Among the more stimulating contributions to the theological understanding of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets in recent years has been a series of articles by Hans Walter Wolff on the kerygma or message of the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), and the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH). By kerygma Wolff seems to have meant a writer's confession of faith in a given historical crisis. His kerygma articles have been organized around a specific formula: for J it was >by you the families of the earth will be blessed; for E the fear of God<<; and for DtrH the admonition to return. As a small measure of the esteem in which I hold Professor Wolff, I would like to respond to his career with an essay on a Pentateuchal stratum which he has not yet discussed kerymatically: P.

I.

To write such an essay necessitates a number of preliminary choices on introductory questions. To decide on this or that fork in the scholarly road is to risk losing the sympathy or support of many colleagues. Yet, however divided we students of the Old Testament are on the nature, date, ending, and make-up of P, there is a surprising consensus on which materials are to be assigned to priestly tradents, and it is my hope that those who would differ with me on this or that introductory question, could modify my theological proposal appropriately to fit their own views of pentateuchal origins. Here, then, are my positions on P.

1) I believe that P is to be considered a source or a stratum, that is, it once existed independently of J and E. Those who hold the opposite position might prefer to discuss what I say about P as part of the canonical shaping process (B. S. Childs), or as a theme of the finished Pentateuch (D. J. A.)

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Clines), or even as part of the redaction history of the Pentateuch (F. M. Cross). The potential usefulness of my insights on P for various schools of Old Testament research should not obscure the fact that the isolation, identification, and description of P's message are immeasurably facilitated, in my opinion, by the hypothesis that P was once a separate literary work.

2) Flexibility should characterize the discussion of theologians when it comes to the dating of P. I believe that P was written in the exile, but even if those who hold for a post-exilic date should prove to have the better case, the challenge posed by the historical crisis to the original author would not be altogether dissimilar. What we call post-exilic would still be exilic, as far as many of the theological, social, political and other problems are concerned.

3) Disagreements about the original ending of P (in Deut 34 or in the book of Joshua), raised afresh by N. Lohfink and J. Blenkinsopp, are of little moment in determining the theological intention of this copious document, but in my view the case for assigning portions of Joshua to P has not been sustained.

4) Far more crucial is the distinction between the original P narrative (what the Germans call P\textsubscript{g}) and the various series of supplements (what the Germans designate loosely as P\textsubscript{s}). While J. Wellhausen, for example, was impressed (distressed?) by what he perceived as the cultic legislation of P in the lengthy Sinai pericopes, K. Elliger, focusing on P\textsubscript{g}, found the real theme of P not in the cult or the cultic community, but in the land. This is not the place to decide the exact extent of P\textsubscript{g} and P\textsubscript{s} though surely almost all who employ source critical methodology at all concede that the original P, was supplemented over a period of years by increasingly detailed cultic stipulations. But are we correct in distinguishing a message of P\textsubscript{g} that deals primarily with the land or the return home, and a message of the full or supplemented P that is preoccupied with regulation of the cult? I would hold that description of the message of P to be most convincing which would see a basic continuity between P early and late, short and full. My own study of the message of P concludes that the original message of P was modified, reapplied, and extended in the cultic materials of the supplementers, but that throughout this history of growth a basic, unified theological intention can be discerned.

Wolff himself suggested that the »covenant formulae, or at least its first half, would be appropriate for articulating the message of P. That first half of the covenant formula, »I will be your God, might be better labeled as the

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5 The Theme of the Pentateuch, JSOTSuppl. Ser.10 (1978).
9 Sinn und Ursprung der priesterlichen Geschichtserzahlung, ZThK 49 (1952) 121-143.
10 See the reference in W. Brueggemann, Vitality, 36-37.
>God promise<. There is no question in my mind that most of what P has to say could be classified under this formula. One can only hope that Professor Wolff will yet find room in his busy schedule to give us his own articulation of the priestly message.

