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THE EXODUS AS SACRAMENT: THE CLOUD, THE SEA, AND MOSES REVISITED

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Introduction

DISCUSSIONS REGARDING BAPTISM and its Old Testament antecedents frequently focus on the relationship between circumcision as a sign of the covenant and baptism as its New Testament replacement. This focus is understandable in the light of what the apostle Paul says in Colossians 2:11ff. This relationship, however, may be misunderstood in the sense that baptism does not look back to circumcision. Baptism is a Christian sacrament, and as such it focuses upon what God has done for the redemption of his elect people in Jesus Christ. The saving work of Christ marks the transition from the old order of the Mosaic administration to the age of the new covenant in Jesus Christ. This redemptive-historical progression calls for signs and seals that fit the new realities of salvation which have been inaugurated with the coming of Christ.

Although Old Testament historical events may be examined and shown to serve as analogies or types of Christian baptism, this is not very common or at least not a very prominent feature of the New Testament witness. But there are exceptions. The classic passage is 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, where Paul confronts his Corinthian readers with a warning about apostasy, specifically a falling away through idolatry and seeking fellowship with idol-worshipers. To give his warning urgency, Paul recalls the events of the Exodus from Egypt under Moses, the presence of the

cloud and the trek through the Red Sea, the eating of "spiritual" food and the drinking of "spiritual" drink, whose source was Christ. "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (Οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν πάντες ὑπὸ τὴν νεφέλην ἦσαν καὶ πάντες διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης διῆλθον καὶ πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ).[1] Although all Israel experienced this, most of them fell into idolatry and died.

What is most remarkable here is that the exodus from Egypt is designated a *baptism*. This indicates that a particular episode in redemptive history, not just a ceremonial ritual (i.e., circumcision), functions as a sacramental-type of a new covenant sacrament to come.

In this article I wish to explore the implications of such a designation. Is the Exodus-event a baptism in any sense analogous to the New Testament understanding of that term? If so, what might be the implications of that analogy for Israel and for the New Testament church? Our answers to this question have implications for both the church's theology and its pastoral functioning.

The Focus of the Issue

Given the apostle Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff., the debate regarding the sacramental nature of the Exodus-event is perhaps best illustrated by the opposing positions of John Calvin and Gordon Fee, both well-respected biblical expositors. Although other commentators form part of the discussion, Calvin and Fee, in coming to opposite positions regarding the sacramental character of 1 Cor. 10, each represent a different exegetical consensus regarding the question at issue.

[1]Unless otherwise noted, the English Bible quoted will be the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition. The Greek text used in this article is the Nestle-Aland text, 27th edition.

Calvin sees the situation of the Israelites and of New Testament believers as virtually equivalent, for Paul declares that there is "no point of difference between the Israelites and us, which would put our whole situation in a different category from theirs."[2]

> Therefore, because he [Paul] intended to threaten the Corinthians with the same vengeance which befell the Israelites, he begins like this: do not take pride in some special privilege, as if your standing with God is better than theirs was. For they had the same benefits which we enjoy today. The Church of God was in their midst, as in ours today. They had the same sacraments, to be testimonies to them of the grace of God. But when they abused their gifts, they did not escape the judgement of God. Therefore, you should be afraid, because the same thing threatens you.[3]

Calvin further affirms that Israel was the Old Testament expression of the church. The Israelites had "the same benefits which we enjoy today." Calvin notes that the Israelites were the people of God, just as much as we are, and that "our situation is the same as theirs."[4] The crossing of the Red Sea, under the protection of the divine cloud and Moses' leadership, functions as a sign of God's grace. "For the sacraments are tokens by which the Church of God is discerned."[5] Thus Calvin represents a position that has had a long and honored tradition in the Christian church.

Gordon Fee comes to different exegetical conclusions than Calvin.[6] Specifically, Fee takes the position that the Exodus-event is not to be understood as a sacrament, at least as that is usually understood in classic Protestant theology. According to Fee, Paul views God's new people as "the true Israel of God, who fulfill

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[2]John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. by John W. Fraser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 200.

[3]Calvin, *First Corinthians*, 200.

[4]Calvin, *First Corinthians*, 200.

[5]Calvin, *First Corinthians*, 200.

[6]Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

his promises made to the fathers. This identification is precisely what gives the warning that follows such potency."[7] One of his stronger statements comes in a footnote: "All attempts to suggest that Paul saw Israel's experience of the Red Sea, or their eating manna and drinking water from the rock, as something sacramental are misguided and futile. Paul is not concerned with Israel's *experience,* but with the analogies they provide."[8] Calvin and Fee clearly reach different conclusions on this matter and represent different exegetical positions.

Thus the issue of debate surrounding this text centers upon the nature of the "baptism" into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. This is an issue of debate both in terms of the theological context for the reference, as well as the pastoral and practical import that this passage entails.

Grammatical Constructions

It is important to analyze the grammar that is typically used in the phraseology of baptism and baptismal formulas. In particular, it is important to note the grammatical constructions used in conjunction with the verb βαπτίζειν, especially the several uses of the prepositions ἐν and εἰς.

