EXODUS TYPOLOGY IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

ROBERT HOUSTON SMITH

THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER

IN THE continuing search for the origins and structural principles underlying the Gospel of John, one of the most promising sources of insight would seem to be that of exodus typology, which is not only attested in many other NT writings but finds specific expression several times in John. Yet the results of recent investigations in this direction have been only partially successful, as a survey of several studies will reveal.

In his article "The Book of Exodus as a Literary Type for the Gospel of John," Jacob J. Enz sets forth the hypothesis that the Fourth Gospel not only has many isolated instances of typology related to the exodus traditions but also shows a running parallelism of content to the book of Exodus. As evidence for the latter he cites the following similarities:

Both documents make early reference to the unrecognized deliverer (Exod 2:11 = John 1:11); the sign of the serpent is also referred to early in both writings (Exod 4:4 = John 3:14); both writings reveal a response of belief to the first signs (Exod 4:30 = John 2:11); the early sections of both books are built deliberately around a series of signs (Exod 3:12-13 = John 2:11-12); the latter part of both books is concerned with the Lord's own people (Exod 16-40 = John 13-21) and with such other things as the construction of the sanctuary (Exod 25-31, 35-40 = John 19:30), divine commandments (Exod 20-23 = John 13:34), prayers of intercession (Exod 32-33 = John 17), and the credentials of the leader (Exod 33:16 = John 17:5); the manner of closing is similar (Exod 40:33b = John 19:30); and finally, the effect of the signs upon the people can be compared (Exod 14:31; 19:9; 35-40 passim = John 12:37-42; 20:8, 25, 30 f.).

B. P. W. Stather Hunt finds quite a different exodus typology within the Fourth Gospel. Noting a "Jewish tradition" which said that when the Messiah came he would duplicate, on a higher plane, the miracles which Moses had done in the wilderness, Hunt proceeds to identify what he considers to be Moses' chief miracles in the wilderness and to correlate with them certain Johannine materials (chiefly miracles), with the

2 Some Johannine Problems.

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following results: the sweetening of the waters of Marah (Exod 15:23-26) =
the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11); the feeding of Israel with manna
(Exod 16:11-36) = the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14); the
provision of water in the desert (Num 20:7-13) = Jesus' conversation with
the Samaritan woman at the well, and Jesus' later claim to be the living
water (John 4:7-42; 7:37-38); the healing of the Israelites with the bronze
serpent (Num 21:8-9) = Jesus' healing by his death on the cross (John 19).

Yet another scheme is proposed by Harald Sahlin in his monograph
Zur Typologie des Johannesevangeliums. Sahlin alleges that the Fourth
Gospel is constructed on an OT typology which extends from the early
chapters of Exodus through 1 Kings 8. Some of the more important
comparisons which he draws are: the call of Moses (Exod 3-4) =
the beginning of the gospel (John 1); Moses' turning of the Nile into blood
(Exod 7:14-24) = the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11); the saving of
the children of Israel at the Red Sea (Exod 14:19-15:21) = Jesus' conversation
with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21); the camping of the Israelites at Elim
(Exod 15:27) = Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-42); the words,
"I, the Lord, am your healer" (Exod 15:26) = the healing of the official's
son and the healing of the lame man (John 4:46-54; 5:1 ff.); the manna in
the wilderness (Exod 16) = the feeding of the multitude (John 6:1-14);
the Lord's appearance in a cloud (Exod 16:6-12) = Jesus' walking on the sea
(John 6:16-21); the complaint of the children of Israel (Exod 17:2-4) =
the Jews' rejection of Jesus' mission and baptism and authority (John
7:1-36); God's provision of water from the rock (Exod 17:5-7) = Jesus'
offer of living water (John 7:37-44); the story of the golden calf (Exod
32) = the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11); the book
of Leviticus = Jesus' healing of the blind man (John 9); the appointment
of Joshua as Moses' successor (Num 27:16-23) = Jesus as the good shepherd
(John 10); Joshua's deeds (Josh 1-5) = Jesus' raising of Lazarus (John 11);
Solomon's riding to Gihon and being anointed king (1 Kings 1:32-40) =
the anointing of Jesus and the entry into Jerusalem (John 12:1-19); Solo-
mon's dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8) = Jesus and his disciples at
supper, Jesus' high priestly prayer, Jesus' passion (John 13; 17; 18-19);
no parallels for Jesus' resurrection and the conclusion of the gospel.

