The recollection of God's mighty acts of long ago in Ps. lxxiv 12-17 falls into two parts: verses 12-14 describe the dividing of the sea and the slaying of Leviathan, and verses 16 f. the creation of the world. It was once generally believed that the first part refers to the overthrow of the Egyptians, pictured as a monster, at the crossing of the Red Sea (to use a familiar, even if questionable, term); on this view, verse 15 alludes to the smiting of the rock by Moses to bring out water and to the drying up of the Red Sea in his time and of the Jordan in the time of Joshua. This interpretation was challenged by H. GUNKEL 1) who saw in the passage, and in many other parts of the Old Testament, a reference to the myth of God's victory over the monster of the watery chaos: as in the Mesopotamian Enuma Elish, the victory was the prelude to the creation of the world in this psalm and in Ps. lxxxix 10-13 and Job xxxviii 4 ff. (cp. xxvi 12 f.). Since GUNKEL wrote, our knowledge of the background of the myth has been enlarged by the discovery of the Ugaritic texts in which Baal fights the dragon Itn and Prince Sea (ym), also known as Judge River (nbr); the Ugaritic tablets, however, do not directly relate this struggle to the creation of the world 2).

The fact that verses 12-14 refer to the dragon myth is not itself an

1) Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit (Göttingen, 1895), pp. 41-5; cp. Die Psalmen (Göttingen, 1926), ad loc.

2) See the discussions of the Ugaritic material in O. KAISER, Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel (Beihefte zur Z.A.W., lxxviii) (Berlin, 1959), and W. SCHMIDT, Königtum Gottes in Ugarit und Israel (B.Z.A.W., lxxx) (Berlin, 1961). It is unnecessary here to discuss L. R. FISHER's argument, V.T., xv (1965), pp. 313 ff., that the Baal of the Ugaritic texts can legitimately be described as a creator, since the defeat of the monster is not created with an act of creation in the same sense as in the Enuma Elish.
argument against an allusion to events in the period of the exodus; the myth might be reinterpreted historically in terms of the overthrow of the Egyptians at the Red Sea \(^1\). But GUNKEL maintained that the reference to the creation in verses 16 f. shows that this part of the psalm is speaking of God's activity in primeval times, long before the exodus \(^2\). So far, general agreement has not been reached among scholars, but, since the matter cannot be discussed in detail in the present paper, it must suffice to express the opinion that GUNKEL is right \(^3\). However, the possibility remains that the psalmist is referring both to the primeval battle and to the exodus \(^4\); but the primeval reference is primary, and no interpretation can be accepted that understands any part of these verses to speak only of the period of the exodus.

This raises the question how verse 15 is to be understood. It is not satisfactory to explain it as a reference to events in the time of Moses and Joshua, unless it is also a reference to primeval times. On the other hand, an interpretation of the verse as a reference to primeval times may be acceptable, even if it does not also leave room for an allusion to later events.

The first part of the verse speaks of the cleaving by God of spring and torrent. It has been thought that this means the creation by God of ordinary springs and streams or wadies on land. This explanation relates this part of the verse to the following verses, 16 f., which tell of the creation. The second part says that God dried up נלאים נלאים. This suggests a connexion with the preceding verses, 13 f., which regard the sea, the waters, and the dragon of the waters as hostile to God and which tell of his attack on them (cp. Nahum i 4, Job xxvi 12 f., Ps. lxxxix 10 ff., xciii 3 f. \(^5\)). The נלאים are probably the currents of the cosmic ocean \(^6\) attacked by God. Part of the ocean was dried up in order to produce dry land (cp. Ps. civ 6-9). But such an interpretation involves difficulties. First, if the second part of the verse

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\(^1\) Cp. S. MOWINCKEL, Psalmenstudien II (Kristiania, 1922), pp. 54 ff., for a discussion of this well-known phenomenon.


\(^3\) See the Additional Note.


\(^5\) Cp. Isa. li 9 f., where however there is a reference to the Red Sea.