In 2 Kings 5:14 we read that Naaman "went down and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean" (LXX: καὶ κατέβη Ναιμαν καὶ ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν τῷ Ιορδάνῃ ἑπτάκι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα Ελισαιε καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν ἡ σὰρξ αὐτοῦ ὡς σὰρξ παιδαρίου μικροῦ καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη). The key phrase is ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν, with the preposition ἐν indicating location, though an *instrumental* usage of ἐν is also possible. Albrecht Oepke says that the means by which baptism "is administered is expressed by the dat. instr. . . . or more commonly by ἐν (ἐν ὕδατι . . . ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ . . . ἐν

[7]Fee, *First Corinthians*, 444.

[8]Fee, *First Corinthians*, 445, footnote 18. See the refutation of this view by Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 181-83.

πνεύματι ἁγίῳ [καὶ πυρὶ]."[9] Thus both locative and instrumental uses may be conveyed by ἐν in the phrase βαπτίζω ἐν.

Another phrase in 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2 is βαπτίζω εἰς. The preposition εἰς is used in several expressions usually "to denote the aim sought and accomplished by baptism: εἰς μετάνοιαν . . . εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν . . . εἰς ἓν σῶμα . . . ."[10] In other words, εἰς indicates where baptism "puts" the recipient of baptism, or the preposition at least expresses the resulting "location" intended by the baptismal rite. Thus the phrases noted above would have baptism place the baptized person into repentance (Matt. 3:11), into the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), into one body (1 Cor. 12:13), and so on. The object of εἰς states "the aim sought and accomplished by baptism."[11]

The following sampling of passages is instructive and illustrative of the definitions given by Oepke:

- Matthew 3:11: Ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν ("As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance")
- Matthew 28:19: βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα . . . ("baptizing them in the name. . .")
- Acts 10:48: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ βαπτισθῆναι ("to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ")
- Acts 19:3: εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα . . . ("into John's baptism. . .")

[9]Albrecht Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), I:539.

[10]Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:539.

[11]Oepke (p. 539) adds, "Weakened spatial notions are present where εἰς denotes the constitutive element of a form of baptism: εἰς Χριστόν, Gl. 3:27; R. 6:3 with εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ; εἰς τὸν Μωυσῆν, 1 C. 10:2; εἰς τί ἐβαπτίσθητε; . . . εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα, Ac. 19:3."

- Acts 19:5: ἐβαπτίσθησαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ("they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.")
- Romans 6:3: εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν ("they have been baptized into His death?")
- 1 Corinthians 1:13: ἢ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε; ("Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?")
- 1 Corinthians 12:13: …ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν ("For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body")
- Galatians 3:27: ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε ("For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.")

Without examining each of the above references separately, we note in the above passages the frequent use of both βαπτίζω ἐν and βαπτίζω εἰς, with the verb βαπτίζω often in the passive voice. Matthew 28:19 employs the idiom εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, a phrase that Oepke[12] says seems rather "to have been a tech. term in Hellenistic commerce ('to the account')." The one named is the owner of the account and responsible for what he owns. Whether the owner is designated as the Name of the Triune God or more simply, Jesus Christ, the effect is the same: the Name of the owner is placed on the one owned. The person baptized belongs to and is under the dominion of the Triune God through Jesus Christ.

John Murray also notes the explicit phraseology of 1 Corinthians 1:13 and 10:2—"baptised into (the name of)"—as that which is significant in the formula. He writes, "It is apparent that it expresses a relationship to the person into whom or into whose name persons may have been baptised. It is this fact of relationship that is basic."[13] While the relationship can be

[12]Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:539.

[13]John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1952), 6.

analyzed on several levels—legal, vital, covenantal, spiritual (pneumatic), mystical—it is the relationship itself that is noteworthy and in need of exploration.

It must also be observed at this point that the phrase "to baptize into Moses" or "to be baptized into Moses" is not common terminology. It appears to be derived from the New Testament, for there is no similar idiom or antecedents of the phrase in Jewish writings.[14] If this phraseology is unique to 1 Corinthians 10, it succeeds in catching the reader's attention in order to convey a particular point. Most likely Paul took his cue from the liturgy of the Christian community in its baptismal rites, seeing an analogy in the redemptive events of the Exodus. Within the fabric of redemptive history, the apostle sees the Exodus-event as not only sacramental but as decisively Christian in its typology, anticipating what was to come.[15]

Baptism in the Pauline Corpus

Galatians, 1 Corinthians, Colossians, and Romans are the principal epistles in which the apostle Paul raises the question of baptism. Of course, when Paul mentions baptism he does not usually have in view a well-developed theology of this rite. For he frequently refers to baptism in the context of ethical exhortation or paranesis concerning the lives of believers. In fact, the apostle is not overly concerned with his officiating over the rite of baptism (see 1 Cor. 1:14-17). He is much more concerned about the implications the rite had for baptized members of the Christian community.[16] Thus we must remember that when he refers to baptism, his emphasis is usually pastoral in orientation.

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[14]William B. Badke, "Baptised into Moses—Baptised into Christ: a Study in Doctrinal Development," *Evangelical Quarterly* 60/1 (January 1988): 27; William Baird, "1 Corinthians 10:1-13," *Interpretation* 44/3 (July 1990): 287.

[15]Andrew J. Bandstra, however, notes that it is "a disputed point whether Paul was the first to describe the exodus as a baptism."—"Interpretation in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11," *Calvin Theological Journal* 6/1 (April 1971): 6.

[16]Richard P. Carlson, "The Role of Baptism in Paul's Thought," *Interpretation* 47/3 (July 1993): 255.

Nonetheless, Paul's pastoral concern rests against the backdrop of a particular theological understanding.

