

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

by

Melancthon W. Jacobus

Note: Author's introduction in *Notes, Critical and Explanatory, on the Book of Exodus* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1874). The text has not been modified, except that punctuation has been modernized and long paragraphs have been divided.

After the Genesis comes the Exodus. After the Book of the Creation comes the Book of the Redemption. Glancing back at the heads of history, we have the Creation and the Fall of man followed by the Deluge, in which there was the saved remnant, and this succeeded by the Dispersion and Population of the Globe, with the national differences at length limited by the Divine plan to bring forward a chosen nation for God Himself.

Abraham, called from among the Chaldees, enters Canaan as a strange land, and is led by the Divine Providence to Egypt where his household, at first honored, becomes enslaved but grows under the special favor of God into a nation and is miraculously redeemed from the bondage as His own chosen people.

The kingdom of God on earth is thus brought into strong contrast with the kingdom of Satan, and the issue is fairly joined. The powers of darkness are always found rallying against the powers of light. God interposes and achieves the victory for His Church over His foes and theirs.

In all this the principles of the Divine administration for all the ages are plainly set forth. And this signal Deliverance becomes a pledge for all the future, a historico-prophetical transaction, referred to by the prophets and the Psalmists, as the impressive type of the greater Deliverance to come in the last time by Jesus Christ.

The Church in bondage to the world-kingdom of successive ages is to be led forth in the future as it has been led forth in the past, and by a series of splendid interpositions of Divine power and grace--opening the sea for her, overwhelming her enemies, leading her through the wilderness by the Angel of His presence, giving her water out of the Rock, spreading her table with manna and with meat, and vanquishing the foe. Step by step the Jordan is finally to be crossed and the Land of Promise is to be entered.

The Christian reader finds also his own religious history shadowed forth by the same wonderful narrative, involving the same great principles of the Divine administration; so that "these things, which were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." This, therefore, is history pregnant with religious truth. Some will read these wondrous chapters of the Pentateuch as a parable because they are so redolent of instruction for all time. But it is history, gleaming all over with pictorial teaching for all men and for all the ages.

This Book sets forth God's Redemptive dealing on the lower plane of temporal events, according to the Divine plan of working out in the lower department His illustrations of the higher, and thus, as with

Jesus in His miracles, through the avenues of the bodily transaction reaching to the affairs of the soul.

But for the very reason that this Book of Redemption stands so at the gateway of inspired History in reference to the Salvation of men, it has been most persistently assaulted as most absurdly incorrect in detail and unhistorical. This is done mainly by begging the whole question. It is first assumed by such that a miracle is impossible, and then the record is pronounced upon in the light of a mere natural development and is denied. But the supernatural is not impossible if once it be admitted that there is a God. For God is supernatural. And then at once it is plain that the supernatural act is only natural to a supernatural Being.

On the other hand, to work out reconciliations of science with Scripture by finding the miracle to be only some exaggeration of the natural working, or the natural forces only extraordinarily operated in a way to tone down the miracle and to bring it within the scope of the natural law, is most absurd, because if once the possibility of miracle be admitted, we may safely follow the narrative and not be treating the miracle as "*too hard* for the Lord." Nay, if the probability of miracle in God's dealings with men be admitted, as we must admit as surely as there is a God, then we have only to receive these glimpses of the Infinite as God's own methods of revealing Himself and the higher world to men.

It would seem as if precisely to confront such scepticism as that of our day--which finds no God in the world and puts the laws of nature, so called, in the place of God--that these Egyptian miracles were wrought in such close connection with natural law. God here will show Himself to the unbelievers to be the God of nature--working in the domain of nature so as to manifestly control the forces of nature and to sway them at His bidding--ordering the natural phenomena in a way to show a supernatural personal power behind the phenomena, and directing the laws of nature so as to show the lawgiver in them all.

This close and convincing relation of the miracle to the natural phenomenon has encouraged those who strive to find in the operation only an exaggerated account of the common physical order of things. But if this could be accepted as only a poetic account of common events, how then can we account for the history as to momentous results brought about by these events? It was the effect of these miracles upon Pharaoh which led to the Deliverance of the Israelites from his oppressive bondage. And it would be idle to say that, after all, there was nothing in these mighty operations in nature beyond the working of natural law. Even De Wette has admitted the impossibility of thus explaining away these miracles as they are related in the narrative.

