; also Gen.4.10; Is.13.4,40.3,52.8. But the second meaning is not suitable in this context.

6. von Rad. OTT.Vol.I. p.360.

use of the voice of the Lord 'seven'times.¹ However, it is evident that the poet is using it in a Yahwistic context. Undoubtedly, the power of Yahweh over the natural realm is emphasised in these verses. A plausible apologetic motif, especially in the Canaanite background, is not impossible in this psalm. Ba'al had been the acknowledged storm-god in Canaan. But the Psalmist, in unambiguous terms affirms that 'it is not the voice of Ba'al, but the voice of Yahweh whose thunderous cries of self-expression in nature evoke universal response'.² The manifestation of Ba'al in nature is not independently made, but always accompanied by minor deities - mist, showers and other phenomena.³ But Yahweh is independent and not a prisoner of the powers of nature. The Canaanite poets would not have affirmed the distinction between Ba'al and the natural phenomena, as the Psalmist maintains the otherness of Yahweh from the powers of nature in this psalm. The following poem illustrates Ba'al's involvement in nature.

Ba'al failed for seven years,
 The Rider on the clouds for eight (years,
 Leaving the land) without dew, without showers
 Without upsurging of the two oceans,
 Without the sound of the voice. (Aq.I.i.42-46)⁴

Here, Ba'al is virtually identified with the 'land naturally watered by the rain'.⁵ Therefore, his absence brings calamity on the land. But in Israel, the failure of rain is due to the displeasure of Yahweh (2 Ki.8.1; Amos.4.7, etc), and not due to His death, an impossible concept to be harboured by the religion of Israel.⁶ The use of the sacred name seven times, quite possibly meant to affirm the Israelite faith that Yahweh is able to control the realm of nature even in those seven years of Ba'al's absence when the natives live in despondency and anxiety. Here, the Psalmist makes no mistake in declaring Yahweh's sovereign right and rule over the land of Canaan. (cf. Nos. 2.8-9, 21ff)

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1. 'Seven' is a sacred number signifying perfection, cf. Cassuto, Commentary on Genesis, p.10; cf. Gen.41.26f, 2Ki.8.1-3. The Akkadian ilani, the totality of divinity, constitutes seven gods. cf. Helm, J. op. cit. pp.175f. According to Akkadians, the palace of the Nether world had seven gates, ANET, pp.107f. The use of the number seven is prominent in Ugarit, eg. Shalyat of the seven heads, Ba'al disappears for seven years, etc. ANET, p.138, col.2. According to the Hindu faith there are seven layers in the celestial region. Also ERE vol.9. pp.406, 417 (1917).
 2. Habel, N.C. Yahweh Versus Ba'al. p.86.
 3. Habel, N.C. op. cit. p.74.
 4. LCTT. p.125, ed. by D.W.Thomas.
 5. Gaster, T.R. op. cit. pp.122f; Driver, G.R. Canaanite Myths and Legends. p.20.
 6. cf. Gray, J. 'Kingship of God in Prophets and Psalms' VI, xi, 1961, p.27; Anderson, G.W. 'The Religion of Israel' in ICB, para.132k.

The poet continues to speak of the effects of the voice of God on the mountain-ranges and in the wilderness. (vv.6,8) It is possible that the poet is not reporting his impressions of a thunder-storm directly experienced. Here, his imagination recapitulates the effects of the storm on the whole country. 'The devout Israelite's view of Nature was profoundly religious. He did not contemplate its wonder and beauty and variety for their own sake' says Kirkpatrick.¹ Characteristically enough, the poet sees the glory of God in the storm phenomenon.

In the natural order, the poet hears the voice of the Lord 'upon² many waters'.³ (v.3) According to Gunkel, the poet begins the scene with the thunder-storm gathering over the ocean.⁴ But in the context, the waters could represent the dense masses of storm cloud in which the waters are accumulated.⁵ The thunder occurs in the clouds. The waters also represent, in a mythical sense, the elements of chaotic forces, the primeval waters.⁶ In the cultic context, we should regard the waters as representing the forces that challenge the authority of Yahweh. He thunders against them. Here, 'glory' is to be taken as a synonym to 'power'.⁷ Since the powers are mighty, God thunders with strength and power.⁸ The power of His voice breaks the mighty cedars of Lebanon. (cf. Is. 2.13-14) The high ranges of Lebanon and Sirion⁹ quake at the voice of the Lord. (cf. Amos. 1.2; Ps. 114.4) The thunder is accompanied with lightning. (v.7) It devastates the desert. The features in vv.7-8, Weiser regards, 'probably originate in God's revelation on Mount Sinai where the voice of God made itself heard by the people in thunder accompanied by smoke, fire and earth-quake (Ex. 19)',¹⁰ The fear of the thunder of God causes havoc in the animal world. It makes the hinds to calve prematurely.¹¹

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1. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.147.
 2. Mowinckel reads as meaning 'against', Ps.St.ii. pp.47f.
 3. May.H.G. 'Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbim, "Many Waters" ' JBL lxxiv, 1955, pp.9-21.
 4. cf. Gunkel. Die Psalmen. p.125.
 5. cf. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.149.
 6. Mowinckel. ibid.
 7. Mowinckel. op.cit. p.47 and note 6.
 8. קו and גדו are parallels meaning 'power', cf. Ps.St.ii. p.153 and note 2.
 9. Sirion is the Phoenician name of Hermon and the Amorites call it Senir, Gordon. Ugaritic Text book, 51, vi 19, 21; Text in transliteration etc. p.172, also cf. St. J. J.; Driver. G. R. CML. pp.98ff.
 10. Weiser. op.cit. p.264.
 11. RSV reads, 'The voice of the Lord makes the oaks to whirl', is a repetition of the idea found in v.5; Therefore, 'the voice of the Lord makes the hind to calve and causes the birth of kids in haste' is preferable. cf. NEB. Anderson. G. W. op.cit. in ICC, para. 367a.

In the realm of nature, the poet experiences a theophany.¹ The glory, power and majesty of God are revealed in the thunder-storm. The emphasis of the psalm is not merely the natural phenomena themselves, but the impact of the power of God on the mighty powers of nature, the waters, the mountains, the tall trees, the animals and the desert. In the cultic context, the psalm emphasises the power and authority of Yahweh against the powers of chaos, the mighty waters and the desert.² According to the Priestly and Yahwistic traditions, the powers of waters and desert (cf. Gen. 1 and 2) had to be brought under control by the supreme creative might of Yahweh. These two, in the Hebrew thought, always challenge the order of nature, the creation of God. In the cultic experience, the community affirms and declares Yahweh's power and authority over these forces. According to the Psalmist, God's majesty and power are not merely confined to the heavenly region. He establishes His power and authority throughout the cosmos.

vv.9c-11. In v.9c, we hear the cultic response of the community to what they have realised in the theophany. The cultic response 717D is an Amen to the revelation of God in nature. The last scene is again in the heavens. 'The Lord sits enthroned over the flood'. A great deal has been written on the meaning of Mabbul in this context.³ The word does not occur in the O.T. outside the context of the deluge. (Gen. Chs. 6-10) In the light of the Assyrian verb Nabalu, the word is taken to mean the destructive storm.⁴ Mowinckel and Gunkel interpret it as chaos in the cosmic realm which has challenged the authority of Yahweh.⁵ In the realm of nature it should be regarded as the water-carrying clouds.⁶ (cf. v.3)

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1. Eaton assumes a fusion of two aspects of the divine work, viz. the act of creation or the triumph over chaos and the renewal of this life-enabling triumph in vv.5-9. The Psalms. p.90.
 2. cf. Pedersen. op.cit. Vol.I-II, pp.453ff.
 3. Begrich, J. makes an exhaustive study on the meaning of the word Mabbul in Gesammelte Studien zum A.T. 1964, pp.39-54 under the title 'Mabbul-Eine exegetisch-lexikalische Studie', (originally published in Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete, vi, 1928, pp.135-153.)
 4. Skinner. Genesis. p.154, also see von Rad. Genesis(ET) p.124.
 5. Mowinckel. Ps.St.ii. p.48, and note 1, Gunkel. Die Psalmen. p.123.
 6. This conclusion has been reached independently of Begrich's work. Begrich regards the term Mabbul as 'terminus technicus für himmelische Wasserschlauchlagen', op.cit. p.53; cf. Kirkpatrick on v.3, op.cit. p.149.

Now God has assumed power over the 'many waters' and the 'flood'. Therefore, the community can expect rain and fertility in the land. They are confident because God has power over the Mabbul.

In the light of the preposition ב, some scholars interpret the enthronement of Yahweh over the flood as sitting for judgement.¹ In this context it is not necessary to discuss whether Yahweh is judge because He is king or He is king because He is judge. He is both ruler and judge.² The enthronement of Yahweh over the Mabbul is a reminder to the cultic community, of the covenant promise which the Lord has made with Noah. (Gen.8.22)³ The kingship of Yahweh brings order and stability in nature. The poet reaches the climax in v.11. With confidence he declares that the Lord gives strength and prosperity to His people. This is true because the Lord is the king and judge of the universe.

The kingship of Yahweh is associated with the authority over the powers of chaos. When Yahweh has victory over chaos, He brings order into existence, that is, His creation. This is also true in the enthronement psalms, where Yahweh is celebrated as king because He establishes the world.⁵ (Pss.93.1-2,95.3-4) His kingship is acknowledged in the experience of the cult. In the cult He^{is} acclaimed as king over the cherubim. (99.1) The royal attributes of Yahweh, כבוד, הדר, עז, הון, תפארת are recounted closely in relation to the act of creation. (96.6-7) In Ps.29 too the power and glory of Yahweh are emphasised in the context of His authority over nature and powers of chaos. Therefore, we may conclude that the poet affirms, although not explicitly, the faith of Israel in God who is king and creator.

The kingship of Yahweh in heaven, on earth and upon the powers of chaos, is the fundamental thought of this psalm.⁴ The mighty power of Yahweh, the king, is sufficient to subjugate the powers of chaos which appear in the forms of 'many waters, desert, and flood'. In the world of nature, this cultic vision imparts an assurance of stability, order and prosperity to the cultic community. This is their confidence as they face the uncertain future.

1. Hupfeld. Die Psalmen. Vol.I. 3rd ed. p.450; Delitzsch. Die Psalmen, 5th ed. pp.249ff.

2. cf. Gray. J. 'Kingship of God in Prophets and Psalms', VT, xi, 1961, pp.3ff, see EBD on מלך and שפט.

3. Thackeray. op.cit. p.57.

4. Johnson. A.R. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. 2nd ed. p.64.

5. cf. Watts. J.D.W. 'Yahweh Malak Psalms' in TZ, 21, 1965. p.345.

4. Ps.33.

This is a hymn of praise celebrating the greatness of Yahweh as Lord of nature and history. It has 22 verses and is followed by an acrostic poem, Ps.34. As we consider its proximity to the acrostic poem and its arrangement into 22 verses, we get the impression that this psalm too, was originally intended to be an acrostic poem. (cf.Ps.38; Lam.5)¹

The plural imperatives in the hymnic introduction imply the presence of a congregation. According to Gunkel, the first three verses, perhaps, represent the three groups of the temple choir - the laity who sang the vocal part, the Levites who played the lyre and the harp, and the Priests who blew the trumpet. So he regards this as a hymn of the choir.² (cf.Pss.150.3ff,115.9ff,118.1ff) $\eta\psi\lambda\eta\eta$ in worship is the greeting to the divine king who comes to rule.³ The occasion of the psalm is the annual autumn festival. The contents are quite appropriate for that occasion.⁴ But we cannot rule out an actual historical situation in which this psalm was originally written. 'The Psalms do not only presuppose cultic renewal, they reflect actual historical situations as well' says Birkeland.⁵ In this case it is difficult to pinpoint the actual historic situation. However, we may say that the psalm was originally composed to commemorate a great act of deliverance.⁶

Now we shall turn to the text. The psalm may be divided as follows:-

- i. vv. 1-3. A Hymnic introduction praising God.
- ii. 4-9 The Creative word of God.
- iii. 10-19 The providence of God in history.
- iv. 20-22 The waiting community.

The relevant passage for our consideration is found in vv.4-9.

vv.4-9. This section may be subdivided into three.

- i. vv.4-5. The nature of the word.

The poet introduces five cardinal attributes of God -

1. cf.Gunkel. Die Psalmen. p.139

2. Gunkel. op.cit. p.140, Einleitung. p.66.

3. Segal.M.H. The Pentateuch. p.160.

4. cf.Weiser. op.cit. p.289, Anderson.G.W.'The Psalms' in ICB, para.367e.

5. Birkeland. Evidences in the Book of Psalms p.94.

6. cf.Weiser. op.cit. p.289.

uprightness, faithfulness, righteousness, justice and love, - in relation to the word. 'The word of the Lord is upright;

and all His work is done in faithfulness. (v.4)

Here, the upright word is used as a parallel to God's work in faithfulness. In this context, one may notice the relation between the works of God and the moral concepts.¹ The word **הַשֵּׁשׁ** should be understood as the acts of God in nature and history. (cf.vv.6ff,10ff) Since His word is upright, His work is reliable. In the realm of history God loves righteousness and justice which are 'the ordinance of the covenant'.² 'In Hebrew ethics these are the foundations of a stable order of society'.³ The poet sees the whole world as full of divine love. (cf.Is.6.3) Therefore, he invites the cultic community to praise the Lord.

ii. vv.6-7. The effect of the word.

Verse 6 is the first reference to creation by word in the Psalms. (cf.148.5-6; Job.26.13; Gen.1.3ff) This concept is also found in the religions of the ancient Near East.⁴ But the distinctive O.T. character of the divine word is clear in this context. According to the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian concept, 'the creative power did not go beyond an involvement of the divine word in Nature, an involvement which for the most part was tied to magic'.⁵ Here, the word is the agent of God and it does not get involved in the order of creation. It acts as an obedient servant at the command of God and essentially belongs to Him. Jacob says, 'Die Welt ist nicht aus ihm, sondern durch ihm'.⁶ The concept of emanation and immanentism are avoided by the Psalmist. The poet emphasises the power of God and the effortlessness of the act of creation by introducing the concept of creation by word.

In v.6, the 'word' comes as a synonym to the 'breath of His mouth'. So in the thought of the poet, the word is equivalent to the creative energy, the **אֵל**. Verse 6 may be regarded as a parallel to the expression 'and God said' in Gen.1.3ff.⁷ The word of God is

1. 'Nature and morality are associated as correlatives' In Religion - A Study of Theological Method in Schleiermacher and Nygren. by Johnson.W.A p.27.

2. Weiser. op.cit. p.291.

3. Cohen. The Psalms. p.95.

4. above Ch.2.4.b.ii.

5. Weiser. op.cit. p.292 and note 1.

6. Jacob.B. Das Erste Buch der Torah Genesis. p.50.

7. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.166

powerful. The heavens and their host (Gen.2.1) were made by it; the sea and its waters were controlled by it. It is significant to note that the LXX uses the word *ἡ βύραμις* to translate *כַּיִם*. The LXX acknowledges the mighty power of the word of God over the powers of the heavens.

Verse 7 continues the idea of the divine power. God gathers the waters as in a goat-skin.¹ The comparison to *Nēd* probably refers to the appearance of the sea from the shore and may have derived from Ex.15.8.² Delitzsch interprets v.7 as an act of God to give rain.³ The victory over chaos is identical with the production of rain and springs.⁴ (cf. Job.38.37) By the commanding power of God the primeval waters were put in the storehouse of God (Job.38.8-10,22,37; Ps.135.7, 45.3; Jer.10.13,51.16; Dt.28.12) where He keeps rain, hail, snow, wind, sea, etc. In the light of the evidence from Ugarit, the preposition in v.7 should be understood to mean 'from'.⁵ So we may render v.7b as 'He who releases (produces) the deep from the reservoirs'. Here, the poet explains the mystery of the deep and the rain. The Lord controls the deep and gives the rain. He brings the water chaos under subjection and makes use of it for the benefit of His creation. This vision of God's authority in the cosmic realm gives the cultic community confidence, and assurance in the renewal of nature.⁶

iii. vv.8-9. The person behind the word.

In these verses the poet emphasises the Lord who utters the word. Neither the 'word' nor the 'breath' has any power in itself. It belongs to God. He is the speaker and the doer. And by His command the creation came into existence. (cf.v.9) He has overcome the powers of chaos and gives rain to the people. (cf.v.7) Therefore, the community has no need to be afraid. The poet calls the earth and its inhabitants to fear the Lord and to acknowledge Him as the true God who deserves the worship of all mankind. (cf.v.8)

1. cf.NEB. Dahood renders it as 'jar' op.cit. p.201, RSV 'bottle' also cf.BH margin.

2. Cohen. op.cit. p.96; Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.167.

3. Delitzsch. op.cit. ps268.

4. cf. Johs Pedersen. Israel. I-II. p.473.

5. cf. Patton. J.H. Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms. p.22.

6. Therefore, the community is persuaded to sing a new song to the Lord. (v.3)

In this psalm, both nature and history are brought under the providential care of God who is the creator and ruler. The title of this psalm, according to the Jerusalem Bible, is 'the providence of God'. In the light of v.14, the Rabbis have formulated the doctrine of providence, Mashgachah. Since God is the creator, He is also responsible for the maintenance of the world.¹ Though He is transcendent, He is not a retiring deity as El of Canaan. Neither is He involved in nor dependent on the physical world for His existence. The cultic community pays homage to Him as creator and king.

Ps.104.

This is one of the most descriptive hymns of creation which are found in the Psalter. The picture of the entire cosmos is drawn with imaginative language and expression. 'We are astonished to seek within the compass of a poem of such small dimension, the universe, the heavens and the earth, thus drawn with a few grand strokes',² says Alexander von Humbolt. The theological vision of the poet is profound, the range of the knowledge of nature is astonishing and the faith of the writer is uncompromising. He is far in the background of the poem. Our knowledge of the author is very little. In the light of vv.1 and 35 we might think that the poem was written with a grateful heart. The occasion is not known.

However, some have associated the psalm with the spring festival on account of its magnificent picture of the manifestation of the Lord.³ But the internal evidence is lacking to assign the psalm to the Passover festival. On the other hand, the kingship of the Lord and His act of creation are favourite themes of the annual autumnal festival. Those two themes are dominant in this psalm. Therefore, that annual feast may be regarded as the setting-in-life of this psalm.

The next question is about the poet's dependence on the famous Hymn to Aton and on the P account of creation. Scholars have compared the Ps.104 with the hymn to Aton and have come to different conclusions. Some scholars believe that the poet is dependent on the Egyptian hymn.⁴ Others reject that view.⁵ Here, we cannot go into

1. cf. Titius. D.A. Natur und Gott. p.111.

2. Quoted by Cohen. op.cit. p.337.

3. cf. Arens. Die Psalmen im Gottesdienst des Alten Bundes. pp.178,182.

4. Jirku. A. The World of the Bible. pp.16ff; Gestereley. op.cit. Vol.II. p.440.

5. Gunkel. Ausgewählte Psalmen. p.156; cf. Weiser. op.cit. p.666.

the details of their conclusions, but can only state our view about it. It is almost impossible to be influenced by a poem which was declared heretical by later generations and sought to obliterate it, especially after several hundred years.¹ In the Egyptian hymn, the sun is the creator while in Ps.104, it is only a physical phenomenon under the control of Yahweh. 'Religions may employ the same ideas and yet differ profoundly from one another in their essential nature'.² Similarities are due to the common theme which the poets of the ancient N.E. have employed in their description. But that does not mean mutual dependence. Therefore, we do not subscribe to the view that the Psalmist is influenced by the Akhnaton's hymn to the sun-god.³

Attempts have been made to prove the dependence of the psalm to Gen.1.⁴ Here again, we should remember that the similarities alone will not establish dependence. There is no doubt that the Psalmist is familiar with the creation faith of Israel. But 'the freedom with which he treats this creation tradition shows his originality and poetic genius'.⁵ Since the poem is regarded by most scholars as an early one,⁶ there is all the possibility for the Priestly writer to be influenced by the Psalmist. Therefore, the view that the poet depends on Gen.1. is not acceptable.⁷

In the light of its contents we may divide the psalm as follows:-

- i. vv. 1-4. The majestic appearance of God, the creator,
- ii. vv. 5-9. The creation of the earth and the mastery over Chaos.
- iii. vv.10-13. The streams and the rain - provisions for animals and birds,
- iv. vv.14-18. The creation of vegetables and trees - food for man and animals,
- v. vv.19-23. The creation of the celestial bodies,
- vi. vv.24-30. The wisdom of God, the sea and its creatures,
- vii. vv.31-35. The new vision of the poet, his joy.

1. cf. Williams.R.J. 'Hymn to Aton' in DOTT, p.149.

2. Vriezen. The Religion of Ancient Israel. pp.23,31; also cf. Cohen ibid.

3. Humbert.P. 'La relation de Genèse I et du Psaume 104 avec la liturgie du Nouvel-An israélite', Opuscules d'un Hébraïsant. Université de Neuchâtel, 1958, pp.60-82 (not accessible to me, but is mentioned by Anderson.B.W. op.cit. pp.91f.)

4. McCullough.S. 'The Psalms' in IB, p.550.

5. McCullough.S. ibid.

6. Kraus. op.cit. p.709, Dattenwieser. op.cit. p.161; Terrien.S. 'Creation, culture and Faith in the Psalter' in Theological Education, Vol.2, No.4, 1966, p.123. quoted by Anderson.B.W. op.cit. p.91.

7. contra. Fullerton.K. 'The Feeling for Form in Ps.104', JBL, xl, 1921, pp.43f.

i. vv.1-4. The majestic appearance of God.

The psalm begins with a vision of the glory of God with all His majesty and honour. Just as with the king, Israel also commences with the regal splendour of God.¹ (cf.93.1,96.6,145.5; Job.37.22,40.10) To the Psalmist God is personal. In the meditation of the poet, God appears to him very great. It is in the light of poet's observation of creation that he sees God as 'very great'. The words with which the poet describes the majesty of God are pregnant with meaning.

Mowinckel says, 'Alle diese Wörter bezeichnen nun nicht den modernen abstrakten Begriff Ehre, sondern etwas Konkretes, Handgrieffbares, nämlich die Überirdische Lichtsubstanz, die Yahwa umgibt und so zu sagen den Stoff bildet, aus dem er besteht'.² According to Oesterley, the concept of light as opposed to darkness, is possibly due to Zoroastrian influence.³ But this view is hardly true since the poet brings darkness also under the authority of Yahweh. (cf.v.20) Light has no special sanctity in the thought of the Psalmist. (cf.18.12) Light is mentioned simply as the first of his observation of the natural phenomena. (cf.Gen.1.3)

In vv.2ff, the poet uses participial construction to explain the acts of God. The present participle indicates the activity of God as a present reality. It also implies the continuous creative act of God. The first four verses mention the creation of the heavens, the waters, the clouds and the winds. Commenting on v.3 Ginsberg says, 'it is not Yahweh's chambers which are built in the upper waters, but the upper waters which are stored in Yahweh's chambers'.⁴ That will agree with the idea in v.13. Here, the poet is expressing the view of heaven and the other celestial phenomena, as he knew it in his contemporary setting. Some of those heavenly phenomena were ministers to the deity while light was His garment. This is a typical Oriental concept of God. The basic idea behind the words $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$, Zeus, Deva, is brightness.

1. Gunkel. Ausgewählte Ps. p.147.

2. Mowinckel. Ps.St.ii. p.158 and note 2.

3. Oesterley. op.cit. p.440.

4. Ginsberg reads v.3 'who lays the beams in the heavens, his chambers'. see. 'Some Emendations in Psalms', HUCA, xxiii/i, 1950-51. p.102.

Varuna, the Vedic god was believed to have covered himself with the starry heavens as with a robe.¹ The concept of the Deity riding on the wings of the wind or on the clouds was also common in the Orient.² The poet was a child of his age and he used the thought patterns of the age as befitting to the Hebrew concept of God.

ii. vv.5-9. The creation of the earth.

The description of the creation of the earth has been given in these verses. The poetic style and presentation agree with other psalms which describe the creation of the earth. (cf. 93.1, 96.10, 24.2 and Job. 38.4ff; Prov. 8.28) The P account in Gen. 1.6ff differs in this respect. In v.5, we expect a participle as in the previous verses to explain the act of creation.³ God establishes the earth on its foundations. At the beginning the earth was covered⁴ with waters as with a garment and the mountains were not visible. (v.6) But at the command of God, the waters fled and the mountains and the valleys were made visible.⁵ God set a bound for the sea so that it may not again cover the dry land. (cf. Job. 38.10f; Prov. 8.29; Gen. 1.9)

The poet was well aware of the mythical concept of creation which was widely current in his time. Here, he makes use of them to illustrate his own concept of how Yahweh has brought order into existence. The turbulent waters were brought under control by the word of God. (cf. Ps. 33.6, 9, 148.5-6) The power and authority of God is the dominant theme here. According to the poet, God who is able to make the powerful phenomena of nature His servants, is also able to control and overcome the mighty waters. The water chaos is no more a frightful deity but a mere natural object which obeys the command of God. The poet continues to explain how the elements of chaos, viz. the waters, are used for the benefit of animals and mankind.

1. Rig Veda. viii.41; cf. Radhakrishnan. Indian Philosophy. p.77.

2. cf. Gunkel. Psalmen. p.448; Kittel. Die Psalmen. p.375.

3. cf. BH margin.

4. כִּסְיוֹתָ (v.6) The Lxx reads it to mean 'its covering'. Since the masc. suffix does not agree with neither chaos nor earth, some versions change the suffix to feminine. cf. BH margin. But this does not make much difference in translation. NEB translates 'the deep overspread it', a better rendering.

5. In v.8, the subject of the verb should be the 'waters' and the idea continues from v.7, NEB rightly renders it; cf. Kraus. op.cit. p.708 and note 'g'; Gunkel. op.cit. p.454 and note on v.8, also AV, RSV takes 'the mountains as the subject of the verb. Therefore, there is some ambiguity in the RSV rendering. cf. also The Psalms - A New Translation, Collins, Fontana Books; Sutcliffe. E.R. 'A Note on Ps. 104.8' in VT. Bd. 2, 1952, pp.177f.

iii. vv.10-13. The streams and the rain.

This provision of water for the earth has no parallel in Gen.1, but in Gen.7.11 two sources of water are recognised. But in J account we find a similar thought. (Gen.2.6)¹ In the setting of a desert, **וַיִּבְרָא** could mean an oasis, or a wady. God lets us the springs to gush forth in the wadys and the waters² flow between the mountains. (cf.v.8; Ps.74.15) The wild animals quench their thirst and the birds make their nest beside the waters. (vv.11-12)³ The wild asses are specially mentioned because they are afraid of inhabited regions and they depend entirely on natural resources. Driver suggests that they are Zebras.⁴ This is doubtful since we have no other evidence in the O.T. to substantiate the claim.

The earth and the mountains wait for rain. God sends rain from His hydro-chambers. (cf.Gen.7.11,8.2; Dt.11.11;Ps.65.10,68.9,105.32, 135.7,147.8) The poet reflects a primitive concept of rain. This is a proof of the antiquity of the psalm. After rain the earth gets satisfied. The expression 'the fruit of thy work' (v.13) is to be taken as a figurative meaning, rain, and the verse does not require any emendation.⁵

Here, those who think that the poet owes to Aton's hymn quote for comparison the following stanzas,

All beasts are content with their pasturage;
 Trees and plants are flourishing;
 The birds which fly from their nests;
 Their wings are (stretched out) in praise to thy Ka.
 All beasts spring upon (their) feet,
 Whatever flies and alights,
 They live when thou hast risen (for) them.⁶

1. cf.Gen.2.6 in LXX,S and V.

2. the LXX adds in, **ὕδατα** at the end of v.10 which makes the text meaningful.

3. The LXX and Syriac read 'among the rocks' instead of 'among the branches', is a possible rendering. NEB reads 'among the leaves'.

4. Driver.G.R.'Notes and Studies, Ps.104.11' JTS.44,1943,p.19 and note 8.

5. Weiser translates **אֶת־הַמַּנְיָה** 'the gift of', Kraus and Gunkel read 'vom Nass deiner Kammern', Ginsberg, 'from the drippings of', op.cit.HUCA,xxiii/i, 1950-51, p.102, 'thy provision' - a broad term is used by NEB. cf.Bll. p.41.

6. ANET. pp.369-371

Here, the Egyptian poet describes the state of things when the sun shines. The sun god is not interested in the affairs of the creatures. On the contrary, the God of the Psalmist is directly and indirectly concerned about the wellbeing of the creation. It is he who causes the springs to gush out and the rains to fall down upon the earth. Although similarity in style is found between these two poems, there is no affinity in thought forms. The comparison does not establish the poet's dependence on the Aton's hymn.

iv. vv.14-18. The creation of the vegetables and trees.

The simplest of the plant species, the grass and the vegetables are grown by the Lord. They are food for man and animals.¹ (cf.Gen. 1.11-12) We find similar expression in the Cairo hymn to Amun. It reads:-

'who madest pastures for all cattle and the fruit trees for man'.²

Here, the poet reflects the primitive life of man when he lived on vegetarian food. (cf.Gen.1.30,3.18) The agricultural background is envisaged. (vv.14-15) The wine and oil are symbols of fertility. 'The divine order gives more than mere necessities, it spills over into beneficence' says Welch.³

The trees of the Lord, the tall natural trees of Lebanon, are contrasted with the trees planted by man.⁴ (v.16) The natural growth in the forest of Lebanon is due to the blessing of the Lord. Man has done nothing to preserve them. Therefore, it belongs to the Lord. He gives rain to preserve their growth. The observation of the poet is vivid and picturesque. It includes the wild life, the little sparrows, the stork, the wild goats, the badgers, the cedars, the firs⁵ and the rocks. The poet's description includes the humbler and the loftier of the plant-world, the grass and the cedars; of the bird species, the sparrows and the stork which is noted for its love towards the young ones. Here, the poet is concerned to uphold the love of God for all His creatures irrespective of their stature.

1. עֵשֶׂב in v.14 is rendered by Weiser as 'seed' with which man produces food from the land.
2. Peet.T.E.A Comparative Study of Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia. pp.81-82.
3. Welch.A.C. The Psalter - Four Essays. p.25.
4. cf.Cohen. op.cit. p.557, LXX reading τὸν πῆσιον seems to have different reading possibly עֵרִי. Sparks.H.F.D. reads 'the trees of Sirion' (Dt.3.9; Ps.29.6) in 'A Textual Note on Ps.104.16' JTS.48,1947. pp.57f. This is unnecessary.
5. בְּרוֹשִׁים in v.17b, according to the LXX means 'in their tops', cf.NEB and Weiser. It is not unlikely that the poet here 'has observed more trees in the context. So the rendering 'fir trees' is a reasonable translation.

v. vv.19-23. The creation of the celestial bodies.

The poet, now, takes us to the heavenly region which, to the ancient Orientals, was a realm of mystery, awe and wonder. The sun, the moon, the stars and the darkness were divine beings to the contemporaries of the poet. But he brings all of them under the direct hand of God, the creator. The moon is created by God and it shines when the sun sets. The creation of the sun is not mentioned and that does not mean that it was not created by God. v.19b is a parallel to v.20b. When it is dark the animals of the forest creep forth. So also when the moon shines, the sun hurries for its setting. The poet is describing the course of the day. It happens every day. God is the actor behind all the natural phenomena. Nothing can say no to the active will of the creator-God. To avoid the ambiguity of translation, Aquila and Symmachus read ἔγνώρισε (ἔγιν'), (v.19b) and make it definite that it is the Lord who causes the sun to know its setting.¹ Even without the support from the versions, we can say that it is almost impossible to leave the sun alone as something not created by God in a context like this. The general trend of thought in the psalm does not permit us to have such a conclusion.

The poet is clear about the origin of darkness and night.

(v.20) The Priestly writer conveniently avoids the question. (cf.Gen. 1.3-5) But the Psalmist is explicit about its creation. (cf.Pss.74.16) Darkness is not disliked by God. It belongs to His creation. (cf.Pss. 18.12,19.3; Is.45.7) Both day and night have their part to play in the order of creation. Man and animals do their part for their livelihood. Gunkel assumes that the peaceful condition between the carnivorous animals and man, is presupposed in this context.² Here, man is not a unique creature and he does not get any special treatment from God. (cf.vv.14,21-23)

vi. vv.24-30. The Wisdom of God, the sea and its creatures.

In v.24, the poet takes a retrospective look and exclaims,

Lord, how manifold are thy works! (cf.Ps.40.6)

In wisdom hast thou made them all;

the earth is full of thy creatures. (cf.Prov.3.19-20,8.22f)

1. cf.BH margin.

2. Gunkel. Ausgewählte Psalmen. p.155.

The poet reaches the height of his observation. He cannot believe his own eyes. The creatures are many, innumerable and diverse in the world of nature. The poet cannot explain how they came into existence. He knows that they are created by the wisdom of God. (cf. Job. 12.13) God alone knows the secret of creation. Man's search for the mysteries of the universe is in vain if it is not accompanied by divine revelation. There is a wisdom motif in the psalm. Man has been brought before the manifold works of the Lord. He realises the immensity of the works of the Lord. Only by the revelation of the divine wisdom, he is able to see a total picture of the visible realm of nature. The revelation of the divine wisdom further leads man to a true knowledge of God who is the sustainer of the physical world. The poet, makes the affirmation 'in wisdom hast thou made them all'. Job says, 'I know that thou canst do all these things'. (Job. 42.2) Man's understanding is shattered to pieces before the wisdom of God which is revealed in nature.