Still other theories of exodus typology in the Fourth Gospel could be
brought forward, but these three illustrate well the present state of
research. The difficulty is not that there are too few theories but that
there are too many. Even allowing for the fact that Johannine imagery
is often subtle and complex, it hardly seems possible that all of these
competing hypotheses can be equally correct. Clearly some evaluation
is in order. This can best be accomplished by observing the extent to
which the theories meet four basic requirements.
1. A typological analysis should sensitively reflect the fact that typology can take many forms and serve varied functions. One cannot assume that every typological allusion is necessarily integral to a larger scheme, though of course it may be. Some typologies are strictly terminal, having their validity solely in the correlation of a single OT detail with some aspect of the Christian tradition, without particular regard for context. Typologies which occupy a genuinely structural rôle in NT literature must consist of some fundamental correlation such as those of Moses = Jesus and Israel = Church, ideas which arise not from the similarity of isolated details in the OT and Christian traditions but rather from the perception of profounder similarities between complexes of major events in the respective traditions.

This principle is quite important in the typological analysis of the Fourth Gospel. The Johannine identification of Jesus as the serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness (John 3:14 f.) is a clear instance of terminal typology (the lifting up of the healing serpent = the lifting up of the healing savior). When Hunt brings this passage into his scheme of Jesus' repetition of Moses' wilderness miracles, he does so only by unconsciously inverting the typology, treating Jesus as the miracle worker Moses rather than as the serpent. The Johannine passage itself is content with the terminal correlation of Jesus = serpent. A similar observation can be made about the reference to Jesus as the manna (John 6), which both Hunt and Sahlin work into their typologies. While both of these passages in the Fourth Gospel reflect the interest of the evangelist in the application of exodus traditions to Jesus, neither of them can be said to occupy a typologically structural rôle in the gospel.

2. A convincing typological hypothesis will rely primarily on a correlation between materials which are similar in form. One can compare words with words, stories with stories, and ideas with ideas much more reasonably than, say, words with whole stories and narrative details with concepts. This principle must be laid down even though there are instances where NT writers did derive typologies from unlike materials, and even though it is sometimes debatable as to just what constitutes true similarity of form.

Evaluated by this criterion, Hunt's presentation stands up rather well, for it consists chiefly of a comparison of miracles with miracles. Enz makes some apt comparisons, but founders on others; perhaps the most striking instance of the latter is his citation of Jesus' words on the cross, "It is finished," as a parallel for the whole thirteen chapters of Exodus which deal with the tabernacle.\(^4\) Sahlin is especially given to the com-

\(^4\) Enz also draws attention to Jesus' reference to rebuilding the temple in three days (John 2:18–21), but this passage is also a very inadequate parallel for the chapters in Exodus which deal with the tabernacle.
parison of unlike items, with the result that much of his analysis is liable to strike one as fanciful. He takes, for example, the statement, “Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the water” (Exod 15:27), which is really only a bit of narrative framework without any accompanying traditions, as a parallel for the account of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman, which is a lengthy story-discourse of quite a different nature. Similarly implausible because of the inequality of materials is his paralleling of the whole of Leviticus with the story of Jesus’ healing of the blind man.

3. Any theory of an extended typology — that is, one covering considerable portions of a NT work and occupying a structural role in it — must account satisfactorily for all of the materials in the units which are being compared, either by putting everything into parallel or by reasonably justifying the omission of any sizable amount of material which does not fit the scheme. This, of course, is only a specialized form of the scholarly principle that one must make every effort not to be arbitrary in selecting one’s evidence.

Both Enz and Sahlin, with their theories of typology which extends throughout the Gospel of John, fail to meet this requirement, for they leave portions of both the gospel and the OT parallels (particularly the latter) unaccounted for. Because he extends his OT parallels to the Fourth Gospel over a large area, Sahlin is particularly open to criticism. He makes no explanation, for example, of why the fourth evangelist skipped from Num 27 to Josh 1-5 and then to 1 Kings 1 and 8 for his typology. This is a serious weakness, for, after all, if one has a large body of varied materials with which to work, one can devise a theory of almost any kind. Hunt, though he also chooses widely scattered materials for his typology, is relatively safe from criticism, since he limits his typology to one of the wilderness miracles only; nevertheless, he exercises some arbitrariness in selecting only the four wilderness miracles which he does, and he fails to explain the existence of those Johannine miracles which have no parallels in the wilderness traditions. Thus in varying degrees all of these scholars present theories which involve the arbitrary selection of evidence.