The only alternative must be to deny the history because it is the history of miracle. Though faith must be founded on testimony, yet here would be an arbitrary limitation of testimony and of history so as to dictate and choose the things to be believed however amply attested. Jehovah was here showing Himself to be the Personal power in Egypt and in all its affairs, and thus He was propounding His supreme claims as against their idol deities. It was the *Personal* will displayed throughout--forewarning and executing accordingly, bidding the natural forces to come and go at His pleasure, and discriminating in the results between the Israelites and the Egyptians. This proved the Personal God.

The magicians were put to shame. "*They did so with their enchantments*"--they wrought some resemblances to the miracles. "*They did so*"--thus after the same fashion. *Imitating* as to the appearance "*with their enchantments*"--by their jugglery and tricks of magic, and only so far as to embolden those who would not believe in God but would believe in imposture.

Pharaoh is a representative unbeliever, lured on by shams and deceits of magicians and their

experiments until overwhelmed by the great miracle of the Judgment Day. As Professor Henry has well said, *The more Law, the more Law-giver*. The more proof we find of Law, the more proof we have of a Law-giver. And these magicians of Moses' time are referred to by name as types of their successors in every age; and in our day, "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth. Men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men *as theirs also was*" (2 Tim. 3:8).

To what shameless puerility are men of learning left who maintain that the most we can legitimately gather from these records is "the *not ourselves which makes for righteousness*"--and that this abstraction is the explanation of the name *Jehovah*. And Strauss at length declares that "the *choice only lies between the Miracle--the Divine Artificer--and Darwin*." It has been well said, that in proof of the possibility of miracle the Christian man may put forward the miracle of his own regeneration. This is a convincing proof to himself and may become so to others also. This is in the domain of "*the greater works*" than these of the physical phenomena. If "the Christian is the world's Bible and the only Bible that it reads," let not that be unhistorical, as the written revelation is not. But the denial of miracles has led Strauss and his school to the denial of Immortality and of a PERSONAL GOD. The standing miracle of the ages, and most essentially *historical*, is the Jewish nation itself. A chaplain of Frederic William I. of Prussia was ordered to give the briefest possible proof of the truth of Christianity, and he replied, "*The Jews, your Majesty*."

TITLE

The name of the book, "Exodus," means *Departure--going out*--and refers to the leading fact recorded, the Departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt. It forms an important chapter in the National Annals of the Hebrew people, which are also Ecclesiastical records in the history of God's ancient Church.

AUTHOR

The arguments for the Mosaic authorship of Genesis are valid for this Book also--(See *Notes on Genesis--Introduction*). The New Testament is explicit to this effect. Our Lord calls it "the Book of Moses," (Mark 12:26). "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush," (Luke 20:37) etc.

HISTORICAL CREDIBILITY

The history itself is amply attested by the use of it in the National songs--reciting the leading particulars. As in Psalm 66, "*Come and see the works of Jehovah. He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land. They went through the flood on foot. There did we rejoice in Him*." So in Ps. 68, most expressly in sublime passages referring to the Exodus. Also in Ps. 74, "*Thou didst divide the Sea by thy strength*," etc. In Ps. 77, "*Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron*." And then the leading events are recited in detail in Ps. 78. And how could this Psalm have been composed, or how could it have been sung by generations of the people as a National sing if there had been no such history? Ps. 81 mentions the proving at Meribah. So Ps. 86, Ps. 89:10, Ps. 103. "*He made known His ways unto Moses*," etc. This history is sung in

course in Psalms 105 and 106.

The Prophets also refer to the history of the Exodus in a way to show that this stupendous Deliverance was at the basis of Israel's religious history and the pledge of the more glorious deliverance that was yet to come. *"Art thou not it (He) that hath cut Rahab (Egypt) and wounded the Dragon? Art thou not it that hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?"* (Isa. 51:10). *"Where is He that brought them up out of the Sea with the Shepherd of His flock? that led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them to make Himself an everlasting name, that led them through the deep as a horse through the wilderness that they should not stumble?"* (Isa. 63:13; Isa. 43:9). So in Jeremiah, *"Neither said they where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt,"* etc. (Jer. 2:6; 16:14; 23:7).