The hymn to Aton may be compared in this context. It reads:-
 How manifold it is what thou hast made
 They are hidden from the face (of man)
 O sole god, like whom there is no other!¹

The Egyptian poet also reaches the climax of his observation of the works of the sun-god. Man cannot really fathom its depth. True indeed. But the wisdom of the Egyptian poet does not lead him beyond the disk of the sun. The poet's understanding of nature does not take him to the real God who is the creator of even the sun. In the Aton's hymn, says Eichrodt, 'the transcendence of the divine creative will, its essential difference from all intra-mundane powers, is obscured; and there is therefore no possibility of Man's arriving at a spiritual fellowship with this divine sustainer of the world in a relationship of moral responsibility and decision, and the ethical contrast which bursts from the singer at the end of Ps. 104 (v. 35) remains beyond its ken'.²

On the other hand, the poet of Ps. 104 extends his thought beyond the bounds of the visible world and declares the creation as the works of a personal God with whom one can have intimate communion. He addresses Him 'O Lord my God'. According to Terrien, the Hebrew poet came down from his thoughts of God upon the world, rather than

1. ANET. *ibid*.

2. Eichrodt. Theology of the O.T. Vol. ii. p. 156.

rose from the world up to his thoughts of God.¹ Between the Akhnaton's hymn and Ps.104, differences are more numerous than the similarities.

In vv.25ff, the poet shows us more wonders of God's creation. He says, 'Yonder is the sea, great and wide,

which teems with things innumerable,

living things-both small and great. (v.25)

There go the ships,

and Leviathan which thou didst form to sport in it. (v.26)

The sea, in the words of the poet, is great and wide with innumerable living creatures, both small and great. Observing great and small things of nature was the custom of the poet.² Here, he sees the sea as a vast space of waters with sailing ships³ and huge marine animals. Leviathan should be understood as crocodile as in Job.41.⁴ The text requires no emendation because the meaning is clear. The mythical language may be used for the glorification of the creator.⁵ However, there is no need for a mythical explanation of Leviathan in this context. The poet describes the sea and its creatures as objectively as possible. The sea and its living creatures are brought under the care of God. (cf.v.27f) Even the hymn to Aton does not make any allusion to mythical belief in a similar context.

The ships are sailing north and south as well,

For every way is open at thy appearance.

The fish in the river dart before thy face;

Thy rays are in the midst of the great green sea.⁶

Therefore, alluding mythical motif to this verse is unnecessary and out of place.

All the living things of the sea look to the Lord for their sustenance. Just as the lion, the king of the beasts, looks to the Lord for its food, Leviathan, the huge creature of the sea waits before the Lord for its nourishment. (cf.v.21,27) Leviathan is the king of the sea-creatures. (cf.Job.41.34(26) These creatures are

1. Terrien.S. The Psalms and their Meaning for Today. p.64., also cf. Abraham.H.I. Legacy of Israel. p.18.

2. see above the comments of vv.14-18.

3. Weiser reads (v.26) 'sea monsters' instead of 'ships', op.cit.p.665.

4. cf. McCullough.S. op.cit. pp.397,556.

5. cf. Wanke. Die Zionstheologie der Korachiten. p.69.

6. ANET. ibid.

well fed by God. (cf. Prov. 12.14, 13.2) God gives them everything in plenty and not the bare necessities. (cf. v. 15)

God controls the life-breath of the living beings. They live because God is concerned about them. When He turns His face away from them, they are dismayed. The existence of the living beings depends on the good will of God. In this case, both men and animals share the same fate. When the breath (נִשְׁמָה) is taken away, the creatures return to the dust. When the breath is sent forth, life begins to appear on the face of the land. 'This is a magnificent and deeply religious interpretation of the coming into being and passing away of everything in nature', says Weiser.¹ Death is not a tragic end of existence in this psalm. It is a process of transformation and God has its rein in His Hand. Since God is continuously active in the realm of nature, one need not be anxious about the dependability of the order of nature. Renewal of nature is done by the will of God. The future of man, the living beings and the natural order, is therefore, safe in the hands of a personal God who is the creator and preserver of what He has brought into existence.

vii. vv. 31-35. A new vision of the Lord and the joy of the poet.

At the close of the poet's description of nature, he prays that the glory of God that is imprinted in His acts of creation may continue for ever and God may continue to take pleasure in His works. This is a spontaneous outburst of prayer after having a glorious vision of God and His visible work, the created order. But the poet does not forget to remind us that God has another aspect of His character, viz. the terrible and numinous nature of His being. He is not a mere absentee from His work but occasionally, when He makes His manifestation in His awesome nature, the earth trembles and the mountains smoke. (cf. Ex. 19.18, 20.18)

Since the poet has established a personal relation with the creator-God and has taken by the glory and majesty of God in creation, he dedicates his life for the praise of the Lord. 'Die Schöpfung ist als ein einziges grosses wunder angeschaut, das Gottes Herrlichkeit im Ewigkeit sichtbar macht, dessen er sich freut und das er nach seinem Willen durchwaltet. Der Mensch aber, in dessen Auge sie erscheint, soll Gott, preisen und ihm singen sein Leben lang',² says Procksch. What is said by Procksch may be the true experience of

1. Weiser. op.cit. p.670.

2. Procksch. Das Bekenntnis im A.T. p.18.

the poet. But in the world that belongs to God, the poet does not suffer godlessness. He wishes for the extinction of sinners and wickedness from God's world. (cf.v.35; Ps.101.8)

According to the psalm, nature is an active sphere of a loving and caring God. It is not the realm of capricious deities, but it is an orderly sphere in which the phenomena of nature co-operate with one another for the wider purpose of its creator. But von Rad says, 'Zweifellos kannte Israel den Begriff der Natur nicht; es sprach auch nicht von der Welt als einem Kosmos, also von einem in sich ruhenden und bestimmten Gesetzen unterworfenen Ordnungsgefüge. Welt war ihm zunächst viel mehr ein Geschehen als ein Sein, und gewiss viel mehr ein persönliches Widerfahrnis als ein neutraler Gegenstand seines Erkenntniswillens'.¹ But this does not mean that the O.T. had no understanding of an orderly world. Ps.104 is a clear example for that concept. To the poet, order of nature depends on his belief in a God who brought order into existence. It is true that the O.T. did not have a modern understanding of nature with definite and fixed laws. But the Psalmist recognised laws in the natural order. Since his view of nature is religious, he has attributed the laws to the word of God. (Ps.147.18,148.6; Job.28.25-26; cf.104.5,10,14,19,20, 28,29) Therefore, he cannot have a neutral view of the world of phenomena.

The nature-religions deified the powers of nature; the philosophers contemplated the unity of nature with the indistinguishable, ineffable being that is the ground of all existence; the secular humanist delineated nature as a neutral ground with fixed rules and laws;² but the Psalmist saw nature as governed by the word of God and the sphere in which God's love and care to the creation is revealed to His servants. It is the loving care of God for the creatures that sustains nature as a cosmos.

1. von Rad. Die Wirklichkeit Gottes: Wirklichkeit heute. 1958. p.97 quoted by Kraus. op.cit. p.715.

2. The view that nature is governed by fixed rules and laws, is now questioned by modern scientists. There is no rigidity or uniformity as such in the order of nature. 'So far as the phenomena are concerned, the uniformity of nature disappears....If we still wish to think of the happenings in the phenomenal world as governed by casual law, we must suppose that these happenings are determined in some substratum of the world which lies beyond the world of phenomena, and so also beyond our access'. Jeans James. Physics and Philosophy. p.143. Sometimes the universe is understood in a personal way. 'Everywhere in nature, I touch God, as it were, with my hands', said Kepler. 'God, working in the world, was to him (Kepler) a reality as forceful and present as to the Psalmist', says Hooyakas. See. Hooyakas.R, Natural Law and Divine Miracle. p.225.

Now we may sum up the main ideas of the psalm as follows:-

- i. The poet believes that a God, who is personal, is at work with the order of creation.
- ii. According to the poet, the order of nature is alive and responsive in the realm of creation.
- iii. The poet's view of nature is completely religious. He does not see nature free from the jurisdiction of a living God.
- iv. Mythical and natural powers which the ancient Near East believed as deities, were demythologised by the poet and declared them as mere objects of nature, controlled by the authority of God, the creator.
- v. Man is no unique creature, He stands together with the other creatures before His Creator.
- vi. The meaning and mystery of creation is hidden in the wisdom of God.
- vii. A disharmony exists, not between man and nature but between man and his creator.
- viii. According to the poet, the act of creation is a continuous process in the order of nature. The preservation of nature is the continuous act of creation.
- ix. Since a caring God is active in the realm of nature, there is no cause for anxiety; man and the animal world can be confident about the future course of the world order.
- x. This note of confidence is a unique contribution of the poet to his understanding of God and nature.

Ps.105.

This is a hymn which surveys the religious history of Israel. It has been regarded as a thanksgiving hymn.¹ (v.1) The purpose of the poet is not to give a verbatim report of the past. He is very selective in choosing his materials. He pin-points certain events which will remind the people of the wonderful works of the Lord and His judgments in the past. 'The materials thus presented serves to illustrate the Psalmist's philosophy of history, viz. that in these great events of Israel's past a guiding Hand has been at work', says McCullough.² Like the poets of Pss.78,106,107 and 136 the author of this psalm too, has been inspired by the national history of his people.

1. Oestereley. The Psalms. p.445.

2. McCullough. op.cit. p.558.

In 1 Chro.16.8-22, we find that Ps.105.1-15, along with Ps.96 and 107.47f, is sung as a festal hymn at the time of the installation of the Ark in Jerusalem. Perhaps, that reflects an early tradition of the use of this psalm. Pss.96.7cfff,99.6f make reference to the use of Heilsgeschichte in the worship of the temple. The content of this psalm is appropriate for a covenant renewal service. (cf.vv.8-11,45) It is quite likely, therefore, that the psalm may have been used for such a cultic worship.

On the basis of its contents the psalm may be divided as follows:-

- vv.1-6 An exhortation to worship the Lord, recalling His wonderful deeds.
- vv.7-15. The Covenant with the Patriarchs,
- vv.16-24. The story of Jacob in Egypt,
- vv.25-36. The plague and oppression in Egypt,
- vv.37-45. Exodus, wandering and settlement in Canaan, the Covenant responsibility of Israel. (v.45)

Since we have already discussed the significance of the plague and the Exodus tradition in the third chapter of the thesis,¹ we do not undertake a detailed study of the topic in this context. However, we make certain general observations from the point of view of the Psalmist.

The purpose of the psalm, as we have seen, is to remind the people of the wonderful deeds of the Lord and His judgments. (cf.v.5,45) The last verse has been regarded as a reference to the didactic motive of the psalm.²

According to the poet, the history of Israel constitutes events which we may call natural and historical. These events have been regarded as signs which point out to God's power and authority over the realms of nature and history. 'All the miraculous events are traced back to God as the subject of action, while the men who had a share in them either recede into the background or sink in complete insignificance' says Weiser.³ (cf.vv.26-36,39-41,44) Both nature and history have been seen and interpreted from a theological point of view. A secular understanding of nature and history was foreign and abhorrent to the

1. See above, Ch.3,1,i.

2. cf.Eissfeldt.O. Introduction to the O.T. p.125.

3. Weiser. The Psalms. p.675.

Psalmist. In this psalm, the poet represents the true Hebrew view of nature and history.

Ps.113.

The psalm is a hymn of praise. It comes as the first of a group of Hallel psalms which is usually known as the Egyptian Hallel. Thus it is distinguished from the Great Hallel Ps.120-136 and the other Hallel Ps.146-150. In the LXX, the last verse of this psalm is used as the title of Ps.114.

Traditionally these psalms (113-118) have been used for the Feast of Dedication, New Moon and the Day of Atonement. At the Passover, Ps.113-114 are used before the meal and Ps.115-118, after the meal. (cf.Mt.26.26,30)

According to the form and content, we may divide the psalm as follows:-

vv.1-4. A call to praise, - the name and glory of God.

vv.5-9. Reasons for the praise of God - His sublime nature and compassion.

In this psalm, vv.4-6 are particularly relevant for our purpose. Here, the poet's understanding of God and His relation to nature is described. First of all, the being of God is seen as a transcendent reality. His glory is above nations and the celestial regions, that is, according to the poet, God is beyond history and nature.¹ (cf.99.2,8.2,57.5,148.13 etc) יְהוָה in v.4 is the sovereignty of God.² He is enthroned in heaven. (v.5) 'His being coincides neither with nature nor with the history of the nations'.³ In this context, the Lord is not even confined to the history of Israel. The poet has a universal vision about the sovereignty of God. Therefore, His name is worthy to be praised always and everywhere.⁴ (cf.v.3; Mal.1.11)

The Lord is incomparable, (v.5) a note frequently found in Second Isaiah and some of the Psalms. (Is.40.18,25,44.7,46.5, also cf. Ps.115.3f,135.5ff) The transcendence of God does not make Him a

1. cf.Weiser. op.cit. p.706.

2. Weiser. op.cit. p.704.

3. Weiser. op.cit. p.706.

4. The concept of the universality of the deity was common in the ancient N.E. The idea is found in connection with the praise of the king who was the incarnate god. 'Siehe, der König, mein Herr, hat gesetzt seinen Namen am anfang der Sonne und am Untergang der Sonne', EAI.288.5-7, vid.Jirku.A.'Kanaanäische Psalmen etc', JBL 52,1933, p.119, ANET, EAI, No.288, p.488; also Gunkel. Psalmen. p.492.

remote deity. He is concerned about His heavens and the earth. (v.6) With providential care He looks upon His work. (cf.33.15-14) In v.6, a pluralistic concept of heavens is implied, a notion prevalent in the ancient Orient. God sits enthroned above all the heavens. Therefore, His glory is visible to all mankind. (cf.8.2,19.2,96.7-8,108.5 etc) He is the one God, above all and for all.

The incomparable, transcendent God is the King and Saviour.¹ The poet sings His work of compassion in vv.7ff. In this psalm, we get a beautiful picture of the universal King whose glory and name are chanted by His faithful. Mankind and the work of creation are safe under His constant providential care.

Ps.114.

According to the tradition, this is a Passover hymn sung on the 8th day of the festival. But it is not certain whether the hymn was originally composed for that occasion. In the light of vv.2,7, the Covenant festival has been suggested as the Sitz im Leben of the psalm.² The theme of the psalm is the election and the exodus tradition. Similar historical themes are discussed in Pss.78,105,106, and 136. Here, the language of the poet seems to have been influenced by the mythical picture of the concept of creation, and especially by the act of the creator in quelling the forces of chaos.³

The content of the psalm may be divided as follows:-

- vv.1-2. A reference to the Exodus and Election.
- vv.3-6 The reaction of nature at the time of Exodus and Entry into Canaan.
- vv.7-8. The poetic declaration of the epiphany of the Lord.

In this psalm, the main concern of the poet is the reaction of the powers of nature at the time of the redemptive act of God. The first two verses introduce the context of the events that are taking place in vv.3-4. We are not told why the sea and the Jordan flee and the mountains and the hills skip, until v.7. It is implied in the psalm that the commotion takes place in the realm of nature because of the coming of the Lord. He comes forth as a mighty man on His way to His sanctuary in Judah. (cf.Ex.15.3ff) The sea looks at Him and flees. We cannot here avoid a hidden allusion to the mythical figure

1. cf. Anderson.G.W. op.cit. in ICB, para.383a.

2. cf. Weiser. The Psalms. p.709.

3. cf. Anderson.G.W. op.cit. pin ICB, para.383b.

of the primeval chaos who was conquered by the creator. (cf. Is. 27.1; Ps. 74.13, 89.10) Verse 4. is an allusion to the theophany of the Lord at Sinai. (Ex. 19.18f, 20.18f) The Lord comes to enter into the land of Canaan. Jordan, an element of the chaotic water, turns back. (Josh. 3.7-13)

According to the poet, the Exodus event has been a revelation of the might of God against the powers of chaos. The poet is not stressing the aspect of salvation in this psalm. His theme is the mighty power of God which He manifested in nature at the time of Exodus. (cf. 106.8) The Exodus from Egypt has been interpreted as an act of creation, that is, an act in which the powers of chaos have been overcome by the might of God. The natural phenomena tremble before Him. Because He is fierce and terrible, the poet calls 'all' the earth¹ to tremble before the God of Jacob. God's power has been realised through His wonderful deeds in the realm of nature. (cf. v.8)

In this psalm, the reality of God is declared, not through events which we may call historical, but through natural events which can be understood only by means of religious faith. To the poet, the Exodus is not primarily an historical event but an event which has great significance to the faith of Israel. It is the manifestation of a living and powerful God before whom all other powers tremble and fear.

Ps. 135.

In the light of the opening and closing verses of this psalm, it has been regarded as a liturgical hymn meant for antiphonal singing. According to Weiser, 'the hymn reflects the essential features of the festival cult: the revelation of the name of Yahweh (vv. 1, 3, 13) and of the transcendent majesty of His nature as manifested in creation (vv. 5-7), in the election of Israel (v. 4), in history (vv. 8-12), in God's goodness (v. 3) and in His judgment (v. 14)'.² The allusion to the clouds, lightnings and rain perhaps ensues from the connection with the annual autumnal festival. All these suggest that the psalm may have been composed for the use of the autumnal festival.³

1. cf, BH margin.

2. Weiser. op.cit. p.789.

3. cf. Weiser. op.cit. pp.789f; Taylor. W.R. 'The Psalms' in IB, p.694.

Allusions to other parts of the O.T. and other psalms clearly indicate that the psalm is not an original composition.¹ The thoughts of the psalm have been collected and put together for the cultic purpose.

The main parts of the psalm are the following.

- vv.1-4. A call to praise the name of the Lord,
- vv.5-7. The reasons for praise - He is creator and ruler over the phenomena of nature,
- vv.8-12. God's might in the history of Israel,
- vv.13-14. The manifested name of the Lord and His judgment,
- vv.15-18. The polemic against the idols.
- vv.19-21. A final call to bless the Lord.

In this psalm, we are particularly concerned with vv.5-7. Followed by the election of Israel, the poet introduces the greatness of God as the second reason to praise His name. In v.5, the poet gives a kind of 'Bekentnis' says Gunkel.² The verb **יָדָע** shows the certainty of the affirmation which the poet makes in this verse. He brings forward three facts of which he has certainty.

i. Our Lord is above all gods.

This affirmation is frequently found in the psalms and in second Isaiah. (cf. Ps. 115.3ff, 95.3, 96.4-5, 97.7; Is. 44.8ff, 46.5ff, 48.5, 40.18ff) The poet clarifies his stand in vv.15ff.

ii. The Lord has perfect freedom to act in the realm of creation.

This freedom of action is the distinctive character of Yahweh and the reason of superiority over the idols of the world. It is possible that the poet includes the act of election, creation, and preservation (vv.4, 8-12, 6 and 7) in the freedom of Yahweh.

iii. God is the giver of rain.

To the cultic community, the renewal of nature and the fertility of the land have been the problems of major concern. But the poet gives them assurance, that it is Yahweh who gives them rain, wind and lightnings. Yahweh's authority over the forces of fertility is emphatically affirmed.

The divine actions in the realm of nature and history manifest the name of the Lord. This is the means of divine rule over His people. (cf. v.14) The poet of the psalm, acknowledges Yahweh as the

1. cf. Gunkel. op.cit. p.574. (cf. v.1=115.1, 2=134.1, 4 with Dt.7.6, v.7= Jer.10.13, 51.16, vv.10-12=136.17-22, vv.15-17=115.4-8)

2. Gunkel. op.cit. p.575.

God of creation and history. The reference to other gods, according to Driver, has lost its definite connotation and form. They are used merely as a figure of speech.¹ (cf. 115.4-8, 135, 15ff, 96.5, 97.7) Since the poet has not accepted the effective reality of other gods and declared Yahweh as the highest among them, we cannot support the view that the faith of the Psalmist was not strictly monotheistic.² The O.T. and the Psalmist consistently upheld the belief in one God. (cf. Dt. 6.4; Josh. 24.14f; Ps. 50.1, 100.5, 136.4, 86.10, 148.3) Ps. 135 is a clear evidence of the faith of the Psalmist in one God whose reality has been revealed through actions in nature and history, and especially the history of the people of Israel.

Ps. 145.

This is the only psalm which bears the title **תהלה**, and it extols the kingship of God, and His providential care for His creatures. An acrostic poem perhaps composed in the post-exilic period, has been used for the liturgical worship of the temple. It is recited three times a day in the Synagogue worship.³

The contents of the psalm may be divided as follows:-

- vv. 1-3. The praise of God, the King,
- vv. 4-7. The mighty acts of God,
- vv. 8-9. The gracious being of God,
- vv. 10-13. The works of the Lord praise Him,
- vv. 14-21. The providential care of God.

Here, we will examine vv. 4-7. The mighty works of the Lord is the theme of the section. The poet is not specific about the deeds of the Lord. However, the verbs employed in vv. 4-7, **שבח, אמר, ספר, נגד, ובע**, = **הוה** and the attributes which describe the wonderful deeds of the Lord, resemble to Ps. 19.2-4. **הוד, כבוד, הדר**, and **נפלאות** remind us the divine acts in the realm of nature. (cf. 29.1-4, 8.2-3, 19.2, 96.3-4, 104.1. etc) In Ps. 19.2ff, it is the phenomena of nature that communicate the glory of God's work one to another. Here, it is the people, who communicate the mighty acts of the Lord. (v. 4) The poet also participates in the meditation of the wondrous works of God. (cf. 104.34, 145.5, 6, 21)⁴ The works of the Lord described in vv. 4ff, reveal the **זכר** and **קדוּת** of God. **זכר** is equivalent to His name (135.13), which is the visible nature of God on earth. **קדוּת** stands for the victorious deeds of the Lord, which nature also reveals by its sheer existence. (cf. 50.6, 97.6) Thus the

1. cf. Driver. G.R. 'The Psalms in the Light of Babylonian Research', in The Psalmists, ed. by Simpson. D.C. p. 122; Willoughby. The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow. p. 139;
 2. Mowinkel. III.1. p. 99.
 3. cf. Kirkpatrick. op. cit. p. 315.
 4. cf. BH. in v. 5, the LXX reading of **λελογισεν** for **יגיד** is preferable.

people realise the essential nature of God (cf. vv. 8-9) and they call upon the works of the Lord to praise His goodness.

According to the poet, the reality of God is confirmed through the wonderful works of the Lord in the realm of creation. This is the sign of His sovereignty and the rule of His kingdom in the midst of man. (vv. 10-13)

Pss. 146, 147, 148.

Psalms 146-150 are generally known as 'Halleluiahs' psalms. They share certain common characteristics. All of them are hymns with a strong note of trust in the Lord. These psalms have been used in the Synagogue worship. Pss. 146-149 have 'Haggai and Zechariah' as their title in the LXX. 'Whether this title represents some tradition, or was simply a conjecture from the use of these psalms in the service of the Second Temple, is quite uncertain', says Kirkpatrick.¹ However, we can confidently assume that these psalms were used in the cultic worship of the temple.

Ps. 146.

The psalm may be divided as follows:-

- vv. 1-2. A call to praise the Lord,
- vv. 3-4. A warning not to put trust in the transient man,
- vv. 5-10. Yahweh, the object of trust, is the creator, helper and king.

The poet makes a contrast between Yahweh and man. He comes to the conclusion that man cannot save other men because man is but a breath and his plans perish on the day in which he returns to the dust. (cf. v. 3-4, 90. 3-6, 103. 15-16 and Job. 10. 9, 14. 1-2) An awareness of the reality of Yahweh leads the poet to this conclusion. 'This is by no means the result of the inferiority complex of a man who is at the end of his tether', says Weiser.² On the contrary this is due to a vision of the Lord which begins from vv. 6ff. The poet sees Him as the creator and sustainer of the world. He alone is trustworthy because to Him all power belongs. In vv. 6ff, the acts of God in creation and preservation are described by present participles. Creation is a present reality. This is an evidence to show that in the O.T. and in the Psalms, the concept of creation is not explained as the beginning of all physical things at the beginning of time. The creation-faith is not answering a question that seeks information about the origin of natural phenomena. It does not answer When and How the creation began. The belief in creation is intimately connected with the actual state

1. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p. 818.

2. Weiser. The Psalms. p. 831.

of affairs in the life of man and in the realm of nature. The creation-faith answers a question that affects the whole of existence.¹ The act of creation is a continuous action. Man and the world of nature are involved in it in their everyday life. They participate in it.

It is this faith of the poet that persuades him to declare the eternal kingship of the Lord over the realm of creation. (cf.v.10) It is this faith that inspires him to make the call to all men to put their trust in God. Giving allegiance to God, the King, is the sure way to help His kingdom and be happy in one's life. (cf.v.5)

Ps.147.

This is another hymn for the divine service. So the cult of the O.T. community has been taken as its Sitz im Leben.² The psalm has a simple construction.

There are three main divisions which all begin with a praise to Yahweh.

- vv.1-6. Praise to Yahweh for His mighty works in history and nature.
- vv.7-11. Praise Him for His benevolent providence,
- vv.12-20. Praise Him for peace and prosperity in the land.

Like Ps.146.6ff, here too, the poet delineates the acts of the Lord as a present continuous action. The Lord is active 'now' in history and nature. Perhaps, v.2 refers to the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the people have returned from the exile. The greatness of the Lord is affirmed by His authority over the stars in heaven. (v.4) Numbering the stars and giving them name, show Yahweh's unsearchable knowledge and sovereign authority over the astral deities of Babylon.³ This verse may have been introduced here to reveal the power of God who brought the people out of exile. Even if the verse has no polemic purpose in this connection, the verse proclaims the unsearchable knowledge of God. (Is.40.26) As the Lord of hosts, Yahweh calls the stars by name and fix their number. The stars are regarded as His soldiers. (cf.Jg.5.20) So the Lord is pictured in this context as a king who calls out his army. The greatness of the Lord is revealed by His power in nature and in history.

1. cf.Weiser. op.cit. p.832.

2. cf.Kraus. Psalmen. II. p.955.

3. cf.Oestereley. The Psalms. Vol.2. p.580.

in the rain and the fertility.

The poet continues to bring more evidence to prove the might of God. He is the giver of rain and the consequent fertility of the Land. (vv.8-9, cf. also 65.10, 135.7, 104.3-4, 13) This is a great message to the cultic community for they wait for the rain and all their prosperity depends on its availability. Yahweh takes personal concern for feeding the wild animals and birds. Both great and small look to Him for their sustenance. (cf. 104.27-28, 145.16, 146.7 etc) Yahweh, the King does not depend on the army or the horse for His strength. He takes delight not in the power of a king but in those who take delight in His love. (v.11)

In the third section of the psalm, the poet sings about the effectiveness of the ordinance of the king in the realm of nature and history. The distinctive feature in the psalm, according to Leslie, 'is the Psalmist's sensitive, vivid, and imaginative view of nature'. So he calls it 'a hymn of God's revelation in nature'.¹ The power of the Lord manifested in the realm of nature gives an impressive account of the poet's detailed knowledge of the phenomena of nature. 'This power is never still, its seeming caprices, its inscrutable orderings in the vagaries of snow, hail, hoarfrost, ice and wind are evidences of a divine spirit (word) that never ceases to operate in the world'.² The God who governs the affairs of history is the same God who controls the phenomena of nature. His word is the operative agent in both realms.

This psalm gives us a new dimension of the relation between God and the natural order. It is found in the Psalmist's profound understanding of the inner unity of the working of the cosmos and the moral law within man. The word of the spirit (cf. vv.18-19) of God is the bond of that unity. This inner unity is very well stressed and sung by the Psalmist with constant freshness of treatment.³ This inner unity of the word has a three-fold operation.

i. It is by this word that the order came into existence. (Gen.1.1-3, Pss.33.6,9,148.5)

ii. It is by this word that the order is constantly maintained.

iii. It is by this word that the moral realm of man is governed.

According to Bohl, the O.T. makes no distinction between the creation and preservation of the world.⁴ This is because, in both, the same

1. Leslie. op.cit. p.147.

2. Taylor.W.R. op.cit.pp.752ff, in IB.

3. cf. Eichrodt. TOT.Vol.I. p.415.

4. cf. Bohl.F. '§ 77 - als Terminus der Weltschöpfung im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauch' in Kittel Festschrift, A.T.Studien, 1915, p.45.

principle is operating. Nature and man have one common source of power with which they are sustained, controlled and governed, viz. the creative word of God. The so-called natural law without, the moral law within come from the same source. The Shalom of the physical world and the world of history, depend on Yahweh's continuous act through His word. He deserves praise because nature and history are maintained by His will, the active spirit or word of God.

Ps. 148.

In this hymn of praise all nature and all men are summoned to worship Yahweh. The reasons for praise are the creation and the restoration of His people. (vv.5-6,14) The Psalm may be divided as follows:-

vv.1-6. A summons to the heavenly hosts to praise Yahweh,

vv.7-14. A summons to the earthly things to praise Yahweh.

In this psalm, we have a great vision of the cultic worship. Not only the congregation participates in the worship, but also, the heavenly beings, the celestial bodies, and all the phenomena of the waters and the earth. This broad concept of worship is a remarkable feature of this psalm.

'The Lord is conceived of as a transcendent being, dwelling apart from His creation'.¹ So the poet begins by calling the heavenly beings - the angels and the hosts - to praise Yahweh. He sits enthroned in their midst and they are the first to acknowledge Him and offer praise.² In vv.3-4, the poet calls them by name, sun, moon, stars, highest heavens, and heavenly waters. The Oriental concept of several heavens, is reflected in v.4. (cf.Ps.113.4; 2 Cor.12.2,4; Heb.4.14,7.26) All of them owe their existence to God, (vv.5-6) and therefore, they are obliged to praise the Lord, their Maker. In v.5, the LXX adds *αὐτὸς εἶπεν, καὶ ἐγένεθ' ἡ θύσασ.* (33.9).

The creative might of God is emphasised in v.6. God sets the various phenomena in their proper places. He gave them rules that they may follow their particular courses without collision. In v.6b, the RSV rendering is ambiguous. 'He fixed their bounds which cannot be passed'. The MT may be translated literally as 'He gave a decree and it shall not pass'. Three interpretations are possible from the MT.

1. Taylor.W.R. op.cit. in IE, p.755.

2. cf.Pss.29.1-2,89.7,82.1.

- i. It may mean that the law given by the Lord shall not pass away,
- ii. It may mean that the Lord gave a law and He shall not change it, that is, He will abide faithful to the decree which is given to the natural phenomena.
- iii. If the verb **יַעֲבֹר** is read in the plural as suggested in the BH margin, it may then mean, that the law which is given by the Lord cannot be trespassed by the phenomena of nature.

In the context, we may understand the law as the unchangeable decrees of the Lord. They are unchangeable because the giver of the law is faithful and reliable. He will see that His decrees are carried out implicitly. Here, the Psalmist sees the order of the natural realm as fixed and regulated because the Lord has given His decree so that every phenomenon may follow its own course and thus maintain the order of the natural realm. The cosmic realm owes its existence to the Lord. The Psalmist shares the thought of Ps.147.18.

In vv.7-10, the poet calls the earthly things to join the praise of God. The sea and the deep are included in the earthly things. This shows that the poet, here, transcends the mythical concepts about the sea and its monsters. **תַּנִּינִים** according to Robertson Smith, are 'personifications of water sprouts'.¹ Delitzsch regards them as 'prominent creatures of the open sea'.² **תַּהֲמוֹת** in plural is definitely no indication of a mythical being. So we might regard v.7b as representing the huge water creatures and the great seas. According to Duhm, the reference to 'the heights' in v.1 and 'deeps' in v.7, give a comprehensive picture of the whole cosmos and the extent of the dominion of Yahweh.³ (cf.95.4,139.8) The poet calls fire, hail, snow, frost,⁴ stormy wind, mountains, hills, fruit-trees, cedars, beasts, cattle, creeping things and flying birds to praise the name of the Lord. Pss.147 and 148 might have originated from the same author. Both show keen interest in the same kind of natural phenomena. (cf.147.4,8,9,14-18 and 148.1-4,7-10)

Nature, in the psalm, is not merely an arena where the glory of God is revealed. It is the responsible partner with mankind in the

1. Smith.R. Religion of the Semites. 2nd ed. p.176.

2. Delitzsch. op.cit. p.326.

3. Duhm. op.cit. p.300.

4. 'frost' might mean 'rain or mist' like the Arabic gitr, cf. Kissane. The Psalms. p.652. NEB reads 'ice'.

5. cf. Wilson. op.cit. p.377.

great adoration of Yahweh, the Creator. Both man and nature finds unity before the glorification of God who brought them into existence.¹ To this cultic community, His name alone is to be exalted, whose glory spreads above the heavens and the earth. (v.15)

b. The Enthronement Psalms.

Gunkel includes Pss.93,97,99 and 47 in the so-called Enthronement psalms.² Mowinckel, in his first list, adds Pss.96,98 and 100 to this group.³ Although the structure of Ps.95 is different, it is also added by Mowinckel.⁴ The kingship of Yahweh, His triumph over the enemies and His judgment, are the main themes of these psalms.

Three methods of interpretations have been suggested.

i. The Historical.⁵

This interpretation tries to understand the psalms in the light of a specific historical situation, perhaps, the conclusion of a victorious battle or the restoration of the temple after the exile, or even the return from the exile.

ii. The Eschatological.⁶

The eschatological interpretation finds in these psalms a picture of the coming kingdom of God, when Yahweh will overcome His enemies and establish His judgment upon the earth. This method, 'is, in fact, a revival of the earlier exegesis of the Church, always in pursuit of "messianic" "prophecies" ', says Mowinckel.⁷ Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possibility for an eschatological interpretation of these psalms. The cultic realisation of the eternal kingship of Yahweh transcends the past, present and future. The efficacy of His kingship cannot be limited to a period of one year cycle, as in the Nature-Religions. The vision gives the community an assurance of Yahweh's final victory over the powers of chaos at the end of time. The cultic vision gives them a hope of a new world order of justice and peace. We cannot isolate this eschatological hope from these psalms. According to Johnson, 'their orientation is eschatological from the first.'⁸

1. cf. Weiser op.cit. p.837.

2. Gunkel. Einleitung.. pp.32,94f.

3. Mowinckel. Ps.St.ii. p.5.

4. Mowinckel. PIV.1. pp.106ff.

5. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. pp.259,565.