At least two others, however, have already attempted to fill the Wolffian gap. W. Brueggemann, for example, continued the heritage of Elliger, both in his focus on the land, and on the restriction of the investigation of P to Pg. 12 Brueggemann finds the message most fully summarized in Gen 1,28, though the formula is partially repeated a number of other times: »And God blessed them and God said to them: >Be fruitful and multiply; and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion . . <' In his understanding, reentry into the land is the central affirmation of P. >The (blessing) formula clearly is concerned with the proper and joyous use of the land, urging that for which land is intended, namely, to be fruitful and to control it. 13 The chaos of tohh u’dbohü is seen as the landless situation of exile; creation is not so much a statement about cosmic origins, but about restoration to the land. Brueggemann deals forcefully with a number of themes in P and, as usual, makes significant hermeneutical use of them. Still one is bothered by the fact that the theme–at least in its formulaic expression–does not appear after Exod 1,7. At that point it refers to the multiplication of the people in .Êgypt, prior to the account of the Exodus, and thus with no tie to the tradition of the land. Moreover, the great body of cultic legislation, according to Brueggemann, plays a minor, primarily defensive role – it prevents expulsion from the land. He has considerable difficulty, therefore, in drawing the continuities between P and P, between land and cult. While the blessing formula articulates a theme in the narratives of P, it may not be broad enough to serve as the message of P. The priestly series of everlasting covenants, for example, plays no role in Brueggemann’s statement of the theological intention, nor do we find mention of God’s dwelling with his people. No one would want to deny, of course, that the land is extremely important for P. After all, it is identified as an everlasting possession, and it is connected with the everlasting covenant made with Abraham and with the God promise (Gen 17,3). It can, however, be questioned whether the notion of land is broad enough to organize the manifold message of the earliest form of P.

A more recent article by S Boorer is much less useful in discovering the kerygmatic intention of the priestly document. 14 Ms. Boorer correlates passages in the Pentateuch with major periods of Israel’s history: Exod 16 with the wilderness period before the entry of Canaan; the Sinai pericope with

12 The Kerygma of the Priestly Writers, ZAW 84 (1972) 397—413; reprinted in: Vitality, 101—113. Brueggemann does not use the symbol P, but he restricts his discussion to the narratives, omitting the laws and genealogies.
13 Vitality, 105.
the life in the land, especially under the monarchy, and pericopes from the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy (Num 13—14; 20,2—12; 20,22—Deut 31,9) with the exilic period. She takes the Sinai materials to mean that the traditions and events of the monarchical period, in particular those concerning the temple and the political power of Judah, were divinely ordained and therefore valid in and appropriate for that period, but only for that time... The temple was not, according to P, a permanent institution but only a temporary structure valid for that period as the means of Yahweh's guidance of his people. « The Sinai pericope is no program for the future, in her telling, but only the demonstration that the promises and hopes of the monarchical period were invalidated by the exiles' current situation. The generation which experienced first hand the destruction of the temple is to die out, but the covenant will finally be fulfilled and a future generation of Israel will possess the land as an everlasting possession. She attempts no integration of this scenario with the cult, the priesthood, and sacrifices. If Sinai is not programmatic, one might ask what Israel would do after it repossesses the land; and if what will take place after Israel reaches the land is left completely open, one wonders why such a theology is to be called priestly.

N. Lohfink's recent essay (cf. note 7) does not really address the question of the kerygma, or at least not in the sense formulated by Wolff. He argues that the distinction between P as a history work (Ewald) or as a work of law, a priestly codex (Wellhausen) is beside the point. For Lohfink, P has turned history back into myths or paradigms. Primeval time does not end with the flood but it extends over the entire story narrated by P. The readers of P do not yet live within the glorious ordinances established by God in this primeval time; they are not to look forward to a new eschatological act of God which will surpass all his previous actions, nor to new, superior ordinances. Rather the ideal form of the world is already there and is well known. As far as God's contribution to this ideal form is concerned it is perpetually available. People move into the future by returning to this ideal form or age Lohfink terms this a rejection of a dynamic world.

II.

While I have learned much from Lohfink's survey of recent research and from his specific investigations, I presented a more dynamic, more eschatological view of P in 'Israel in Exile'. That discussion is entitled 'When Memory is Hope'. The word memory forms the key word or formula by which I organized the manifold reaction of P (or really P') to the historical crisis formed by Israel's loss of land, temple, king, cult, etc. Let me review briefly what I wrote there before I proceed to indicate how the central

15 Ibid. 17.
theme, that of God's memory, can be used as a bridge to the theological intention of those series of supplements which go by the label P.

P's emphasis on Sabbath in the creation story is part of an attempt to preserve Israel's identity by linking Sabbath to creation and by grounding its observance in an imitation of God. Men and women, furthermore, are not really prisoners of war, deportees, or remnants of an aristocracy, but kings and queens of God's estate, created in the image of God. By his word God created the world, and that effective word stands behind and energizes the words of promise situated at crucial points in his narrative. The creator's command promise to be fruitful and multiply was made to all people at the time of creation and flood, and to Israel in the accounts of Abraham and especially Jacob. That promise has been fulfilled repeatedly, also in Egypt (Exod 1,7) where Israel had lived in a kind of exile. The decimated exilic community could expect a fulfillment of that promise since it was part of the everlasting covenant or commitment made by God to Abraham.