4. A typological scheme must be compatible with the theology of the work in which it is used; indeed, if the typology is extensive and fundamental, it may be expected to contribute to the argument of the work. This principle, which arises from the general fact that the OT serves an important theological function in NT literature, is perhaps the most neglected of all in typological research.

With regard to this principle all of the works which we have been discussing are deficient. Enz and Sahlin, preoccupied with details, do not take up the question at all; if they were to do so, they might have some...
second thoughts about the typologies they propose. Exodus and the books which continue the story of the Hebrews' wanderings and settlement presuppose a progressive revelation of God in history; but, as is generally recognized, the fourth evangelist has no sympathy with the idea of progressive historical revelation, holding instead the view of two contrasting eras, the old and the new. Why would he have structured his gospel along lines which were essentially foreign to him? Likewise, the period of the wanderings is highlighted by the Sinai experience, with its emphasis upon God's giving of the law to Moses, the covenant between God and Israel, and the establishment of the Hebrew cultus; yet aside from an occasional reference to the law of Moses as an existing fact, the fourth evangelist shows little concern with these matters. Hunt presumably feels that he has shown the validity of his wilderness typology by simply pointing to the belief that the Messiah would duplicate Moses' miracles in the desert; but he does not show why this particular belief, among the many current in the first century, was singled out by the evangelist for special attention.

In view of their general failure to meet these basic requirements, we must conclude that the proposals of Enz, Hunt, and Sahlin are really not convincing. Some of the objections which we have raised could be obviated by a restatement of the arguments, but other difficulties would remain. Thus we are left with no plausible theory of exodus typology underlying the Fourth Gospel — unless we can advance an alternative of our own.

II

The most likely place where one may seek an exodus typology of major proportions in the Gospel of John is not the traditions concerning the Hebrews after they departed from Egypt but in those concerning them before their departure and up to it, i.e., the materials of Exod 2:23–12:51. In amplifying and testing this hypothesis we may begin with the dominant feature of this unit of material, the signs which Moses performs in Egypt.

Exod 2:23–12:51 is built around the theme of belief in the self-revealing deity. The crucial issue of Moses' call is YHWH's revelation of his name and his sovereignty. Anticipating disbelief among the Israelites and Egyptians, YHWH arranges to prove his existence and his might by

5 See Otto A. Piper, "Unchanging Promises: Exodus in the New Testament," *Interpretation*, 11 (1957), pp. 3-22; note especially the statement that "John has no room for divinely guided history . . . . It is the contrast between old and new, appearance and truth, which dominates John's thinking. While the evangelist is far from denying the historicity of the events, they do not, as in Paul's case, form the foundation of a process from which the new covenant emerges" (p. 5).
investing Moses with the power to perform "signs and wonders" — Hebrew,םַעֲבֵיתָּנָּא, LXX, σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα — or, as they are often called, simply "signs" (see Exod 3:12; 4:8-9; 7:3; 8:23; 10:1-2). Although "signs and wonders" cannot be regarded as "technical terminology," it is interesting to note that when the phrase is used elsewhere in the OT it almost always refers to Moses' miraculous deeds, either as they were originally performed (e.g., Deut 4:34; Ps 78:43-51) or as God will perform them in an eschatological repetition of the exodus experience (e.g., Dan 4:2f.; cf. IV Ezra 7:26f.). Thus when we find the expression σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα (or simply σημεῖα) occurring in the Fourth Gospel in connection with specific miracles (John 2:11; 4:48, 54; 6:14; 9:16; 11:47) as well as by way of general reference (e.g., John 2:23; 6:2), it is evident that the tradition of Moses' signs and wonders lies in the background.

That the fourth evangelist saw Jesus' signs as antitypes of Moses' signs is indicated by several other points of similarity. In the gospel, as in the Exodus materials, the aim of the miracles is to bring the recipient or observer to a recognition of the power of the deity. The gospel likewise portrays Jesus as reluctant to perform signs — note the distaste implied in Jesus' words, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe!" (John 4:48) — even as YHWH seems reluctant to loose his afflictions upon Egypt. Finally, the reaction of "the Jews" to Jesus' signs is one of disbelief, an attitude which is reminiscent of the "hardness of heart" of Pharaoh.