MOSES

As surely as the Jewish people exists, so surely does its peculiar history point back to Moses at the Exodus. Great as were the Pharaohs, Moses was greater than they. And the occupation of Judea by this people came to pass only in consequence of their deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh and the destruction of the haughty and godless oppressor. All history must be denied and its foundations subverted if we attempt to demolish these records upon which the Jewish history stands. How then did Moses, impotent as he was by himself and unaided by any world power, accomplish this wonderful deliverance in the face of the world's proudest and most powerful kingdom? Without battle or blood, and without human intervention, what was the secret of his success if we do not find it here written in the wonder-working power of God?

It would be far more difficult to believe in the Exodus itself, apart from the Divine interposition, than it would be to credit that interposition as here narrated. The history is natural in the midst of the supernatural, all occurring in strict conformity with the known peculiarities of the respective people and with the usages and physical features of Egypt itself, so as to furnish the ample internal evidence of veracity on the part of the narrator, who must also have been an eye-witness of the events. And at this day it would be as idle to deny the existence of the Jewish people in their strong peculiarities of race and usage as to deny these early chapters in their national annals, on which their history is founded, or to deny the facts of Moses' Leadership as their Champion under God before Pharaoh.

"Moses in whom ye trust," said the Saviour to the Jews of His day (John 5:43). *"Not all that came out of Egypt by Moses,"* said Paul to the Hebrews (Heb. 3:16). *"All were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea"* (1 Cor. 10:2). *"Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses"* (2 Tim. 3:8). And the history, including all that is supernatural about it, must be received as surely as we believe that there is today this Jewish people upon earth who sing of this Exodus as a leading chapter in their national annals. There is no accounting for this history, nor even for their existence, if these events of the Exodus be denied. It is only a strange infatuated zeal to get rid of the idea of a Personal God that brands the record as unhistorical, when the history is as much the history of the supernatural as it is of the natural; and you cannot dissever the two without destroying the history.

THE PASSOVER

And how can this religious festival of the Jewish Church be accounted for, celebrated by a whole nation during three thousand years, unless these records of the Exodus be true? It has not more real

connection with the harvest "first fruits" than it has with these "first fruits" of Israel's Redemption. Can we suppose that the sacred and devout worship of the Jewish Church, and of the Christian Church as grafted upon it, could have proceeded during three thousand years upon a sheer fiction or on a mere mythology? That grand Redemptive act in history, as typical and foreshadowy of the Redemption by Christ Jesus, was planned by the Divine mind. And the fact was given to be celebrated as revealing God's purposes of grace for His Church and people in all the ages, just as the Messianic idea is the golden thread upon which all the events of history are strung. As well could we think of a "*Fourth of July*" being celebrated by our own nation during nearly one hundred years, and yet disbelieve and deny any such event as the Declaration of our National Independence.

THE DECALOGUE

The Mosaic code of Ten Commandments has impressed itself upon the history of the civilized world. And whence could it have originated if not as recorded in this Book of Exodus? As the acknowledged standard of morality, and as the true basis of moral legislation, whence was it derived if not from God, and where was it given if not at Sinai? Is it not grossly absurd to account for it only "as the product of a necessity in human society, gradually taught by experience, and finding in this fact the reason of its unalterable obligation?" Will Strauss, as the prince of disbelievers, accept the Sabbath law as thus originated, and will his followers so agree to admit its unalterable obligation? But that law refers to the fact of Creation and bases itself upon the resting of God from His works at the end of the creative week.

And then if this Moral Code grew only gradually out of the public necessity, who tabulated it in its present form of ten commands? Why ten and no more? But is it not more easy to credit the record for any intelligible origin of such a code and for its necessary sanction of Divine authority? True indeed, it had its roots in the public necessity and has proved itself in utmost accord with it through all the ages. But it originated not with that people in the wilderness, recent from the degradation of Egyptian bondage. It had its origin in God, who in connection with the Redemptive act there grouped the fundamental principles of morality into a Code for all nations and for all ages, and of universal application. But wherever the Decalogue is read, there is read the Preface to the Commandments in those significant words which assert the historical verity of the Exodus records: "*I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*" The Law of Ten Commands stands thus distinctly prefaced by the history of this Deliverance from Egypt; and you can as well deny the Decalogue and its Divine obligation as deny the Exodus itself as here recorded.

CHRONOLOGY

The Chronology cannot be positively determined but may be regarded as an open question.