Galatians

In Galatians 3:27, Paul tells his readers, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε). The apostle sees a parallel relationship between "baptism into Christ" and "putting on Christ." The sacramental idea is connected with the clothing imagery, for believers undergo a transition, at least on a certain level, as they go from a status of being unclothed (in some sense) to a status of being clothed with Christ. The end result is that Christian baptism now locates the one baptized "in Christ" and "clothed with Christ." From the context it is also permissible to conclude that faith brings to the believer what baptism likewise brings, though Paul does not at this point fully spell out the exact parameters or the complete content of this parallel.

In addition, the statement of Galatians 3:27 forms a matrix for both the redemptive-historical as well as the experiential. God gave his gracious promise to Abraham "and to his seed" (3:16). That seed was Christ. The law cannot annul the promise and its concomitant—namely the inheritance that belongs to all the children of God. In fact, no law existed that was able to give life (3:21). But now Christ the Seed has come, and his coming is parallel to the arrival of faith (3:23, 25). Christ comes, and so faith comes; and faith in Christ makes the believer an heir according to the promise. In fact, Christ is so much the object of faith for both Jews and Gentiles alike that his coming is tantamount to faith coming. The law was a tutor (3:24, 25: παιδαγωγὸς, a "child-conductor"). But the coming of Christ marks a dramatic redemptive-historical turning point (Gal. 4:4,5). The tutor must now yield and give way now that the Seed has come.

Besides the redemptive-historical, the coming of Christ has experiential implications as well, such that his coming marks the arrival of the object of faith. This means that anyone who

believes in Christ is also "seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:29), whether Jew or Gentile. Faith in Christ is the decisive element from the side of the Christian's experience. We note the repetition of "by faith" or "through faith" in Galatians 3:22ff. The redemptive-historical sets the stage for the experiential. Or, to put it another way, *historia salutis* forms the context for all that happens in *ordo salutis*. In Christ the Old Testament distinctions between Jew and Gentile, slave and free man, male and female, no longer abide (3:28). If a person belongs to Christ, he is Abraham's offspring (3:29).

The parallel then with baptism is striking. Using the indicative in Galatians 3:27, the apostle says that "baptism" is equivalent to "putting on Christ," which, according to the wider context, is also the effect of "faith." As Richard Carlson says,

> As it functions in Paul's thought here, baptism negates the old boundaries of the present evil age (cf. 1:4) that segregated humanity into categories—and also judged one's relationship to God—based on religio-ethnic, economic, and gender criteria. At the same time, baptism also means that one is inaugurated into the new creation (cf. 6:14-15) whose boundaries are defined by Christ because, in baptism, Christians are incorporated into and put on Christ.[17]

Baptism is to be clothed with ("puts on") Christ. As this sacrament is the rite experienced by all Christians, it marks the unity of the church, that is, the unity of those in Christ as Abraham's seed (see Galatians 3:26-29).

Of course, both baptism and faith are God's actions, not those of the human recipient. "In Paul's thought, neither faith nor baptism is a human-generated action. Rather, both involve the formative work of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3, 12-13; Gal. 3:1-5, 26-29) so that baptism is more than a human ritual confirming or sealing that faith. In baptism, God is active."[18] The apostle commonly uses the passive voice (the so-called "divine passive") in his use of βαπτίζω so that God's prior action of

[17]Carlson, "The Role of Baptism in Paul's Thought," 259.
[18]Carlson, "The Role of Baptism in Paul's Thought," 262.

grace and regeneration lies behind the expression of faith. Faith is born out of the divine initiative.

First Corinthians

As all students of the Pauline corpus know, in his first epistle to the Corinthians the apostle begins by chiding his readers for entertaining a party spirit. In the context of the opening chapter he mentions baptism with at least a two-foci emphasis: (1) As a rite of the Christian faith, baptism is clearly secondary to the principal task of preaching the gospel of the crucified Messiah (1 Cor. 1:17)—in fact, Paul is glad he performed relatively few baptisms in Corinth; (2) He reminds the Corinthian Christians that none of them were baptized into Paul (1 Cor. 1:13). The phraseology suggests that if one were baptized into the name of an apostle (or any Christian leader for that matter), then he or she thereby sustained a special kind of loyalty or relationship to that apostle or leader. In other words, the baptized person belonged to the leader that baptized in his own name. If this is so, it is rather suggestive for the language Paul uses later on in chapters ten and twelve.

By his remarks in chapter one, the apostle is not emptying baptism of its significance. Rather, he is placing baptism in a context in which it is illegitimate to exaggerate its significance. Baptism has no independent role either in the life of the Christian or in the church. It is not permissible to divorce baptism from faith, and it certainly may not be separated from what it visibly proclaims: the saving action of God in Jesus Christ and his Spirit. The rite therefore is not magical, as if it were effectual *ex opere operato* in the life of the church. Thus Paul's warning to the Corinthians in chapter ten is anticipated already at the beginning of the epistle. Anyone who divorces the rite of baptism from redemptive reality is on a road altogether displeasing to God.

Romans

In Romans 6:1ff. Paul starts to draw out the ethical implications of being under divine grace—which is to say, he

shows us the implications that follow upon the realities of God's grace to all those united to Jesus Christ, the second Adam, as members of the new covenant in his blood.