We now come to the Johannine signs individually, which are so similar to the Mosaic signs that it seems that the fourth evangelist has deliberately arranged them as parallels.

The first Mosaic sign is that of turning water into blood (Exod 7:14-24). With it one may justifiably compare Jesus' miraculous changing of water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-11). Jesus, like Moses, has divine power,
with which he changes water into wine, the "blood of the grape." But if the fourth evangelist has Moses' first sign in mind here, at the same time he significantly inverts its nature. Instead of creating death-dealing blood, Jesus creates life-giving wine. Thus we find here the first occurrence of the concept, to be found submerged in the other Johannine signs as well, that whereas Moses demonstrated divine power by works of destruction, Jesus demonstrates that same power by beneficial acts. The Mosaic deed thus serves as the type of Jesus' deed in a manner which conforms to the typology of Paul and, in part, to that of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. What was performed by key Hebrew figures in the past was imperfect, and is now recapitulated by Jesus in a perfect way.

The second, third, and fourth signs of Moses, the successive onsluations of frogs, gnats, and flies (Exod 7 25–8 32), which are fairly similar in that they constitute a proliferation of troublesome but presumably nonfatal pests, seem to have no parallels in the Fourth Gospel. This is not particularly disturbing, for if, as we shall see, the writer seems to have wished to show Jesus performing only seven signs rather than the Mosaic ten, he obviously had to leave out some of the material in Exodus. The modern reader will probably concur in the fourth evangelist's decision that these three episodes were most expendable, for two of them — those of the gnats and the flies — are especially colorless.

The fifth of Moses' signs, that of the bringing of a plague upon the domestic animals of Egypt (Exod 9 1–7), also has no obvious Johannine parallel, but in this instance one is perhaps justified in suggesting that the fourth evangelist intended it to be paralleled by the story of Jesus' healing of the official's son (John 4:46–54). In both signs the affliction leads to death. There is also an element of indirectness in the suffering, for the Egyptians are not afflicted in their own bodies and the official himself is not ill. We see here the same typological inversion which we also comes near to functioning as an antitype of YHWH himself. The confusion arises from the presence of the two figures in the Exodus accounts.

11 This idiom appears both in the OT (e. g., Deut 32 14) and in the intertestamental literature (e. g., I Macc 6:34).

12 The Jewish and early Christian symbolical interpretation of wine as a life-giving fluid is explored in detail in E. R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, v and vi. The story of the wedding at Cana presumably did not originally revolve around the motif of Jesus' life-giving blood, but that association can hardly have gone unnoticed by the users of the tradition.

13 See Piper, op. cit., p. 20.

14 The Johannine story would parallel the account in Exodus more closely if it were not the official's son who was ill but his slave — a piece of valuable living property. Interestingly enough, in Luke's version of the parallel Q story (Luke 7:1–10) it is a slave (δοῦλος) who is ill. Matthew's version (Matt 8:5–13) reads πάις, which could mean either "son" or "slave."
noted in connection with the first Johannine sign: whereas Moses brings about the extinction of valued possessions, Jesus sustains life in that which is treasured. Of all of the comparisons which we shall draw, this is the weakest; but though the points of similarity are not strong, neither are they perhaps entirely without value.

The sixth sign in Exodus is the affliction of the Egyptians with a disease which produces sores on the body (Exod 9:8–12). This is the first occasion in the Exodus narrative in which real bodily affliction occurs. With it we may compare the story of Jesus' healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2–9), which is the first of Jesus' signs in which direct personal affliction is involved. The type and antitype are fairly clear; in the one, Moses brings physical debilitation, while in the other, Jesus brings restoration to health.

The seventh sign of Moses is that of the summoning of a thunderstorm upon Egypt, which brings with it devastating hail (Exod 9:13–35). For the Johannine parallel we must break, for the first and only time, the order between the two sets of materials, and find the matching account to be that of Jesus' stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:16–21). This story, which combines the idea of Jesus' stilling of the storm with that of his walking on the sea, shows the usual pattern: whereas Moses conjures up a storm to bring destruction, Jesus, by implication, stills a storm and brings calm.