6. Gunkel. Einleitung.. pp.545ff.

7. Mowinckel. PIV.II. pp.224 and note vii.

8. cf. Johnson. A.R. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. 2nd ed. pp.61ff and note 1.

iii. The Cultic.

According to this interpretation, these psalms are part of the liturgy of the New Year festival, 'in which Yahweh's creative and redemptive work was celebrated, his triumph over the power of chaos, his subjugation of the nations and their rulers, who were the enemies of the people, and his renewal of the covenant bond between himself and Israel'.¹

We will accept the third method for the interpretation of these psalms. Regarding the actual Sitz im Leben of these psalms Weiser and Mowinckel emphasise two different lines. According to the former, these are the hymns for the annual Covenant Festival. The enthronement of Yahweh constitutes only a part of this festival, which was celebrated in autumn at the New Year and lasted for several days.² Mowinckel, on the other hand, holds the view that these hymns are sung at a special enthronement festival, in which the universal kingship of Yahweh was celebrated and indeed enacted in a cult drama.³ It is highly improbable that Israel enacted a cult drama on the Babylonian pattern.⁴ The views of Mowinckel go beyond the O.T. evidence. Barnes writes, none of these 'Psalms really needs the hypothesis of an Accession Feast to explain it, nor does any fact conveyed to us in the Historical Books of the O.T. support the hypothesis'.⁵ Therefore, we should take the annual autumnal Feast as the setting-in-life of these psalms which have taken their origin from the strong tradition of Israelite faith. Weiser says, 'The hope of the kingdom of God, the coming of which is linked up with the Enthronement of Yahweh, and the emphatic linking of creation and eschatology within the idea of the eternal reign of God, have sprung up from Old Testament soil and are the ripe fruit of its belief in God'.⁶

The general pattern of these psalms may be summed up as follows:-⁷

- a. A hymnic introduction to rejoice and pay homage to the divine king.

1. Anderson.G.W. op.cit. in FCE, para.360b.

2. cf.Weiser. op.cit. p.617.

3. Mowinckel. Ps.St.ii, PIW.1. pp.106ff and also cf.RGG².1. (1927)

4. above ch,4,2. on Cultic Interpretation of the Psalms.

5. Barnes.W.E. The Psalms. Vol.I. p.lxxvi; Snaith regards these as Sabbath psalms, Studies in the Psalter, p.95, Jewish New Year Festival, pp.81ff. According to Erdmans, they are used by the Chasidim hymns. 'The Chasidim' in OTS.1.1942, pp.221ff.

6. Weiser. op.cit. p.618.

7. cf.Gunkel.Einleitung..p.113; Mowinckel.PIW.1. pp.183ff; Watts.J.D.W. 'Yahweh Mālak psalms' in TZ, 21,1965, pp.341f.

The invitation is extended to all the earth, nations and peoples.
(cf. 96.1, 97.1, 99.1)

- b. A short reference to the acts of God, His mighty saving deeds and the acts of creation, His fight against the powers of chaos. (93.3f), and the enemies (98.1-2), His righteous acts and judgments. (99.4)
- c. Description about the state of things after Yahweh has established His kingship. He is now 'terrible' (47.3), 'holy' (99.3), 'majestic' (93.4) 'glorious and powerful' (96.7). His enemies are afraid but His people rejoice.

With the above introduction we shall begin the examination of the individual enthronement psalms which are directly relevant to our particular investigation.

Ps. 93.

The psalm has three main divisions.

- i. vv.1-2. The opening acclamation, the Lord reigns, the world is established.
 - ii. vv.3-4. The might of Yahweh over the floods,
 - iii. vv. 5. The final affirmation - the decrees of the Lord are sure.
- i. vv.1-2. This hymnic introduction begins with the cultic acclamation 'the Lord reigns'. The acclamation is the spontaneous response of the community when they experience the epiphany of the Lord. They see Him robed with majesty and girded with strength. (cf. Ps. 104.1c, 2a) Here, the verse יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ has been mainly interpreted in two ways. First, 'The Lord reigns' (cf. AV and RSV) and the second, 'The Lord has become king'.¹ (93.1, 97.1, 47.9, 96.10) The second rendering has created much discussion. Mowinckel, by this translation, means that 'Yahweh has now become king; hence the new song of joy and praise to be sung'.² But many objections have been made against this interpretation.³ Some of the valid reasons as to why we cannot accept the translation 'Yahweh has become king' may be given below.
- a. It gives the impression that the Lord hitherto has not been the king.
 - b. This rendering is mainly based on an analogy from the nature-religions of the ancient N.E. where the blessing of the nature-deity was valid only for a one year cycle.

1. Mowinckel. PIW.1. p.107.

2. Mowinckel. ibid.

3. Here we do not intend to discuss the arguments, pros and cons, but only present some of the valid reasons to which satisfactory answers have not been given. For details see above ch.4.2; Mowinckel. PIW.II. pp.222 and end note VI; Johnson. Special Kingship in Ancient Israel pp.65, not

Therefore, at every New Year festival he had to be made king of the land so that his blessing might continue for the year. But Yahweh has never been a nature-deity.

- c. The interpretation casts doubts on the eternal kingship of Yahweh. (cf.93.2)
- d. Yahweh has never been a retiring deity as El so that he might be made king annually. 'Yahwe herrscht jetzt aktive als König'¹ is not a satisfactory explanation. It suggests that He has not been active for sometime in the past.
- e. The translation 'The Lord reigns', has the emphasis of the actual deeds of the king which he does when the people acclaim Him as the king. This emphasis of Nowinckel² is included in that translation. The verb קָבַל does show the activity proper to a king.³

Here, the kingship of Yahweh is acclaimed in connection with the establishment of the world. It is the Lord who regulated⁴ the world and brought it to an order. (v.1) The kingship of the Lord guarantees the regular course of the order of the natural world. Here, the mythical picture of the founding of the world on waters is implied. (cf.96.10; 1 Chr.16.30; Ps.104.5) The Lord is king from of old. The word מִלְּמֹת suggests that the Lord has become king when He laid the foundation of the world. He is the mighty God⁵ from the beginning.

ii. vv.3-4. The might and authority of Yahweh over the floods is the theme of this section. The floods represent the primeval waters and its many currents.⁶ In the historical realm, these forces of chaos are the enemies of Israel. They challenge the authority of the Lord both in the cosmic and historical spheres of His activity.⁷ But by His victory, the Lord is able to regulate and establish the order of

1. Kapelrud. 'Nochmals "Jahwa Mälāk"', VT, xiii, No.2, 1963, pp.250f.

2. Nowinckel. FIW.1. p.115

3. cf. Michel. D. 'Studien zu den sogenannten Thronbesteigungspsalmen' VT vi, 1956, pp.40-68.

4. קָבַל is to be read קָבַל , cf.75.4, 96.10 BH margin.

5. The Targum adds "'ih'" at the end of v.2; A word like El is suitable in the context, cf. NEB., cf. BH margin.

6. cf. Ps.24.2; Jona.2.4; Similar use of the word קָבַל is found in the Ug. texts; cf. Driver. G.R. CML. pp.81f; Dahood. Psalms 51-100. p.339.

7. cf. May. H.G. op.cit. JBL, 74, 1955. p.12.

creation. This is a great confidence and consolation for the cultic community. Now they can rely on the regularity of nature and be assured of a stable society.

iii. v.5. 'The psalm ends, like Ps.29, on a note of assurance with regard to the future, based, this time upon the thought that Yahweh, who is eternal in being, has the power to fulfil the "testimonies" or "promises" to which he is committed under the terms of his covenant with Israel', says Johnson.¹ It is this new assurance of Yahweh's kingship that strengthens the community as the people of God. Moreover, He gives His eternal presence in the sanctuary amidst the people. Ps.95.

The first 7 verses (1-7b) reflect the characteristics of a hymn while verses 7c-11 contain a prophetic warning. In structure the psalm is very similar to Ps.81. Gunkel classifies it under a 'prophetic liturgy'.² Mowinckel finds no reason to exclude it from the enthronement psalms. Since the content of the psalm is suitable to the occasion of the annual covenant festival, we may regard the autumnal festival as the Sitz-im Leben of this psalm.

The first part of the hymn is the invitation to come and worship the Lord. (vv.1-2) The poet is a member of the community. These verses indicate the presence of the congregation with the singer of this psalm.

In the second part, vv.3-7b three main reasons are given as to why the community should praise Yahweh.

- i. For the Lord is a great God and king above all gods,
- ii. For He is the creator of the depth and the height, the sea and the dry land;
- iii. For He is the God of Israel. (cf.79.13,100.3)

The introit implies the presence of the Lord. In the body of the psalm, the community sings the nature of the God who reveals Himself to the people. Firstly He is a great God and a great king above all gods.³ El may be understood, in this context, as a general

1. Johnson. op.cit. p.67

2. Gunkel. op.cit. p.417; Kraus. op.cit. p.660.

3. cf. Pss.29.1,82.1, 104.1, 111.1

term for God. (cf. 19.2, 29.3) The poet here does not refer to the El of Canaan. To him, Yahweh is the true deity. He has no other criteria except the Lord to determine the nature of the deity.¹

Secondly, the poet declares his faith in a creator God. To God belongs the depths² of the earth and the heights³ of the mountains. These are the two extremities. But they, too, belong to God. These are regions of mystery and abode of beings that might endanger the life of the people. Since, they come under the jurisdiction of the sovereign Lord, the community is safe. The poet continues and says that the sea and the earth are created by God. Thus, from the soaring summits of the mountains to the unexplored, mysterious regions of the sea (cf. Ps. 139.8-9; Amos. 9.2; Ps. 148.1.7) - everything is brought under the supreme authority of Yahweh who is the creator and king. Nothing is left out or hidden from the sovereign power of the Lord.

Thirdly, the community realises that the king and creator of the world is the same God who created Israel. Here, the poet unites the concept of creation with the Heilsgeschichte of Israel. His kingship is acknowledged over the physical realm and over the community of Israel.

In spite of this unique realisation of the cultic community, there were men who failed to have this cultic vision of God. Verses 7c following, is a prophetic warning to such apostates. The cultic worship is no guarantee to have a true vision of the Lord for all people. The true worship presupposes the faith of the people in God as king and creator.

Ps. 96.

This is a cultic liturgy celebrating the kingship of Yahweh. (v.10) In 1 Chr. 16.23ff, the psalm is associated with the installation of the Ark of the covenant, along with parts of Iss. 105 and 106. The LXX gives the occasion of the psalm as 'when the house was being built after the captivity'. It also assigns the psalm to David, and therefore, we cannot rely on the LXX, to determine the setting-in-life

1. cf. Gunkel. Ausgewählte Psalmen. 4th ed. p.16.

2. De Wette renders מְהַקְרֵי-אֶרֶץ as 'Das Innerste der Erde' Die Psalmen. p.484. Delitzsch, 'Der Erde Grunde' op.cit. p.610 and the LXX takes it to mean 'the end of the earth', cf. NEB. The Heb. word is uncertain. 'the unexplored regions of the earth' is a possible translation, cf. מְהַקְרֵי BDB.

3. RV margin reads 'the strength of the mountains', this is better than 'the folds of the hills', cf. NEB, in this context.

iii. vv.10-13. The cultic acclamation, 'The Lord reigns', comes as the climax of the psalm. Here, the MT in v.10 is obscure and difficult. Its parallel in 1 Chro.16.31 is slightly different from this verse, especially in its order. V.10c is omitted in 1 Chro.16.31. But it strengthens the idea of v.13, and therefore **need** not be omitted. Although the text is difficult, its meaning is clear. The kingship of the Lord is connected with the establishment of the physical world as in Ps.93.1.

Here, the poet calls the natural phenomena to rejoice at the coming of the Lord as judge. The sea is only a natural phenomenon in the context and participates in the jubilations. (v.11) It is unnecessary to make it a mythical creature.¹ Verses 11-12 imply the renewal of nature as the Lord comes. (cf.65.10ff,97.7ff)

Gunkel gives an eschatological interpretation to the coming of the Lord.² But to the cultic community, the coming of the Lord is the immediate result of His manifestation in the cult. The Lord comes³ as judge. And as judge He is saviour and king. The emphasis in this psalm, is not on the judgment of God, but His righteous government of the world.

Ps.97.

This is one of the enthronement hymns sharing the same Sitz im Leben with the other Enthronement psalms. The psalm falls into two parts vv.1-6 deal with the epiphany of the Lord and vv.7-12 with the effect of the manifestation on the life of the worshippers of idols and the cultic community.

The psalm opens with the cultic acclamation of the king. (cf.93.1) Since the Lord is the reigning king, the poet asks the earth and the coast lands to rejoice. 'The rejoicing of the whole world demonstrates the worldwide significance of the glad tidings of the beginning of the kingdom of God'.⁴

1. Rowland reads in v.11 'let the sea shake' instead of 'let the sea roar'. This interpretation isolates the sea from among the other natural phenomena and it is not suitable in the context. vid. 'Inner Syriac Corruptions in the Book of Psalms', JTS.42,1941, pp.65ff.

2. Gunkel. Einleitung.. pp.115-116.

3. The repetition of 'for He comes' in v.13 seems unnecessary cf.NEB, cf.BH margin, 1 Chro.16.33; Ps.98.9.

4. Weiser. op.cit. p.632.

Verses 2-5 describe the epiphany of the Lord in a language reminiscent of Pss.18.8ff,50.3ff,77.18f; Hab.3.10f; Ex.19.16f. etc. The Lord appears in the natural phenomena, the clouds, the thick darkness, fire and lightning. (vv.2-4) The mighty mountains melt before the Lord, and the earth trembles. According to Oestereley, these apocalyptic pictures, clearly indicates its eschatological character.¹ But they are not apocalyptic pictures pointing to the distant future. On the other hand, they point to the theophanic experience of the cult. This description is regarded as secondary by Westermann.² He does not give any reason for his point of view. It seems that he does not take seriously the cultic aspect of the psalm. Here, Yahweh appears as the Lord of nature. The natural phenomena are His attendants. He is veiled in the powers of nature. His reality is visible only through His actions in nature and in righteous government. Righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne.³ (v.2) Thus, according to the poet, God's power revealed through nature and His kingdom based on קדש and טשט are the two sure signs of His presence in the world.

In v.6, the poet uses קדש and כבוד in parallel terms. The divine קדש is revealed in the creation of the heavens. In this psalm, we have no direct reference to the act of creation and therefore, this verse should be understood as such. (cf.95.4-5,96.5,10,95.1) The setting up of the heavens is the victory of God over the powers of chaos.⁴ This is the work of glory which is testified by the visible world. (cf.19.2,50.6,29.1-6, and 9-10) But the worthless idols of the nations cannot boast over this glory because they are unable to create the physical world. Therefore, they and their worshippers shall be put to shame. (cf.v.7)

Verses 8-12 describe the reaction of the community to the manifestation of God in the cult. They rejoice and they love the Lord.⁵ In their everyday life, they eschew evil. Finally, they

1. Oestereley. The Psalms. Vol.II. p.424.

2. Westermann. The Praise of God in the Psalms. p.149.

3. In Egypt, they were the two base-stands of the royal throne, Brunner. 'Gerechtigkeit als Fundament des Thrones' VI.VIII, No.4, 1958. pp.426ff. קדש and טשט are regarded almost as visible phenomenon along with the other natural phenomena.

4. cf. the comment of Mowinckel on Ps.50.6 where he relates קדש with the idea of creation. Is.St.ii. p.336.

5. אהב in v.10 may be translated 'those who love' (the Lord) cf. BH margin.

are asked to confess the cultic reality of His holy presence.

The revelation of God in nature, His righteous rule and His victory over chaos, are the main themes of the psalm. They reveal the glory of God to the cultic community as well as to the world. The righteous respond to this revelation and live a saintly life before His holy presence.

Ps.98.

This is another hymn celebrating the kingship of Yahweh. Like Pss.96 and 97, this has been associated with the return of the Exile from Babylon. Its dependance on Deutero-Isaiah has also been suggested.¹ Some scholars have interpreted the psalms in an eschatological sense.² Although we do not rule out the possibility of an eschatological interpretation we maintain that the content of the psalm is most suitable for a cultic interpretation. The Sitz im Leben of the psalm is to be taken as the annual autumnal festival.

The hymn is divided into three parts:-

- i. vv.1-3. In the hymnic introduction, the marvellous works of the Lord ^{are} recollected.
- ii. vv.4-6. A call to all the earth to acknowledge Yahweh as King.
- iii. vv.7-9. A call to nature to pay homage to the King at His coming.

In the first section, it is the marvellous saving deeds of the Lord that capture the imagination of the poet. They are the expression of His power (cf.v.1b) and a means of revelation of His righteousness. (cf.v.2) The covenant love³ and faithfulness of God have been revealed through these actions. The whole world have seen the victorious deeds of the Lord because they have been done in the realm of history.

What the community has recollected in the first three verses, is the sign of the active reign of God on earth. Therefore, the poet makes a call to all the world to sing the praises of Yahweh, the King. This is the theme of the second part. (vv.4-6)

1. cf.Kraus. op.cit. p.677.

2. Cesterley. op.cit. p.426, Gunkel. op.cit.427.

3. The LXX adds to $\tau\delta\beta\pi$ in v.3, $\tau\omega\ \iota\alpha\kappa\omega\beta$ implying the covenant love to Israel, NEB translates $\tau\delta\beta\pi$ as 'constancy'.

The poet widens the horizon of the cultic community. In the third part of the psalm, he includes the natural phenomena too, among those who rejoice at the coming of the Lord, the king. The rule of God will have its effect in the realm of history and nature - in the former, a righteous government and in the latter, a renewal of life. Therefore, men and natural phenomena respond at His coming as the judge. They sing in jubilation. (cf. Ps. 69.35, 68.33, 96.11f, 103.22; Is. 42.10f, 44.23, 49.13, 65.14)

According to the Psalmist, the natural phenomena serve not only as a vehicle to communicate the glory of God but also acclaim the kingship of the Lord along with the cultic community. They are elevated to the position of a responding people. Man and nature enjoy the rule of God. Their joint worship represents the adoration of the entire cosmos. This vision of the Psalmist enhances the glory of God, the sovereign of the universe.

Ps. 99.

This psalm shows the characteristics of the other enthronement psalms. But it has a particular note of emphasis on the past history of Israel. (cf. vv. 6ff) Since the psalm celebrates the kingship of God and recollects His execution of justice, it is appropriate to the annual autumnal festival. The psalm should be interpreted in the light of that festival.

The content of the psalm may be divided into three:-

- i. vv. 1-3. The universal reign of God, His greatness in Zion.
- ii. vv. 4-5. The righteous rule of the mighty king.
- iii. vv. 6-9. The grace of God and His judgment in the past history of Israel.

In this psalm, we are mainly concerned with the first 5 verses. The cultic community declares the reign of God. He sits enthroned upon the cherubim. (v. 1) According to Schmidt, this is a picture of God sitting above the clouds in the heavens.¹ (cf. Ps. 18.11, 68.5, 34, 104.3) Cherubim are symbolically thought to be the supporters of the throne of Yahweh.² Since there were representations of cherubim

1. cf. Schmidt, H. Die Thronfahrt Jahves am Fest der Jahreswende im alten Israel. p. 9.

2. Anderson, G. W. 'The Psalms' in PCB, para. 376a.

in the Solomon's temple, we should regard the first verse in this context, as the cultic vision of the enthronement of Yahweh in the temple. Yahweh alone is the reigning king¹ and therefore, the poet summons the peoples and the earth to tremble. They should revere Him as the true ruler of the universe. (cf. Ps. 2.10-11)

The poet also emphasises the might and holiness of God. (vv. 3-4) The suggestion of Johnson to read סוּדָן in v. 4 with $\text{סוּדָן וְשִׁדְדוֹן}$ in v. 3 gives a better meaning to the text.² The holiness of God is particularly given prominence. (cf. v. 5, 9) The king is not like a human ruler, but He is the 'Wholly Other', free from the tangible realm of nature. At the same time, He is a lover of justice and righteousness. (v. 4) He has given His ordinance to the people of Israel that they might keep it. He spoke to His servants through the pillar of cloud. (v. 7) Again, in this verse His otherness and veiled character is implied. This psalm, thus, extols the presence of the righteous king in the midst of the community and simultaneously maintains the otherness of the Lord as a terrible and mighty God.

c. The Songs of Zion.

Jerusalem has a unique place in the cultic life of Israel. In some of the psalms we find a deep yearning of the pilgrims for the city of Jerusalem, especially because of its cultic association. These psalms are designated as the Songs of Zion. (48, 84, 87 etc) The psalms under this group are believed to have been used by the pilgrims either on the way to Jerusalem or in the cultic festivals in the temple. In Gurkel's classification they are grouped under the Hymns. Like the hymns they do not have the introductory formula of praise.³ However, they show the main characteristics of the hymns.

In these songs the concept of God and nature is not very prominent as in the hymns. Some of the few references which have relevance to our theme, may be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Ps. 48.

This psalm is 'a hymn celebrating the beauty and impregnability of Zion, as well as the kingship of God who reside in Zion'.⁴

1. Gelston rightly emphasises that when יְהוָה is used before the verb מָלַךְ the expression affirms the sole authority of Yahweh. 'Note on Yhwh mlk' in VT, 16, 1966, pp. 507ff, also Köhler. L. 'Jahwah malāk, in VT, iii, 1953, pp. 188.

2. Johnson. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. 2nd ed. p. 70 and note 3.

3. cf. Taylor. W. R. op. cit. in IB, p. 249.

4. Dahood. M. op. cit. Vol. 1. p. 289.

Three possible interpretations have been suggested.

i. Historical Interpretation.¹ -

Those who follow this line of interpretation assume a specific historical situation as the setting -in-life of the psalm, possibly the deliverance from the Assyrians in 701 B.C. Since no definite historical reference is found in the psalm, the supporters of historical interpretation have not got many followers.

ii. Eschatological Interpretation.² -

This interpretation is based on the view that the psalm has prophetic elements and contain eschatological content. According to Weiser, 'an exclusively eschatological interpretation can be justified only if the tenses are disregarded which point to events that have immediately preceded the psalm'.³

iii. Cultic Interpretation.⁴ -

According to this interpretation, the psalm has been regarded as originated from a specific cultic situation. The content of the psalm is quite appropriate to the annual autumnal festival. Therefore, that has been suggested as the setting-in-life of this psalm.

The last seems to be the most reliable interpretation.

In this psalm, v.8 is relevant for our theme. It reads:-

By the east wind thou didst shatter
the ships of Tarshish.

The versions give two possible translations of ברוח קדים. The LXX,S and T understand the words to mean 'with a mighty wind'.⁵ Some Mss take it to mean 'as the east wind'.⁶ Both these renderings are suitable to the context.

In the O.T., the east wind has been used as a symbol of judgment. (cf. Job.27.21; Jer.18.17; Is.27.8) In this context, the mighty king of Zion uses the wind to destroy the powers of His enemies. This is not something new to the cultic community. In the past tradition of Israel, on several occasions, the mighty wind of God had been used against the powers of chaos. Now the enemies of Israel, who are also the foes of God, have gathered together against the people and the abode of God in Zion. They are a threat to the cultic community. They are the powers of chaos in the realm of history;

1. cf. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. pp.262ff.
2. cf. Gunkel. Einleitung.. pp.81ff.
3. Weiser. op.cit. p.581.
4. cf. Nowinckel. Ps.St.ii. pp.61ff.
5. cf. BU margin.
6. cf. BU margin.

they are the forces of death.¹ As in the past, the Lord sends His might, the wind, against the foes. (cf. Gen. 1.2, 8.1; Ex. 14.21; also Ps. 78.26, 147.18, 104.3-4)

The cultic community rejoices at the power and the might of God. He is able to lead them against the powers of death. The community envisages the overthrow of the oppressor whose end is certain because the Lord is mighty in Zion. This vision of the might of God against the powers of chaos continually sustained the community in the face of danger in the cosmic and historical realm. It is this might of God that maintains the realm of creation from falling into the powers of chaos.

Ps. 76.

The psalm has close affinities with Pss. 46 and 48. The same Sitz im Leben is applicable to this psalm too. The historical, eschatological and cultic methods of interpretations have been suggested.² In a cultic context the eschatological view points are found. Therefore, the eschatological interpretation is not altogether out of place. But the historical situations are not specific in this psalm. They are amalgamated in a general way to the salvation-history of Israel. Therefore, we follow the cultic interpretation in this psalm. The specific occasion of the psalm is, most probably, the autumnal festival because the content of the hymn is suitable for that occasion.

Here, v. 9 has a significant understanding about the nature of the God of judgment. The theme of the psalm is the majestic and mighty God in Zion. But Zion is only His earthly abode. He rules from the heavens.

From the heavens thou hast caused to hear judgment;

The earth was afraid and was still. (v. 9, own translation)

The poet assumes the voice of a thundering God in this context. (46.7; Is. 30.30; 1 Sam. 2.10) The Lord utters His voice against His adversaries on behalf of the oppressed of the earth. (cf. v. 10) Here again, the poet affirms the might of God against the powers of enemies.

1. cf. Johnson. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, 2nd ed. pp. 89ff; Jellicoe. S. 'A note on מַגְבֵּי', JTS, 49, 1953, p. 53, both of them bring the importance of מַגְבֵּי in v. 15.

2. cf. the notes on Ps. 48.

In vv.3-5, he compares Yahweh's might to a strong lion, that 'shines majestically from the mountain of prey'. (v.5)¹ In this psalm the poet upholds the transcendence, imminence and might of God, the ruler of the universe.

Ps.84.

According to Weiser, 'the psalm is a song which seems to have been composed on the occasion of a pilgrimage to the temple of Jerusalem'.² The psalm has affinities with the songs of Zion and may have been used for the annual cultic festival in the temple.³ The poet expresses longing for the 'courts of the Lord'. (vv.3,11) The Lord is recognised as the King.

It is in v.7 that we find some allusions to the natural phenomena. It reads,

As they go through the valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools. (v.7) (RSV)

This verse is a crux for the commentators. The MT is obscure and corrupt. Continuing the thought of v.6, we may render the MT as follows:-

Those who pass through the valley of Baca⁴
make it a spring;
Yea, the early rain covers it with blessing.⁵

Gunkel's translation is almost a paraphrase. It may be rendered as,

They pass through the valley of Baca,
drinking from the spring;
Yahweh makes the exhausted to drink
with laughter from the pools.⁶

Among these various renderings the RSV seems to be the better one.

1. In the light of כּוֹן in v.3 and אֶרְצוֹ in v.5 we may retain the MT and render 'mountains of prey'. Yahweh is compared to a lion. cf. Gunkel. op.cit. p.331. 'men that lust for plunder stand aghast' (NEB) This translation does not do justice to the MT.

2. Weiser. op.cit. p.565.

3. cf. Anderson, G.W. op.cit. para.376e.

4. Baca - 'thirsty valley' (NEB)

5. 'Blessing' the RSV by changing the vowel of the Heb. word reads 'pools'. The LXX has misunderstood the text. It reads it to mean 'The lawgiver shall give blessing'.

6. cf. Gunkel. op.cit. p.368.

The vale of Baca does not mean the valley of weeping.¹ It has been suggested that the vale is an arid region where, perhaps, the balsam bush grew.² (cf. 2 Sam. 5.23ff) The pilgrims to Jerusalem pass through this valley. As they pass through the usually dry region, they find something unusual happened. The early rain made the valley green and fertile. The springs and pools have been full of water. This is a miracle, the unusual. 'The impossible and the improbable is here made possible and real'.³ The pilgrims used to pray for rain at the festival. But now, their prayer has already been granted by their faith. God, who is the king and ruler of the land knows the requirement of His people. Their desired end is met in untoward circumstances and in unexpected times. Here, the poet affirms the concern of the Lord for His people and for His land.

Ps.121.

In the light of the superscription, Pss.120-134 have been regarded as pilgrim songs. But there is no specific reference to the festival or sanctuary within the content of this psalm. The general background of the psalm points to a setting out side the temple.

In vv.2 and 6, we have references to the Psalmist's concept of God and His authority over nature. He says,

My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

and in v.6.

The sun shall not smite you by day,
nor the moon by night.

Faith in the creator-God has been the stronghold of the Psalmist and the cultic community in Jerusalem. (cf. 115.15, 124.8, 134.3, 146.6) The old Jebusite cultic centre, Jerusalem, knew El, as the creator-God. (cf. Gen. 14.19, 22) We cannot rule out the possibility of the influence of the Jebusite emphasis on the creation-faith of Israel. Jerusalem cult has been the crucible for the fusion of the creation faith and the salvation history of Israel.⁴ In this psalm, the poet emphasises the traditional faith of his people.

1. cf. LXX, RV and V.

2. vid. Gunkel. op.cit. p.371, for detailed comments of the interpretation of this verse.

3. Weiser. op.cit. p.567.

4. cf. Anderson. B.W. Creation Versus Chaos. p.68.

It is that faith which gives the pilgrim protection from the attacks of the dangerous natural phenomena. The people of the Orient believed that the sun and the moon would attack men if sufficient precaution is ~~not~~ taken. The 'sunstroke' and the 'moonstroke' (e.g. epilepsy and fevers) were regarded as such attacks.¹ The worshippers of the nature-religions tried to propitiate nature-deities to ward off such dangers. But the Psalmist has no fear because God is the creator and controller of the natural phenomena. He is able to save His people from all sorts of dangers. (cf.91.5-6)

In the psalm, the creation-faith of the poet has a practical relevance. It is not declared to answer the curiosity of the intellect about the origin of the physical universe. The faith has its existential relevance. It is concerned about the day to day existence of man. To the Psalmist, creation is preservation, that is, keeping the universe from falling into the hand of the powers of chaos. Whether in the realm of history or nature, it is the function of God to maintain the existence of the universe by constantly resisting the powers that threaten His creation.

d. Psalms of Thanksgiving.

5. Ps.65.

The psalm is a thanksgiving hymn of the community. Gunkel divides the psalm into two, taking the first (vv.2-9) as a thanksgiving of the community and the second (vv.10-14) as a separate hymn for the winter rain.² This is not necessary. The hymn can be understood as a unit. Dahood makes a drastic revision of this psalm. In vv.2-6a, he sees a prayer for admittance to God's heavenly abode after death, vv.6b-8 - God's victory over the primeval chaos and in vv.9-14 - a prayer for rain.³ The content and language of the MT do not warrant such a view and therefore it is not acceptable. But he is right in his view of vv.6b-8. Kimchi calls it a psalm of revelation.⁴

The psalm has been associated with the annual autumn festival.⁵

1. cf. Taylor.W.R. op.cit. in IB. pp.646ff.

2. Gunkel. Die Psalmen. p.272.

3. Dahood.M. Psalms. 51-100. p.109.

4. Easterson.S.I. 'Commentary of Kimchi on Pss.42-72', HUCA,X,1935, pp.309f.

5. Leslie. The Psalms. p.108.

Mowinckel takes it as an enthronement psalm in a wider context.¹ In the psalm we find the community comes to the temple with their vows. (v.2) These vows are taken by the community in times of danger and drought. They have an obligation to pay the vows when they are blessed with prosperity.² Verses 10ff are a description of the divine blessing upon the fields and the flocks. Therefore, we may conclude that the psalm is written as a thanksgiving hymn for such an occasion. The references to the rain (vv.10ff), the corn in the fields and the green verdure of pastures and meadows, describe the luxurious vegetation of the spring season. The poet is quite likely chanting the blessings of the month of Abib 'green ears'.³ in which the cultic community makes their presentation of the first fruits at the festival of Passover.⁴ (cf. Lev. 23.10-14) This seems to be the most likely setting-in-life of the psalm.

The contents of the psalm may be divided as follows:-

- i. vv.2-5. The community gathers in the temple with a grateful heart.
- ii. vv.6-9. The Lord is Saviour and Creator.
- iii. vv.10-14. The Lord has blessed the land.

The hymnic introduction of the psalm describes how the community has gathered in the presence of the Lord in Zion with a heart full of praise and thankfulness and with their offerings in their hands. They express their joy to be in the sanctuary of the Lord who forgives their rebellions.

vv.6-9. The verses 6-14 describe the poet's view of God and His relation to the natural world.

The community recollects the nature of God whom they have come to worship. They see Him as the saviour and creator. First of all, the poet describes God's redemptive act in history. In v.6, the Psalmist makes a reference to the Exodus event. The translation of נוראות as 'thou art terrible' makes the Lord a ferocious deity.⁵

1. Mowinckel. Ps.St.ii. p.5.

2. cf. Wellhausen. Die Psalmen. p.190.

3. Scott. R.B.Y. 'Weights, Measures, Money and Time' in PCB. para.37f.

4. cf. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.360; cf. Anderson. G.W. 'The Psalms' in PCB. para. 372f.

5. vid. Weiser. op.cit. p.460.

The emphasis of that word is not on the Lord but on His awesome deeds.¹ The deeds do not mean the act of creation in this verse.² It is doubtful whether it can be regarded as an answer to the prayer of the people for rain.³ Here, the poet is reminding the congregation of God's mighty act in the past, which He has wrought on behalf of His people. His jurisdiction extends to the ends of the earth and to 'the distant islands'.⁴ The universalism which is dominant in this verse, is rooted in the monotheistic faith of the poet. (cf. Dt. 10.14-21; 2 Sam. 7.23; Ps. 45.5, 106.22)

vv. 7-9. The poet describes the power of the Lord not only in the act of salvation in history, but also in the creation of the mighty mountains (Ps. 18.8, 46.3) and in subjugating the upsurge of the seas. (cf. Jer. 5.22) The mythical notion of creation is implied in these verses.⁵ The mythical language in the psalms is to be understood as a literary device used by the poets to capture the imagination of the ordinary people. The ancient Israelites have not made a sharp distinction between the concept of myth and history. The ideas which seem to us mythical, were very often ideas dealing with history. But both these found their place in the cult.