The discussion from Romans 5 to the concerns of Romans 6 follows a natural course. Where sin abounded, grace abounded even more. Yet this is not a license to sin more so that a more abundant grace may be exercised, for baptism marks a transition in the experience of the believer. This transition is seen in all that baptism signifies and seals. Romans 6:1ff. informs us that baptism points back to the redemptive significance of Christ's work on the cross, to his death and burial, even to his resurrection from the dead. In short, baptism marks the union of the Christian with Christ. As G. C. Berkouwer observes, "The cross is a historical fact, but in that fact, in which God acts in the life of his Son, God's reconciling acts become historical reality."[19] Berkouwer continues by pointing out that Romans 5 and 6 together speak of the "one reality of reconciliation." Christ died for the ungodly "at the right time" (Rom. 5:7), and we died with Christ (cf. Rom. 6:5ff.). Thus the relation "between these two is not primarily one of time, but of *meaning*."[20] The order of considerations is crucial: first Christ and his saving work, and then baptism as the plenary sign and seal of what Christ has done in redemptive-history. The implications of this are well-stated by Oepke: "Every interpretation of Paul's view of baptism is thus mistaken which takes as its starting-point the subjective and naturalistic experience of baptism and not the objective situation in salvation history."[21]

Consequently, the grammatical constructions that relate baptism to Jesus Christ and his work convey the idea that the recipient of Christian baptism is in union with Christ. John Murray identifies Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27, 28; and Colossians 2:11, 12 as "plainly" teaching this very thing. "Baptism signifies union with Christ in his death, burial,

[19]Gerrit C. Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, trans. by Hugo Bekker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 118.

[20]Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, 118.

[21]Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:541-42.

and resurrection. . . . The relationship which baptism signifies is therefore that of union, and union with Christ is its basic central import."[22]

The Context of 1 Corinthians 10

The broader context for 1 Corinthians 10 is chapters 8-10. In 1 Corinthians 8:1 Paul begins to address the question of the believer's attitude and practice toward food that has been sacrificed to idols, as is indicated by his words in 8:1: Περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων. This discussion continues through 11:1. Then the apostle takes up the question regarding proper behavior in worship, even addressing matters of proper attire. However, he comes back to some issues surrounding the Lord's Supper in 11:17-34, having raised this subject in a different context in 10:3ff. and 10:14-22. Clearly, with 1 Corinthians 12:1 a new section begins as indicated by the introductory formula, Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν.

The wider context must also take into consideration the city of Corinth itself. Corinth was a Hellenistic city with many mystery cults. The rites and rituals of these religions were obscure and remained a secret. It appears, however, that the mystery religions became popular among the general population of the city since for many people these religions offered their adherents the hope of becoming attached to a "saving" god (e.g., Dionysus), a deity that offered hope for the world to come.[23]

Paul's pastoral concern in chapter eight concerns how Christians should view meat that has been offered in sacrifice to pagan deities. Although knowledge is good, it puffs up. Believers recognize that there is only one true God, the Father, and one true Lord, Jesus Christ (8:6). By way of contrast, pagan deities are

[22]Murray, *Christian Baptism*, 6. Murray draws attention to the insights here of the Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 27.i), the Westminster Larger Catechism (question 165), and the Westminster Shorter Catechism (question 94).

[23]Badke, "Baptised into Moses—Baptised into Christ," 26.

nothing, and therefore the meat offered to them is unaffected. Meat is still meat.

"But not everyone knows this" (8:7). Thus love must play an overriding role in this matter (cf. 8:2, "love edifies" [NASB]; "love builds up" [NIV]). The Christian whose conscience is weak must not be led into sin by the example of the Christian whose conscience is stronger and is emboldened to eat such meat. Paul is concerned that love lead to mature action for the sake of the weaker Christian.

Paul uses his own life and ministry pattern as an example. While he has the right to many things (9:4ff.: to food and drink, to taking a believing wife with him, to material support), he reminds the Corinthians that "we do not use this right" (9:12; cf. 9:15). The apostle himself denies himself certain prerogatives in order to advance the gospel. In fact, his whole approach in gospel proclamation is to "become like" his audience in order to "win as many as possible" (9:19, NIV). Paul adds, "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some" (9:22).

In the concluding section of chapter nine, verses 24-27, Paul returns to his point that a strict personal discipline must be exercised by each believer in order to "win" the prize (9:24b). Thus his message to the Corinthians comes to this: self-control and self-discipline. The apostle even applies these mandates to himself, "so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (9:27). The above must be seen in light of what Paul introduced in chapter eight: to think of the other (weaker) Christian in love and not to allow what we know to puff up in pride (8:1, 2: γνῶσιν ἔχομεν. ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῖ . . . εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἐγνωκέναι τι, οὔπω ἔγνω καθὼς δεῖ γνῶναι). Thus the slight digression in chapter nine, in which Paul addresses the matter of voluntarily giving up privileges for the greater good of the church, has led him to address the issue of self-control and self-discipline.[24] Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, while very

[24]C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 219-220.

fitting on a personal level, is also applicable to the whole of the Corinthian congregation.

1 Corinthians 10:1 therefore makes a loose connection with the preceding section as indicated by the word γάρ.[25] If one keeps in mind the analogy of the preceding chapter, then the Israelite fathers of 10:1 are comparable to the runner who sets out on the race but becomes distracted, no longer running so as to win the race and gain the prize. Indeed, only two Israelites older than twenty years of age, Joshua of Ephraim and Caleb of Judah, "crossed the finish line" (the Jordan River) and entered the land of Canaan, receiving what the LORD had promised.