The eighth sign in Exodus, that of the attack by locusts upon the foliage and fruit of Egypt, which leaves the people without agricultural sustenance (Exod 10:1–20), has a fairly obvious parallel in the Johannine account of Jesus' feeding of the multitude with bread (John 6:1–15). The Exodus type describes Moses' bringing of famine to those who have food; the Johannine antitype emphasizes Jesus' supplying of an abundance of food to those who are hungry.

The ninth sign which Moses performs is that of invoking darkness upon Egypt (Exod 10:21–29). With its specific statement that the darkness was so deep that the people behaved as though blind, the Exodus

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15 It is possible that the Johannine writer was attracted to this particular healing story because at one point it bears a detailed, if incidental, resemblance to the Exodus account. In the healing at Bethesda the lame man is so afflicted that he is unable to rise in order to get into the pool; in the Mosaic affliction the Egyptian magicians are so ill that they cannot stand before Moses.

16 The same motifs are brought together in the account in Mark 6:45–52 and parallel, but only the element of the stilling of the storm appears in the story in Mark 4:35–41 and parallels. In those accounts which combine the two motifs, that of the stilling of the storm becomes secondary to that of the walking on the sea.

17 Not only in the Johannine story of the feeding but in the Synoptic accounts as well (the five thousand, Mark 6:30–44 and parallels; and the four thousand, Mark 8:1–10 and parallel) the bread occupies the central place and the fish is mentioned almost as an afterthought.
account offers a solid type for the Johannine account of the healing of the blind man (John 9:1–41), in which Jesus brings sight to one who sits in darkness.18

The tenth sign in the Exodus account is the slaughter of the first-born of Egypt within a night (Exod 11:1–12:32). It serves as an effective climax to the series of signs, and has its obvious parallel in the story of the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1–44), which seems rather clearly to be intended as the culmination of Jesus' miraculous deeds. Death is the dominant thought in both stories, but in the former God brings death where there was life, whereas in the latter Jesus brings life where there was death.

With the story of the raising of Lazarus we should, so far as the thought of the Fourth Gospel is concerned, also link the tradition of Jesus' own resurrection, which the writer of the gospel apparently considered to be a sign (see John 20:30; 13:19; 2:18–22). In the resurrection God performs for Jesus what earlier Jesus has done for Lazarus,19 thus revealing himself to be not, as the Exodus story assumes, one who allows the death of the first-born to be final but one who raises up the first-born (Jesus) to life.20 That the death-resurrection of Jesus should be understood as linked with the final Mosaic sign is further indicated by the presence of the paschal lamb typology.21 Thus, as the Fourth Gospel

18 In the discussion between Jesus and the Jews which follows the healing, we find an echo of the motif of affliction which characterizes the Mosaic signs. Jesus says, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind" (John 9:39). Just as Moses' signs bring salvation to the Israelites and destruction to the Egyptians, so do Jesus' signs bring salvation to those who believe and destruction to the Jews. In general, however, the destructive power of Jesus' signs is not emphasized in the Fourth Gospel.

19 It is not surprising that the Lazarus story stands near the passion narrative, for some of its features show that it participates in traditions clustered around Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Matt 27:52–53 mentions the tradition that at Jesus' death tombs opened and many bodies of the saints were resurrected, an idea which seems to stem from the Jewish eschatological concept of a coming day of divine judgment upon the earth. The Fourth Gospel itself mentions this tradition in one of its few passages which imply futuristic eschatology: "For the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his [the Son of man's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28 f.). Jesus' command to Lazarus, "Come out," seems to echo this idea rather explicitly, as C. H. Dodd notes in The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 365.

20 The term "first-born" (πρωτότοκος) is not used in the Fourth Gospel, but the author would probably not have objected to it; cf. the term "unique" (μονογενής) which is used in the prologue and elsewhere (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) to describe Jesus' filial relationship to God.

21 The paschal lamb typology, which is terminal in nature, was developed independently of — and probably prior to — the signs typology. It occupies a place close to the final Johannine sign by virtue of natural attraction to the crucifixion, and it tends
presents it, the final sign of Jesus involves the same dual motif of death-life which figures in the Exodus account.