In these verses, the concept of salvation and creation are discussed on the same realm as the mighty work of God. In this respect, the poet shares the views of Second Isaiah. The act of salvation is essentially an act of creation, triumphing over the powers of chaos. In the realm of history, when the enemies are defeated, God continues His acts of salvation and creation. The acts of God are the signs for the peoples of the world and for the cultic community. (cf. v. 9) According to Nötscher, the signs are the wonders of creation or the catastrophe which happens in history.⁶ Actually, both are His works. The signs arouse the response of fear and joy - fear, on account of the terrible deeds against the powers of chaos in the

1. Nötscher. Die Psalmen p.139; Gunkel. op.cit. p.272.

2. Leslie. op.cit. p.109.

3. Kissane. The Psalms. p.278.

4. cf. BH.

5. Gunkel. Schöpfung und Chaos. pp.97ff.

6. Nötscher. ibid.

realm of nature and history, and joy, because the Lord has overcome forces of chaos and brought order into existence. Some have interpreted מַגְרָר־רַשׁ as monsters, the helpers of Rahab.¹ In the light of v.6b, the 'dwellers of the ends of the earth' need not be regarded as mythical powers. Verse 8c² and 9a together represent the enemies of Israel who fear the might of Yahweh. The meaning of v.9b is obscure. It can be taken as an expression to mean 'east and west'.³ The poet expects rejoicings from east to west because the Lord has revealed His power in the realm of nature and history. The Psalmist expresses a universal hope that every one will acknowledge Yahweh as the sovereign Lord. (cf.v.6b) In the cultic context, v.9b could mean the morning and evening worship in the temple where the community rejoices in the might of Yahweh.

vv.10-14. The cultic community has already been made aware of the saving and creating character of Yahweh whom they have come to worship in the temple. Now they are taken to the actual realm of nature where the Lord has visited with His blessings. (vv.10-14) This is not a prayer for rain as Dahood believes, but an actual experience of the community. The reality of God is now made visible to the agricultural community through the abundance of rain and fertility of the land. (cf.67.6) It is not Ba'al, but Yahweh is the true Lord of the land. Here, the poet shares the faith of Hosea. (2.8ff) God, like a farmer makes the preparation for the cultivation of the land. (v.11; Is.28.26ff) First He gives rain. (v.10) 'The river of God is full of water'. Cohen interprets this as to mean the descent of rain from a heavenly source.⁴ Kissane renders it as 'heavenly stream or divine channel'.⁵ (Job.38.25; Ps.46.5) This is in agreement with the general Oriental belief in a heavenly stream.⁶ However, in the context we should understand it 'the rivers of the land'. The rivers, the trees, the mountains etc, are natural phenomena. They belong to God. Therefore,

1. Mowinckel . Ps.St.ii. p.139; Leslie. op.cit. 110.

2. Taylor.W.R. suggests to omit v.8c 'The Psalms' in IB, p.341, also BH.

3. cf.Anderson.G.W. op.cit. para.372f.

4. Cohen. The Psalms. p.203; Anderson.G.W. ibid.

5. Kissane. The Psalms. pp.276,278.

6. Nile is a heavenly river, cf.ANET. pp.369-371; According to Hindu myths the river Ganges has its origin from the heaven.

they are called as the 'river of God, tree of the Lord, the mount of the Lord' etc. (cf. Ps. 104.16, 36.7) Moreover, in v. 10a, God has already given rain to the land. V. 10b gives us the picture of the result of that rain, viz. the rivers of the land are full of water.

The Lord comes to the land in His chariot, is, ¹ perhaps a poetical allusion to the rain clouds. (cf. v. 11; Ps. 18.11, 68.5, 18 etc) Here, too, we find that the poet is sharing the language of his contemporaries. The presence of the Lord brings blessings upon the land. (cf. 2 Sam. 6.11-12) The allusion to the chariot need not be taken as a special cultic act during the thanksgiving service. The reference to the chariot emphasises the reality of God's presence. The poet, with his vivid imagination, describes how the natural phenomena react at the presence of the Lord.

The pastures of the wilderness drip,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,²
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy. (vv. 13-14)

According to the poet, God forgives the sins of the community and crowns the year with blessings. (cf. vv. 4, 12; Ps. 103.5-4) He visits the people and the land. He is the God of history and nature. He is the hope of all mankind and their fear. The cultic community and the natural phenomena rejoice at the revelation of His presence. (vv. 9b, 14)

The creative and saving deeds of the Lord are not merely understood as the events of the past. To the cultic community, both becomes a living experience, vital and real in the present. The experience is not realised in a cultic drama, but the cult is the response to the experience. In this psalm, the cultic community experiences the creative and saving act of God through the renewal of nature.

Ps. 103.

As far as the form of the psalm is concerned, it is blended with the characteristics of a hymn and an individual thanksgiving. The first five verses have an individual note. From vv. 6ff, the poet

1. NEB omits the reference to chariot and gives an entirely new translation. It reads 'And the palm-trees drip with sweet juice.'

2. The LXX rederring means 'the rams of the flock are clothed with wool'.

identifies himself with the community and uses general terms signifying the experience of the wider community. Perhaps this characteristics of the psalm, later helped its way into the cult.

There is no evidence within the psalm to affirm that it was composed for liturgical purpose. It is quite possible that the psalm was first written from the experience of a private individual. He might have been healed from a serious illness and saved from the verge of death. (cf. vv. 3-4) The poet's expression of thanks comes out as one of the most beautiful hymns in the whole of the Psalter.

There are four main parts for this psalm.

- vv. 1-5. Thanksgiving of the individual worshipper,
- vv. 6-13. The fatherly goodness of the Lord to the people of Israel,
- vv. 14-18. Man's transience is contrasted with the eternal love of God,
- vv. 19-22. The vision of the heavenly King.

The last two sections are important for our examination. God's majesty and love is contrasted with the transience of man. The thought in vv. 14-16, echoes the concept of man in the book of Job. (Job. 7.1-10, 10.9, 14.1-2) Man is not the master of the universe as in Ps. 8.6ff or in Gen. 1.28. He is like the grass that today is and on the morrow vanishes. (v. 15f, cf. 89.48, 90.5-6, 104.29) Here, the poet expresses one of the earliest Israelite views about man. (Gen. 2.7) This view is not an outlet of self-pity. 'It is a striking fact', says Anderson, 'that though in some of the laments the thought of man's ephemeral existence deepens the sense of affliction, here it seems to emphasise the Psalmist's joyful confidence in the enduring goodness of God'.¹ The poet is confident that when God knows the frailty of man, the everlasting $\gamma\delta\eta$ of God is there to strengthen him. For the Lord is righteous and will be faithful to the covenant obligation to His people.² In this regard, the poet gives his personal testimony. (cf. vv. 3-4)

In vv. 19-22, the poet sees a vision of the Lord who is sitting upon His throne in the heavens surrounded by the heavenly hosts.³ (cf. 93.2, 11.4, also Is. 6.1-5) The heavenly sphere of His domain is

1. Anderson, G.W. 'The Psalms' in FCB, para 380c.

2. cf. von Rad. "Righteousness" and "Life" in the Cultic Language of the Psalms', in PHOE, p. 249.

3. For the concept of the heavenly hosts, see above, the exegesis on Ps. 29.1.

'sublime, unchanging and eternal'.¹ The poet of Ps.29 also has a similar vision at the close of a terrestrial commotion. (29.10) Like Michaiiah, the poet has a vision of the heavenly court. (1 Kings.22.19f) It is quite likely that the poet belongs to the cultic officials of the temple.

So far as the weak man is concerned, the final vision is a glorious one. He stands in the company of the divine beings along with the 'works of the Lord'. Although he is transient, his position is with the whole cosmic company of the worshippers of God. Man and the phenomenal world pay homage to the divine King whose dominion stretches over all His creation. The King is loving and righteous, therefore the mankind, the 'works of His hands' and the celestial beings, are safe in the kingdom of God.

Ps.136.

This is a liturgical hymn of thanksgiving. In the Jewish tradition the psalm became known as the 'Great Hallel'; the epithet 'great' deriving from the twenty six repetitions of the response about the goodness of God'.² The psalm gives the impression that it is an elaboration of the great theme, the $\tau\omicron\pi$ of God. In the structure and content the psalm is very similar to Ps.135. (cf.135.8-12,136.10-22) The psalm shows acquaintance to other parts of the O.T. (cf.v.2f with Dt.10.17; v.12 with Dt.4.34; vv.7-9 with Gen.1.16) But this need not be attributed to borrowing, rather it reveals the Psalmist's close association with the common traditions of Israel.

Various suggestions have been made with regard to the setting-in-life of this psalm. 'Looked at from the view point of appropriateness for Hebrew worship, it would be fitting for the great seasonal festivals', says Leslie.³ But the Jewish custom assigns the psalm for the Passover festival.⁴ Oestereley suggests the New Year festival as the Sitz im Leben of this psalm.⁵ But it is really difficult to

1. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.604.

2. Taylor.W.R. op.cit. in IB. p.699; also Ps.113 above.

3. Leslie. op.cit. p.199.

4. cf.Oestereley. The Psalms. Vol.2. p.542.

5. Oestereley. ibid.; In the light of v.25, Weiser suggests the harvest festival as its Sitz im Leben. op.cit. p.793.

be specific about the cultic occasion of Ps.136. What Gunkel says, 'Der „Sitz im Leben“ für das Danklied Israels ist eine kultische Begehung im Heiligtum',¹ is the only possible statement which we can make about the setting-in-life of this psalm.

We may summarise the content as follows:-

- vv.1-3. A call to give thanks to the Lord,
 vv.4-9. to Yahweh, the God of creation,
 vv.10-22. to Yahweh, the Lord of history,
 vv.23-25. He is the saviour of Israel and sustainer of all.

The great theme of the psalm is God Himself whose goodness and love endures for ever. Because He is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the Psalmist makes the call to acknowledge Him and confess Him as the supreme God of all.²

Verses 4-9 and 25-26 are particularly relevant for our purpose. vv.4-9. Here, the Psalmist gives the second reason as to why one should confess Yahweh as the supreme God. According to him the Lord is the creator of heaven and earth. (cf.124.8) The Lord alone is able to do great wonders. (v.4) The term, תְּשׁוּבָתוֹ designates the entire work of creation. (cf.72.18; Job.37.14) It also stands for the acts of judgment and redemption. (cf.Ex.3.20; Jg.6.13; Jer.21.2 etc) V.4 is an obvious reference to the Psalmist's faith in Yahweh as the sole creator of the universe. (cf.115.15,135.5; Is.44.6-8,45.21) In the description of the creation of the earth and in the use of the participial construction, the Psalmist differs from the Priestly account of creation in Gen.1. On the other hand, similar ideas are found in other psalms. (cf.24.2,93.1,104.5) This is an indication that the Psalmist had his own way of interpreting the creation faith of Israel. He says that the Lord has created the heavens with תְּבִרָתוֹ. (cf.104.24; Prov.3.19, 8.27; Jer.10.12,51.15) The works of the Lord display the intelligence of a master mind. תְּבִרָתוֹ suggests not only the depth of knowledge with which the visible order was brought into existence, but also His far-sighted plans for the order of creation.

1. Gunkel. Einleitung... p.315.

2. תְּשׁוּבָתוֹ(vv.1-3) may be rendered as 'testify or confess'. It means more than mere 'give thanks'. cf. Westermann. The Praise of God in the Pss. p.32 and note 18; Grimme.H. 'Der Begriff von hebräischen Hödāh und Tōdāh', in ZAW 58, 1940-1941, pp.234-240; cf. Weiser. op.cit. p.55,791, also תְּשׁוּבָתוֹ in BDB.

In the description of creation, prominence has been given to the celestial bodies, a feature we find in the wisdom literature of the ancient N.E.¹ The distant heavenly phenomena were wonders for the ancient people. The poet brings them also under the creative hand of God. He is above all the wonders, because Yahweh Himself is the doer of miracles. The powerful celestial phenomena, the sun and the moon, have been given special assignments. Thus, the Psalmist sets God above all phenomena. They owe their existence to Him.

In vv.10-22, God's work continues in the realm of history, particularly in the history of Israel. God's concern for all flesh is the theme in vv.25-26. The term, 'God of heaven', is regarded by some as a late expression. (cf.2 Chr.36.23; Ezra.1.2; Neh.1.4,5,2.4,20) But it is not altogether absent in the early tradition of Israel. (cf.Gen.24.3,7(J)) In the context of vv.4-9 where God has been declared as the creator of all the heavenly bodies, the epithet is quite appropriate in this psalm.

The poet makes no distinction between the work of God in nature and in history. 'What is created and what occurs have not yet been separated from one another; the special realm "nature" does not yet exist', says Westermann.² We should also add that the special realm 'history' too, then, is waiting to be emerged. In this psalm, the emphasis is not on nature or history, but on God. What we call 'nature and history' have been created by the continuous act of God. We cannot say that God is active in them, but they actively exist because God is continuously acting. It is the divine act that constitutes nature and history.

The goodness and love have been regarded as the essential character of the living God. The continuation of nature and history depends on Yahweh's eternal goodness and love. The whole outlook of the poet in this psalm is concentrated on these essential qualities of the active God. The poet's concept of nature and history is based on his concept of God. So far as the existence of the world of phenomena are concerned, the Psalmist gives us an optimistic outlook because it depends on the active work of God whose goodness and love exist eternally.

1. cf. von Rad. 'Job xxxviii and Ancient Egyptian Wisdom' in HICE, pp.281f; cf.Pss.8.4,19.2-7,104.2-4.

2. Westermann. op.cit. p.127.

3. The Royal Psalm.

According to Gunkel, these psalms are to be understood in relation to the pre-exilic Israelite monarchy and its place and function in the cult. The occasion of these psalms varies. It may be a king's ascent to the throne (Pss.2,110), or royal wedding (45), or a military campaign or its victory or a function in which a royal member participates as a leader of the worship in the temple.¹ (cf. 2 Sam.6.5,15; 1 Kings.8; Pss.132,78.68-72)

In this group Pss.18,72 and 144 are relevant for our particular enquiry. An exegetical study of these psalms will be undertaken below.

Ps.18.

This is also found in 2 Sam.22, with some textual variations. Scholars generally regard that Ps.18 is one of the oldest psalms in the Psalter.² But agreement has not been reached with regard to the form and unity of the psalm. Delitzsch interprets the psalm along with Ps.19. According to him, this is God's revelation in history which is followed by God's revelation in nature and Torah in Ps.19.³ Some others take the psalm as a combination of two originally independent poems; vv.1-31, a psalm of thanksgiving and vv.32-51, a royal song.⁴ In the light of its content, it is unnecessary to bifurcate the psalm. Both parts maintain the chain of unity. The theme of deliverance and thanksgiving are resounded throughout. (cf.vv.4,6,7,17,18,44f,49,50) It has been considered as a royal thanksgiving psalm.

Two lines of interpretations have been followed.

- a) Some hold that the psalm celebrates an actual historical deliverance in which mythical language has been employed to describe the experience of the king.⁵
- b) Others maintain that the psalm celebrates the conflict and sufferings of the king in the annual ritual drama of the New Year festival.⁶

1. cf.Gunkel. Einleitung... pp.140ff.

2. cf.Weiser. op.cit. pp.185f; Cross and Freedman.'A Royal Song of Thanksgiving', JBL 72,1953, pp.15ff.

3. Delitzsch. op.cit. pp.190ff.

4. cf.Taylor.W.R. op.cit. in IB, p.92; Kraus. op.cit. p.140 regards both parts as 'thanksgiving', while Schmidt calls the first part 'a lamentation' and the second part a 'hymn of the king', on Ps.18 in Die Psalmen.

5. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. pp.86f; Mowinkel.Is.St.i. p.125; Gunkel. op.cit. p.67; Kraus. op.cit. p.141.

6. cf.Johnson.Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. pp.116ff (2nd ed.) The interpretation based on A.M.E. King-ideology is not applicable to this psalm, especially in the light of the C.T. understanding of kingship. See above, Ch.4.2.ii.

Both the interpretations emphasise the cultic use of the psalm. Although the specific historical situation is uncertain, we cannot rule out its significance for the interpretation of the psalm, particularly in the light of vv.32ff. Gunkel says, 'Der Psalm ist das Lied eines König aus Davids Stamme, gesungen an einem Siegesdankfest, wie es Ps.20.6 angekündigt wird'.¹ In the royal thanksgiving service the king and the community are addressed by the cultic kerygma. It is through the language of theophany that the cultic community is brought to a realisation of the saving power of Yahweh. The significance of the cultic myth has to be understood and interpreted in the cultic context. In the cult Yahweh appears as a present help, and not as one who saved the king in the past.

The present reality of Yahweh in the cult as a saviour has to be borne in mind as we interpret the psalm.

On the basis of its contents, the psalm may be divided as follows :-

- vv. 2-4. The Psalmist praises God, his saviour,
- 5-7. The distress of the worshipper,
- 8-16. Yahweh comes to rescue His servant - a theophany,
- 17-20. He delivers the sufferer,
- 21-31. The Psalmist declares his righteousness and his dependence on Yahweh,
- 32-46. He extols the help of Yahweh in overcoming his enemies,
- 47-51. The concluding praise to Yahweh.

The theophany of Yahweh (vv.8-16) has particular significance to our thesis.² Here, the theophany occurs in response to the cry of the sufferer. The Lord hears the call of the Psalmist in His palace. **לְהִיכַל** in this context, should be understood as the heavenly palace of the Lord. Verses 10 and 17 suggest that the Lord is coming down from His heavenly palace. The descent of the Lord to the earth is described to the minute details. This gives a powerful impression on the whole worshipping community. The language is similar to the other theophanic passages in the O.T. (cf. Ex.19.16ff; Hab.3.3-15; Is.30.27f; Jg.5.4f; Pss.59.2,68.8ff etc)

1. Gunkel. *ibid.*

2. see Additional Note on 'Theophany'.

vv.8-10. In these verses, the effects on the natural phenomena at the coming of the Lord, are described. They are 'compared to the phenomena accompanying a volcanic eruption, quaking of the earth, smoke, deadly flames and fiery volcanic stones'.¹ Many features in the description resemble the Sinai theophany. (Ex.19.16ff) According to the Psalmist, these phenomena reveal the presence of the Lord. (cf.Ps.104.32; Is.6.4; Hab.3.10; Amos.9.5; Jg.5.4-5) Here, the Lord comes for judgment on behalf of His servant. He is fierce in appearance. Therefore, the earth and the mountains shake before Him. But He is not visible to the human eye. It is fatal for man to see Him in His glory. (cf.Ex.33.20) But nature is sensitive and realises God's presence quicker than man. So far as man is concerned, God is revealed through His active power. 'Als der revelatus bleibt er der absconditus', says Kraus.² Darkness and thick darkness cover His face from man. (cf.vv.10,12)

vv.11-15. Here, the imagery changes. The phenomena of a thunderstorm are given in these verses. Fierce winds, dark, vapour-carrying clouds, lightnings and hailstones, are usual accompaniments of a thunderstorm. Amidst these, the poet sees Yahweh riding on a cherub,³ upon the wings of a wind, a familiar imagery of the coming of the high gods in the A.N.E.⁴ We have similar pictures in the O.T. too. (cf.Pss.68.5,34, 104.3-4) In the cultic context, the imagery of a thunderstorm is not merely just an archaic expression. The worshipping community stand before the symbolic representations of the throne of Yahweh in the Ark which is set in between the cherubim. The cherubim represent the chariot of the Lord. Their wings cover the God who was believed to be enthroned in the Ark. (cf.Ex.25.22; 1 Chr.28.18; Ez.1 and 2) In the light of these, the theophanic descriptions of the Psalmist, make the presence of the Lord more meaningful to the cultic community.

vv.14-16. In these verses the Lord participates in the battle on behalf of the man in distress. Here, the Psalmist is reminded of the past experience of the community. (cf.Jg.5.20; 1 Sam.7.10; Ex.14.24; Hab.3.9,11; Ps.77.17f) An allusion to the mythical belief of

1. Taylor.W.R. op.cit. in IB, p.95.

2. Kraus. op.cit. p.144.

3. Cherub, since the word comes as a parallel to the 'wind', it should be regarded as a personification of wind. Schmidt regards cherub, in this context, as clouds. Schmidt.H. Die Thronfahrt Yahves.. p.17.

4. see above, ch.2,3.b. Ba'al and note 2 on p.25.

overthrowing the powers of chaos, is implied in v.16. (cf. Ps. 104.7, Ex. 15.8; Ps. 106.9; Nah. 1.4) Through these vivid imageries, the Psalmist brings before the cultic community the reality of Yahweh with all His power. Yahweh's power that quelled the might of water chaos, the power that rebuked the Red sea and revealed at Sinai, is still available to the king and his people. With these powers the Lord comes from on high and draws the king from 'many waters'.¹ (v.17)

Some of the salient thoughts of this psalm which is relevant for our main theme may be summarised below.

- i. The saving power of Yahweh has been revealed in this psalm, not through a verbal dictum but through visible and powerful signs of the phenomena of nature. The salvation-history of the people bears witness to these powerful signs of Yahweh.
- ii. Nature is more than a spectator in the redemptive work of God, it is a fellow-worker.
- iii. Yahweh's power revealed in overcoming the powers of chaos, is still available and active for the sake of the king and his people. His victory over 'many waters' has been brought into close relation with the Heilsgeschichte of Israel and is delineated in the cultic experience as a living power in which people can take shelter. His power extends over the powers of Sheol and death (v.6) and is active in the realm of history.
- iv. According to the Psalmist, the paradox of the 'hiddenness' and 'revelation' of God, are conveyed through the medium of nature. It is the faith of the worshipper that makes him sensitive to the power of God which is active in the phenomenal world. And that faith is the medium of true revelation of God.

Ps. 72.

This psalm, as is evident from its content, is a prayer for divine blessing on the king. In the light of its superscription and vv. 1, 8, 10, 15 it is believed that the psalm refers to Solomon. But this is not a reliable assumption. The verses are general statements and the title could be a later addition. Therefore, we cannot assign the psalm to a particular king of Israel.

1. A figurative, signifying the distress of the king. The phrase is taken from the mythical belief of the water chaos that challenged the creator. In the psalms, it has been used for all kinds of troubles. cf. May, H.G. op.cit. in JBL 74, 1955, pp. 9ff.

The occasion of the psalm also is uncertain. The psalm is appropriate to the coronation of a king or the annual royal day or any other such functions.¹ According to Gesterley, this has never been in use of the worship of the Synagogue or intended for liturgical worship.² This may have been composed by a court-poet to welcome the new king or to sing on an annual royal function or festival in which the king participated. In characteristic Oriental style, the Psalmist idealises the king and prays for the royal person and the people.³

Messianic interpretation has been given to this psalm both by Jewish and Christian exegetes. Messianic elements cannot be ruled out in this psalm. But it should be taken as a prayer for one of the reigning monarchs of Israel. The hyperbolic language truly represents the characteristic Oriental style. It does not specifically describe the ideal Messiah.

An outline of the content is given below:-

- vv. 1-7. A prayer, that the king may rule righteously and his fear may fall upon the wicked.
- vv.8-14. A prayer for the king's world-wide dominion based on justice and mercy.
- vv.15-17. A prayer, that the king may have long life and fame.
- vv.18-20. A benediction, possibly a conclusion to book.ii.of the Psalter.

In this psalm, vv.3,5-8 and 16-17 make reference to the natural phenomena. These verses have to be understood from their particular contexts.

v.3. This verse does not specifically mean the natural prosperity of the land. The mountains and hills represent the land of Israel.⁴ The righteous rule of the king will bring peace upon the land. Although Shalom means 'all-round well-being and harmony',⁵ in this context, 'peace' is a better rendering. (AV,RV)

1. cf.Kraus. op.cit. p.495.

2. Gesterley. The Psalms. Vol.2. p.537.

3. cf.the Egyptian hymns at the accession of Mer-ne-Ptah and Ramses[IV, in ANET, p.378; also the prologue to the Code of Hammurabi - where the king's rule brings the welfare to the people, justice and protection for the oppressed and weak, and affluence and plenty in the land. ANET, p.164.

4. Kirkpatrick. op.cit, p.419.

5. Anderson. op.cit. para.373g.

vv.5,7. May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generation! (v.5)

This is an emended text based on the LXX. Since the same idea is repeated in v.15 'Long may he live', the emendation seems to be unnecessary. In this context, Dahood's rendering seems to be appropriate. He reads 'May he revere you as long as the sun...'. The sun and the moon are signs that lasts for a long time. The poet wishes that the king should revere God for a long time as long as the sun and the moon exists. The verse does not mean the eternal life of the king.¹ The hyperbolic language expresses the greatest desire of the poet that the king should be faithful and loyal to God who appointed him to the office.

Similar language has been used in v.7 showing the desire of the Psalmist that righteousness and peace should continue for an indefinite period during the king's reign. The success of a king's reign is measured by the prosperity and peace which his rule brings upon the land. The rule of the king is judged by means of analogical language taken from nature. Weiser says, 'The significance of the king's duties and of the far-reaching hopes which the people cherish for their ruler is to be judged by that eternal divine order of salvation which arises on the foundation of God's eternal order of Nature and cannot be separated from it'.² (v.5,7,17; cf.Gen.8.22)

vv.6,16. In v.6, the reign of the king is compared to the rain that waters the earth. (cf.2 Sam.23.4) The Psalmist prays to God to bless the land with abundance of grain. Therefore, there is no suggestion here, that the king is the giver of fertility on the land.³ V.16 is very difficult. $\eta\delta\phi$ meaning 'handful or abundance', is a doubtful rendering.⁴ For $\psi\gamma\gamma$, 'wave' (RSV), 'shake' (AV) and 'rustle'⁵ have been suggested. On the whole, the RSV rendering gives a better meaning than the others. The Psalmist prays in earnestness that even the mountains should have abundance of corn which is the daily bread of the poor. During the reign of the king the poor man's bowl should

1. contra. Mowinkel. Ps.St.ii. p.302.

2. Weiser. op.cit. p.503.

3. contra. Kapelrud. 'King and Fertility' in Interpretationes... pp.115f and especially p.116.

4. cf. BDB on $\eta\delta\phi$.

5. Kirkpatrick.op.cit. p.423.

be filled. In this psalm, the expectation of the people which they would like to have fulfilled during the reign of the new king, is beautifully drawn.

v.8. A world-wide dominion is expected. But the Psalmist's vision does not exceed beyond the ancient N.E. The traditional boundary of Israel is reaffirmed in this wish. (cf. Ex. 23.31) Therefore, it is unnecessary to allude mythical notion in the reference to 'sea and the River'.

The Israelite king is the adopted son of God (Ps. 2.7) and is His vicegerent. He is the channel of divine blessing.¹ Under this theocratic rule nature and nation co-operate to make the vicegerent's reign prosperous. People expect peace and prosperity from God. So they pray for the king that he may wisely govern them. By virtue of his office the king has no ability to bring fertility and peace upon the land. He is subjected to God who is the true giver of peace and plenty in the land.

Ps. 144.

This is a cultic liturgy of royal thanksgiving.² Many scholars have questioned the unity of the psalm seeing the individual and communal characteristics in the psalm,³ But this does not establish that the psalm was originally two independent poems. Ps. 105 also has the same characteristics. Nevertheless, that is regarded as one psalm. The individual and communal character of the psalm shows the author's acquaintance with the liturgical language. The same reason may be attributed to its similarity with other psalms.⁴

The occasion of the psalm is uncertain. It could be a royal festival.⁵ The content is quite appropriate to be sung at the beginning of a military campaign.

There are two main divisions:-

- i. A royal thanksgiving and prayer, vv. 1-11.
- ii. An expectation of blessing from the Lord, vv. 12-15.

Verses 3-7 and 12-15 are important for our consideration.

vv. 3-7. In vv. 3-4, the king acknowledged the frailty of human nature. Man is like a breath, a passing shadow. (v. 4; cf. 8.5, 59.5-6, 103.14-16; Job. 7.16, 14.2 etc) Here, the king confesses before God that he too,

1. cf. Nowinckel. op.cit. pp. 299ff.

2. cf. Weiser. op.cit. p. 823.

3. Leslie. op.cit. pp. 279; 450; Taylor. W.R. op.cit. in IB, p. 734.

4. cf. Anderson. op.cit. para. 388b.

5. Weiser. ibid.

being a man, depends on God for strength. (cf.v.1) This humble approach of the king is in the prelude to his prayer for help.

Verses 5-7 is the king's prayer for God's intervention on his behalf. (cf.18.10,15,17,104.32) A theophanic language has been used in this context. The king relies on the power of God manifested through the natural phenomena at Exodus and in Sinai. (cf.also Jg.5.20, Hab.3.3-15) The familiar expression 'many waters' has been used to represent the dire distress of the king. It is quite likely that the Psalmist here, remembers Yahweh's might over the primeval waters. He believes that the same might is still available for him and his people.

vv.12-15. These verses are integral part of the psalm.¹ The Aramaic expressions do not make the psalm late in its composition.² Here, the cultic community express their desire that they should have prosperity and plenty in their land. This wish can be regarded as a prayer of the community along with their king. (cf.Ps.72.3-4,6-7,12-14, 16) The LXX and some other versions read v.12f along with v.11 and v.15 is taken as describing the contrast between the temporal happiness of the aliens and the permanent happiness of the people of Israel. But this can be regarded as a conjectural alteration, and not as the true reading' says Kirkpatrick.³ The RSV translation gives the best possible meaning.

The psalm does not allude to king as the source of blessing on the land and the people. 'The Israelite king, ... remains even in his sacral capacity a member of the community which he represents and personifies before Yahweh in the cult'.⁴ The king is a weak human being like his subjects standing before God for strength and help. (cf.vv.3-4) This idea of kingship is peculiar to the O.T. as a whole and this is the fundamental difference between the royal psalm of the O.T. and the position held by the king in the royal ritual of the ancient N.East. The king and his subjects stand before the Lord in the cult and ask for blessings upon the people, the land and the king, His annointed.

1. Weiser. op.cit. p.825.

2. Gunkel. Die Psalmen. p.606.

3. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.841.

4. Weiser. op.cit. p.63.

4. The Psalms of Lament.

A large number of the psalms fall under this literary type. There are individual and communal laments. The occasion of the former may be private afflictions or sickness or attack from personal enemies. In such laments, the individual first narrates the nature of the suffering and then calls for divine help and deliverance. The occasion of the communal lament can be national calamities or perils, famine or drought, impending attack from foreign nations or a defeat in war.¹ On such occasions the community declares a national fast for penitence and prayer. The communal laments are sung on those occasions. These laments state the plight of the nation which is followed by a prayer for Yahweh's help, usually with some reference to Yahweh's past goodness or revelation of might. (eg. Ps. 44, 74, 79, 80)

Not many psalms of this genre bear witness to the concept of God and Nature in the Psalter. We will examine only Pss. 74 and 90 in this connection.

Ps. 74.

This has been regarded as a communal lament over some national catastrophe which in the light of vv. 3ff and 8 may be regarded as the fall of the city. As a result of this national blow, the people are in despair. They do not have even the prophets to give them messages of consolation. In such a situation the Psalmist, representing his people, raises the cry of help unto the Lord. The first verse itself shows the characteristic sign of a lament. (cf. Lam .1.1, 2.1, 4.1)

The content of the psalm may be divided as follows:-

- vv. 1-3. A plea for help,
- vv. 4-11. A description of the tragedy, with a cry for divine help,
- vv. 12-17. A hymnic description of Yahweh's triumph over the powers of chaos,
- vv. 18-25. A renewed plea for help.

Verses 12-17 are relevant for our consideration. The theme, here, is a characteristic feature in laments.² In a hopeless situation, the poet is not without hope. He is reminded of the mighty power of Yahweh which He has revealed in the past. 'God's mighty

1. cf. Gunkel. Einleitung... p.118.

2. cf. Anderson, G.W. op.cit. para. 374b.

works of redemption and creation attest His power to interpose for the deliverance of His people'.¹ (cf. Ps. 77.11ff.)

Therefore, with confidence the poet recalls how the Lord has overcome the powers of chaos at the time of creation and at exodus. (vv.12ff) In overcoming the powers of chaos, the poet acknowledges Him as the King who has established His authority **מִקֵּדָם**, that is, from the foundation of the earth.² (cf. Prov. 8.23; Mic. 5.1; Is. 45.21) In vv.13-14, the poet uses the familiar mythical language current in his time. The Psalmist freely uses the creation myths of the ancient N.E. as a means of communicating Yahweh's power over the powers of chaos.³ But in this context, the Psalmist uses the mythical language with a double motive, viz. to describe Yahweh's power revealed in overcoming the primeval chaos and in the realm of history. In other words, the myths have been historicised.⁴ 'Working **יְשׁוּעָה** in the midst of the earth' (v.12b) suggests the saving acts of God in the realm of history⁵ and especially it has a reference to the Exodus. (cf. Ex. 8.22; Ps. 77.14) The dragons and Leviathan could very well mean, in a figurative sense, Egypt and its power. (cf. Is. 27.1, 51.9; Ezek. 29.3) The Lord has crushed the power of chaos in the realm of history and given their (Egyptians') bodies to 'the shark of the sea'.⁶ The opening of springs in the desert and the drying up of ever-flowing streams have also been included in the acts of **יְשׁוּעָה**. These are Yahweh's victorious deeds against the powers of chaos. The desert and waters are enemies of cosmos. Victory over them is a necessity to preserve the cosmos intact. (cf. Gen. 2.6; Ex. 17.6, 14.21; Josh. 3.13; Pss. 78.16, 20, 105.41, also cf. Is. 50.2, 51.10) Here, the concept of salvation and preservation are identical. In preserving Israel, Yahweh defeats the powers of chaos that threaten her life.

1. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.446.

2. Dahood's rendering 'Destroy, O God, the kings from the East' (v.12a) is impossible as it stands in the MT. He has no support from the versions. op.cit. Vol.2. p.198.

3. In Babylonian terms, Tiamat, Kingu and their brood, ANET. pp.61-68; in Ugarit, Yan, Lotan and Shalyat, ANET, pp.129f, 137, 138.