But what follows in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff. is actually more serious.[26] Paul is pressing an earnest warning upon the Corinthian church by recalling the divine favors Israel had experienced: Israel's first national favor being that of *baptism*. It is not easy to determine how much understanding his audience had of this history. The fact that Paul does not elaborate concerning the details suggests that his audience had at least an elementary knowledge of the Exodus story. By saying "For I do not want you to be unaware" (Οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν), Paul is insisting that the Corinthians not miss the full significance of what had happened to Israel in the Exodus and the subsequent failure of Israel during the wilderness wanderings.[27]

Paul recalls also the sacramental nature of Israel's eating and drinking in the wilderness, along with the spiritual apostasy in the golden calf episode (Exodus 32; Deut. 9:7-21). All of these elements function typologically for the church today.[28] By the use of these words, the apostle is underscoring the true analogy between the church today and Israel in the past. This does not mean that Israel's experience of baptism and subsequent failure is

[25]Cf. Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), 478-479. Godet finds either δὲ (the Textus Receptus reading) or γὰρ "suitable" readings, although the latter is "simpler." The force of γὰρ is to give this sense, according to Godet (p. 479), "And *indeed* the danger exists; what happened to our fathers is the proof of it."

[26]Godet, *First Corinthians*, 478.

[27]Godet, *First Corinthians*, 480.

[28]1 Corinthians 10.6, τύποι; 1 Corinthians 10.11, τυπικῶς.

a two-dimensional caricature that functions as an example for us. Rather, Israel's baptism into Moses and her subsequent apostasy is a pre-figuration of what is still true and functions as a warning to those who are the recipients of baptism in the New Testament fulfillment. The church in Corinth exists in spiritual infancy, thus recalling an earlier redemptive-historical era in which the people of the covenant were also in spiritual infancy. The church today imprints (τύπτω, "to impress") itself, as it were, upon an earlier period, thus creating the virtual equivalence between then and now. Consequently, Christians today may learn from the past, not because Israel during its Exodus and wilderness-period serves as a flat example, but because the spiritual realities that believers face today, like Israel of old, along with their concomitant spiritual struggles, are essentially the same.[29]

Nor is Paul engaged here in fanciful midrash or homiletical excess. He places no embroidery upon the Exodus narrative (unless one thinks that Paul's use of "baptized into" at this point is the midrash!). Paul's treatment is "not fanciful: it is God's own interpretation of what He commanded Moses to write."[30]

Thus, it may be the case that the danger Paul perceives comes from two directions. First, within the congregation are the weaker Christians who are spiritually wounded by stronger Christians who freely, openly, and without any scruples eat meat offered to pagan idols. But a second danger comes from the direction of stronger Christians who too easily eat such meat *in any place* and *in any circumstance*. Knowing that idols are nothing and that food is a gift of God, such Christians in Corinth "took an easy view of sacrificial food (a view that was not the same as what Paul understood by Christian freedom) because they did not take idolatry seriously . . . because they believed that the Christian rites of Baptism and the Supper secured them from any possible harm."[31]

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[29]The very involved subject of typology cannot be fully explored in this article.

[30]Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians: a Contemporary Commentary* (Jefferson, Maryland: Trinity Foundation, 1975), 151.

[31]Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 220.

All Our Fathers

Paul refers to the Israelites of the Exodus as "our fathers." In so naming them, he is identifying the Gentile members of the Corinthian church as one with ancient Israel.[32] Paul is not merely speaking as a Jew at this point, since he addresses his readers with the word "brothers" (v.1, ἀδελφοί). This is consistent with his teaching in Galatians 3:6-29, 6:16, Ephesians 2:11ff., Romans 4:1 and 11:17-21. Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ are the true children of Abraham,[33] one new man in Christ, citizens of the commonwealth of Israel, people who are built into the same spiritual temple of the new covenant era, and branches grafted into the covenant community whose roots are grounded in God's sovereign election.[34] This reference to "our fathers" has the rhetorical effect of pressing home Paul's warning upon the Corinthian church: Israel and Israel's experience in the Exodus-event and the subsequent wilderness journey are not the tales of a people remote in time and space. Believers are essentially one with Israel at the Red Sea in the time of Moses. The newly liberated Israelite slaves are "our fathers."

The Old Testament also identifies Israel as God's son, his firstborn (Exodus 4:22,23; cf. Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9). The prophet Hosea elaborates on the image of God's paternity and care for this son when he writes in Hosea 11:1-4:

> When Israel *was* a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. The more they called them, the more they went from them; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to idols. Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, and I became to

[32]Note the fivefold use of the word πάντες ("all") in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff.

[33]Cf. J. van Andel, *Paulus' Eerste Brief aan de Corinthiërs aan de gemeente uitgelegd* (Leiden: D. Donner, 1897), 154; Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 220.

[34]Says Barrett (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 220), "Jewish proselytes … continued after conversion to speak of 'your fathers' (see *Bikkurim* i.4)."

> them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; and I bent down *and* fed them.

The picture is tender, for God reveals himself as a caring father who is eager to nurture a very young son, despite the fact the son is increasingly prone to wander away from his father. Thus when God delivered Israel from the Egyptian bondage, we are shown a nation in its youth. In fact, Ephraim is depicted as a toddler who needs God to teach him how to walk. (Remember: youth is the time of training and instruction.) Redemptive-historically speaking, then, the Exodus-event was not the rescue of an adult nation. Israel could barely walk. She was therefore rescued by the LORD, as he bore her on "eagles' wings" and brought her to himself (Exodus 19:4). The redemptive-historical phase of Israel's existence when God delivered her from Egypt is critical for understanding what she needed experientially, since it functions as the matrix of both the redemptive-historical and the experiential to which Paul draws attention in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff. Baptism is the sacrament of the initiate, the "tender youth" (without any regard to age). Similarly, the Exodus is the baptism of a young child of God, that is, Israel.