The correlation which we find between the signs in Exod 3–12 and those in the Fourth Gospel is, then, as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>YHWH's (Moses') Signs in Egypt</th>
<th>Jesus' Signs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Water turned to blood (Exod 7 14–24)</td>
<td>I Water turned to wine (John 2 1–11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Onslaught of frogs (7 25–8 15)</td>
<td>II Healing of official's son (4 46–54)</td>
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<tr>
<td>III Onslaught of gnats (8 16–19)</td>
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<td>IV Onslaught of flies (8 20–32)</td>
<td>IV Feeding of the multitude (6 1–15)</td>
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<td>V Plague on animals (9 1–7)</td>
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<td>VI Disease of boils (9 8–12)</td>
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<td>VIII Onslaught of locusts (10 1–20)</td>
<td>and death-resurrection of Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX Darkness upon the land (10 21–29)</td>
<td>X Death of the first-born (11 1–12 32)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Important in assessing the validity of these parallels is the fact that no significant rearrangement of the Johannine passages is required. The one exception is the Johannine story of the feeding of the multitude, which, if parallel to the Exodus narrative, would appear after the story of the stilling of the storm rather than before it. But it should be noted that these stories are precisely the two which John shares with the Markan tradition. We may assume that although it would have suited his typology to reverse the accounts, the fourth evangelist did not do so because he had received the traditions as an established unit22 and was reluctant to tamper with their order. This single deviation in parallelism thus presents no serious difficulty for our hypothesis.

While speaking of the arrangement of the signs in the Gospel of John, we may note that our findings give no support to the widespread idea that John 5 and 6 originally stood in the reverse of their present sequence, but indicate rather that if these chapters ever existed in the sequence 6–5 it was prior to the time of the structuring of the gospel as a whole. The present sequence is apparently the work of the compiler of the group of signs, who, for some reason at which we can only guess, left a hiatus to supplement the signs typology even though not an integral part of it. It was capable of standing independently, as is indicated by the fact that it continued to be used in the church after the signs typology had fallen into disuse. Its permanence is undoubtedly due in good measure to Paul's specific reference to it in I Cor 5 7: "For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed."

22 It is not necessary to assume that the fourth evangelist got the traditions directly from Mark, for a common oral source may lie behind both versions. That the two stories came to the evangelist (or some earlier compiler) already linked is generally agreed; see, for example, R. Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes28, p. 77.
between the two sections. This observation raises serious doubt about the existence of any "original arrangement" of these chapters.23

If we accept as valid the hypothesis of the parallelism between the Johannine signs and those in Exodus, we find a solution to the long-standing problem of how many signs there are in the Fourth Gospel; there are seven. The story of Jesus' walking on the sea (i.e., his stilling of the storm), which has most often been questioned as a sign,24 is shown by its Exodus parallel to be one of the signs. There could, of course, be more than seven signs — anywhere from eight to ten, though hardly more than ten since that is the limit of the signs in the Exodus narrative; but there seems to be no other Johannine material which could be correlated with the Exodus signs.25 Furthermore, we know from the book of Revelation that by the late first century popular tradition had recast the ten afflictions on Egypt into a sevenfold form.26 There is thus both internal and external support for the recognition of seven Johannine signs.27 Why only the first two signs are specifically numbered, and two (the healing of the lame man and the stilling of the storm) are not referred to as signs at all, remains obscure, but a difference of sources may be partly responsible.28

23 See the comments of C. K. Barrett in his revision of W. F. Howard's The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation, p. 167.


25 One can speculate as to whether or not any of the materials between the first and second Johannine signs (i.e., John 2:12–4:45) might possibly be submerged parallels to the second, third, and fourth Mosaic signs, for which we have listed no parallels. The fact that the first two Johannine signs are explicitly numbered "first" and "second" makes the task formidable. Bultmann (op. cit., p. 78), inclines to the idea that the cleansing of the temple (John 2:13–22) constitutes a sign, and Dodd (op. cit., p. 303) specifically refers to that episode as a sign. Against this view one must place the fact, perhaps not unsurmountable, that Jesus' actions in that episode are not in any way miraculous.

26 See below, n. 31. For the author of the Apocalypse the number seven clearly had special symbolical significance. How much significance the fourth evangelist found in the number is debatable. Bernard (op. cit., pp. lxxviii ff.) finds no solid evidence that the evangelist had any interest in the number; Bultmann (op. cit., p. 78) likewise sees none.