4. Weiser. op.cit. pp.60f.

5. cf. McCullough. S. op.cit. p.396.

6. cf. BH. margin.

In vv.16-17, the Psalmist ingeniously invoke the power which God possesses to create day and night, luminaries and sun, summer and winter. God can create things which seem to us apparently opposites. He creates the luminaries for the night which also belongs to God.¹ He fixes the boundaries of the earth so that the powers of chaos may not engulf it again. (104.9,148.6; Job.38.10-11)

The intention of the Psalmist is clear in this context. Israel, the creation of God, is passing through a time of crisis. The powers of chaos is against her. But the poet believes that God is able to illuminate her darkness by His creative power. The powers of chaos cannot have the ultimate sway because God is active against them even in the realm of history. It is this faith that saves the people of the O.T. from tragic outlook on life and helps them to overcome dualism and daemonism.² Here, the poet shares the faith of the author of Ps.89(vv.5-18) and Second Isaiah. Both of them cling to the power of Yahweh to keep the cosmos in existence from falling into chaos. This is a great hope for the people in suffering. Yahweh's creative power is still available for His people.

Ps.90.

The structure and content of the psalm show the features of a lament and therefore, we may classify it under a community lament.³ The occasion of the psalm is difficult to ascertain. We have no evidence in the text. But the vague language and the general nature of affliction suggest that the psalm may have been composed not for the use of a specific fast day during a period of distress or famine, but for an annual penitential day.⁴ The author is a man of mature experience, at the close of his life reflects on human experience with a retrospective mind. His reflection resembles the thought of the wise men of Israel.

There are two main divisions. Verses 1-12 is a contrast

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1. Here, the Psalmist is courageous (cf.Is.45.7) while P hesitates to attribute the creation of night to Yahweh.cf.Gen.1.3-4.
 2. cf.Vriezen.T.C. An Outline of O.T. Theology. p.186.
 3. cf.Weiser. op.cit. p.595; Anderson.G.W. op.cit. para.578a.
 4. cf.Leslie. The Psalms. p.250; cf.Schmidt.H. Die Psalmen. p.170.

between the eternal God and the transient man, and vv.15-17 is a prayer for God's grace and help.

vv.2-6. In these verses the poet expresses his confidence in an eternal God. He realises how short-lived is man when he considers the everlasting character of God. The Psalmist's creation-faith is expressed in v.2. According to him, God has brought forth the visible world. The mountains, the earth and the world, represent the created order. God, who existed prior to the visible world, is the confidence of the poet. In a sense, God is the true home of the Psalmist.¹

But vv.3-6 make the contrast. According to the Psalmist, man is a paradox. Although his refuge is in God, he essentially belongs to the earth. He is like a dream,² like grass which is renewed in the morning and in the evening fades and withers. (cf.105.14-16; Gen.3.16) This view concerning man seems to be a gloomy one. But we should realise that the Psalmist comes to this conclusion not by taking a stock of man's achievements, but by examining man in the presence of the eternal God. The author of Ps.8 also has a similar picture of God and man. But he adds to it the condescending grace of God. Here, the poet prays that God may return to man that he may be upheld, (cf.vv.13ff) in his weakness.

Here, 'the poet contrasts the precariousness of individual and national existence with God's eternal dominion, and concludes that the essence of Wisdom lies in recognising the transience of human life'.³ Not only that, the poet also subjects the phenomenal world and mankind under the eternal care of God. Man and nature alike depend on God for their existence.

5. The Wisdom Psalms.

According to Gunkel, these psalms fall under the minor types. Human life is the main theme of these psalms. At the beginning, the wisdom in Israel had a noble setting-in-life.⁴ But we cannot determine the particular Sitz im Leben of the wisdom psalms. In fact,

1. cf.McCullough.S. op.cit. p.487.

2. v.5a is obscure and difficult. Still the MT can be accepted without emendation. (cf.Leslie. op.cit.p.251;Anderson.G.W. ibid) Here, הַנֶּשֶׁךְ is a figurative for 'death'. (cf.Job.14.11,12;Ps.76.6;Jer.51.59,57) cf.BDB Literally we may render v.5a 'thou dost sweep them - a sleep', that is thou dost sweep them by death. The verb אָרַךְ means 'pour forth in floods or flood away'. This is a sign of death and destruction. The idea expressed in v.5a agrees well with vv.3 and 5ff.

3. Dahood. op.cit. Vol.2. p.322.

4. cf.Gunkel. Einleitung.. p.382.

we have no evidence from the text to find out the original Sitz im Leben.

Very few psalms of this type discuss the problem of nature and God. In Pss.1,57 and 49, there are some references to the subject under investigation. None of these psalms are cultic.¹ Perhaps, some of them may never have been used in the cult.²

Ps.1.

In this psalm, there is a strong pedagogical interest centred in the law. Because of this emphasis, Leslie holds the view that it may have been used, at least in later Judaism for the Festival of Weeks which celebrated the giving of the law at mount Sinai.³ But the psalm does not show any indication of a cultic origin or cultic use.

The position of the psalm without a superscription at the beginning, gives the impression that it has been added to the Psalter as a general introduction, 'summing up the faith in God's righteousness and the idea of piety to which it bears witness'.⁴

The psalm develops its theme in three stages.

vv.1-2 The two ways are contrasted,

vv.3-4. The poet's view of the nature and value of the righteous and the wicked is given in two figurative expressions,

vv.5-6. God's judgment on the two ways.

vv.3-4. It is in these verses that we find some reference to the natural phenomena. They have been used to illustrate the nature of the righteous and the wicked. Similar pictures drawn from nature, are found in Jer.17.6-8. (also cf.Ps.52.8,92.12; Job.29.19; Ezek.19.10-11; Sir.39.13) Here, the God-fearing is like a tree transplanted⁵ by the streams of water. The tree may be regarded as the symbol of wisdom. (cf.Prov.3.18) The stream may have an allusion to the life-giving waters of the Paradise. (cf.Gen.2.9,10; also Jer.2.13; Ezek.47.7; Rev.22.2) In a figurative sense, the righteous is constantly nourished by the waters which is the source of wisdom and life. In using the nature-imagery, the poet is following the pattern of the wisdom writers of the ancient N.E. In the teaching of Amenemope we read:-

The truly silent man, he withdraweth himself apart,

1. cf.Mowinkel.'Psalms and Wisdom' in VTS, III,1955, p.213.

2. cf.Quell.G. Das Kultische Problem der Psalmen, pp.143ff.

3. cf.Leslie. op.cit. p.452.

4. Anderson.G.W. op.cit. para.361a.

5. cf. 5תש פפפ.

He is like a tree growing in a plot.
 Its growth green and doubleth its yield;
 It is before its Lord.
 Its fruit is sweet; its shade is pleasant.
 Its end is reached in the grove.¹

The wicked man is likened to the chaff that is driven away by the wind. This is a common figurative, found in the description of judgment. (v.4) The thought, here, is not so much on the destruction of the wicked, but on their instability. Like the righteous who is planted by the streams, the wicked has neither deep roots, nor they are nourished by the water.

Here, the Psalmist's understanding of nature has been used for didactic purposes. In these verses, the poet has found the natural phenomena as the best means to communicate the message of Hebrew wisdom. In a sense, the poet is making a secular use of the natural phenomena.

Ps. 37.

It is significant to note that this psalm has an acrostic form and a dominant wisdom motive. The problem of retribution which is also found in Ps. 75; Hab. 2 and the book of Job, is the main theme of the psalm. The poet is a man of wider experience and his exhortations are valuable for the edification of men. (cf. vv. 27-28)

The main divisions of the psalm are the following:-

- vv. 1-11. An exhortation to trust in the Lord;
- vv. 12-20. The transient prosperity of the wicked;
- vv. 21-31. The blessing of the righteous;
- vv. 32-40. The contrasted outcome of the wicked and the righteous.

Like the poet in Ps. 1, here, too the nature of the wicked is compared to natural phenomena. The analogies are drawn from the plant-species. (cf. vv. 3, 20, 35) The grass and the glory of the pastures are symbols of transience. (cf. 90.5, 103.15; Is. 40.6-8; Job. 14.2) The wicked may flourish for a while, but they will not last. Like the poets of Egypt, the Psalmist also makes use of the imageries which are abundant in nature. About the wicked, Amenemope says:-

1. DGTT. p.178; translated by Plumley. J.M.

As for the hot-headed man in a temple,
 He is like a tree growing in an enclosed space.
 A moment completeth its loss of foilage.
 Its end is reached in the maldherma.¹

The arrogance of the wicked may grow like a cedar or a 'green tree in a native soil' (RV). This picture from nature is very frequent in the O.T. (cf. 92.7; Job. 20.6-7; Is. 2.13; Ezek. 31.10) The poet believes that the prosperity of the wicked, however great it may be, will be cut off; for he rebels against God. This conviction of the poet is based on his belief in a God who sees and judges all things from His own righteous standpoint.

Ps. 49.

Since this is a wisdom psalm, it has affinities with Pss. 37 and 73. It has also parallel thoughts in Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The Psalmist's audience includes 'all peoples' and his message has a universal application. (vv. 2-3) The purpose of the poet is to instruct men about the fundamental issues of life.²

We find two main divisions in the psalm.

- vv. 2-13. A general call to listen to his words, presentation of the problem, ends with a note on man's death,
 vv. 14-21. The poet contrasts his lot with the fortunes of the wicked who are led to Sheol like sheep, ends with a similar note as in v. 13.

vv. 13, 15, 21. In the previous two psalms illustrations have been taken from the plant-world. Here, the poet takes the analogy from the animal-world. 'Man cannot abide in his pomp', he says, 'he is like the beasts that perish'. (vv. 13, 21) According to him, death is the only certainty and is the great leveller. Neither riches nor fame, wisdom nor folly can snatch man from the grip of death. Man is led to Sheol like sheep. (v. 15) Verse 15 is obscure and probably corrupt in the MT. However, the RSV presents the general sense of the verse.

Sheol, the underworld is personified as a shepherd that leads

1. DOTT. p.178, translated by Plumley. J.M.

2. cf. Taylor. W.R. op.cit. p.254.

the sheep to its appointed end. An Oriental myth is alluded to in this verse.¹ Here, the Psalmist strikes a new note. Confidence has been expressed that God would deliver his life from the hands of Sheol. (cf.73.24) We are not sure whether while composing this poem, the poet was aware of the translation of Enoch and Elijah. (Gen.5.24; 2 Kings.2.11) According to the poet, the authority of God extends even to Sheol, the abode of the dead. (cf.vv.10,15,16,139.8)

In these wisdom psalms, we may note the following points.

- i. The poet's understanding of nature does not bring God into it. Neither His majesty nor His authority over the phenomenal world is emphasised. Since the poet is mainly concerned about the problems of human life, he uses nature, which is around man, as an open book of illustration to get across the issues of man's life to his audience.
- ii. The Psalmist has a secular view of nature and the observation of it is guided by wisdom motive.
- iii. The transient nature of man, whether righteous or wicked, reverberates in these psalms. Man who is rebellious against God, perishes like an animal. But the God-fearing has hope even from the grip of Sheol.
- iv. The powers of death is under subjection to God. The underworld which is the abode of death, is part of the universe according to the Psalmist.

6. Mixed Poems.

There are a number of psalms which cannot be strictly classified under one literary type. Characteristics of two or more literary genre are found in them. In this group, we have found about nine psalms which are relevant for our particular investigation. An examination of these psalms is our task in this section.

1. According to Hindu mythology, Yama, the god of death, comes and leads the soul to his kingdom at the time of the individual's death. Both the Babylonians and Egyptians believed in the power of the ruler of the Nether world. cf.ANET. p.52. But the Egyptians hoped for life after death. cf.ANET. p.32.

Ps.24.

The liturgical character of this psalm is so obvious that no one can deny its cultic use. But the problem is to determine the exact Sitz im Leben. According to the LXX superscription of the psalm, this was used on the first day of the week. The dedication of the temple is the appropriate occasion of the psalm, according to Kirkpatrick.¹ 'The psalm is presumably part of the liturgy of the autumnal festival whose climax is the appearance of Yahweh as the King', observes Weiser.² The Enthronement festival has been suggested by Mowinckel.³ Later Jewish sources associate the psalm with the festival of the New Year.⁴ The allusion of Yahweh as creator (vv.1-2) and the celebration of Him as King. (vv.7ff) favour the view that the psalm is a part of the liturgy of the autumnal festival. It may have been used as an antiphonal song for the procession in connection with the festival.⁵

The psalm has three main parts:-

- vv.1-2. A hymn declaring Yahweh as the creator and controller of the universe.
- vv.3-6. A liturgy of the gate,⁶ delineating the conditions of approach to the presence of Yahweh.
- vv.7-10. An antiphonal song celebrating the epiphany of the King of glory.

vv.1-2. These two verses are most relevant for our theme under consideration. Here, the Psalmist makes an unambiguous claim, a declaration that the earth and its fulness belong to the Lord. The second part of v.1 expands what the term 'fulness' means. It includes the earth and its inhabitants. The LXX is more specific in this context. וְיִשְׁבִי is rendered as καὶ πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες⁷ which

1. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.127.

2. Weiser. op.cit. p.232.

3. Mowinckel. Ps.St.ii. pp.5ff, PIW, vol.1. pp.106f

4. Fiebig.P. ed.Rosh Ha-schana (Giessen,A. Töpelmann.1914) P.52, quoted by Taylor.W.R. op.cit. p.131.

5. cf.Johnson. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, 2nd ed. p.72.

6. Koch.K. The Growth of the Bib. Tradition. p.30.

7. cf.Syriac Version also.

leaves out no living creatures of the earth. God created the earth not as a chaos but an ordered realm to be productive and inhabited. (cf. Is. 45.18; Gen. 1.28) Yahweh is its owner.

In v.2, the poet gives the reason as to why he has made the claim in v.1. He says,

For He has founded it upon the seas,
and established it upon the rivers.¹

The 'seas and rivers' have been used in parallel terms. They allude to the subterranean waters upon which the earth is established. This mythical view is frequently found in the Psalter. (104.5f, 93.1, 136.6, also Job. 38.4; Prov. 8.29) Here the word **סין** has an emphatic meaning. Yahweh alone is the creator and no other. We see 'in the O.T. more than once an attempt has been made to argue the legitimacy of the power of God by means of a deduction from his creation'.² (1 Sam. 2.8; Ps. 74.16ff, 89.11ff, 95.4f). That reasoning is here used effectively as an introduction from which the rest of the psalm proceeds. It is significant to note that the emphasis, here, is not on the deeds of Yahweh in history but in the cosmic realm. This is a characteristic feature of the so-called enthronement psalms. (cf. 93.1, 95.5, 96.10) The lordship of Yahweh over the world is grounded on His creative act by which He has brought order into existence.

Since Yahweh alone is the creator and owner of the world, He alone deserves the allegiance of the world. The cultic community celebrates Him as the King of glory. (vv. 7ff) To the cultic community, the creator-God is the King of glory. Paying homage to the King of glory demands a certain standard of moral integrity from the inhabitants of the world. (cf. vv. 3-6) The vision of Isaiah (6.1-8) has striking parallels with this psalm. (cf. Ps. 24.1 with Is. 6.3, 24.3-6 with Is. 6.5-7, 24.7-10 with Is. 6.1, 3, 5)

In this psalm, the concept of God as the creator is intimately related to the moral nature of God. Here, the idea of the kingship of Yahweh proceeds from the faith in Yahweh as the creator and controller of the world. To the cultic community, He is not just a remote deity, but an active reality who comes in the cult as 'the Lord

1. **סין** is rendered as 'ocean currents' by Johnson. *op.cit.* p.73. cf. Jona. 2.4; Is. 44.27. The term is also found in the Ugaritic text. cf. Driver. G.R. *CML.* pp. 81ff.

2. Weiser. *op.cit.* p.233.

strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle', the King of glory. The cultic presence of the Victor is the strength and confidence of the community.

Ps.46.

The psalm resembles a hymn so far as its general spirit and purpose are concerned. But it does not conform to the structure of a hymn. Gunkel classifies it as a song of Zion with eschatological element.¹ The psalm has also the features of a psalm of confidence. (cf.91)

This psalm has been interpreted from three different stand-points.

i. The Historical.

Those who give a historical interpretation believe that the psalm has a specific historical setting. The more favoured view of the historical situation is the deliverance of the city from the Assyrian invasion in 701 B.C.² According to Duhm, the situation is the historical disturbances in the 3rd century B.C.³ The so-called allusions to the historical events are very vague in the psalm that it is almost difficult to identify them with any particular event. Moreover, such vague expressions are found in the psalms which celebrate the kingship of Yahweh. (cf.98.1-3,47.2f,48.3f)

ii. The Eschatological.

In the light of vv.9ff, some scholars have found an eschatological prophecy in the psalm. There may be eschatological elements, but we cannot interpret the psalm purely in terms of eschatology. The refrain, 'the Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge', is a strong reminder of the present experience of the community.

iii. The Cultic.

The exegetes who adhere to this method interpret the psalm from its cultic setting-in-life. The autumnal festival,⁴ the New Year festival⁵ and the Enthronement festival⁶ have been suggested as

1. Gunkel. Einleitung.. p.329.

2. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.253.

3. Duhm. Die Psalmen. p.153.

4. Weiser. op.cit. p.366; Anderson.G.W. op.cit. para.369d.

5. Schmidt.H. Die Psalmen. p.88.

6. Mowinckel. Ps.St.ii. p.4.

its Sitz in Leben. Since these festivals are not clearly drawn in the G.T., we cannot be specific about their features. This is a drawback to determine the exact occasion of this psalm. However, in all probability we may take the autumnal festival as the setting-in-life.

We find three divisions in the psalm.

vv.2-4. God is the refuge and strength of Israel in the face of natural calamities,

vv.5-8. God is a refuge when the powers of chaos in the realm of history rise against the people,

vv.9-12. God is the exalted One of the world.

In this psalm, we are mainly concerned about the first two sections.

vv.2-4. The second verse is the keynote of the psalm, Yahweh has been declared as the confidence of the people. The community that lives in tension, pressed in between life and death, order and disorder, wants to affirm their faith again and again. At the annual cult the community realise how the Lord has been their defence and stronghold in the past. They express their hope that the same God would continue to be their refuge and strength in the years to come. It is this faith that sustains the community against the odds of life and gives them courage to face the future.

In these three verses the confession of the poet rises 'above the raging of Nature at the formation and dissolution of the world', observes Weiser.¹ In fact, they do not refer to the formation and dissolution of the world. What is said in these verses are hypothetical probabilities. They emphasise Yahweh's power to defend His people if natural catastrophe occur. They 'deal with the assurance of Yahweh's help in virtue of His power over the great cosmic sea... which apparently represents the primeval forces of darkness'.² Since Yahweh is the Victor over the chaos, He is able to protect His people from adversities! He establishes a fortress on their behalf and defends them. (cf.8.3,29.11,68.34-36) At the end of the first section the refrain is not given, although it is appropriate. (vv.8,12)³

vv.5-8. Dahood reads $\text{וַיִּגְדַּל אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ (v.5) together with v.4, perhaps

1. Weiser. op.cit. p.367.

2. Johnson. op.cit. 2nd ed. p.92.

3. cf.BH margin.

assuming that the river in this context is an element of chaos.¹ Here we find the danger of reading too much extraneous mythical influence into the O.T. The O.T. does not always regard the element of water as a cosmic enemy. In the J tradition, spring and rivers are elements of blessing. (Gen.2.6.10f) Therefore, here, the text need not be altered. The river, here, is a sign of divine presence (cf.Ezek.47.1ff) or blessing. (Is.55.21; Ps.65.10, also Is.8.6) In contrast to the waters of death and destruction (v.4) there is a river of life and security, God Himself. This is a perennial source of life to the cultic community against the perils of death.

Here, we should note that 'it is in the person of the "Most High", worshipped with all eloquent symbolism of the sun, that Yahweh triumphs over the forces of darkness, the gloomy underworld of "death", and the kings (or nations) of the earth who threaten the life of His chosen people'.² In v.7, by the careful use of the verbs as in vv.3-4, the poet delineates the active work of the powers of chaos in the realm of history. But they do not last long because the thundering voice of God stills them. (cf.29.3-10,18.14) The enemies are routed and the people are safe.

It is this continuous triumph of Yahweh over the powers of chaos that leads the poet to the vision of peace and security. (vv.8ff) It is Yahweh's victory in the realm of cosmos and history gives him the conviction that Yahweh alone is the true God (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) of the world. (cf.v.11)

Ps.68.

Since the psalm has no counterpart in the Psalter, it is difficult to classify it under one particular type. There is no unanimous view concerning the style, structure, Sitz im Leben and the date of the psalm. The arguments about these problems are many and they are not directly relevant to our purpose. However, some important views will be considered.

Albright regards the psalm as an ancient catalogue of incipits and his study led him to discover about thirty such incipits in the psalm.³ Perhaps following this view, Taylor calls the psalm

1. Dahood. Psalms.1. p.277.

2. Johnson. op.cit. pp.93ff.

3. Albright. 'A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems', HUCA.vol.xxiii/i 1950-51. pp.1ff.

'Libretto of Songs for the Sanctuary'.¹ The psalm has several features similar to the Ugaritic, Babylonian and Egyptian poems.² But this should not lead us to conclude that the psalm lacks unity of thought or depends on earlier short poems. 'The alleged lack of unity or sequence is probably to be explained by the fact that the psalm is the accompaniment of a solemn festival procession and ritual reaction to various aspects of which its several parts were related', writes Anderson.³ These so-called incipits are neatly woven together as a garland so that it may be an ornament of honour to Yahweh, whose assumption as King in Zion is celebrated as the main theme of the psalm.

Regarding the actual setting-in-life of the psalm, many views have been expressed.⁴ Those who give a cultic interpretation of the psalm, see in it the celebration of the kingship of Yahweh.⁵ Among the divergent views, the most convincing seems to be the one which takes the psalm as a processional hymn on the occasion of the annual autumnal feast. (cf. vv. 25-26)

The leading motif of the psalm is developed in five parts.

vv. 2-4. Introduction - the announcement of the coming of the Lord, His character,

vv. 5-15. The triumphant march of Yahweh from Sinai through the wilderness,

vv. 16-19. The entry of the Lord into Zion as King,

vv. 20-32. The effects of the rule of Yahweh from Zion,

vv. 33-36. A call to the nations to pay homage to the Lord, the universal King.

In our study of this psalm, we will give special attention to vv. 8-11, 16-19 and 33-36 where the poet expresses his views on God and His relation to the natural world.

i. vv. 8-11.

Verses 8-9 almost resemble Jg. 5.4-5 which portrays Yahweh

1. Taylor. W.R. op.cit. p. 355.

2. Gunkel. Die Psalmen. p. 284; Johnson. op.cit. p. 77; Westermann. PGP, op. 95ff.

3. Anderson. G.W. op.cit. para. 373c.

4. Schmidt. H. regards the psalm as a New Year hymn. op.cit. pp. 167f; Notscher regards it as a processional song. Die Psalmen. p. 143; Mowinckel, in Der Achtundsechzigste Psalm, pp. 51ff argues the Enthronement festival as its setting-in-life. Gunkel interprets the psalm in an eschatological sense. Die Psalmen, p. 284.

5. Mowinckel. PIW.1 pp. 152, 170; Johnson. op.cit. p. 77.

as God who reveals Himself in earth-quake and storm. The Psalmist has the basic pattern of the theophany at Sinai. Yahweh's manifestation has been presented to the cultic community, in the language of Sinaic theophany. The community realise His coming as a present reality.¹ They see the reaction of the natural phenomena before the presence of the Lord, the One from Sinai.² The coming of the Lord is accompanied by the blessing in the realm of nature, namely, abundant rain. (v.10) Mowinckel writes, 'Neben und vor das Heil der Erneuerung der Natur und der Vitalität tritt die Geschichtliche Heilstat Gottes'.³ The renewal of nature is believed to be an essential part of the salvation experience of the people.

A literal rendering of v.10a may be given as 'a rain of free-will offering thou dost wave'. This expression has been interpreted as a liturgical reminder of the feast in which the priest makes the wave-offering, (׀ ׁ ׀ ׀). Here, the Lord Himself acts as a priest by giving the rain as a free-will offering.⁴ By this natural blessing, the Lord renews His heritage, the land and its people at a time of weariness and perhaps drought. Various emendations have been suggested for v.10b.⁵ Although the text is difficult, the general sense is clear in the RSV rendering. The renewal of nature and the subsequent prosperity are the signs of the 'goodness' of the Lord. (v.11)⁶

The coming of the Lord has its repercussions in the realm of history. The Lord scatters the enemies of Israel. (cf.v.15,22; also Jg.5.19f) Verse 15 has two possible interpretations.⁷ It may suggest the time or the manner in which the Lord routed His enemies.

1. cf. Weiser. *op.cit.* p.482.

2. ׀ ׁ ׀ ׀, need not be delited as some suggest, cf. BH margin. It could be translated as 'the One from Sinai' or 'He of Sinai', cf. Dahood. *op.cit.* p.151; Johnson. *op.cit.* p.79 and note 4; Schofield. J.N. 'Judges' in PCB, para.264f, 'the lord of Sinai', (NEB).

3. Mowinckel. Der Achtundsechzigste Psalm. p.35.

4. cf. Thackeray. The Septuagint and Jewish Worship. p.59.

5. 'Thou has raised her up', Mowinckel. *op.cit.* p.34; 'Thou hast created her', Albright. *op.cit.* in *IBCA* xxiii; 1950-51. pp.1f.

6. 'Goodness' stands for 'rain' according to Dahood. This seems to be a too rigid and narrow interpretation, *op.cit.* p.140, also see Vol.1, pp.25ff

7. Ivry's rendering, 'As snow dries up in Zalmon' does not agree with the whole spirit of the verse. vid. 'Notes on Ps.68', *JBL* 71, 1952, pp.161ff. The Jerusalem Bible interprets the verse in a figurative sense, see Johnson, *op.cit.* p.80, where the verse is rendered as a simile; also NEB.

Perhaps we may take it as having both these aspects. There might have been a severe snow-storm at the time of the battle which forced the enemy to withdraw or admit defeat. The poet regards it as an intervention of Yahweh with His power over the natural phenomena. (cf. Josh. 10.11; Ex. 9.23; Jg. 5.20-21)

ii. vv.16-19. The Triumphant Entry of Yahweh in to Zion.

In the poetic imagination, the mountains have been attributed with quasi-consciousness. Verses 16-17 resound almost like Pss. 114.5ff, 77.16f. Here, the Psalmist echoes the ancient view that the gods had their abode in the peaks of the mountains. Yahweh shifts His residence from Sinai to Zion. He comes as a mighty warrior. (vv.18-19) The text of v.18 is obscure. Albright translates:-

The chariots of Yahweh were two (?) thousand
Two myriads the bowmen of my Lord,
When they brought the Holy (Ark) from Sinai.¹

This rendering has obliterated the sense of the cultic vision of the coming of the Lord. The army of the Lord is to be understood in terms of the hosts of heaven (2 Kings. 6.16; Is. 66.15; Dt. 33.2) rather than 'bowmen' or 'archers'.² The RSV is not very satisfactory in this verse. The translation given by Johnson, gives a better sense than other renderings. It reads:-

The chariots of God are thousands upon thousands;
The Lord is amid them, He of Sinai is in the sanctuary.³

The Rider on the clouds who makes the winds His messengers, fire and flame His ministers (cf. vv. 5, 3⁴, 10⁴. 3-4), now appears before the cultic community with all His retinue. When the mighty God takes His abode in the midst of man, He does not relinquish neither His majesty nor His power. The presence of this mighty God in the midst of the cult-community is their source of strength and courage.

The presence of the Lord in their midst gives the community freedom from the fear of death (v.21) Here, some scholars see an allusion to the victory of Ba'al over Mot.⁴ Others find allusion to

1. Albright. 'Notes on Ps. 68 and 134' in Interpretationes... p.4.

2. cf. Dahood. Psalms. 51-100. p.131.

3. Johnson. op.cit. p.82.

4. Nowinckel. PIW.1,152; Johnson. ibid; also cf. Ps. 48.15.

Satyr or goat monster in the word $\gamma\psi$ in v.22.¹ One cannot avoid mythical allusions in these verses, but it should not interfere with the interpretation of the psalm. The myth has a historical significance in this context. $\gamma\psi$ is to be understood with Cohen, as referring to the soldiers of the enemy who keep long hairs under a vow.² It may represent the captains or the soldiers of the foreign nations who plot against the people of God. (cf. Dt.32.42; Num.6.5.) And 'death' in this connection is the destruction or humiliation at the hands of the enemies. But Yahweh has universal authority and He is able to route the enemy in the heights and in the depths. (v.23; Amos.9.2-3; Ps.139.8) Both mythical and historical enemies are within the limit of His jurisdiction and therefore, the community can dwell in safety.

iii. vv.33-36.

The concept of universalism is continued. The kingdoms of the earth are called to pay homage to the Lord because He is the sovereign Lord. The expression שמי שמי קדוש is not very clear. It may suggest the 'primeval or the eternal heavens',³ or perhaps the 'highest heaven'. But the Lord is the One who rides in these heavens. He is its eternal ruler. From there He sends forth His mighty voice, which is the voice of command and judgment. (cf. 104.7, 46.7, 29.3-9) He is mighty in the heavenly realm and fearful in His sanctuary. (cf. vv.35-36) Therefore, He deserves the homage of all people. Since He is majestic and powerful, He is able to give strength and power to His people. (cf. Pss.8.5, 29.11, 46.2)

The main thoughts of the psalm concerning the theme under consideration may be summed up as follows:-

- i. The cultic community acknowledges the reality of God as revealed through the natural phenomena.
- ii. The giving of rain and the consequent prosperity of the land have been regarded as a sign of the manifestation of the Lord.

1. Albright. op.cit. in HUCA. vol.xxiii, 1950-51, p.27; Mowinkel regards $\gamma\psi$ as a reference to Edom Seir of Jg.5.4, Der Achtundsechzigste Psalm. p.49.

2. Cohen.A. The Psalms. p.213, also cf. Jg.5.2; Cohen.A. Joshua and Judges. p.193; Gray.J. (ed) Joshua, Judges and Ruth. pp.275ff

3. cf. Dahood. op.cit. p.132; Weiser. p.490.

- iii. The power of God is revealed in the realms of nature and history, in the storm, rain, heavens, the battle field and in the sanctuary. (vv.5,10,12f,25,34,36) In these spheres of activity He is a terror to the powers of chaos, and death. (vv.15,21-22)
- iv. It is the powerful authority of Yahweh revealed in the realm of nature and history, that inspires the Psalmist to proclaim the universal claim of the Lord.

Ps.77.

So far as the form of the psalm is concerned, two literary types are found in it, an individual lament and a hymn. Gunkel classifies it as a mixed type.

We may divide the psalm into three divisions.

- vv. 2-11. A lament over the present distress which is contrasted with the blessings of the past,
- vv.12-16. He recalls the wonderful deeds of the Lord in the past,
- vv.17-21. A description of theophany.

Verses 12-21 have the literary characteristics of a hymn. It has been suggested that the combining of the two sections of the psalm must have taken place for a specific situation.¹ But this need not be the case. Both parts of the psalm could have come from the experience of the poet. At first, he laments over the present agony and soon he changes his thoughts to the wonderful works of the Lord. This is a common feature which we find in other psalms of lament. (cf. 102,18.2-20) In the second part of the psalm (vv.12-21), the poet is invoking the power of Yahweh which has been revealed in the past on behalf of God's people. Meditation on the power of God strengthens him with the hope of speedy deliverance from his agony. Of course, the situation or the nature of the suffering cannot be determined in the light of this psalm. We are also not certain whether the poet represents an individual or the people.² The psalm is appropriate for a national day of lamentation when the theme of this psalm can bring hope and confidence in the cultic community.

1. cf. Kraus. Psalmen.1. p.530.

2. Anderson.G.W. 'The Psalms', in PCE, para 375b, Mowinckel considers it as a national psalm. FIW.1. p.227.

For our purpose we will take vv.12-21 where the Psalmist expresses his views on God and His relation to the order of nature.

i. vv.12-16.

In affliction the poet turns his thoughts to the mighty power of God where he can take shelter. He meditates over the wonderful deeds of the Lord which He had done on behalf of His people. Here, the language and thought-forms resembles the song of Moses in Ex.15. (cf. the use of נִסִּים in v.12 and Ex.15.2, cf. v.14-15 and Ex.15.11) The deeds are the signs ¹ (vv.12,16) which make Yahweh the unique God of redemption. In v.14, the poet underlines the unique nature of Yahweh in the use of the word וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה .² The otherness of God has been revealed through the works of redemption. It was a revelation of His power. (v.15b; Ps.106.8; Ex.14.18) The terms, mighty deeds, wonders, might, arm' (vv.12-16) have been used, in a sense, to heighten the greatness of the Lord and His power of redemption. According to the poet, there is no other God like Yahweh.³ The use of יְהוָה clearly indicates the Psalmist's acceptance of Yahweh alone as the true God.

ii. vv.17-21.

In the second part of the meditation, the poet sees the reaction of the powers of nature before the Lord. Some of these nature-powers represent the powers of chaos and others appear as attendants of the God of redemption. The waters and the deep are the remnants of the cosmic sea. Seeing God and they tremble with fear. (114.3f) On the other hand, the clouds, the thunder, the lightnings, the whirlwind and the earth-quake are the accompaniments of a theophany.⁴ (Ps.18.8ff; Hab.3; Ex.19.16f etc) In the vision of the poet, the Lord comes as the leader of the community and a great commotion takes place in the realm of nature. (cf. Is.40.10f, 42.13)

According to Weiser, this should be understood as the cultic experience of the community. The poet is not just narrating a

1. For the meaning of the word סִימָנִים cf. Robinson, H.W. Inspiration and Revelation in the O.T. p.37.

2. AV renders it 'the sanctuary', but 'Holy' is preferable and it corresponds to קֹדֶשׁ in v.14b.

3. In the light of Ex.15.11 we should expect יְהוָה refers to Yahweh alone. MT lacks the suffix 'our' with 'God' in v.14.