The potential sin of exilic Israel, introduced in P's discussion of the flood, was one she had done in the past, and it is the common failing of all mankind: violence. The leaders of the exilic community seem to have been tempted to repeat the failings of the spies of the wilderness period, to despise the land and no longer want to have it. Its spiritual leaders, like Moses and Aaron at Kadesh, were in danger of failing to trust in and proclaim the miraculous power of Yahweh.

The everlasting covenant made with Noah promised that all flesh would never again be cut off by flood waters and that the world itself would never return to chaos. This promise could not be undone by catastrophes like exile, nor could the sins of Israel annul it. P promised that God would remember this covenant just as he remembered Noah in the ark, and just as he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by raising Moses, besting Pharaoh and liberating Israel from Egypt. At the Exodus God had remembered his people in a foreign land. Precisely when he had seemed to be most forgetful, he did remember after all. Now in exile, with the rainbow as a reminder, he would remember the covenant with Noah again. Life and the world are therefore sure.

A second everlasting covenant was made with Abraham and with it came the promise „to be God to you and to your seed after vow“ (17,7). One fulfillment of this „God promise„ came in the Exodus from Egypt, a second in Yahweh's dwelling with Israel in the sanctuary, a third in the gift of the land as an everlasting possession to a group of sojourners. The patriarchs never occupied the land as owners, and the Exodus generation died in the wilderness. But Joshua is held up by P as the one who never faltered in his belief that God would give the land. Exilic Israel is implicitly urged by P to mimic Joshua's faith and that of the second generation in the wilderness, who walked in perfection and the land was theirs.

The period of history beginning with the call of Moses (Exod 6) witnesses the Exodus from Egypt and the march toward the land, but also the institu-
tion of the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrificial system. These events disclose God's true identity, and hence the name Yahweh is revealed at the beginning of this period (Exod 6,3). The Exodus was the means by which Yahweh became known, and the Exodus formed the content of Israel's knowledge of God: You shall know that I am Yahweh your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians (Exod 6,7).

Israel could and should believe the promises of the everlasting covenants because their effectiveness was shown by previous partial fulfillments and because her God was depicted as superior to tyrannical power. We have already spoken of God's remembering Noah and of his remembering Israel in Egypt in fulfillment of his promise. The command to be fruitful and multiply was fulfilled by the Toledoth genealogies of Gen 5 and 10—11 and by the notices that Israel was fruitful and multiplied in Egypt (Gen 47,27; Exod 14,4).

The promise of fertility was even fulfilled in Abraham's lifetime in the birth of Isaac (Gen 21,1). The land promise was partially fulfilled when a token of the land came into the patriarch's possession as a burial place. The purchase of the field and cave is described at some length in Gen 23; in that cave they buried Sarah and Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, Leah and Jacob.

No tyrannical power could thwart God's promise. The plagues in P serve as a contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh to see who has the greatest glory. At the Reed Sea Yahweh got glory over Pharaoh and all his host (Exod 14,4). The magicians, who represent the bureaucracy of an imposing world power, at first matched the power of Aaron, but they, their secret arts, and the gods who stood behind them could not bring up gnats as in the third plague. With the sixth plague they suffered a final indignity: the boils sent on man and beast broke out also on them. They pass from the scene in disgrace and concede the victory of Yahweh. His was the glory!

Sinai is not the place for covenant in P. Rather, there Yahweh prescribed the ideal cultic community in which he would graciously tabernacle with his people and in which they would serve him with a proper priesthood and a proper sacrificial system. Under these circumstances the promises inherent in the everlasting covenants would be realized; the community's cultic institutions would make possible a blessed and ongoing life. Purgation and forgiveness are not prerequisites to God's renewed dwelling in the tabernacle and the land; they are, rather, necessary requirements that must be carried out if that dwelling is to have an abiding future.

The new community is to be brought about by the force inherent in the covenants with Noah and Abraham. P showed how these covenants had been effective in the past and why they could be trusted in exile. He urged the exiles to maintain their identity by keeping the Sabbath and by practicing circumcision.

Each year Israel remembered at the passover the saving actions done in

Egypt, but the message of P urged them to expect Yahweh to repeat his actions so that they and the nations might recognize him as the mighty God, who gets glory for himself in his historical deeds. A reader of P would know what good things happen to Israel and what had things happen to their oppressors when God remembers his covenant. And God could not forget his covenant with Noah and Abraham despite his apparent forgetfulness in P's own day. The rainbow would inevitably bring God's memory of his covenant to life. P ends his narrative with old Israel on the verge of the land and full of hope, and that is where and how he wanted his audience to understand themselves as well.