27 One of the more recent commentaries to use a sevenfold sign scheme — which really amounts to a traditional view — is that of F. C. Grant, The Gospel of John. Compare the view of C. H. Dodd (op. cit.), who finds in John 2:12, which he calls the "Book of Signs," seven major blocks of material in which the various signs (more than seven in number) are unequally distributed.

28 The idea of Jesus' miraculous deeds as signs, though perhaps not the concept of a full-fledged sign typology, may well have arisen with some predecessor of the fourth evangelist, from whom the evangelist may have gotten the two accounts which are so neatly numbered; Sydney Temple in JBL, 81 (1962), pp. 169–74, has attempted to show
The typology which we have postulated likewise has considerable bearing on the question of the sources of the Fourth Gospel. In order to have been able to select miraculous deeds of Jesus which constituted acceptable parallels to the Mosaic signs, the fourth evangelist must have had a large fund of traditions at his disposal—especially since he did not, so far as one can tell, allow himself to modify his sources in order to make them more suitable for his scheme. Since he used some materials which we find, in differing versions, in both Q and Mark, and several traditions otherwise unknown to us, we may suppose that the total body of his resources was quite large—perhaps considerably larger than that of Mark.

An important question remains to be answered. Why should the Mosaic signs have been so important to the fourth evangelist that he would use them typologically? The answer lies in Johannine theology. As we know, the evangelist was convinced that Jesus brought to men a full revelation of God, to the extent that the divine plan essentially required no future culmination. But as occasional hints in the gospel reveal, and as common sense would in any case suggest, he was fully aware of the prophetic expectations of a coming eschatological event in which God would right all wrong and establish his reign forever. Particularly strong in his background seems to have been the view that this coming event would constitute a cosmic repetition of the afflictions which God sent upon Egypt. These expectations had to be fulfilled, for God

that these signs stem from a distinctive Cana source. If some prior editor is responsible for the numbering of these two signs, the retention of the numbers in the Fourth Gospel suggests that the evangelist was strongly reluctant to engage in editorial rewriting of his materials. In any case, the casual way in which the term “signs” comes into the narrative in connection with the healing of the blind man (see John 9:16) and the raising of Lazarus (see John 11:47) warns one not to place undue emphasis upon the presence or absence of the term.

An alternate explanation is, of course, that the parallelism of the Johannine signs to those of Moses is due to Jesus himself who, in order to convey the impression that he was God or Moses, performed only a limited number of carefully selected deeds reminiscent of the afflictions on Egypt.

Because the signs seem to have been taken into the gospel without drastic editorial modification it is still profitable to study them individually for such varied motifs as they may contain. It is interesting to note that at more than one point we have been prompted to assume a conservatism on the part of the evangelist in handling his sources. Whether or not this generalization is ultimately valid depends, of course, upon many other factors.

Cf. Isa 19:19-22; Joel 2:30-31; Ezek 9:4-8; Hag 2:6-7. That some Christians were emphasizing a repetition of the Exodus afflictions is clearly shown by another document traditionally attributed to the Johannine community, Revelation. Revelation, which presents the eschatological events as occurring in seven great waves, each of which consists of seven afflictions, plainly derives two of its sevenfold onslaughts (the second and the fifth, Rev 8:7-11, 19 and 15-16) from the narrative in Exod 3-12.
had not allowed his prophets to speak falsely. Since from his point of view the only sphere for the fulfillment of them was the life of Jesus, the fourth evangelist did the most logical thing. Through careful selection and arrangement of Jesus' miraculous deeds according to the typology of God's signs in Egypt, he presented the fulfillment of the eschatological prophecies within Jesus' life. The signs typology thus not only is congenial to the realized eschatology of the Fourth Gospel but also contributes to the argument of the work; for without it, the evangelist would possibly have had to resort to a futuristic eschatology for his presentation of the divine plan.\footnote{Precisely such a futuristic eschatology is given in Revelation, and in a way that the fourth evangelist could by no means have accepted. Strongly vindictive, and seemingly oblivious to the fact that in the Exodus account the major function of the afflictions is to bring the Egyptians to a recognition of the existence and might of YHWH, the author of Revelation sees the eschatological events solely as punishment upon the wicked, with no real anticipation that they will bring men to salvation. More nearly acceptable to the fourth evangelist would have been an eschatological program in which God would send affliction for the sake of restoring men to him. That idea is found as early as Isa 19:19–22: "In that day . . . the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the Lord. . . . And the Lord will smite Egypt, smiting and healing, and they will return to the Lord, and he will heed their supplications and heal them." But even this would not content the evangelist, for he completely transmutes the Mosaic signs so that they become works of divine goodness. In pointing this out we would challenge the almost commonplace assumption of scholars that, whereas in the Synoptic gospels Jesus performs miracles out of compassion, in the Fourth Gospel he performs miracles as impersonal signs of his divine glory. In part this is, of course, correct, and the signs typology does not lessen the note of formality in the gospel; but the picture is often considerably overdrawn. The thrust of the signs typology is that in his person Jesus has revealed a new dimension of God, that of divine love.}