4. see additional note on Theophany.

past event but the reality of God's manifestation takes place in the cultic theophany.¹ It is through the realisation of God's power that the sufferer gets hope and confidence in distress. The last part of the psalm brings before the worshipper the realisation of Yahweh's power.

Although the power of Yahweh is a reality in the realm of nature and history, there is a kind of mystery associated with His revelation in nature. The God of Israel has never been identified with any powers of nature. He has not been given or associated with any particular form. Nevertheless, He was real in the experience of His people. In this psalm, the Exodus event has been regarded as an open manifestation of the power of God. Yet in v.20 we read 'thy footprints were unseen'. This is an indication that the reality of God can be explained only through analogical language. Nothing can exactly equate Him or reveal Him adequately, because He is the God who is extraordinary and incomprehensible. **צְתָהּ הָאֵל עֲשֵׂה**

סִפְּוּ does, not only mean that He is a doer of miracles, but He Himself is **סִפְּוּ**. (Jg.13.18)

Ps89.

The psalm is regarded as one of the early psalms in the Psalter. It has been subjected to much critical examination on account of its particular form and literary character. Under critical examination two main literary forms have been discovered in this psalm, a hymn and a lament. This can be seen from an analysis of the content. We may divide the psalm as follows:-

- vv.2-5 . A Hymnic introduction,
- vv.6-19 . A Hymn in praise of Yahweh, the victor over chaos, the creator and owner of Nature and the King of Israel,
- vv.20-38 . A narration of the covenant made with the dynasty of David,
- vv.39-51 . A bitter lament over the affliction of the Davidic king and a prayer to remember the sufferings of the king and his people.

In the light of its content, some scholars maintain that the psalm is a combination of two or three originally independent poems.² When we take into consideration the literary features of

1. cf. Weiser. op.cit. p.533.

2. Oestereley. op.cit. pp.396f, for a list of scholars who hold this view, see Johnson. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. 2nd ed. p.25 and note 1.

The psalms of lamentation,¹ we will find that this view is untenable. In such psalms the sufferer, whether the individual or the community, invokes the power of God who is able to help him in the time of affliction. Usually this invocation will have the characteristics of a hymn. (cf. 74.13ff, 102.12f) The transition of style and mood is due to the particular setting-in-life of the psalm. The psalm reflects the changing moods and hopes of the sufferer. In thought and conception the psalm is a unity, as it probably was in liturgical usage.²

The next problem is the question of interpretation. There are two main approaches, viz. the historical and cultic interpretations. We shall take the second line of interpretation first.

The Scandinavian School, particularly Engnell,³ Pedersen,⁴ Bentzen⁵, Ahlström⁶ and others regard that the psalm has no historical reference and is to be interpreted as a cultic liturgy. Bentzen goes to the extreme and says, 'What here look like the remnants of an "historical" situation of distress could be a strongly "historified" description of the ritual combat from the creation drama'.⁷ The suffering of the king has been regarded as the ritual suffering of the king in the cult as in the Babylonian New Year festival.⁸ Since we have already discussed elsewhere in this thesis⁹ about the feasibility of interpreting the Psalms in the light of the King-ideology of the ancient Near East, we do not propose to have another discussion in this context. Now we would just say that adequate evidence is still lacking to prove the ritual suffering of the Israelite king in the cult. So we may not accept the cultic interpretation of this psalm as these scholars hold.

There are others who see a specific historical situation.

1. Anderson, G.W. op.cit. para. 374b, 380b.

2. Anderson, G.W. op.cit. para. 377e.

3. Engnell, I. Studies in Divine Kingship in the A.N.E. pp. 146f

4. Pedersen, J. Die KMT-Legende: Berytus VI, 1941, pp. 63ff, cited by Kraus, J. op.cit. p. 617.

5. Bentzen, A. King and Messiah. pp. 29ff.

6. Ahlström, P. Ps. 89. Eine Liturgie aus dem Ritual des leidenden Königs.

7. Bentzen, A. op.cit. p. 30.

8. cf. Johnson, op.cit. pp. 103f, 2nd ed. pp. 112f.

9. cf. Ch. 4, 2.ii.

as the background of this psalm and interpret it accordingly.¹ Several historical situations have been suggested.² However, in the light of its content, it is hardly possible to establish the verity of any of these claims. The psalm does not exhibit any concrete features to support one particular historical event.³ Although we are not able to locate the psalm to a specific historical situation, we may be right if we associate it with a historical event, possibly in this context, a military set back. It is quite possible that the psalm has been composed by a court poet on such an occasion and later it has been used in the cult on a national day of lamentation. Mowinckel has rightly pointed out that this psalm should be treated as a psalm of national lament.⁴ In spirit and thought, the psalm has some similarity with Ps.18. In the cult, the king as the leader of the community may have led the worship. Therefore, the use of 'I' in this psalm seems to have a collective meaning.⁵ It has both the individual and collective aspects. Since this is a national lament, the humiliation of the king is regarded as the humiliation of the people. Some scholars are of the opinion that the psalm was originally used in the annual autumnal festival.⁶ Unless we support the view that the humiliation of the king refers to the ritual suffering of the Israelite king in the cult, it is difficult to see the relevance of this psalm of lamentation in the annual autumnal festival.

Here, we are concerned with the hymnic section of the psalm, especially from vv.6-19. This part may be subdivided as follows:-
 vv. 6-9. The uniqueness of God,
 vv.10-11. His victory over chaos,
 vv.12-13. His act of creation of nature and His lordship over it,
 vv.14-19. This most powerful and righteous God is the King of Israel.
 In the introduction of the hymn (vv.2-5) the Psalmist praises the true covenant love of God which He has shown to David, His anointed. (cf.2Sam.7)

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1. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.531f.
 2. Anderson.G.W. op.cit. para.377e.
 3. Weiser. The Psalms. p.591.
 4. Mowinckel. Ps.St.i. p.97.
 5. Mowinckel. PIW.1. pp.225f,235f.
 6. Weiser. op.cit. p.591.

The Psalmist thought¹ that God would maintain His covenant love 'firm as the ancient earth' and establish His faithfulness 'as the heavens'.² But the hope and faith are shattered to pieces. The present condition of the community does not confirm that the Lord is still maintaining His יְהוָה (cf. v.50). But the community has no other hope except to call upon Yahweh and plead with Him to remember His covenant love to David, His servant.

vv.6-9. His uniqueness.

Therefore, in these and the following verses, the poet is invoking the majesty, greatness, power and love of God, so that the community may be assured of Yahweh's real nature and be comforted in this time of national crisis.

First of all, Yahweh's greatness in the midst of the heavenly assembly is sung by the poet. This is no picture of the plurality of gods. The oneness of God, according to the faith of Israel, has never been conceived ~~as~~ as a mathematical unit. He has been acknowledged as 'the Lord of Hosts' (v.9), a fellowship of divinity. The assembly of the divine beings 'represent all the collective wisdom and power of the heavens'.³ It is the heavens that first acknowledge the קְדוּשָׁה of God. It does not mean 'promise' in this context.⁴ 'The word conveys the idea of what is mysterious, supernatural, divine'.⁵ It signifies the total otherness or separateness of Yahweh. So we render the word as 'uniqueness' of the Lord.⁶ (cf. Jg.13.18; Ps.77.15)

1. For translation of כִּי-אֶרְצֶה cf. BH margin. The text is difficult. RSV and NEB omit it. The LXX, θ , translate with 2nd pers. sing. suff. 'I acknowledge', Johnson. op.cit. p.107; Anderson. op.cit.377e; 'I said' (AV); In the whole context of the psalm, we want to retain the text and render 'for I thought'; cf. BDB for אֶרְצֶה and also Gen.20.11,26.9; Num.24.11; Ru.4.4; 1 Sam.20.26; 2 Sam.5.6,12.22; 2 Ki.5.11; Jg.15.2.
2. cf. NEB.
3. Robinson. H.W. Inspiration and Revelation in the O.T. pp.167f and esp. p.169; also see the comments on Ps.29.1, and Cross. F.M. 'The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah', JNES, xii, 1955, p.274; Vriezen. T.C. The Religion of Ancient Israel. p.36.
4. cf. Dahood. op.cit. p.508. He renders it as 'promise' on the analogy of Lev.22.21,27.2; Num.15.3,8. But in all these cases the word occurs along with קָדְשׁ and specifically means 'special votive offering', cf. BDB on קְדוּשָׁה ; Here the word is not specific as in the above mentioned contexts.
5. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.553.
6. cf. Robinson. H.W. op.cit. pp.37ff.

The Lord is not only unique in His essential nature but also trustworthy. The witness is made first by His close associates, the heavenly assembly. Verses 7ff emphatically repeat the idea of v.6. The question in v.7 implies that the Lord alone is unique and incomparable. (cf. Ex. 15.11) These verses reflect certain concepts of Deutero Isaiah. (cf. Is. 40.18f, 25f, 44.6-7, 46.5) Here, the Psalmist brings before the community the fearfulness, greatness, awesomeness, might, and integrity of the Lord. (vv. 8-9)

vv. 10-11. His Victory over chaos.

Through the use of mythical language the poet describes how the Lord had overcome the arrogance of chaos in the past. (cf. 74.13f) The myth has both cosmic and historical significance. As cosmic myth, it alludes to the struggle between Marduk and Tiamat in the Enuma elish, or the fight between Ba'al and forces of chaos.¹ In the historical realm, Rahab stands for the traditional enemy of Israel, viz. Egypt. (cf. Job. 9.13, 26.12; Ps. 87.4; Is. 30.7) Again in these verses, the intention of the poet is to underline the power of God that is still available for His people so that they could take shelter in time of national calamity.

vv. 12-13. His power which is revealed in creation.

All the visible phenomena of nature belong to the Lord. According to the Psalmist, the lordship of Yahweh over the physical realm is due to His claim as the creator. (cf. 24.1) The extremities of the land, the north and the south² are created by the Lord. (cf. 95.5, 148.4, 7) The mountain peaks, Hermon and Tabor rejoice in His name because they can claim Yahweh as their creator. The joy of the natural phenomena before the Lord is a frequent thought found in the Psalms. (cf. 69.55, 96.11, 98.7, 148)

vv. 14-19. The righteous and mighty God is the King of Israel.

The thought of the power of God is continued. The hand of the Lord is mighty and is lifted high as if to strike in an action.

1. Johnson. op.cit. p.108 and note 4, ANET. pp.61ff, 137, 138.

2. In v.13 the text is obscure. The LXX reads καὶ θελαίσσας for יְצִי, assuming a different textual reading. The NAB reads 'Amanus', a pure conjecture in this context. We prefer to retain the RSV rendering, because that agrees with יְצִי. Moreover, names of four mountains in one verse seem to be a very unlikely occurrence.

This comes as a climax of the liturgy of glorification. Then the poet describes the essential nature of Yahweh's rule. (v.15) **Divergent** views have been expressed on the interpretation of this verse. According to Widengren, P T S is a reference to an old Canaanite deity,¹ a very improbable conjecture in the light of the Hebrew understanding of God. If Sedek is a deity, we have to discover deities for the other parallel words occurring in this verse. P T S and טפנׁו have been hypostatized by Ahlström.² It cannot be understood as a 'power-charged sphere beneficial to man' either.³ These conjectures and interpretations are based on the ideas prevalent in the ancient Near East. Here, one should interpret the verse in the total revelation of God in the Old Testament. Righteousness, justice, true love and faithfulness are the essential bases of the divine government. (cf. Prov. 16.12, 20.28; Ps. 97.2) The words have been used in a figurative sense⁴ to depict the reality of Yahweh's nearness in the midst of the cultic community. The throne of Yahweh is an expression of the nearness⁵ and authority of Yahweh.⁶ In the cultic use of this psalm, the hymn of glorification gives the community, confidence in the essential nature of Yahweh. When He arises to judge the cause of His people, these essential nature of God will be realised in the realm of history. (cf. 85.11ff) The chanting of the psalm continues before the presence of God and therefore the hope of the community is not altogether lost even in the tragic situations when the anointed of the Lord feels that he is on the verge of death. (cf. vv. 48-49)

Ps. 102.

Traditionally the psalm has been used as one of the seven penitential psalms. (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) But the psalm from within, shows hardly any signs of a penitential psalm. The elements

1. cf. Widengren, Geo. The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation as Religious Documents. p. 71.

2. Ahlström. op.cit. p. 78.

3. Koch, K. 'Sdq im A.T., Eine Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung'. pp. 35ff. an unpublished dissertation, Heidelberg University, 1955, cited by Ruble, R.T. in 'A Study of the Root Sdk in the Psalter', an unpublished dissertation submitted to the University of Edinburgh, 1964, p. 65.

4. cf. Ruble, R.T. op.cit. p. 67.

5. Eichrodt. Theology of the O.T. Vol. I. p. 110; Jacob, E. Theology of the O.T. pp. 256-257.

6. DeVaux. Ancient Israel etc. p. 106.

of lament, hymn and prophecy, are found in the psalm. The poetic style is not consistent. It seems that in the process of transmission, the poem has suffered textual disorder. The elements of different literary genre arouse suspicion among the scholars with regard to the unity of the psalm.¹ But in the light of what we have already said about the formal character of similar psalms,² we may affirm the unity of Ps.102.

The superscription gives a fairly adequate account of the nature of the psalm. This is an individual lament. We have no evidence to determine the original Sitz im Leben of the psalm. It seems that the author had undergone or is undergoing some kind of physical agony, most probably sickness. It is quite likely that the psalm was originally composed by an individual from his personal experience and later it was adopted by the cultic community to be used by the individuals and the community, on occasions of suffering and disaster.³ In the liturgical context, the 'I' should be understood as the representative of the community, the leader of the worship.⁴ In the cult, the psalm is throbbing with the deep agony and anguish of the community. The concept of a deep sense of corporate personality also has to be borne in mind as we interpret this psalm.

This psalm may be divided into three sections.

- vv. 2-12. The miserable plight of the sufferer,
- vv.13-23. A hymn celebrating the eternal kingship of the Lord and a prayer for the deliverance and restitution of Israel.
- vv.24-29. The sufferer commits himself to the care of the eternal creator of the world.

Now we may examine vv.13, 26-28 which are relevant for our particular concern.

The Psalmist is passing through the valley of sorrow, and from its darkest places he could see the rays of hope and confidence. In v.13, he declares two of his convictions, viz. that the Lord is the eternal king and His קִדְשׁוֹ shall be known to all generations. The RSV

1. Oestereley. op.cit. p.453; McCullough.S. op.cit. p.539.

2. cf.Ps.77,89 above, also Nowinckel.PIV.1. p.219; Weiser. op.cit. p.653.

3. cf.Nowinckel. PIV.Vol.II. p.9.

4. cf. Nowinckel. PIV.1.

rendering of **כבוד** as 'name' and the **NEB** as 'fame' do not sufficiently convey the actual meaning of the word. The poet is concerned about the eternal rule of God and its tangible reality in the midst of the community. The poet is not satisfied with the mere prestige or fame that the Lord is the king, but he wants to have the nearness and presence of the king with him and the community. **כבוד**, in this context almost means the 'presence' of the Lord.¹ The kingdom of God is the visible revelation of the reality of God in the midst of the people. With this faith and conviction, the poet continues to plead with the Lord for the deliverance of Jerusalem. (vv.14f)

In vv.26-28, the poet declares how the Lord had created the earth and the heaven in the past. (Pss.24.2,104.5,19.2) The visible phenomena of nature bears witness to the creative power of Yahweh. But the emphasis is not on the physical world. Even they (v.27 **הַיָּמִין**) may perish and change (note the verb **אָבַח**), but God, its creator will remain reliable and unchangeable as ever before. Here, we notice a different emphasis which had not been stressed in the ancient Near East, namely the dissolution of the physical world. (cf.Ps.46.2; Is.51.6) The world of matter is not eternal. They are transient like man. (cf.vv.4ff,24ff) There is nothing eternal except the Lord. They are the real security of the health of the community.² It is quite likely that the Psalmist is, here, using a hyperbolic language to express the certainty of Yahweh's eternal presence. (cf.46.1-3) The ending of the psalm rings a note of supreme confidence. Whatever might happen in the realm of nature, nothing would affect the eternal power and reliability of Yahweh, the Ruler and Creator of the world. He is a sure rock of refuge in times of suffering.

Ps.106.

This has been regarded as one of the companion psalms to Pss. 78 and 105. But despite the similarities in structure these psalms vary considerably in their motives. The significant point of view of this psalm is 'Yahwes Huld und Israels Schuld', observes Kraus.³

1. cf.Ex.3.15; Weiser. on Ps.145.7, op.cit. p.827; For the detailed meaning of the word, see DeBoer. Gedenken und Gedachtnis in der Welt des Alten Testaments, p.65; Childs.B.S. Memory and Tradition. p.71.

2. cf.Dahm. op.cit. p.239.

3. Kraus. op.cit. p.727.

Here, the Psalmist's interpretation of history is very similar to the Deuteronomist's points of view especially as revealed in the Book of Judges. Peters assumes that there is a didactic motif in this psalm.¹ But it is not very obvious.

It is difficult to determine the original setting-in-life of the psalm. The content of the psalm is appropriate for a covenant renewal ceremony, which might have taken place in the annual autumn festival.² Here, history provides the material for a confession of sins and a prayer for the restoration on the part of the congregation.³ The psalm may be classified as a lament of the congregation.⁴ The literary elements of a hymn and a lament which we find in this psalm need not disrupt the unity of it, because such mixed literary form is a characteristic feature of the psalms of lamentation.

The psalm may be divided as follows:-

- vv. 1-5. A call to acknowledge Yahweh's unfailing goodness and love, Psalmist's personal request to spare him to see the restoration of the people,
- vv. 6-33. A confession of sin reciting the failures of the past history of Israel,
- vv. 34-46. Failures in the land of Canaan,
- v. 47. A concluding doxology to the 4th Book of the Psalter.

vv. 7-12.

The concept of God and nature which is described in this section has already been discussed in connection with Ps. 105.27ff.⁵ Therefore, here we may not make a detailed study of the text. However, certain points will be raised.

The acts of God have been regarded as מִצְדָּוֹת , the unique signs of Yahweh's love revealed in the realm of nature, particularly in the context of the Exodus. (cf. v. 7, 78.11, 32; III.4; Neh. 9.17) These events are not miracles in the ordinary sense of the word, but extraordinary signs that take place in the realm of nature or history. It is pointless to argue that they are mere historical or natural events. The terms 'history and nature' are mere words of abstraction which had no place in the thought of ancient Israel. 'All these notions - Nature, sickness, death, history and so on - are merely

1. Peters. N. Das Buch der Psalmen. p. 265.

2. cf. Weiser. op.cit. p. 679; Anderson. G. W. op.cit. para. 381b.

3. cf. Nowinckel. FW. II. p. 112.

4. cf. Leslie. op.cit. p. 164.

5. also cf. Iss. 78, 77. 13f.

vast ciphers'¹ so far as the ancient Israel is concerned. They separate man from the presence of God. It was through concrete and tangible events that they realised the reality of God. The visible physical phenomena mediated to the people of Israel such concrete evidence for the acts of God. According to the Psalmist, the Most High² was the author of אֱלֹהֵי טוֹב in nature. He was regarded as the majestic creator of the universe. (cf.v.7b; Gen.14.18-22) The Jerusalem cultic community knew Him as the creator God.³

According to the Psalmist, the great exodus event was a unique witness to the power of the Lord. It was wrought for the sake of His name. (cf.v.8; Ex.14.18; Ps.77.15) Here, the power had been revealed in the physical realm so that everybody could see it. The witness of history serves to demonstrate the saving power to the succeeding generations.

In vv.9-12, the poet does no mistake in distinguishing the powers of nature and the enemies of Israel. (cf.vv.9,10) But the verb כָּרַע alludes to the mythical concept of the chaotic forces. (cf.104.7) Nevertheless, 'the waters' in v.11 have been used to destroy the enemies of the people. Apparently this shows that the 'waters' were not regarded as enemies in this context. Therefore, v.9 should be regarded as a figurative expression. Moreover, אֱלֹהֵי טוֹב in plural occurs as a parallel to the 'Red Sea'.

The revelation of God's power manifested at the Exodus, has become the corner-stone of the faith and history of Israel. (cf.v.12; Ex.14.31) In a sense, the salvation-history takes shape from the revelation of divine power which manifested in the realm of nature at Exodus.

Ps.107.

This psalm consists of a communal thanksgiving and a hymn. The mixed literary form of the psalm led some scholars to question its

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1. von Rad. 'Some Aspects of the O.T. World-View' in PHOE. p.154.
 2. In the light of Ps.78.17,56, we prefer to read אֱלֹהֵי טוֹב in this context. RSV and NBB omit the word. The verb requires an object. Eleyon also corresponds to the person who is implied by the 2nd sing. suffix in v.7c.
 3. Since Jerusalem was a Jebusite centre worshipping El Eleyon, the creator-god of the Canaanites, we cannot deny a possible influence from the Canaanites on the cultic community with regard to their faith in Yahweh as the creator of the world.

unity.¹ In the light of the liturgical background of the psalm, we need not doubt about the unity of Ps.107. The first part (vv.1-32) is a well-arranged poem of thanksgiving in which different groups of worshippers have been called to thank God for what they have been benefited by Him. The second part, a hymn (vv.33-41), is a common testimony of the community to the providential care of God in the realm of nature and history.²

The occasion of the psalm seems to be a great annual thanksgiving day, probably one of the important festival days when pilgrims from all over the world throng to Jerusalem to pay their vows and sacrifices.³ We have no internal evidence to prove any one of the festivals as the cultic occasion of this psalm.

The psalm has two main divisions. The content of the psalm is given below.

- i. vv. 1-32. A call to thank the Lord for what He had done in the past,
 - a)vv. 1-3. The poet calls the redeemed,
 - b)vv. 4-9. The poet calls those who wandered in the desert, perhaps the caravan traders,
 - c)vv.10-16. The poet calls those who sat in darkness and gloom, probably the exiles,
 - d)vv.17-22. The poet calls the sick,
 - e)vv.23-32. The poet calls the business men who undertake perilous voyages in the sea.
- ii. vv.33-41. A hymnic description of what God had done in the realm of nature and history.
- vv.42-43. Declare the didactic motif of the psalm.

In this psalm, we may examine vv.24-29 and 33-38.

vv.24-29. Description of a storm in the Sea.

This is a classical example of the Psalmist's observation of nature. The description of the storm is beautifully delineated. Here, we see the faith of the Psalmist. The storm-wind rose at the command of God. The waves mounted on high. The men at the sea tossed to and fro, up and down. They lost heart before the mounting

1. Oesterley. op.cit. p.452.

2. cf.Weiser. op.cit. p.685.

3. Weiser. ibid.

waves and the raging sea. But they did not lose faith in the Lord of the storm. At their cry, the Lord stilled the sea. (cf. Jo. 2.)

What is described above is the מַסְבֵּי of the Lord.

(v. 24)¹ Nature and its powers are not in the hands of a capricious deity, but under the control of a benevolent and loving God. (cf. v. 31) The Psalmist and the men at the sea certainly have acknowledged and believed Yahweh's power over the natural phenomena. Since He is their creator, He has power and authority over them. (cf. 104. 4-9)

vv. 33-38. God's reaction to moral relapse.

According to the Psalmist, natural catastrophe occurs as a result of man's failure to respond to the moral demands of God. (cf. vv. 33-34) The righteous and loving God cares for the hungry and needy. For their sake, He changes the desert 'into standing pools, and parched land into springs of water'. (v. 35) 'He gives the hungry a home' (v. 36)² 'Yahwe hat uneingeschränkte Macht über das Kulturland und über die Wüste', says Kraus.³ The prophetic faith is reflected in this psalm. (cf. Is. 41. 17ff, 43. 19f, 55, 52. 15ff)

The psalm testifies to the power and authority of God over the phenomena of nature. God is righteous and loving and therefore, the acts of redemption and providence are believed to be the signs of His love. His reaction to the moral failure of man comes out in the form of natural catastrophe while His affection and concern for the poor and the hungry manifest itself through the renewal of nature and the prosperity of the land. Here, we find a wisdom motive, the doctrine of retribution. (cf. מִי 42-43)

Ps. 115.

There is no single type in the Psalter under which we can classify this psalm. It consists of the literary elements of lament, antiphonal song and hymn. Gunkel has classified it as a psalm of lament. Since the psalms of lament have varied literary features, (cf. 89, 102 etc), Gunkel is right in classifying the psalm under the lament. Of course, this is a liturgy of mixed type.⁴ In the LXX and the Vulgate this psalm is joined with Ps. 114.

1. See above the exegesis on Ps. 106. 7-12.

2. NEB.

3. Kraus. op.cit. p. 740.

4. McCullough. S. op.cit. p. 606; Kraus. op.cit. p. 785.

The exact occasion of the psalm is not certain. According to Mowinckel, the occasion of the psalm is a day of penance,¹ perhaps one of the great pilgrimage festivals.² In the light of vv.10f we can be certain of the cultic use of the psalm. The text itself is not of much help to determine the original Sitz im Leben. The first two verses suggest that the community was undergoing some kind of national humiliation.

The following are the main parts of the psalm.

vv. 1-2. An introduction with a lament.

vv. 3-8. A hymn, the heavenly God is contrasted with the impotent idols,

vv. 9-11. Israel's trust, Yahweh,

vv.12-15. A prayer and benediction,

vv.16-18. A concluding hymn of praise.

vv.3,15-16.

These are the relevant verses for our consideration. Here, we find that the community in a state of despair and despondency invokes the name of the Lord. (cf.v.1) It is for the sake of His name, His true love and for His faithfulness, that the Lord should act now when the community is humiliated and derided all around. The nations deride and ask, where is your mighty God? The answer of the Psalmist gives some insight into his concept of God. He says,

Our God is in high heaven;

He does whatever pleases Him.³

The psalm emphasises two cardinal views of the Hebrew faith. Firstly, he affirms the transcendence of God. He does not belong to the earth which is only His creation. No physical phenomena could contain Him. He is far above and beyond. He remains as the totally Other.

Secondly, the absolute freedom of the Lord to do whatever pleases Him, is acknowledged. The verb *הוּשָׁא* implies something already done. Here, the LXX adds *ἀνω, ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐν τῇ γῆ*. If the LXX was translating from an earlier Hebrew text, the idea seems excellent. The Lord has shown His freedom of action not only in heaven but in earth as well. His action implies the creative deeds as well as the deeds in history.

1. Mowinckel. III.II. p.50.

2. Weiser. op.cit. p.714.

3. NEEB.

There is an implicit polemic purpose in vv.3-8. The Psalmist's answer to the mocking of the nations ingeniously attacks the impotence of the objects of their worship. The idols are earthly and they are absolutely earth-bound. They have no freedom and always depend on the freedom of their makers, the men. In these verses the Psalmist exposes the futility of idol worship. The Psalmist, in unequivocal terms, affirms the monotheistic faith. Neither syncretism nor henotheism has any place in his theology. We should acknowledge him as a monotheist.¹ (cf.86.9,10,96.5,97.7,135.15f,136.4)
vv.15-16.

The thought of v.3 is continued in these verses. The Lord belongs to the heaven because it is His own. Although the versions have a different reading,² one would prefer to retain the MT. The NEB renders v.16 'The heavens, they are the Lord's;

The earth He has given to all mankind.' (cf.Ps.8.7) God does not belong to earth. But this does not exclude His authority and right over the earth. He is its owner. (24.1) He has created it and given to man to look after and cultivate it. (cf.Gen.1.28f, 2.8,3.23) Man is only a tenant and a gardener. He is responsible to God the true owner of the land. It is this faith that the Lord is the true owner of the land that enabled the people of Israel to acknowledge the gift of Canaan as if from the hands of the Lord. (cf.Ps.111.6,105.11)

Since Yahweh is the true Lord, He alone is able to bless the people on the land. So the blessing is pronounced in the name of the God who created the heaven and earth. (cf.v.15,121.2,124.8,135.6) The Lord gives the increase to all the generations. (cf.v.14) The creator God is also the preserver. He remembers mankind and blesses them. By remembering, the Lord makes His presence³ available to mankind. (cf.v.12) This is a comforting message to the people in their sufferings.

1. cf. **Flint .F.B.** The Religious Ideas of the Psalms. p.16; Mowinckel. PIW.I. p.98; Gesterley assumes that the Psalmist had no pure monotheistic belief. This is a dubious view about the faith of the Psalmist. Since the Psalmist had a background in which the nature-religions acknowledged many gods, the Psalmist could not keep a water-tight mentality without mentioning the names of the gods. Mentioning their names does in no way impinge the monotheistic faith of the Psalmist. cf. Gesterley. op.cit.p.474

2. The LXX reads $\delta \text{ \u03c5}\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma \text{ \tau\omicron}\upsilon \text{ \u03c5}\rho\alpha\nu\hat{\omicron}\upsilon$, also S,T.

3. cf. the Exegesis on Ps.102.13.

7. Other Poems.

There are few psalms which have their own distinctive characteristics. They cannot be brought under a class of literary types because they have their own particular literary features. Among such, Pss.50 and 78 are relevant for our investigation.

Ps.50.

This psalm has been regarded as a prophetic liturgy.¹ The spirit of the psalm is not conducive to the cultic practices of the temple.² This does not label the psalm as anti-cultic. The psalm may have taken its origin from the cultic situation itself. The author, probably a cultic prophet, with the intention of injecting more spiritual content³ and life in the liturgical practices of the temple, admonishes and rebukes the community. This is not a didactic psalm in imitation of the wise men of Israel because it vibrates, not the sentiments of a wisdom writer,⁴ but the spirit of a prophet.

The psalm is suitable for the renewal of the covenant. (cf.v.5)⁵ Perhaps we could relate the psalm more closely to the moment when Yahweh appears before the cultic community for judgment. (cf.v.4)

The psalm exhibits a clear construction. It may be divided as follows:-

vv. 1-6. A hymn, announcing the epiphany of the Lord,

vv. 7-21. A prophetic utterance, expounding the true nature of worship and rebuking the wicked,

vv.22-23. A solemn warning and a promise.

vv.1-6,10-11. In these verses we get a glimpse into the Psalmist's view of God and nature, He begins the psalm with a theophanic description which shows linguistic resemblance to the Sinai theophany. (cf.Ex.19.16ff) The God of Sinai is already in Zion. (cf.Ps.68.18ff) In Zion, He is El, the mighty One, the Lord of Israel. Probably the author belonged to the tradition of the faithful people who had taken a solemn pledge to serve יהוה יי אלהים אלהינו. (cf.v.1; Josh.22.22, 24.19) The manifestation of the Lord, according to the poet, is still with the paraphernalia of nature-phenomena. He appears with devouring

1. Gunkel. Die Psalmen. p.214.

2. von Rad. 'The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch', PHOE, p.23.

3. cf.Mowinckel. PIW.II. p.22.

4. contra. Kirkpatrick. op.cit. p.276.

5. cf.Anderson.G.W. op.cit. para.570c; Weiser. op.cit. p.593.

fire and mighty tempest, which make the community aware of the unapproachableness, invisibility and power of the God of Jerusalem. (cf. Dt. 33.2; 1 Ki. 19.11ff; Ps. 18.8f, 97.3f) The Lord summons the earth and the heavens to be His witnesses. (vv. 1,4; Dt. 4.26, 32.1; Is. 1.2; Mic. 1.2f; 6.1ff)

'The cosmic setting gives everything a universal and eschatological emphasis', says Weiser.¹ But we cannot be certain whether the psalm gives an eschatological emphasis. According to Mowinckel, here, the verb 'judge' means only 'admonish and rebuke'.² The prophetic message of the psalm is more relevant to the present life of the community than to their distant future.

The natural phenomena, in the psalm, have been regarded as a witness against man. They are on God's side. The heaven testifies to the righteousness of God. (v. 6, 97.6) It also bears witness to His glory. (19.2)

vv. 10-11. Here, the poet declares that all the living creatures belong to God, the beast of the forest, the cattle on the hills, the birds of the air,³ and the teeming life of the fields. Since He is the owner, He lacks nothing and does not require anything from man. What is required of man is due honour and right relationship with God, his Creator and Judge. (cf. vv. 15, 23, also Mic. 6.8)

According to the psalm, the Lord is all-sufficient because He is the creator and ruler of the physical realm. He reveals Himself to man in order that man might acknowledge Him as the true God, (cf. vv. 1, 7), pay Him homage and establish communion with Him.

Ps. 78.

This is a historical psalm. The Psalmist cites the past experiences of his people in order to give instruction in the way of true religion. The superscription of the psalm alludes to the didactic motive of the poet.⁴ The poet is selective in his approach to history and not slavishly dependant on the Pentateuchal traditions.

1. Weiser. *op.cit.* p. 395.

2. Mowinckel. PIW. II. p. 71.

3. RSV, here (v. 11), follows the LXX, S and T, which seems better than the MT and NEB which read 'the mountains'.

4. For the meaning of 'Maskil', cf. Kirkpatrick. *op.cit.* p. xix, also Pss. 32.8, 47.8.

A synopsis of the Heilsgeschichte is given in the form of a hymn, drawing salutary lessons from the past. In a sense, the past history of the people acts as a teacher of moral instruction. The author of the psalm, probably, is a priest who is authorised to impart Torah.¹ (cf.v.1; Mal.2.6-7)

The occasion of the psalm has been regarded as the covenant renewal ceremony. The Manual of Discipline of the Qumran community throws some light on the use of the Heilsgeschichte in the liturgy of the renewal of the covenant.² Therefore, we may confirm the view that the psalm has originally been used in a covenant renewal ceremony.

The following main parts are found in the psalm.