The Period of the Patriarchs from the Covenant to the Exodus is computed at 430 years (*A.M.* 2086-2516), though some high authorities reckon 400 years as belonging to the sojourn in Egypt. Gen. 15:13, Exod. 12:40, and Acts 7:6 with Galat. 3:17 are the passages which need to be compared. In Galatians the period from the Promise to the Exodus is stated as being 430 years; and the other passages do not necessarily conflict with this, for Palestine is noted in several passages as being to them a strange land and so answering to the description in Gen. 15:13. And their sojourn there is to be reckoned with the dwelling in Egypt as part of the entire time. So the *Sept.* and the *Samar Pent* add the words "And in the land of Canaan" to define the sojourn. So counted, the half of the whole

period would fall to each locality.

We may be tempted to concede the entire time for Egypt because of a seeming relief in working out the large increase of the people during their abode there. But *see Notes* Ch. 12:40, where the passage reads, "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." The entire *sojourning* (not in Egypt, but) *of the people who dwelt in Egypt* is given in the same terms as we find in Galatians more explicitly set for the period from the promise to the law--"The law, which was four hundred and thirty years after" the promise. This exactly defines the time and puts it within most express limits, and must therefore be followed.

ANALYSIS

The History divides itself into five special topics:

- I. Moses' commission to Israel in Egypt -- Six chapters (1-6)
- II. The ten plagues and the Passover -- Six chapters (7-12)
- III. The Exodus and onward to Sinai -- Six chapters (13-18)
- IV. The Law given -- Six chapters (19-24)
- V. The Tabernacle -- Sixteen chapters (25-40)

SYNOPSIS OF THE HISTORY

BOOK 1

ISRAEL IN PREPARATION FOR GOD'S SALVATION

Chapters 1 to 11

1. Israel in Egypt -- Jacob's family (1:1-6)
2. House of bondage (1:7-14)
3. The male children doomed to death (1:15-22)
4. The birth of Moses (2:1-10)
5. Moses' patriotism and his flight (2:11-25)
6. Call of Moses (3:1-10)
7. Moses' objections and God's answer (3:11-22)
8. Doubts removed (4:1-9)
9. Moses' further objection, etc. (4:10-31)
10. Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh (5:1-23)
11. Jehovah's promise (6:1-8)
12. Moses' discouragement, God's order (6:9-30)
13. Miracles according their mission (7:1-13)
14. The first plague--blood (7:14-25)
15. The second plague--frogs (8:1-15)
16. The third plague--lice (8:16-19)
17. The fourth plague--flies (8:20-32)
18. The fifth plague--rinderpest (9:1-7)
19. The sixth plague--boils, etc. (9:8-12)
20. The seventh plague--hail (9:13-35)

21. The eighth plague--locusts (10:1-20)
22. The ninth plague--darkness (10:21-29)
23. The tenth plague--threatened death of the firstborn (11:1-10)

BOOK 2
THE COVENANT CONSECRATION AND SEAL--
EXODUS TO SINAI
 Chapters 12 to 18

24. Institution of the Passover (12:1-14) and of Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:15-20)
25. Jehovah's Passover (12:21-28)
26. The tenth plague executed (12:29-36)
27. The Exodus begun (12:37-42)
28. Ordinances of the Passover (12:43-51)
29. Sanctification of firstborn, etc. (13:1-16)
30. The Exodus continued (13:17-22)
31. God's marching orders and the pursuit (14:1-18)
32. The Red Sea crossed (14:19-31)
33. Review, triumphal song (15:1-21)
34. The bitter waters sweetened (15:22-27)
35. The bread from Heaven (16:1-35)
36. Murmuring for lack of water, Horeb (17:1-7)
37. Defeat of Amalek (17:8-16)
38. Jethro's visit to Moses (18:1-27)

BOOK 3
SINAI--THE LAW GIVEN
 Chapters 19-23

39. The Moral Law introduced (ch. 19)
40. The Ten Commandments (20:1-17)
41. The Civil Law (chs. 21-23)

BOOK 4
GOD'S PUBLIC WORSHIP PROVIDED FOR--
THE TABERNACLE
 Chapters 24 to 40

42. Divine directions for the building and arrangement of Jehovah's dwelling place (chs. 24-31)
43. The golden calf (ch. 32)
44. The people forgiven (33:1-20, ch. 34)
45. The preparation of the Tabernacle and furniture (chs. 35-39)
46. The Tabernacle set up (ch. 40)