Among the Jews of the first century AD resided the conviction that a proselyte convert to Judaism was "a newborn child." Naturally, the new convert was expected to live under the covenant administration of Moses and his commandments.[35] The baptism of a Gentile proselyte was an initiatory rite, signifying for its recipient a cultic cleansing, an external washing of external purification. In this way the new convert was brought into Judaism and given access to the sacred assemblies of Jewish worship. But in proselyte baptism, ritual purity was distinguished from actual expiation of sins.[36] Baptism represented an external cleansing. By itself, it did not transform one's internal nature.

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[35]Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:536. Says Oepke, "It is from this point on that he must keep the commandments. There is no thought of any natural, let alone ethical, death and regeneration."

[36]"Rabb. Judaism thinks of washing only in terms of purification from cultic uncleanness (cf. Lv. 14:8; 15:5ff.; 15:11; Nu. 31:23 …)" (Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:536, fn. 34).

Nor by itself did it provide full instruction and training in the ways of the Lord. Further training and experience were required, especially training in the wisdom that love yields (cf. 1 Cor. 13).

Thus Israel, as she existed in the Exodus period, prefigures for the New Testament church at Corinth both blessing and warning. The typological character of Israel is so sufficient and accurate for the life of God's people in the New Testament era that the apostle sees a virtual parallel between the spiritual struggle of ancient Israel and the New Testament church. This is a parallel that functions theologically and pastorally in this epistle.

Israel, during the Exodus-period, was immature, only newly rescued from a pagan culture. For her, the law God delivered at Mount Sinai was new and fresh. The habits of the godly heart were yet to take deep root in her life and walk of faith. Similarly, in Corinth the fresh converts to Christ were immature and still entangled in the habits of a pagan culture. The life of loving obedience involved the struggle to walk in an obedient manner. Thus the Corinthian Christians in their struggle to rise above the sinful patterns of their pagan upbringing are antitypical to Israel in her Exodus experience. According to Paul, all our fathers experienced the great blessing of God's deliverance, yet further instruction is required, instruction in righteousness. For in their immaturity, "all our fathers" longed to go back to Egypt—a shameful episode starkly manifest in their appalling devotion to the golden calf and in their giving way to pagan revelry (Exodus 32:6, 17).

In the Cloud

The Rainbow in the Clouds

Prior to the historical narrative that deals with Israel's exodus out of Egypt, there is a reference to עָנָן (cloud). When God established his covenant with Noah after the flood, he declared that he would display his covenant sign, the rainbow, in the clouds (Gen. 9:12-17). The Scriptural text does not reveal anything more except to say that the rainbow in the clouds

signifies God's promise and resolve not to destroy the world again with a flood.

The Pillar of Cloud

In the Exodus narrative, however, cloud takes on a more active redemptive role. As the LORD becomes explicitly involved in Israel's deliverance, he manifests himself in the pillar of cloud. "The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exod. 13:21, 22). Similarly, there are these words in Exodus 14:19, 20, 24, "The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night. . . . At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion." The action of the angel of God and the location of the pillar of cloud are coterminous. Both defend the fleeing Israelites from the pursuing Egyptian forces. The cloud thus signifies the presence of the LORD in his activity of defending warrior (cf. Exodus 14:14; 15:3).

The Cloud of Heavenly Glory

In addition, the cloud functioned as a manifestation of heavenly glory, serving as the royal chariot of God himself (cf. Ezek. 1:22-26). According to Exodus 13:21-22, Israel witnessed this glory. The association of this divine cloud with God's revealed glory is made explicit in Exodus 16:10, where the whole community of Israel saw the LORD's glory revealed in the special cloud (וְהִנֵּה כְּבוֹד יְהוָה נִרְאָה בֶּעָנָן). This cloud of heavenly glory brought the nation to Mt. Sinai, and temporarily encamped there.

At Sinai this Glory-cloud thickly enveloped the entire mountain, accompanied with thunder and flashes of lightning (Exodus 19:16; see also 24:16,18; 34:5). The mountain where Moses and Israel received the Torah is itself made holy because of God's special presence. Thus the cloud is a revelation of God's covenantal presence, personalized in the Angel of God (מַלְאַךְ הָאֱלֹהִים; cf. Exodus 23:20ff.).[37]

It was this Glory-cloud that entered the Tabernacle of Moses and later the Temple of Solomon (Exodus 40:36-38; 1 Kings 8:10,11). The Holy of holies was the special dwelling place of the LORD. There the LORD sat enthroned upon the Ark of the covenant, reigning as king in the midst of his covenant people. This same Glory-cloud would later go up (ἀνέβη) from the Temple during the time of the exile (Ezek. 11:23) but return to the new Temple (Ezek. 43:1, 2). Isaiah 4:3-5 looks forward to the day when the Glory-cloud shall cover the sanctified elect in the city of God: "It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem. When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy."