- vv. 1-8. An introduction with the features of wisdom writing, (cf.49.1f)
- vv. 9-31. The rebellion of the people in spite of the goodness of of the Lord,
- vv.32-39. The continuous waywardness of the people,
- vv.40-55. A retrospection of the Exodus event,
- vv.56-66. The failure of Israel in Canaan,
- vv.67-72. The rejection of Ephraim and the election of Judah, Jerusalem and David.

The poet makes a rapid survey of the past history of Israel and he chooses events which would communicate to the generations, the saving deeds of the Lord and help them to set their hope in God and keep His commandments. (cf.vv.4,7) History reminds the community, God's goodness and man's failure to respond to His love in the past. The poet comes very close to the Deuteronomic view of history.

Verses 12-16,19-20,23-27,39,47-52 illustrate the Psalmist's view of God and nature. But, since we have already examined similar psalms and ideas elsewhere in this thesis,³ we do not intend to elaborate our discussion in this context. However, we make few observations.

The poet is particular in citing the extraordinary events that took place in connection with the Exodus and the wandering in the wilderness. It is significant to note that the words סבב, and ניסבב have been used to denote a different kind of miracle other than the plagues in Egypt. (cf.vv.4,11,12) God's extraordinary

1. cf.Weiser. op.cit. p.539.

2. cf.Burrows.M. The Dead Sea Scrolls. pp.371ff.

3. see above, Ch.3.I.i, also exegesis of Pss.105,106.

acts in relation to nature are the signs of His love for the people. They are the manifestation of His power as well as the exhibition of His inner being. The cloud and the fiery light (v.14) represent the continuous presence of the Lord with the rebellious people.

vv.25-27. Feeding with Manna and the quails.

God is not only the redeemer but also the preserver. He gives provisions to man at unexpected times through unbelievable means. Although these provisions come from nature, the writers of the O.T. attribute it to the direct acts of God. (cf.vv.25-26, 1 Ki.17.4-16) The sky, the east wind, and the south wind co-operate with God to bring provisions for His people. 'Manna' has been associated with a kind of drop-like formation from the exude of a tree-insect on the Sinai Peninsula. The nomads call it 'Mann or Mann as-samā'.¹ Quails were a kind of migrating birds which come in spring and autumn seasons. These gifts of nature, according to the Psalmist, are the provisions from God. But the men of ingratitude rebel against God 'while the food was still in their mouths'. (v.30) So they were punished (v.33), but the love and compassion of the Lord prevailed over His righteous anger. What is man that he should be punished! 'Man is 'but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again'. (v.39) The Psalmist realises the transience and weakness of man because man is always viewed in the great light of divine majesty and power.

This psalm strikes a significant note concerning the acts of God. According to him, the substance of the תְּהִלָּתוֹ of Israel is תְּהִלָּתוֹ יְהוָה which are the signs and wonders which the Lord had done as the manifestation of His might. (cf.v.4) This is what one generation must make known to the coming generations. (cf.145.4-7) The psalm, thus, underlines the crux of the whole praises of Israel. God, whose reality is made known through the visible and tangible acts in the realm of nature and history, is the sum and substance of the 'Praises of Israel'.

This psalm declares the authority and power of God in nature through the recital of the Heilsgeschichte. 'For Israel there is only the God who is experienced in history, from whom all working of miracles stems, and who places his working of miracles at the

1. cf. Neth.M. Exodus. p.132; Cassuto. Exodus - A Commentary. pp.195f.

service of His actions in history', says Noth.¹ These words of Martin Noth stem from an over-emphasis given to the abstract concept of history which was, in all probability, not real to the ancient Israel.² 'The Old Testament draws no such distinction between Nature and history'.³ They are one single area of reality under the direct control of God. Therefore, it is true to say that for Israel there is only the God who is experienced both in history and nature. The concern of Israel was neither history nor nature, but God and His praises.

1. Noth.M. op.cit. p.72.

2. von Rad. 'Some Aspects of the Old Testament World-View', PHOE, p.154.

3. von Rad. op.cit., in PHOE, p.155.

CHAPTER SIX.CONCLUSIONS.

Now it is our task to sum up the general conclusions which result from the investigation of the various relevant psalms. Here, we will follow the order which we have pursued in the exegetical study.

In our examination of the various psalms, we have found that there are twenty six hymns of praise which bear witness to the concept of God and Nature in the Psalms. They include the Hymns, the Enthronement Psalms, the Songs of Zion, and the Psalms of Thanksgiving. (8,19A,29,33,104,105,113,114,135,145,146,147,148;93,95,96,97,98,99;48,76,84,121;65,103,136)

First of all, certain features which we have observed with regard to the special approach and background of these hymns of praise may be stated.

Firstly, the conspicuous character of these psalms is the adoration of God whose majesty is seen through His deeds. We may naturally ask where did God reveal His mighty acts? Neither the concepts of nature nor of history as we understand them today, were in the vocabulary of the Psalmists. Therefore, we cannot give a right answer to the question which we have raised. Nevertheless, applying our own terminology we may say that the authors of these psalms were not seriously concerned about the deeds of God in history especially the salvation-history of Israel. Out of the 26 psalms we have examined, barely eight psalms give direct or indirect evidence to the concept of salvation-history in connection with the concept of God's relation to nature. (cf. Pss. 33,105,114,135,147,148,65,136) This indicates that eighteen of the twenty six hymns of praise which bear witness to the Psalmist's idea of God and Nature, describe it without any reference to the Heilsgeschichte. The poets transcend the bounds of clime and culture. Here, man meets his creator. The only way, if any one wants to relate the salvation-history in these psalms, is to claim that the poets belonged to the community which had the salvation-history. We doubt very much whether the poets themselves would venture to make such a claim.

Secondly, the concept of God and Nature in these psalms chiefly originates from a community whose life was primarily based on

an agricultural economy. The geographical disposition and the meteorological condition of the land reflect in these psalms. However, the faith of the authors in a God who controls the order of nature and provides the needs of man, is the mould in which the poets formulate their concepts about God and Nature.

Thirdly, we should say that these authors who had a pastoral or agricultural background would naturally tend to depict God in terms of terminologies from nature rather than history. Although we do not deny that the Israelites had attained a sense of history earlier than her neighbours, we should affirm that her still earlier understanding of God developed through her faith and observation of events in nature, such as defeat of the enemies by natural catastrophes (Ps.68.15,105.27-36,136.15-16, etc) or by the blessing of a long-awaited rain (147.8,135.7,65.10f) or giving the fodder for the sheep and the cattle, and food for man. (cf.33.19,104.14f,145.15,146.7,147.9,14, etc) The concept of time, too, was formulated on the basis of their agricultural life. The Gezer Calendar which may be dated to circa. 925 B.C. eloquently testifies the truth of what we have said. According to that Calendar,

Two months are harvest, two months are planting,
 Two months are later planting, one month is hoeing up flax,
 One month is harvest of barley, one month is harvest and
 measuring (of fruit)
 Two months are vine tending,
 One month is summer fruit.¹

An over-emphasis on the salvation-history should not obliterate the fact that Israel had known her God and His working in the realm of Nature, before she had developed a sense of history.

The Concept of God and Nature in the Hymns of Praise.

So far as our thesis is concerned, the Hymns of praise have a great contribution. The results of our study may be stated below.

1. God, and not nature, is the primary concern of these psalms. Nature appears, as if, to bear witness to the glory of God. Occasionally, the poet personifies the natural phenomena. But this is nothing more than a mere literary device of the poet. The

1. Kraus.H.J. Worship in Israel. p.58 and ANET. p.320.

phenomena of nature have never been personalised as beings that deserve man's worship. Sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers and other phenomena of nature which the people of the ancient Near East worshipped, were de-personalised and depicted merely as material objects in creation. They belong to God who is their creator and ruler.

2. Since these psalms are theocentric, we do not see the equivalent of the modern secular concept of nature in them. This is an impossible view to be expected from the authors of these psalms. To explain the views on God and Nature, the poets have made use of the mythical language which was current in their age. However, this does not mean that the Psalmists acknowledged the ideas associated with the mythical language. Their strong faith in Yahweh would not have given them room to entertain a belief in beings or gods other than Yahweh. Everything was subjected to the supreme power of Yahweh. He was their only criterion to judge all other powers. Neither dualism nor disharmony between man and nature, had any place in the theology of the writers of the hymns. The only disharmony which they were aware of, was the disharmony between man and his Creator.

3. The faith in God that is embedded in these psalms, enables the authors to see the glory of God in nature. The natural phenomena do not reveal God but they serve as means of revelation. The faith in God is an a priori condition to hear the word of God that is communicated through nature, without words, without speech and without voice. (19.4) Nevertheless, it is an incessant and universal witness accessible to all.

4. These hymns affirm that God is the creator of the physical world. To explain their creation-faith, they do not adhere to one particular mode of expression. They have their own individual styles and expressions. For example, the heavens are 'the work of thy fingers' or 'He made the heavens' or 'stretched out the heavens like a tent'. (cf.8.4,96.5,104.2) God set 'the earth on its foundations' (104.5), 'the world is established' (95.1,96.10) 'He established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds which cannot be passed' (148.6), 'He spoke and they were created' (55.9,148.5, cf.136.4-9). These psalms show the primitive concept of the three-decked-world. It is obvious that the authors of these psalms did not depend on a particular tradition of Israelite faith in creation. Neither J or P can make any exclusive claim on these writers. The Psalmists seem to

represent the popular belief in the creation-faith.

5. The act of creation is understood not merely as a divine act in the indefinite past, but as a present continuous act of God. The natural order depends on God at every moment of its existence. He sustains and preserves all. The created natural phenomena also participate in the act of preservation. The springs 'give drink to every beast of the field' (104.11), 'the high mountains are for the wild goats, the rocks are a refuge for the badgers', the moon marks the seasons and the sun knows its course. (104.18-19, 19.6ff)

To the Psalmists there is no 'natural law' independent of God. The universe is governed by the word of God. (147.15f) The creative word is at work in the course of nature. He has given the natural phenomena decrees that cannot be violated. (148.6) He has set bounds for the sea that it may not engulf the dry land. (104.9) There is order and regularity in nature because God is at work and the natural phenomena implicitly obey the decrees of God given to them. God's continuous watch over the phenomenal world keep it from falling into chaos. If God hides His face, the creatures dismay. (104.29f) If He is angry, the earth trembles and the mountains shake. It is God's faithfulness and love (136, 33.4-5) that sustain the world.

6. The kingship of God is intimately connected with the concept of creation.¹ Creation is bringing order into existence, that is, establishing the physical world. (cf. 104.2f, 148.6, 8.4) The kingship of Yahweh is established when the Lord laid the foundation of the earth. (93.1-2, 96.10) Since then, He governs the universe. Realising this, the Psalmists explicitly use royal attributes such as **הוד, הדר, כבוד**, to Yahweh especially in association with His relation to the natural order. (8.2, 6, 19.2, 29.2, 104.1, 145.5). The royal privileges and functions **ששש**, and **הדרה** are also applied to Him in this context. (33.5) If these psalms are compositions of pre-exilic Israel, there is no doubt that the kingship of Yahweh was acknowledged in Israel in

1. cf. Johnson, A.R. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel. 2nd ed. p.142.

connection with the belief in creation. Therefore, the view that the kingship of Yahweh was not associated with the belief in creation before the exilic period, seems to be a dubious proposition.¹ In the Enthronement psalms Yahweh is celebrated as king because He is responsible for the order of nature. He judges and rules, both functions exercised by a king.²

7. The universal sovereignty of God which is acknowledged in these psalms springs mainly from the belief in Yahweh as the only God. The heavens and the earth testify to the universal glory and righteousness of God. (8.2,19.2,97.6,113.4,104)
8. These psalms do not share the mythical belief that the physical world was brought into existence by defeating the powers of the cosmic sea. There is no mention of a mythical fight in connection with the creation of the physical world. (cf.104.5f, 8.4,33.6,9,95.1,95.5,96.5,148.5-6) But these psalms do refer to the powers of the sea and the rivers. They are nothing but a figurative expression for the powers that threaten the cosmos which the Lord has already established. (cf.93.3f,104.7) The sea and the rivers are not always depicted as the powers of chaos. They are the work of His hands. (104.25f,95.4-5,8.9,148.7) The sea also exults at the celebration of the kingship of Yahweh. (96.11,98.7)
9. These hymns uphold the moral nature of the creator God. The דבן , טפשי and הקדש have been stressed as the essential character of God. (33.5,136) Since the creator is a personal being and has moral qualities, the works of His hands are reliable. Although He is transcendent, He is not aloof from mankind. He is the praise of Israel and the object of their worship. He gives His presence in the cult. He rules the world from the heavens and from Zion. (48.1-3,76.1-2,33.13) He meets the agricultural needs of the people. (84.6)
10. Some of these hymns associate the authority of Yahweh over the powers of nature with the salvation-history of Israel. (33, 105,114,135,147,148,65,136) In them, the natural phenomena - the sea, the mountains, the hills, the rivers, the springs, the desert and such - respond to the saving act of God at the creation of Israel. (105.27ff,65.5ff,114,135.8f) These natural

1. contra. Eissfeldt. C. *Kleine Schriften*. Bd. 1. p.191, 'Yahwe als König' ZAW, 46, 1928, pp. 81-105.

2. cf. Gray. J. 'Kingship of God in Prophets and Psalms', VT, XI, 1961, p. 5. Watts. J. D. W. 'Yahweh Malak Psalms', TZ. 21, 1965, p. 345.

phenomena have various reactions before the presence of their creator and king.

In these psalms, the creative deeds of the Lord are described as 'wonders or signs' along with the saving acts of God.

(136.4f,105.27ff) To the authors, the world of nature acted as a sign-post to the reality of a saving God whose faithfulness and love have been revealed through the salvation-history of Israel.

11. Undoubtedly, these psalms echo the monotheistic faith of Israel. (96.5,97.7,135.15-18) God's absolute freedom (135.6,115.3) and His wisdom have been revealed through the natural order. (104.24,136.5)
12. Man is no unique creature in the order of creation. His food comes from the earth and he goes back to the earth because he is but dust. (104.14,23,103.14) He is like grass that perishes on the morrow. (103.15f,8.5) His glory lies in the divine grace (8.7,103.17) by which he has been made the ruler of the realm of creation. In obedience and worship, he finds fulfilment of his life. (29.9,19.14,104.34,145.5,21)
13. The Psalmists reach the climax when, in their great vision, they include the phenomena of nature as a part of the worshipping community. (96.1,11,98.7,103.20-22,145.10,21,148) An inner unity between man and nature has been recognised by these psalms. That is, the unity in obedience to the word of God; nature to the decrees set by God (147.15f,148.6,104.9) and man to the revealed word of God, the Torah. (147.19,19.8f) The vision of worship in these psalms has a cosmic dimension, in which the hosts of heaven and the hosts of earth continuously participate in the praise of God.

The Royal Psalms.

In this group, there are only three psalms which throw some light on the Psalmists' concept of God and Nature. (18,72,144)

The conclusion of our investigation may be stated below.

1. Nature-theophany is a great theme in these psalms (18.8ff, 144.5f) The purpose of theophany is not to confound the royal person or his retinue with the sheer majesty and power of God. The theophany is a saving response of God on behalf of His servant, the king. He comes to rescue His servant from the attack of the powers of chaos - 'many waters', - (18.17) which is at work in the realm

of history.

2. There is a paradox in the nature-theophany. God is both revealed and hidden in it. He is revealed to the cultic community because they have 'faith' to receive the revelation. He is hidden to those who have no receptacle of 'faith'. Even to the cultic community, He is hidden as a person, but revealed as an active power. Therefore, the nature-theophany is to be regarded as a revelation of the active power of God and a revelation of His hidden reality.
3. According to these psalms, the status of nature has been transformed from the position of a mere onlooker to the status of a fellow-worker in the redemptive acts of God. The powers of nature belong to the hosts of God which obediently serve to fight against the powers of chaos. (18.14-15, 144.6) Nature is not a neutral ground. It is always on the side of God obediently carrying out His behests to fulfil the wider purposes of its creator.
4. Abundance of fertility and the prosperity of the land have been regarded as signs of a successful king. The king in Israel has been a channel of divine blessing. To the king, who maintains righteousness and justice in the land on behalf of God, the true King, nature gives her full yield. (cf. 72.1-4, 6-7, 12-14, 16) By virtue of his office, the king has no power to bring renewal of the land. He is a mere man who is like a breath and his days are like a passing shadow. (144.4) He remains even in his sacral capacity a member of the cultic community. He never 'takes the place of a god-king who vicariously suffers and "typifies" in a sacral act the cultic myth of the dying and rising god'.¹ This is the great distinction between the king-ideology of the ancient N.E. and the part of the king in the cultic life of Israel. He stands in need of God's help. (18.7) His people pray for him that God may send plenty and prosperity in his time. (72, 144.12ff)

The Psalms of Lamentation.

Pss. 74 and 90 are relevant for our particular theme. The main emphases are the following.

1. cf. Weiser, A. The Psalms. p. 63.

1. In these psalms, the people in distress cry to the God of great power. (cf.74.12f,90.16) It is in the creative and redemptive act of God that they discern the might of God. (74.12-15, 16-17) These psalms speak about the creation of what apparently seem to us opposites - day and night, summer and winter. But He has created the luminaries for the night. He fixed the bounds of the earth. The sun also is His creation. In a sense, light and darkness, cosmos and chaos belong to Yahweh. He controls them. (Is.45.7) Therefore, the poet believes that God is able to lighten the darkness of their suffering.
2. In these psalms, God's victory over the powers of chaos has been brought into the realm of salvation-history. The event of Exodus was a victory over the cosmic sea, the dragons, Leviathan and the rivers. (74.13-15) The lively imageries of the 'historicised' myth convinces the people of Yahweh's living power in history.
3. In contrast to the power and eternity of God, the Psalms describe the frailty and transience of man. (90.3-6,144.3-4,39.5-6, 105.14f etc) This view of man does not arise from a pessimistic outlook on life, rather it does represent the true understanding of the nature of man before the presence of God. Both man and nature owe their existence to God. God alone existed before everything. (90.2) One who realises the truth of the transient nature of man and his dependence on God, is the man of wisdom. (90.12) And such will take God as the true shelter. (90.1)

The Wisdom Psalms.

We have examined three psalms in this category (1,37,49) which have some bearing on our theme. What they witness to God and His relation to the natural world are stated below.

1. The writers of these psalms are not interested in depicting nature bearing witness to God or to His glory. They are not concerned about the salvation-history of Israel. The main concern of these psalms is man and his righteous life. The natural phenomena have been used metaphorically to illustrate the sayings of the writers. (cf.1.3-4,37.2,20,35) We may be right, if we conclude that these poems have a sort of secular understanding of nature.

2. The ephemeral character of human life is recognised. Death is the great leveller of all injustice and godlessness. The godlessman is compared to a perishing animal. He is led to Sheol, the land of no-return. Nothing can get his release from the grip of death. But God will ransom the soul of the God-fearing man from Sheol. (49.16)
3. The Sheol, the appointed place for the dead (49.10,15-16) is under the jurisdiction of God. (cf.139.8) Here, death is not so gruesome to the Psalmists. It is only a transfer of the soul from the terrestrial realm to Sheol, another region of the cosmic order. But the righteous wants to continue in communion with God which is possible only in the land of the living.

Mixed Poems.

Under this title we have examined nine psalms. (24,46,68, 77,89,102,106,107,115) As we draw the conclusion of our study of these psalms, we also include Pss.50 and 78, the two special psalms which have separately been dealt with under the heading 'Other Poems'.

1. God's ownership of the physical world is claimed by His right as the creator. (24.1-2,50.10-11,74.16-17,89.12) Man is only the tiller of the ground and the tenant of God. He has given the earth to the children of man. (115.16) The Lord is the sovereign and judge of the world. (24.7ff,50.6) He has absolute freedom to do whatever pleases Him. (115.3,135.6) The Lord's freedom over the world has been proved in the history of Israel by the gift of Canaan. (78.54-55,105.11,44)

The Lord is righteous and demands a moral relationship from man. (24.3f;Ps.15,89.15f) Failure to the moral demands of God leads to catastrophe in the realm of nature.

2. The name of the Lord as **אלהים יהוה**, **אל**, **עליון** has been frequently used in these psalms in connection with Yahweh's power and authority over the physical world. (46.5;50.1,14;68.20, 21;77.11,14,15; 78.7,8,17,18,19,34,35,41,56;89.8,27;106.7d (?),14, 21;107.11) In the light of the Canaanite background of the Psalms, these special names of God should be regarded with particular significance. By these names the Psalmist must have intended a polemic against the nature religions of the land. The confession **אלהים יהוה אל** brings the entire land under the dominion of Yahweh. The Psalmist feels the presence of the Lord in rain and the consequent fertility of the land. (68.9)

3. No rigid attitude has been maintained by the Psalmist with regard to the 'waters' in the Psalms. Occasionally in a figurative sense the waters represent the mythical water chaos, but most frequently they represent the physical element. (46.4,5;74.15f,77.17f, 106.11,107.25f) The waters are a source of blessing and represent the presence of God. (46.5,65.10,68.9f)
4. The physical phenomena have been used as a means of revelation. The Exodus event with all its associated nature-miracles revealed the power of God. (77.15,106.8) But paradoxically enough 'the footprints of the Lord' were unseen. (77.20) Despite the revelation of God through events in nature, the Psalmist always maintained the invisible and hidden character of Yahweh. He is unique and incomprehensible, **אֵל עֲשֵׂה פֶלֶא** (77.15, cf. Jg. 13.18-19).
5. The worshippers of the Lord invokes the power of Yahweh in times of crisis and agony. They trust in Him as the Victor over the powers of chaos and as the Creator of the physical world. The realm of nature may perish and change (46.2ff,102,26), but the Lord will remain eternally faithful.
6. The substance of the **יְהוָה לֹדֵת יְהוָה** is the **עֲשֵׂה** and **נִפְלְאוֹת** which have been revealed in nature and history. To keep the tradition of the praises of Yahweh and to transmit them to posterity, are the bounden duty of every faithful Israelite. (78.4)

S U M M A R Y.

1. It is neither Nature nor History, but the Praises of Yahweh are the supreme concern of the Psalmists. The praises of Yahweh are concerned with the acts of God in the physical world. The acts of God have been regarded as the signs of His majestic reality and active presence in the realm of man. Since the Psalms were mainly originated from an agrarian background, the Psalmists were first captivated by the visible and tangible acts of God in the physical realm. The concept of history came later as a handmaid, a via media, to translate these acts for the generations that came after.
2. The realm of Nature communicates the knowledge of God to the Psalmists who have had the knowledge of God in personal experience. Nature reveals His power and authority, but not His person. He is invisible and hidden behind the phenomena of Nature. He is truly known only in personal relation.
3. According to the Psalmists, the physical world is an order, governed by the divine law, the word of God in Nature. God is its Creator, Owner and Ruler. Not only that He brought them into existence, but He continuously maintains its order by constant creation. His vigil saves the natural order from falling into chaos. The natural phenomena participate in the continuous creation, in God's judgment and join in the cosmic worship of God.
4. Man is no unique creature according to the Psalms. Whatever uniqueness he has, ^{as} the vicegerent of God depends on his obedience to the Suzerain, God Himself. Even the king of Israel has no uniqueness by virtue of his office in the presence of God. He is but a man always seeking strength and wisdom from God, the real King of Israel.
5. The power of Yahweh over the forces of chaos and His might revealed through the preservation of Nature, has been the sure rock and refuge for man in times of affliction and agony. The Psalmists knew the ethical and moral character of God through His actions. Therefore, trusting in the true love and faithfulness of God, the people drew near to Him to realise His redeeming power as He manifested Himself in the cult.

6. The Psalmists believed in the origin and the end of the physical world. It is not eternal. The Natural order owes God to its origin, preservation and final end. The Psalms occasionally, employ the language of myth to explain the understanding of God and Nature. But the Psalmists' concepts of God and Nature should be seen and tested in the light of their deep faith in Yahweh.
7. The sovereignty of God comprehends the entire realm of Nature and man, even death and the abode of the dead. The Psalmists believed in One, Universal, and Personal God. The reference to the divine beings in heaven and to the gods on earth, has been made for the sole purpose of magnifying the glory and might of Yahweh. The Psalmists frequently made universal call to all the nations and all phenomena of Nature to acknowledge Yahweh as God and King.

A D D I T I O N A L N O T E S.

1. The Cult in Israel.

What is meant by cult? According to Mowinckel, the 'cult or ritual may be defined as the socially established or regulated holy acts and words in which the encounter and the communion of the deity with the congregation is established, developed and brought to its ultimate goal'.¹ The cult is one of the main aspects of religion. 'It has been said that religion appears in three main aspects, as cult, as myth and as ethos. Or, in other terms, as worship, as doctrine, and as behaviour (morals)'.² In the cult people wait before the presence of God as if to serve Him.³ The object of cultic worship is God. In the everyday life of the community He, the distant, inaccessible One, comes near and 'let His face shine upon' the community; the deus absconditus becomes the deus revelatus.⁴

In the Israelite cult there is a significant place for the 'narrative representation' of the mighty acts of God which He has done in the past. 'The memory'⁵ of Yahweh's earlier dealings with His people is carefully employed as an aid to present faith and faithfulness'.⁶ This is presented in the so-called 'festal myth'.⁷ In the Israelite cult, the substance of the 'festal myth' is brought into the realm of history. Although mythical language is employed in the recital of the 'festal myth' the emphasis is not on the mythical beliefs but on its 'historicised' meaning. This is a distinctive mark of the Israelite cult from the cults of the nature-religions. The elementary needs of life and harmony with the powers of Nature are the motives of the cult of the Nature-religions, while faithfulness to the covenant and shalom are the objects of the Israelite cult. The cultic community in Israel

1. Mowinckel. PIW.1. p.15.

2. *ibid*, also Mowinckel. Religion und Kultus, p.121, and p.13. (henceforth cited as RK).

3. Mowinckel. RK. pp.10f.

4. Gyllenberg.R. 'Kultus und Offenbarung', Interpretationes... p.76.

5. cf. Ps.145.7 (NEB), see below the discussion on 755.

6. Johnson. Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, 2nd ed. p.141.

7. A very unsatisfactory term given by the scholars for the cultic recital of the saving deeds of the Lord. For details see 'The Meaning of "Mythology" in Relation to the O.T.' Barr.J. in VI.ix, 1959; Schmidt.W.H. 'Mythos in A.T.' Ev.Th.27,1967, pp.257f; Hermisson.H.J. Sprache und Ritus im altisraelitischen Kult.

expect life, salvation, blessing, eternal life,¹ and prudence² from the cult.

There is another aspect in the Israelite worship, viz. the cultic 'realisation' of the epiphany of the Lord. The cultic experience of the presence of God is no way a secondary³ matter in the Israelite cult. The recital of the saving deeds of the Lord and the realisation of His presence are both equally significant. According to Gyllenberg, the cult is 'der Rahmen der Gotterlebens, des Gottbegegnens, der Selbstmitteilung des Göttlichen'.⁴ The community gathers together before the presence of (לפני יהוה, Lev.1.3), the Lord with praises, thanksgiving, confessions and petitions. The Israelite cult is not merely an ethnic element of their religion as some maintain it,⁵ because the amphictyonic tribes were constituted not on an ethnic basis, but on a covenant bond of faith in Yahweh. The cult may be regarded as a spontaneous response of the saved-community to the saving grace of the Lord.

The Israelite cult is to be understood differently from the cult of her neighbours. No convincing evidence has been put forward to establish the view that there is a ritual drama⁶ in the cult which is effective in itself, as a sort of opus operatum. The cultic actions are spontaneous response before the presence of the Lord. In this connection, we should give some thought to the much-discussed theme, viz, the cultic realisation of the presence of the Lord. A great many views have been expressed without sufficiently realising the cultic experience of Israel. Many of the views have been formulated and presented in the light of the cultic practices of the ancient Near East. Here, we propose to have a brief discussion on one of important cultic terms, viz. Zekher (noun), and its root (zkr).⁷

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1. This term suggests a Christian influence on Mowinckel's idea on Israelite worship. Deliverance from 'death' need not mean 'eternal life' in the Psalms.
 2. Mowinckel. PK. p.123.
 3. contra. Westermann 'Vergegenwärtigung der Geschichte in den Psalmen', in GSAT. p.314.
 4. Gyllenberg. op.cit. p.76.
 5. contra. Wellhausen. Israelitische und Judische Geschichte. 9th ed, 1958, p.17.
 6. cf. Johnson. op.cit. p.155, Mowinckel. PIW. pp.169f, 'Drama' in RGK² (1927)
 7. See the important works on ZKR, Schottroff. W., 'Gedenken' im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament. - Die Wurzel zākar im semitischen Sprachkreis., Childs. B.S. Memory and Tradition., DeBoer. P.A.H. Gedenken und Gedächtnis in der Welt des Alten Testaments.

'announced name' in the cult. In the light of Ex.3.15, these two terms represent the unique tetragrammaton יהוה who led Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Wherever people call upon (הזכיר) (Is.62.6, 26.13, 49.1, etc) יהוה and His name, the Lord makes His presence available. In the cult that which is 'remembered' 'becomes an active reality in the life of the believer'.¹ God's remembering has an ontological effect. 'God's remembering always implies His movement toward the object of His memory'.² So in the cult God becomes an actuality. The 'announced name' יְהוָה is Yahweh's cultic reality. Schottroff says, 'Dieser Name kann Hypostase für Jahwe sein und zum Wechselbegriff für Jahwe werden'.³

Thus we find that there is a unique presence of the Lord in the cult. The presence is all the more felt when the 'festal myth' is recited. The יְהוָה is more than the ישועות⁴ and תהלות⁵ of Israel. The saving and creative deeds of Yahweh (cf. Ps.78.4, 145.5-7) which are sung in the cult remind the community that Yahweh's power to do the same is still available, because the Doer of these is in their midst. In a sense, the past events become a present experience. Creation and salvation are no more a memory of the past, nor salvation an experience of the future. The יְהוָה in the cult 'enables each generation in Israel to reinterpret the formative events of her history as the living God of the covenant challenged her to new obedience'.⁶ According to the Hebrew faith, 'in every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had come forth from Egypt, in keeping with the Biblical command', (Dt.6.20f) "And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, it is because of that which the Lord did to me when I went forth from Egypt..." And us He brought out thence that He might lead us to, and give us the land which He swore to our Fathers'.⁷ So the cultic realisation

1. Ringgren.H. The Faith of the Psalmists. p.19.

2. Childs.B.S. op.cit. p.34.

3. Schottroff. op.cit. p.299.

4. cf.Johnson. op.cit. 2nd ed. p.135.

5. cf.Childs.B.S. op.cit. p.71.

6. Porteous.N.W. 'Actualisation and the Prophetic Criticism of the Cult', in Tradition and Situation, ed. by Würthwein.E. and Kaiser.O. p.103.

7. Haggadah of Passover: p.51 ed. by David and Tamar de Sola Pool, cited by Anderson.B.W. op.cit. p.105.

is not a 'repetition or a re-witness or a Wiederbelebung'¹ of past event, but a new and present experience of the community. 'God's (733)remembering is a continuation of the selfsame purpose'.² His memory is not a re-creation of the past, but it is saving and creating reality in the present, 'Now'. The role of Israel's memory, in the cult, is not to re-live the past, but to emphasise obedience in the present and the days to come.³

This understanding of the Israelite cult has a great significance in the interpretation of the Psalms.

2. Theophany.

The O.T., while emphasising the transcendence of God also gives importance to the condescension of God to the realm of man's history. The theophany does signify this condescending of God with the accompaniments of natural powers to the realm of man.⁴ The O.T. does not see the epiphany of God in Nature as such but it is recognised when God specifically manifests His power for the sake of His people. Here, we see the essential difference between the concept of theophany in the nature-religions and the religion of the O.T. The former does not make any distinction between the power of Nature and the deities, while the latter never identifies God with any particular powers of Nature. 'The very variety of events with which He can be brought into connection is the sufficient proof that He is identified with none'.⁵ In the account of theophany in 1 Ki. 19.11-13, Yahweh is not found in the powers of Nature but the prophet heard Him in a 'still small voice'. Here, we see the refusal of the O.T. to identify Yahweh with Nature-powers.⁶

An analytical study of the following source materials will reveal to us the part played by the natural phenomena in theophany. (Ex.19.16-20; Dt.53.2f; Jg.5.4f; Pss.18.8f, 50.2, 68.8f, 77.17-19, 97.3; Is.50.27f; Mic.1.3f; Nah.1.3f; Hab.3.3ff) There are two main groups

1. see. Nowinckel, PIW.1. p.19, 'Drama' in RGG², Bentzen. 'Cultic Use of the Story of the Ark', JBL 67, 1948, pp.37f.

2. Childs. B.S. op.cit. p.42.

3. cf. Childs. B.S. op.cit. p.51.

4. cf. von Rad, OTT.1. p.366.

5. Welch. A.C. The Religion of Israel Under the Kingdom. pp.11-12.

6. cf. Eichrodt. TOI.II. p.19.

of natural phenomena in these theophanic accounts.

i). Weather Phenomena.

Storm, Ps.50.3; Nah.1.3b.

Clouds, Ex.19.16; Ps.18.12; Ex.34.5; Na.1.3b.

Thunder, Ex.19.16; Ps.18.14, 77.18.

Lightning, Ex.19.16; Pss.18.15, 77.18-19, 97.4; Hab.3.9, 11.

Brightness, Hab.3.4.

Light, Ps.104.2.

Rain, Ps.68.9, 10; Jg.5.4; Ps.77.18.

Hail, Ps.18.13-14.

Wind, Ps.18.11, 104.3-4.

Breath, Is.30.28; Ps.77.19.

ii). Volcanic Phenomena.¹

Earth-quake, Jg.5.4; Ps.18.8, 68.9, 77.19, 97.4.

Mountain-quake, Ex.19.18;² Jg.5.5, Pss.18.8, 97.5; Mic.1.4; Nah.1.5; Hab.3.6.