In this brief summary of the message of P, I have shown the critical role played by the term memory in this theology. God's memory of his covenant is the source of hope. That memory-activated covenant would bring about deliverance, God's dwelling with his people, and the promise of the land. The various and many-sided aspects of P's theology are triggered by the catalytic power of God's memory. We now propose to move beyond this description of the theology of P to ask how this theology of God's memory was exemplified or modified as cultic ordinances of various kinds were added to the priestly writing. How does the notion of God's remembering function as an integrating principle between P and P? 

Signs play a role throughout the priestly work, and the function of these signs has been recently clarified in an important article by M. V. Fox. He classifies signs in the Old Testament into three distinct types: 1) Proof signs. Their purpose is to convince the onlooker of the truth of a certain proposition. Fox refers to the sundial of Hezekiah (2Kings 20,8.9) or the signs and wonders at the beginning of Moses' mission (Exod 4,8.9.17.28.30). 2) Symbol signs. They make an event vivid by translating it into representative actions. Compare Ezekiel's siege of the city drawn on a brick (4,3) or Isaiah's going naked and barefoot (Is 20,3). 3) Cognition signs. These signs are to awaken knowledge of something in an observer and can be subdivided into identity signs which mark something as belonging to a certain category (the mark of Cain, Rahab's cord) and mnemonic signs which restore to the awareness of an observer something already known (the rainbow). All of the signs in P, as it turns out, are cognition signs. The heavenly bodies are cognition signs which identify the times and seasons (Gen 1,14) while the paschal blood on the doorposts identifies the houses of the Israelites so that Yahweh can spare them from the punishment visited on Egypt (Exod 12,7-14). The rest of the signs in P are mnemonic cognition signs. The rain-

bow, as we have said, leads to God's remembering, and his resultant maintenance of the covenant means that there will be no more world wide floods (Gen 9,8—17). Sabbath, on the other hand, is a mnemonic sign for Israel, reminding them to perform the command connected with the Sabbath day (Exod 31,12—17). The fringe which Israel is commanded to add to all garments is a mnemonic cognition sign which reminds Israel to keep all the commandments of Yahweh (Num 15,37—40; on v.39, see the textual note in BHK). The censers of Korah and his men, hammered into plates as a covering for the altar, are a sign to remind Israel that no one but an Aaronide can offer incense before Yahweh (17,1—5; EVV 16,36—40). The rod of Aaron, which put forth buds, blossoms, and even almonds to demonstrate the special status of the house of Levi; was deposited in the sanctuary. We can sumise that this sign reminded Israel of the distinct position of the Aaronides and stopped any rebellion against their priestly preeminence (Num 17,25—26; EVV 17,10-11).

Throughout his discussion Fox points out that both the function and the purpose of the signs are explicit, except for the sign of circumcision. Fox attributes this silence to priestly delicacy in regard to sex and argues that the implicit meaning is that God will see the Israelite's penis during or before sexual congress and will remember to keep his covenant by making the union fruitful. The sign of circumcision resembles the rainbow in that it is a reminder to God, but it resembles the paschal blood in that it is a sign which Israel does. Since the function and purpose are not explicit in the text, the case is difficult to evaluate though the fact that circumcision is connected with infancy in P, rather than with puberty or with marriage, makes Fox's interpretation unlikely in my opinion. In addition, the subtlety of this sign in Fox's interpretation would mean that it would be unlikely to signify anything to anyone but the original author or those shrewd enough to pierce through the veil of his reserved language. I would prefer to see circumcision as a mnemonic cognition sign for the Israelites, which would constantly re-mind them of their status as covenanted people or, like the sign of the Sabbath, remind them to carry out God's commands. Abraham's obedience is in fact stressed in P's circumcision account: ... was on the same day that he circumcised himself, Ishmael, the slaves born in his house, those acquired for money, yea, all the men of his household. Exactly eight days after Isaac's birth Abraham circumcised him as well (21,4). Prompt circumcision is part of Abraham's perfect obedience (cf. Gen 17,1). Of course circumcision could also serve as a cognition sign by which an Israelite could identify himself to God as a son of the covenant; or, if we can project back from far later times, cf- 'Mace 1,48, it could serve as an identity sign over against their Babylonian overlords who did not practice circumcision.