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What is to be observed in this redemptive-historical movement of the Glory-Spirit is how each dwelling that it occupies is more glorious than the one before. The Tabernacle was glorious, but it had no permanent abiding place. The Temple was in a fixed place, secure on Mt. Zion in the city of David, but it became an idol to the people (see, e.g., Jer. 7). The glory is

[37]In Exodus 3:2ff. the terminology is "the Angel of the LORD" (מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה). This Angel is often understood as an Old Testament Christophany, a theophany of the Second Person of the Trinity.

beheld again when the Word becomes flesh in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14). He "tents" among us bodily (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). The cloud envelops him on the mount of the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35) and the cloud receives Christ in his ascension (Acts 1:9). The Shekinah-Glory appears as tongues of fire (cf. Exodus 3:2; the pillar of fire in the Exodus), coming upon the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2:3)—all showing the leading and guiding role of the divine Glory-cloud in redemptive-history.[38]

Paul refers to "the cloud" only here in 1 Corinthians 10. There is however another reference that is somewhat ambiguous when he uses the plural form in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ἐν νεφέλαις). Is this a reference to the Shekinah Glory-cloud? Christ ascended in a cloud, and he will return as he left the earth. The context of 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff. concerns the return of Christ. Thus the apostle's use of the plural form is somewhat unclear whether the believers are caught up in the Glory-cloud itself, or whether the other clouds of the sky are made serviceable to the Parousia-event. Perhaps all the earthly clouds are joined to the Lord's Shekinah at the Parousia for one grand celestial display of glory. Whatever the case may be, Paul is quite sparing in his use of the word *cloud*. Thus his reference to "the cloud" in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff. is clearly intended to draw out the typological import of the word in order to establish the paraenetic point he is concerned to make to the believers at Corinth.

We may distill the following from our brief survey of the word "cloud" as used in Scripture. First and foremost, it refers to the very presence of God, visibly and gloriously present at the time of the Exodus to lead Israel out of the clutches of Pharaoh's tyranny and away from the slavery and oppression of Egypt. All the fathers were "under the cloud" and therefore under God's direct presence. All the fathers were baptized into Moses "in the cloud," thus signifying Israel's direct connection to Moses by

[38]See Meredith G. Kline's *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) for an extensive development of the Holy Spirit's role in creation, in the sanctuaries of Israel, in the image of God in man, and in the priestly and prophetic offices in Israel.

divine appointment. The cloud as representative of God's immediate presence shows the divine hand of control over all history. As James Jordan says, "Typology means that history is under God's control."[39] The miraculous nature of the Exodus in history is underscored by the activity of the cloud in the Exodus. Israel was not in control of the Exodus, nor was the Exodus the creative idea or voluntary action of Israel. The same is true in baptism.[40]

In the Sea

When the Israelites left the slavery of Egypt, the Exodus narrative says that the Pharaoh had a change of heart (Exod. 14:5), and he determined to bring the nation of Israel back under his subjection by force. He pursued Israel with 600 chariots, thus putting her in imminent mortal danger. Israel found herself trapped between the armed forces of Pharaoh and the sea. Thus it appeared that Moses had lead Israel out of slavery into destruction and certain death (Exodus 14:11).

The threatening symbol of the Red Sea, as a barrier blocking the way to salvation, presents a redemptive-historical echo of the Noahic flood, although on a much smaller scale. Immersion in the waters of either the Flood or the Red Sea meant certain death. Whereas Peter uses the waters of the Flood as the Old Testament type for the waters of baptism (1 Pet. 3:20, 21; 2 Pet. 3:5-7), Paul uses the waters of the Red Sea for his Old Testament baptismal typology. The floodwaters in the time of Noah actually brought death to the whole world, eight souls excepted. Such death presented itself to Israel in the Exodus, for the sea represented a barrier impossible to overcome, an obstacle that prevented the escape of the Israelites. The idea of trying to

[39]James Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988), 50.

[40]"Though mediated by men, baptism is the action of God or Christ (Eph. 5:26). Hence baptism by others rather than self-baptism, and hence also the predominance of the passive" (Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:540).

navigate and overcome the waters of the Red Sea meant certain destruction.

In the opening chapter of Genesis we read that at creation God's Spirit hovered over the water deep (Gen. 1:2). The firmament (רָקִיעַ) is created to keep separate the waters above the earth and the waters below the earth. God gathered the seas into one place to allow the dry land to appear (Gen. 1.9,10). In this connection, James Jordan observes that the sky above is a kind of boundary, reflective of the greater heaven "beyond" where God dwells in his great glory. Similarly, the sea points to the great abyss "beyond" where the great enemy, the serpent, dwells (cf. Gen. 1:20, 21; Job 41; Ps. 104:24-26; Isa. 27:1).[41] It is a restless, ever unstable, region in which death always threatened. Its restlessness is suggestive of the restlessness of the sinful nations. Threatening powers arise against God's people like monsters that emerge from the turbulent sea (Dan. 7:1ff.; Rev. 13.1).

Yet God is not helpless against the sea (or its resident enemy, Leviathan or Rahab). On the contrary, God's creative power is sovereignly exercised over the sea. He causes the "seas above" and the "seas below" to break forth in order to inundate the world with a flood (Gen. 7:11). Conversely, God is able to subdue the floodwaters until dry land appears (and thus he reestablishes the arena of life for the new community in Noah).

God's sovereignty over the waters is also depicted in the Exodus, for "the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground…" (Exodus 14:21,22). Just as God's creative action on the third day separates (sea) waters so that (new) dry land can appear, so too in the Exodus the land and the sea are separated, and (new) dry land appears. The water does not touch the Israelites in their exodus from the land of slavery to the Promised Land, though the wilderness of trial and testing lay in between.