Smoke, Ex.19.18; Ps.18.9; Is.6.4, 30.27.

Darkness, Ps.18.10, 12.

Fire, Ex.19.18; Dt.33.2; Ps.18.9, 50.3, 97.3; Is.30.27.

Glowing coals, Ps.18.9, 13-14.

A third group is found in connection with the theophany of the Lord, viz. Pestilence and Plague. (Hab.3.5) The reference in Habakkuk may be regarded as a strong reminiscence of the Egyptian plague by which the Lord had revealed His power and authority in the realm of nature. In Ex.19.16, we have a reference to the sound of the trumpet. The sound of the trumpet need not be taken as an echo from the cultic use of this passage at a later date.³ It could mean the rumbling sound of the earth tremor which the writer was trying to communicate by a familiar word.

The presence of two different physical phenomena leads some scholars to think that the weather phenomena reflect the agricultural background of the community and the volcanic phenomena, the nomadic life.⁴ According to them, the two traditions have fused into the theophanic descriptions of the O.T. The early versions

1. cf. Phythian-Adams.W.J. The Call of Israel. Part III. pp.140f.

2. The LXX reads in Ex.19.18 'the people' instead of the 'mountains'.

3. contra. Schmidt.W.H. AGSU. p.41.

4. Schmidt.W.H. ibid.

may have had only the phenomena from the nomadic background while in the course of transmission of Sinai traditions, the agricultural phenomena, quite likely, were added to the early oral traditions and thus we have a fusion of both in the later versions.

Since Yahweh is frequently associated with the storm, some scholars believed that He was originally a storm-God.¹ In the light of the various natural phenomena which accompany the manifestation of the Lord, this view cannot be taken seriously. If we do, then, we have to believe that He was originally a volcanic deity or a fire deity and so on and so forth. The storm may have been associated with Yahweh as the best possible physical phenomenon through which the power and invisibility of Yahweh could well be presented to His believers. The concept of the power of the deity was a highly revered belief among the ancient Semites.

The purpose of theophany was not merely to reveal the power of God but to affirm that the Lord was a God of covenant who wants to continue His covenant relation with man. The Sinai theophany ends with the making of the covenant. These two aspects viz. the power and the communion of God,² were the main motives of the theophanic descriptions. The motive of the communion or the covenant expresses itself in the form of redemptive action by God. (Ps.18.8ff; Hab.3; Jg.5.4f)

The account of theophany never gives the slightest suggestion that Yahweh was a nature-deity. He was never described as a fertility deity manifesting Himself in storm or thunder or rain. When He manifests Himself with the powers of Nature as His retinue, there will be great commotion in the realm of Nature. (cf. Amos.1.2; Ps.18.14,29.3ff,50.2f,114.3ff etc) We do not find the language of theophany when God blesses the land or instructs the farmer. (Ps. 65.10f; Is.28.23f)

The theophany is not a simple thunderstorm or earthquake or volcanic eruption. The occurrence of these provided the stage for a theophany, but they themselves are not the epiphany of the Lord.

1. cf. Stade. Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments. pp.17,94ff; also, Anderson. B.W. regards that Yahweh takes the symbolism of the storm-God, especially in Ps.18.15ff, cf. op.cit. p.97.

2. The power and communion of the Deity were common theological beliefs shared by the Semites. cf. Vriezen. 'The Study of the O.T. and the History of Religion', Congress Volume, VTS.xvii,1969, p.4.

The faith in God's power and authority in Nature, prepares the mind to receive an epiphany of the Lord in Nature. An atheist or an agnostic can hardly have a theophany. The purpose of theophany, like every other wonder, is not to awaken one's amazement but to evoke and confirm faith,¹

In the light of its structure, the theophanic accounts may be classified into three main groups.

i) The Sinai Theophany. (Ex.19.16f;20.18;34.5; Dt.5.4,23 etc)

According to Hebrew tradition, this is the earliest reference to a theophany in Nature. God descends from heaven with the accompaniments of natural powers. The people witness the glory and majesty of God in these natural phenomena. The later theophanic descriptions are based on the vision at Sinai.

ii) The theophany which looks back to Sinai. (Jg.5.4f; Ps.68.18; Hab.3.3f)

These accounts of theophany look back to Sinai. God comes from Sinai or Seir or Teman, - all suggesting the direction of the first theophany in the wilderness. In these descriptions the Sinai account is a past event. The purpose of these theophanic hymns is to evoke the presence and power of God by recalling similar natural phenomena which accompanied God at Sinai. The occasion is usually a national crisis. The Lord of Sinai comes and succours His devotees.

iii) The Theophany from Zion. (Ps.18.7,50.2, also cf.Is.6.1-6)

These theophanic descriptions imply Yahweh's manifestation in the cult. Here, too, the language is modelled on the description of the Sinaic account. But the happening of the theophany is a present reality.

We find in the theophanic accounts a progress of thought from Sinai to Zion. This is particularly true in Ps.68 where allusions to the three aforesaid groups are found. (cf. group i - Ps.68.8ff, ii - vv.18f, iii - vv.24ff,36) We might ask, was it true that all these natural phenomena have accompanied the Lord in the cult? The phenomena were not actually present in the cult but their symbols and replicas were in the temple, eg. smoke, fire, wind (cherubim, Ps.18.11), coals of fire (Is.6.6), the sound of the trumpet, molten sea, (1 Ki.7.23-26).² In a sense, the temple itself was a microcosm

1. Rust.E.C. Nature and Man in Biblical Thought. p.94.

2. To get the details of symbolic representations in the temple, see, Ex.25.10f,40.18ff,1Ki.8.6-13.

of the macrocosm, an earthly replica of the heavenly temple. Jerusalem was the omphalos of the world like Babylon or the Primeval Hill in Egypt.¹ (cf. Ps. 48.3, 99.1-2) In the light of these symbolic representations in the temple, the reference to the natural phenomena becomes meaningful to the community.

God meets His people in the cult. (cf. Ex. 20.24, 25.22) The theophany is not a literary creation of the poetic imagination as some people do believe.² Theophany is an actualisation of an historical tradition in the cult.³ The theophanic experience, of course, is narrated with literary skill. The theophanic descriptions truly reflect and represent the feeling and experience of the numinous in the cult. Those who regard the theophanic descriptions as merely the product of poetic imagination deny the power and presence of the Lord in the cult. (cf. Ex. 20.24)

The prophets use the theophanic language to describe the eschatological judgment of Yahweh. (Is. 30.27ff; Jl. 2.10ff; Is. 31.4) In Second Isaiah we read the coming of the Lord as the head of the restored community. (40.10f, 42.13)

In a strict sense, theophany is not a medium of the revelation of God. He never appears in Nature.⁴ What is visible in Nature is His power and glory. (cf. Ex. 24.15-18, 16.10, 33.19-23) To the worshippers, God shines forth through these media. (cf. Dt. 33.2; Ps. 50.2, also 80.2, 94.1) They will have either a vision or an audition from the natural phenomena. In the cultic manifestation too, the worshippers have similar experience.⁵

'The Psalms draw its traits from various sources: the theophany of Sinai; great cosmic disturbances; hurricanes and fearful storms, such as arise in the rocky deserts of Sinai and Palestine; perhaps, more or less indirectly, the great cosmogonic poems of Babylon'. There is no doubt that the Psalms use a wide variety

1. cf. Voegelin. Order and History. p.44.

2. cf. McKenzie, J.L. Myths and Realities. p.104.

3. cf. Weiser. 'Die Darstellung der Theophanie in den Psalmen und im Festkult', Festschrift für Bertholet, p.516.

4. cf. Schmidt, W.H. op.cit. p.149.

5. It is significant to note that Hinduism, a major religion of the Orient uses the term Darshan (to have a vision) to denote the idea of worship.

of picturesque language in the description of the theophany which only confirm the skill of the writers to employ the available literary medium to translate the experience of the cultic community.

3. The Glory of the Lord.

First of all let us see the root meaning of the stative verb כבוד. According to BDB, כבוד means to be 'heavy, weighty, burdensome or to be honoured. The noun כבוד has the following meanings in the O.T.

כבוד = abundance, honour and glory. But the word has different connotations in different contexts. For example,

- i) Abundance or riches in Gen.31.1; Is.10.3,61.6,66.11,12; Ps.49.17,18, etc.
- ii) Honour, splendour or glory of external conditions and circumstances.
 - a) Of men - Gen.45.13; Job.19.9,29.20 etc.
 - b) Of things - Esth.5.11; ISam.2.8; Ps.84.12 etc.
 - c) Of God - especially glory in cultic appearances - Ex.33.18,29.43, in ideal manifestations of the Lord - Pss.63.3,29.3,72.19; Neh.9.5 etc. The Lord is glory - Ps.24.7-10,102.17 etc.
- iii) Honour, dignity - Num.24.11; Ps.112.9.
- iv) Honour, reputation - 2 Chr.26.18; Ec.10.1; Prov.21.21, etc.
- v) My honour, that is nobility - Gen.49.6; Pss.7.6,16.9,30.13 etc.
- vi) Honour, reverence, glory - of men - Mal.1.6; 1 Chr.17.18; 2 Chr.32.33, etc, of God - Is.42.7,48.11, etc.
- vii) Glory as the object of honour - Pss.3.4,106.20; Jer.2.11 etc.¹

According to von Rad, 'Kabod is by and large that asset which makes peoples or individuals, and even objects, impressive, and usually this^{is} understood as something that can be perceived or expressed'.² When it is applied to God, Kabod is still regarded as a visible element. The Priestly writings and the Book of Ezekiel bear witness to this emphasis of the glory of God. In cases like Lev.9.24; Num.16.22,17.10, 20.6, the Priestly writer speaks about the fiery presence of the Lord that consumes the wicked and the rebellious. It consumes the offering and creates awe and fear among His servants. But the J writer is not

1. cf. BDB, here all the references from the BDB are not given. Particular emphasis has been given to the Psalms' references.

2. von Rad. OTT. Vol. I. p.239.

as dramatic as the P author. J too, recognises the majesty and awe in the presence of the Lord. (cf. Ex. 34.5-8) In the Book of Ezekiel, the word occurs about nineteen times with different shades of meaning, such as to be heavy or honoured etc. In Ezek. 28.22, 39.21, we see that by the revelation of Yahweh's power and judgment God manifests His glory. But the chief emphasis of the Book of Ezekiel is found in his introductory vision and call in Ch. 1. After a brilliant description of the theophany, he says, 'Like a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day was the sight of that encircling radiance; it was like the appearance of the glory of the Lord'. (1.28, NEB) Like P, Ezekiel also sees something visible and radiant. For both P and Ezekiel,

כבוד, is not an attribute of God but it points to 'die personale Gegenwärtigkeit Jahwes in seiner Lichtherrlichkeit' says Zimmerli.¹

כבוד יהוה is a 'terminus technicus für die erscheinende Lichtherrlichkeit' Yahwes',²

Not only in the theophanic accounts these words occur but also in connection with Yahweh's deeds in the realm of nature and history. God's glory is revealed in His power and activity.³ (Num. 14.22) Anderson says, 'The light which suffuses the creation is God's glory (Kabod), the refulgent radiance which shields His being.'⁴ It is part of His being. Man cannot stand before this 'fiery, intensely radiant light'⁵ that emits from the presence of the Lord. When Moses confronted God, his face also shone by the radiance of the glory of God. (cf. Ex. 34.29ff) He used a veil. The reason is not given, perhaps it was to protect the people from too-close a contact with the glorious face of Moses. It has its aspect of 'separateness' and is too dangerous for unholy people. (cf. 1 Sam. 6.19-20; 2 Sam. 6.7)

God's glory was an assurance of protection and guidance to the people of Israel in the desert. His glory accompanied them in the pillar of fire and the pillar of clouds. (Ex. 14.19, 24) 'With the first solemn appearance of the glory of Yahweh over the tabernacle the ancient promises to the Patriarchs that Yahweh would be Israel's God. (Gen. 17.7) were fulfilled'.⁶ When the temple was built, the glory of

1. Zimmerli.W. Biblischer Kommentar A.T., Ezechiel.1. p.58.

2. Zimmerli.W. op.cit. p.57.

3. cf. Pedersen. Israel. iii-iv. p.616.

4. Anderson.B.W. Creation Versus Chaos. p.90.

5. von Rad. op.cit. p.146.

6. von Rad. op.cit. p.241.

the Lord moved with the Ark of the Lord to the temple. (cf. 1 Ki. 8. 10-11; 2 Chr. 5.13-14) Yahweh's strength and glory were associated with His Ark. (cf. Is. 78.61) It contained the ineffable name and all the other epithets of Yahweh.¹ In the tabernacle and in the temple, the glory was seen in the descent of the cloud. The cloud presented the presence and the transcendence of the Lord.² God's glory in the temple does not in any way diminish His glory in the world.³ (cf. Is. 6.3,4)

'The tent of meeting' has been rendered by the LXX as σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου - the tent of revelation or manifestation. (Ex. 33.7) In later Judaism Shekinah represented the glory of God with man.⁴

The word Kabod occurs about 194 times in the O.T. and in which about 77 times it has a secular meaning.⁵ It occurs about 50 times in the Psalms.

Our study has brought forth the following results. It is significant to note that Kabod occurs more frequently in the Hymns than in the other literary forms. We find its occurrence in the Hymns about 26 times. The glory of God in the Hymns has certain particular characteristics.

- i. Glory, as majesty and honour, belongs to God alone. 8.2,19.2, 24.7-10,66.2,96.8,102.16-17,108.6,145.5.
- ii. Glory is revealed in the cultic worship. 29.1,2,9,24.7-10,96.7, 102,16-17.
- iii. Glory is the work of the Lord in creation and history. 29.5,96.3, 97.6,104.31,113.4,145.11-12.
- iv. Glory is revealed in theophany. 29.3,97.6,102.17.
- v. Glory is acknowledged by men and natural phenomena. 19.2,29.1, 2,96.7-8.
- vi. Glory is given to man by God. 8.6,149.5

The other occurrences of Kabod are found in the following order.

Laments. (3.4,4.3,7.6,26.8,57.6,9,12,63.3,85.10,115.1)

Wisdom Psalms. (49.17,18,75.24,112.9)

Royal Pss. (21.6,72.19)

1. Jewish Encyclopaedia, vol.II. p.105b.

2. cf. Congar.Y. The Mystery of the Temple. p.10.

3. cf. Rust. Nature and Man in Biblical Thought. p.93; Moore.G.F. Judaism.II. p.420.

4. cf. Davies.W.D. 'Contemporary Jewish Religion', in FCB, para.615a also Snaith.N.H. 'Leviticus', in FCB, para.205e.

5. cf. Amirtham.S. The Presence of God in the Psalms, p.215, a dissertation submitted to the University of Hamburg in 1968.

- Pss. of Confidence. (16.9,62.8)
 Pss. of Thanksgiving. (30.13,138.5)
 Songs of Zion. (84.12)
 Historical Pss. (106.20)

The main characteristics of glory in the Psalms are the following.

- a) Glory belongs to God, 26.8,57.6,12,72.19,73.24,106.20,115.1.
- b) Glory belongs to man, 4.3,7.6,21.6,49.17,18. (as riches)
- c) Glory represents the soul of man, 3.4,16.9,30.13,57.9,108.2
- d) Glory is the honour of man, 21.6,62.8,112.9.
- e) Glory is revealed in the ways of the Lord, 138.5,
 " " " " in the temple, 26.8,63.3,
 " " " " in the land, 85.10.
- f) Glory is imparted to man along with grace, 84.12.
- g) Glory is synonymous with Hod (8.2,21.6) Hadar (8.6), Us or Geburah (29.1,2,145.11-12) and His Niphla'oth (145.5)

4. The Occurrence of Natural Phenomena in the Psalms - An Analysis.

The interest of the Psalmists in the phenomena of Nature is not motivated by any speculative goal but is strictly objective and theological.

Here, we propose to have a detailed analysis of all the occurrences of natural phenomena in the Psalter. Our study will be under **four** main headings:

- i) The Phenomena of the earth,
 - ii) The Phenomena of the heavens,
 - iii) The Phenomena of the waters,
 - iv) The Concept of the Underworld.
- i) The Phenomena of the Earth.

The word אָרֶץ is translated by three different English words in the RSV,¹ viz. earth, land and ground. The word occurs about 175 times in the Psalter. (2.2,8,10;7.6;8.2,10;10.18;12.7;16.3;17.11;18.8;19.5,21.11;22.28,30;24.1;25.13;33.5,8,14;34.17;37.9,11,22,29,34;41.3;44.4,26;45.17;46.3,7,9,11;47.3,8,10;48.3,11;50.1,4;57.6,12;58.3,12;59.14;60.4;61.3;63.10;65.6,9 (אֶרֶץ) 10;66.1,4;67.3,5,7,8;68.9,33;69.35;

1. Here the verse order is from the MT and the translation of words is as found in the RSV. The NLB omits the translation of the Heb. words occasionally but brings out the meaning. eg.72.16b,79.2,101.6,8. In 12.7, it translates אָרֶץ as 'gold' from a probable reading.

71.20;72.6,8,16,19;73.9,25;74.12,17,20;75.4,9;76.9,10,13;77.19;
78.69;79.2;80.9;82.5,8;83.19;85.2,10,12;88.13;89.12,28,40,45;90.2;
95.4;96.1,9,11,13;97.1,4,5,9;98.34,9;99.1;100.1;101.6,8;102.16,20,26;
103.11;104.5,9,13,14,24,32,35;105.7,11,16,23,27,32,35,36,44;106.17,24,
27;107.3,34,35;108.6;109.15;110.6;112.2;113.6;114.7;115.15,16;116.9;
119.19,64,87,90,119;121.2;124.8;134.3;135.6,7,12;136.6,21;138.4;139.15;
140.12;141.7;143.3,6;146.6;147.6,8,15;148.7,11,11,13;)

The World. (תִּבְלָה) 9.9;18.16;19.5;24.1;33.8;49.1 (קִלְדָּה); 50.12;
77.19;89.12;90.2;93.1;96.10,13;97.4;98.7,9. = 16 times.

The land and the ground. (אֲדָמָה) 49.11;83.11;104.30;105.35;137.4;
146.4.

The land and the field. (שָׂדֵה) 8.8;50.11;78.12,43;80.13;96.12;103.15;
104.11;107.11;132.6. = 10 times.

Dry land. (יַבֵּשָׁה) 66.6;95.5.

The wilderness or the desert. (צִיָּה , יַשִּׁימוֹן , מִדְבָּר) 29.8,8;55.8;
63.2;65.13;68.8;74.14 (?); 75.7;78.15,19,40,52;95.8;102.7;105.41;
106.9,14²⁴,26;107.4,4,33,35,35;136.16. = 25 times.

The Mountains and the Hills. (גְּבוּעוֹת , הַרִים) 2.6;5.5;11.1;15.1;
18.8;24.3;30.8;36.7;42.7;43.3;46.3,4;48.2;5,12;50.10,11;65.7,13;68.16,
16,16,16,17,17;72.3,16;74.2,75.7;76.5;78.54,68;80.11;83.15; 87.1;90.2;
95.4;97.5;98.8;99.9;104.6,8,10,13,18,32;114.4,6;121.1;125.1,2;133.5;
144.5;147.8;148.9. = 55 times.

The Valleys. (עֲמָק) 60.8;65.14;84.7;104.8 (בְּקִיעוֹת) 108.8.

The meadows and pastures. (נֹהַר , כְּרִים) 23.2;37.20;65.13,14;72.6;
74.20;79.7;83.13. = 8 times.

The Rock. (סֶלַע , צוּר) 18.3,32,47;19.15;27.5;28.1;31.3,4;40.3;
42.10;61.3;62.3,7,8;71.3;73.26;78.15,16,20,35;81.17;89.27;92.16;
94.22;95.1;104.18;105.41;114.8;137.9;141.6;144.1. = 31 times.

Stones. (סִבְנִים) 91.12;102.15;118.22.

Sand. (חוֹל) 78.27;139.18.

Mire. (שִׁט) 18.43;40.3;69.3,15.

Dust. (עָפָר , דָּכָא) 7.6;18.43;22.16,30;30.10;34.19;44.26;72.9;
78.27;90.3;102.15;103.14;104.29;113.7;119.25. = 15 times.

The Minerals.

Gold. (זָהָב , פָּז , כֶּתֶם) 19.11;21.4;45.20,14;72.15;105.37;
115.4;119.72,127,127;135.15. = 11 times.

Silver. (כסף) 12.7;15.5;66.10;68.4,31;105.37;115.4;119.72;135.15.
= 9 times.

Iron. (ברזל) 2.9,105.18;107.10,16;149.8. = 5 times.

Bronze. (נחשת) 107.16.

The Trees and the Plants,

Trees. (עצ) 1.3;74.5;96.12;104.16;105.33;148.9. = 6 times.

Forest. (יער) 29.9;50.10;80.14;83.15;96.12,104.20;132.6 (a place name, NEB)

Cedars. 29.5,5;80.11;92.13;104.16;148.9; Broom tree. 120.4.

Sycamore. 78.47.

Willows. 137.2.

Fig. 105.33.

Vine. 78.47;80.9,14;105.33;

Olive. 52.10;128.3.

107.57;128.5.

Palm tree. 92.12.

Hyssop. 51.9.

The Grass and Vegetation.

Reeds. 68.31. Grass and Greens. (עשב , חציר) 57.2;72.16;90.5;
92.8;102.5;102.5,12;103.15;104.14;105.35;106.20;129.6;
147.8;

Grain and Corn. (דגן , בר) 4.8;65.10,14;72.16;78.24.

Wheat. 81.17;147.14.

The Living creatures. (חיים) 7.6;16.11;17.14;21.5;23.6;26.9;27.1,4;
or life. 30.6;31.11;34.13;36.10;42.9;49.19;56.14;63.4,5;
64.2;66.9;69.29;88.4;103.4;104.33;128.5;133.3.
= 25 times.

The beasts and Cattles. They include both wild and domestic. 8.8;36.7;
49.13,21;50.10;68.31;73.22;78.48;79.2;104.11,14,20;107.38;135.8;
147.9;148.10. = 16 times.

Lion. (לבא , כפיר , אריה) 7.3;10.9;17.12;22.14,22;34.11;55.17;
57.5;58.7;91.13;104.21. = 11 times.

Boar. 80.14.

Horse. 20.8;35.17;76.7;147.10.

Wild Ass. 104.11

Mule. 32.9.

Wild Oxen. 22.22;29.6;92.11.

Dog. 22.17,21;59.7,15;68.24.

Wild Goat. 104.18.

Bulls. 22.13;50.9,13;51.21;68.31.

Jackal. 63.10.

Oxen. 8.8;69.32;106.20;144.14;

Hart. 42.2

Calf. 29.6;68.31;106.19.

Badgers. 104.18.

Sheep and Flocks. (צאן , צנה , שנה)
8.8;44.12,23;49.15;65.14;74.1;77.21;
78.52,70;79.13;80.2;95.7;100.3;
107.41;119.176;144.13. = 16 times.

<u>Goat.</u> 50.9,13;66.15.	<u>Rams.</u> 114.4,6.	<u>Lambs.</u> 114.4,6.
<u>Birds.</u> 8.9;11.1;50.11;78.27;79.2;102.8;104.12,17;124.7;148.10		
<u>Vulture.</u> 102.6.	<u>Flies.</u> 78.45;105.31.	<u>Worm.</u> 22.7.
<u>Eagle.</u> 105.5.	<u>Gnats.</u> 105.31.	<u>Snail.</u> 59.9
<u>Owl.</u> 102.6.	<u>Moths.</u> 39.12.	'abortive birth' (NEB)
<u>Raven.</u> 147.9.	<u>Locusts.</u> 78.46;105.34, 109.23.	<u>Frog.</u> 78.45.105.30.
<u>Stork.</u> 104.17.	<u>Caterpillar.</u> 78.46.	<u>Vipers.</u> 140.3.
<u>Quails.</u> 105.40.		<u>Serpent,</u> and Adder. 58.5;91.13.
<u>Dove.</u> 55.7;68.14.		
<u>Sparrow.</u> 84.4.		
<u>Swallow.</u> 84.4.	<u>Bees.</u> 118.12.	

2. The Phenomena of Heavens.

The Heaven. 2.4;8.2,4,9;11.4;14.2;18.10.14;19.2,7;20.7;33.6,13;36.6;
50.4,6;53.3;57.4,6,10,12;68.9,34;69.35;73.9,25;76.9;78.23,
24,26,69;79.2;80.15;85.12;89.3,6,12,30;96.5,11;97.6;102.20,
26;103.11,19;104.2,12;105.40;107.26;108.4,5,6;113.4,6;115.5,
15,16;119.89;121.2;123.1;124.8;134.3;135.6;136.5,26;139.8;
144.5;146.6;147.8;148.1,4,4,13; =73 times.

The sky and the clouds.¹ (עַשׂוּן, שָׁמַיִם) 18.12,15;36.6;57.11;
68.4,35;77.18;78.14,23;89.7,38;97.2;99.7;104.3;105.39;108.5;147.8.

The Firmament. 19.2;150.1.

The Sun. 19.5;50.1;58.9;72.5,17;74.16;84.12;^{8937,} 104.19,22;113.3;121.6;
136.8;148.3.

The Moon. 8.4;72.5,7;89.38;104.19;121.6;136.9;148.3;

The Stars. 8.4;136.9;147.4;148.3;

The Luminaries. 74.16;90.8.

The Wind.² (רוּחַ) 1.4;11.6;18.11,16,43;32.2;33.6;34.19;35.5;48.8;
51.14,19;55.9;77.4,7,19;78.8,39;83.14;103.16;104.5,4,29,30;
106.33;107.25;135.7,17;139.7;142.4;143.4,7,10;146.4;147.18;
148.8. = 36 times.

Tempest and Hurricane. 31.6;51.12,13;76.13;83.16;107.25,29;148.8.

Thunder. 18.14,29.3;77.18,19;78.48;81.8;96.11;98.7;104.7.

1. עַשׂוּן is quite often used to signify both the clouds and the sky.
It means the 'fine dust', and 'cloud'. So it stands for the sky.

2. רוּחַ is rendered 'spirit, wind, breath' in the Psalms.

Lightning. 18.15;29.7;77.19;97.4;105.32;155.7;144.6.

Hailstone. 18.15;14;78.47,48;105.32;148.8.

Sulphur or Brimstone. 11.6.

Rain and showers. 65.10;68.9,10;72.6;84.7;105.32;155.7;147.8.

Ice. 147.17.

Winter. 74.17.

Snow. 51.9;68.15;147.16;148.8.

Summer. 52.4;74.17.

Frost. 78.47;147.16;148.8;

Heat. 19.7;32.4;

Dew. 110.3;155.5.

Smoke. 18.9;37.50;68.3;102.4.

Light.¹ 4.7;27.1;36.10;37.6;38.11;43.3;44.4;49.20;56.14;78.14;89.16;97.11;
104.2;112.4;119.105;136.7;139.11;148.3. = 18 times.

Fire. 11.6;18.9,13,14;21.10;29.7;39.4;46.10;50.3;66.12;68.3;74.7;78.14,
21,63;79.5;80.17;83.15;89.47;97.3;104.4;105.32,39;106.18;118.12;
140.11;148.8. = 27 times.

3. The Phenomena of the Waters.

The Sea. 8.9,9;24.2;33.7;46.3;65.6,8;66.6;68.23;69.35;72.8;74.13;77.20;
78.13,27,55;80.12;89.10,26;93.4;95.5;96.11;98.7;104.25;106.7,
9,22;107.3,23;114.3,5;135.6;139.9;146.6; = 34 times.

The Flood. (מבול) 29.10.

The Waters. (מים) 1.3;18.12,16,17;22.15;23.2;29.3,3;32.6;33.7;42.2;
46.4;58.8;63.2;65.10;66.12;69.2,3,15,16;73.10;74.13;77.17,
18,20;78.13,16,20;79.3;81.8;88.18;93.4;104.3,6;105.29,41;
106.11,32;107.23,33,35,35;109.18;114.8,8;119.156;124.4,5;
136.6;144.7;147.18;148.4; = 52 times.

The Deeps. (תהום, מצולה) 33.7;36.7;42.8;71.20;77.17;
78.15;104.6;106.9;107.24,26;130.1;135.6;148.7; = 13 times.

The Rivers. (יאר, נהר) 24.2;46.5;66.6;72.8;74.15;78.16,44;
86.12;89.26;93.3,3,3;98.8;105.41;107.33;137.1. = 16 times.

The Streams. (פלג, אפיק) 1.3;18.16;42.2;46.5;65.10;119.156;126.4;

The Brooks or (wady) torrents. 18.5;36.9;74.15;78.20;83.10;104.10;110.7;
124.4;

The Springs. 74.15;84.7;107.33,35;114.8;

Creatures of Water. 74.15;104.26;148.7.

Fish. 8.9;105.29.

4. The Concept of the Underworld.

The Psalmist believed the abode of the dead as part of the universe. Although the dead may not be able to communicate or praise God, their place of shadowy existence belongs to the order of the universe. God has authority over Sheol and His power extends over it.

1. Here, light is used in a figurative and literal sense.

Different words have been used to signify the abode of the dead, viz.

שׂוֹן, שְׁחַת and בֹּרַי . 6.6;9.18;16.10;18.6;30.4;31.18;
49.15,15,16;55.16;86.13;88.4;89.49;116.3;139.8;141.7. = 16 times.

Our analysis leads to the following conclusions.

- i) The Book of Psalms show a very keen sense of the natural world. The earth is the most prominent natural realm which attracted the observation of the Psalmist. Almost every phenomena of nature have been mentioned in the Psalms. The religion of the Psalms was not merely a religion of the other world. The Psalms are deeply rooted and grounded in the land and its natural surroundings.
- ii) Next to the earth, it was the waters and the sea that captivated the attention of the Psalmist. There is no wonder that the waters played a significant role in the thought of the Psalms. The region of Palestine was mostly arid and dry and depended mainly on rain for its fertility. Therefore, it is quite natural for the people to give importance to waters, brooks, rivers and pools which sustain the life of the land.
- iii) The distant sky and the heavenly phenomena definitely helped to mould the theological thinking of the Psalms. The God of the Psalmist was the Creator of heaven and earth. He was the Lord of Hosts. He was transcendent God yet mindful of the needs of man. He brought rain upon the land. He defeated the powers of the sea, the source of all waters. So He is able to send rain. For the life and prosperity of man and beast, the pious always looked upto God. He says, 'My help comes only from the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth.'. (121.2)

ABBREVIATIONS.

- AGSU - Alttestamentlicher Glaube und Seine Umwelt. by W.H.Schmidt.
- AJSL - American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures.
- A.N.E. - Ancient Near East.
- ANET - Ancient Near Eastern Texts, ed. by J.B.Fritchard.
- ARI - Archaeology and the Religion of Israel. by W.F.Albright.
- ARW - Archives für Religionswissenschaft.
- ASTI - Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute.
- ATANT - Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments.
- AV. - Authorised Version.
- BANE - The Bible and the Ancient Near East, ed. by G.E.Wright.
- BASOR - Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.
- BDB - Hebrew - English Lexicon, by Brown, Driver & Briggs.
- BH - Biblia Hebraica, ed. by R.Kittel, also Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.
- BWANT - Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament.
- BZAW - Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.
- CBQ - The Catholic Biblical Quarterly.
- CLANE - Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East, by S.G.F.Brandon.
- CML - Canaanite Myths and Legends, by G.R.Driver.
- DOTT - Documents From Old Testament Times, ed. by D.W.Thomas.
- EAI - Tell-El Amarna Inscription.
- ERE - Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
- ET - English Translation.
- ExT - Expository Times.
- FSAC - From Sone Age to Christianity, by W.F.Albright.
- GSAT - Gesamlete Studien zum Alten Testament.
- HACH - History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism, by W.F.Albright.
- HTR - Harward Theological Review.
- HUCA - Hebrew Union College Annual.
- IAAM - The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, by Frankfort and Others.
- IB - The Interpreter's Bible.
- ICC - The International Critical Commentary.
- J - Yahwist.
- JB - Jerusalem Bible.
- JBL - Journal of Biblical Literature.

- JJS - Journal of Jewish Studies.
- JNES - Journal of the Near Eastern Studies.
- JQR - Jewish Quarterly Review.
- JSS - Journal of Semitic Studies.
- JTS - The Journal of Theological Studies.
- LXX - Septuaginta, ed. by A.Rahlfs.
- MT - The Massoretic Texts.
- NEB - The New English Bible.
- OBS - Oriental and Biblical Studies, by E.A.Speiser.
- O.T. - The Old Testament.
- OTS - Gudentamentische Studien.
- OTT - Old Testament Theology, by von Rad.
- P - The Priestly Writer.
- PCB - Peake's Commentary on the Bible, Completely Revised, 1967.
- PEQ - Palestine Exploration Quarterly.
- PGP - The Praise of God in the Psalms, by C.Westerman.
- PHOE - The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, by von Rad.
- PIW - The Psalms in Israel's Worship, by S.Mowinckel.
- Ps.St. - Psalmenstudien, vols.i-vi, in two vol., by S.Mowinckel.
- RGG - Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.
- RK - Religion und Kultus, by S.Mowinckel.
- RSV - Revised Standard Version.
- S - Peshitta.
- RV - Revised Version.
- SJT - Scottish Journal of Theology.
- SOED - The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.
- T - Targum.
- TLZ - Theologische Literaturzeitung.
- TOT - Theology of the Old Testament, by W.Eichrodt.
- ThR - Theologische Rundschau.
- TZ - Theologische Zeitschrift.
- V - Vulgate.
- VT - Vetus Testamentum.
- VTS - Vetus Testamentum - Supplément.
- WHJP** - The World History of the Jewish People, by E.A.Speiser.
- WINE - Wisdom in Israel and In the Near East, (VTS.III)
- WMANT - Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament.
- YGC - Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan, by W.R.Albright.
- ZAW - Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.
- ZRGG - Zeitschrift für Religions - und Geistesgeschichte.
- ZTK - Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche.

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