The signs in P— and now we mean P in the broader sense — awaken something in God and in Israel. When they serve this cognitive function for God, deliverance is the result (paschal blood, rainbow). When they serve a cognitive function for Israel obedience is the result (Sabbath, -fringe, altar cover-
ing, Aaron's rod, circumcision). The distinction between identity signs and mnemonic signs may be too subtle for our purpose. The purpose of the signs in P is to stir up cognition so that a covenant, a promise, or a commandment is maintained by God or man. Memory in this understanding is a key to the message of P.

Another way to pursue this theme is via a study of the word aikkarho which occurs only in sections usually designated as P'. The passover is called a zikkdrho or memorial. Just as the blood on the doorpost served as an identity sign to God, the passover memorial stimulates Israel's memory and participation in the sacral order:" Most of the zikkdrho references, however, serve as reminders to God. The two stones, each Inscribed with six names of the sons of Israel, are worn on the ephod of Aaron when he goes before Yahweh. They are stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel (Exod 28,12 [twice]; 39,7). Similarly, the twelve stones on the Aaronic breastpiece of judgment, each engraved with a name of a tribe, bring the sons of Israel to continual remembrance before Yahweh (Exod 28,29). When Israel takes a census, it is to give a ransom lest a plague befall them. Appointed for the service of the tent of meeting, this ransom brings the people of Israel to remembrance before Yahweh, so as b make atonement for them (Exod 30,16). The cereal offering of remembrance, used in connection with the ordeal to determine the fate of a woman accused of adultery, brings the iniquity to God's remembrance (Num 5,15.18). The blowing of trumpets at the beginning of Holy War serves a similar function: When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before Yahweh your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies. (Num 10,9). This mnemonic function of trumpet blowing also is prescribed for so-called days of gladness, feasts and the beginning of months or New Year (Num 10,10; cf. Lev 23,24). The gold booty taken in war was to be given to Moses and Eleazar so that it could serve as a memorial of the people before Yahweh or to make atonement for them before him (Num 31,50-54). Cult objects and cult activities, therefore, were designed to stimulate God's memory, which is virtually synonymous with his acts of intervention. just as the rainbow served in Pg as a stimulus to God's memory and action (Gen 9), so in the expanded priestly writing the cult was to bring Israel to the remembrance of Yahweh. God's memory of his people, in both Pg and P', serves as the catalyst that a function provides continuity in the message of P. Increased emphasis is given, in the later supplements, to the cult as the ongoing institution that perpetually stimulates the memory of God.

Related to this would be the memorial portion (nzkardh), a special part of the cereal offering that is to be burned for Yahweh, with the remainder

19 See the helpful comments on zikkardn by B. S. Childs. Memory and Tradition in Israel, SBT 37 (1962) 66-70.
going to the priests (Lev 2,2; 9,16; 5,12; Lev 6,8 [EVV 15]; 24,7; Num 5,26). G.R. Driver suggests that this memorial offering was a token to remind the worshipper that the whole offering is really owed to God, but God chooses to accept only part of it, with the rest remitted from burning. R. de Vaux seems also to favor this interpretation although he lists another possibility, namely, that the 'azkarah recalls the worshipper to the mind of God.

Priestly texts use the verb remember (zakar) with God as subject to refer to his remembrance of recipients of the covenant (Noah, Gen 8,1; Abraham, Gen 19,29, if truly P) or to his remembrance of the covenant itself (cf. earlier references to Gen 9,15,16; Exod 2,24; 6,5). A final pair of references at the end of Lev 26, whose redaction history is by no means clear, add a few new nuances to memory as the message of the priestly traditions in the Pentateuch. In the first of these passages the writer tells us that confession of sin and making amends for it are the necessary prerequisites for the activating of God's memory: »Then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land « (Lev 26,42).

The second reference in Lev 26, which Zimmerli assigns to an earlier edition of H, is the only priestly passage to connect God's memory with the Sinai covenant. This verse in H may antedate P. When the Holiness Code was incorporated into P, the latter's memory theology was expanded to cover this »covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations« (Lev 26,45).

If God's memory of Israel was her hope in exile, then his memory of her, stimulated by numerous cultic activities, was grounds for ongoing confidence in the restoration. To a lesser, but by no means insignificant extent, signs, memorials and memorial portions were to stimulate Israel's memory of God and her participation in those events which mediate God's plan. Thus, the »memory of God« (taking the genitive as both subjective and objective) is a most usable formula for organizing the message of P and for seeing the theological continuity between the earlier and later parts of this Pentateuchal stratum.

20 Three Technical Terms in the Pentateuch, JSS 1 (1956) 99-100.