Like any good fundamental correlation between Christian traditions and the OT, the signs typology had an inherent possibility for expansion into a structural typology for the whole of the Fourth Gospel. All that was necessary was that additional elements of the narrative in Exod 2:23–12:51 be introduced typologically into the gospel. It is too much to say that a pervasive typology of this kind actually exists in the Fourth Gospel, but the evangelist clearly seems to have been thinking in this direction. Note in particular how certain major features of the gospel, besides the signs, tend to have parallels in the passage in Exodus. "The Jews" play a highly stylized rôle in the gospel which is quite similar to that of Pharaoh, as the representative of the Egyptians, in the Exodus account; both are consistently represented as opponents of the deity and are characterized by their lack of unbelief in the signs which the deity performs. Likewise those who believe in Jesus constitute a parallel to the Israelites, who, unlike the Egyptians, believe when they see YHWH's signs (Exod 4:31). Also notable is the similarity, which scholars have from time to time pointed out, between Jesus' "I am" declarations in
the Fourth Gospel and YHWH's "I am" revelation in Exod 3:14; and just as YHWH's self-revelation is intimately linked with the subsequent signs which prove his existence and power, so Jesus' declarations stand in close relationship to the signs which he performs as evidence of the truth of his assertions.

As fertile as the typology based on Exod 2:23–12:51 was, it had an unavoidable limitation: the story unit ended with the night of the flight of the Israelites from Egypt; subsequent events belonged to other cycles of material. So far as the Fourth Gospel was concerned, this meant that the signs typology was applicable only through the event of the death and resurrection of Jesus. That event marked the beginning of a new period, that of the life of the community of Jesus' followers, who in John 20–21 become the center of interest in a way not previously found in the gospel, just as following the escape from Egypt the Israelites enter actively in the exodus traditions in a way in which they previously have not. The most appropriate typology for the life of the church after Jesus' resurrection would be that of the wilderness wanderings; and indeed, the authorization and commandments given by the risen Jesus hint faintly at a comparison with the divine commandments of YHWH at Sinai. But if there is any wilderness typology in the postresurrection traditions of the gospel, it is still inchoate.

The typology of the Gospel of John contrasts strikingly with the typological ventures in the Synoptic gospels, where the wilderness experiences of the Israelites predominate—particularly in Matthew, which presents Jesus as a new lawgiver.33 That there is much to be said for the Synoptic interpretations is evident from the fact that they have exerted an influence in Christianity down to the present day. So far as we know, the Johannine typology was not perpetuated within the church.34 One cannot help but regret this loss, for no other typology was so profound in its proposal for correlating the central events in Hebrew and Christian salvation history.

33 See Piper's discussion of Synoptic typology, op. cit., pp. 16–18.
34 Note, however, the following passage in the Apostolic Constitutions: "For neither did the Egyptians believe in God after Moses had done so many signs and wonders; nor did the multitude of the Jews believe in Christ, as they believed in Moses, who had yet healed every sickness and every disease among them. Nor were the former shamed by the rod which was turned into a living serpent, nor by the hand which was made white with leprosy, nor by the river Nile turned into blood; nor the latter by the blind who recovered their sight, nor by the lame who walked, nor by the dead who were raised" (viii, 1). The reference to the rod and the hand confuses the issue, but the signs typology is clear enough. Like many other materials in book viii of this work, this passage may stem from early traditions.