Paul reminds his readers that Israel ("all our fathers") passed through the sea (v.1**,** διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης) and, further, they were

[41]Jordan, *Through New Eyes,* 145ff.

all baptized "in the sea" (v.2, ἐβαπτίσθησαν . . . ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ). Both the cloud and the sea are the locations of baptism and the instruments of baptism. The preposition ἐν can have both a locative as well as an instrumental meaning (as noted earlier), and here in 1 Corinthians 10:2 both senses can be equally applied.

There is here another intriguing aspect to the connection between the cloud and the sea. If the cloud was mediating a divine presence, the pre-incarnate Christ as well as the Spirit, then the events of the Exodus likewise present a redemptive-historical echo, oblique perhaps, of the mediating presence of the Spirit at creation when the Spirit of God (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) hovered over the waters (Gen. 1:2). Thus God spoke, and all things came into existence. Similarly, the Holy Spirit gives life to all creatures (cf. Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30; Ezek. 37:9).

In this connection water becomes representative of life: without water, all life would come to an end. Water is a vital element, and from this fact it becomes a vital symbol.[42] Alexander Schmemann calls water "undoubtedly one of the most ancient and universal of all religious symbols."[43] Nevertheless, while this is true, the precise connection between water and baptism needs to be identified. The classic Reformed understanding of water and baptism is not in water as an element as such; rather, the critical factor is the *use* made of water in baptism (cf. Eph. 5:26). "Christ instituted this outward washing and with it gave the promise that, as surely as water *washes* away the dirt from the body, so certainly his blood and his Spirit wash away my soul's impurity, in other words, all my sins" (Heidelberg Catechism, Ans. 69; emphasis added). The Catechism's reference focuses on water's ability to cleanse.

This however raises a question: does the sea through which Israel passed and in which she was "baptized" represent water either as an element of life or an agent of cleansing? Neither of these ideas seems to fit the Exodus. As noted above, the water

[42]Cf. Wesley L. Gerig, "Water," in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 812-813.

[43]Alexander Schmemann, *Of Water and the Spirit* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 39.

was a barrier, a physical obstacle that prevented Israel's escape from the Egyptians. Secondly, when Israel did pass through the sea, there was no water applied to the Israelites, at least not directly. The waters heaped up in wall formations (Exodus 14:22); apparently not a drop touched the Israelites as they passed through these waters. Indeed, Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground (Exodus 14:22, 29). After she had passed through the sea to the other side, it was the Egyptians who were totally immersed in the water—all of them drowning in the sea (Exodus 14:28, 30). The waters of the sea brought death to the enemies of God and his people.[44] Indeed, Schmemann observes that water is

> a symbol of destruction and death. It is the mysterious depth which kills and annihilates, the dark habitation of the demonic powers, the very image of the irrational, uncontrollable, elemental in the world. . . . We find water as wrath, judgment and death in the stories of the Flood and of the annihilation of Pharaoh and his chariots under the waves of the Red Sea.[45]

However, further reflection on the dual ability of water to cleanse and to destroy, shows that no ultimate conflict or contradiction is in view. God has two methods of cleansing the world: water and fire (see 2 Peter 3). He employed water in the Noahic flood. The world was externally cleansed and purified of sinners (save for eight persons in the ark) by destroying the wicked world. Similarly, fire is also an instrument of purification, for example when fire is applied to metals in order to burn up the impurities found in the ore.

The parallel with baptism is readily apparent: just as water cleanses our bodies from impurities, so too we are cleansed by Christ's blood and renewed by the Holy Spirit. Purification is

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[44]Says Lenski, "This might be conceived as an immersion in so far as the cloud would cast a shadow over the Israelites but scarcely in regard to the waters of the sea which in no way covered the Israelites who walked through 'upon dry ground'; only the Egyptians were immersed, and that not figuratively but very literally" (R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1946], 390). Both the cloud and the sea separated the Israelites away from the Egyptians.

[45]Schmemann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 39.

achieved by the destruction of sin and wickedness. The crossing of the Red Sea is a real baptism in that the tyranny of sin and bondage is externally destroyed. Israel is now in a new situation and condition inasmuch as Pharaoh's forces have been destroyed (Exodus 14:30,31).

Meredith Kline draws attention to this dual significance of the Red Sea crossing by placing it in the context of ancient Near Eastern water ordeals. In these ordeals, the person was apparently placed on trial before the gods (as understood among pagan peoples) by putting them in water, typically a river, so that the river deity could judge the person's guilt or innocence. This is analogous then to the events in the Flood narrative as well as in the accounts of the Red Sea and Jordan River crossings.[46] In each case there stands a significant figure, a mediator, whose role is critical for the survival of the parties attached to them. Noah is the divinely chosen individual whose leadership and direction was necessary for his family to come safely through the water ordeal of the Flood. The same is true of Moses and Joshua and the people of Israel with respect to the water ordeals of the Red Sea and crossing the Jordan. In each water ordeal (the Flood,[47] the exodus through the Red Sea, and the entrance into Canaan through the Jordan River) a "verdict" is rendered that delivers God's chosen people but condemns the guilty.

Although in each of these episodes the ordeal neither transforms the heart of the human parties nor improves their moral behavior (at least not necessarily),[48] nonetheless, these episodes do move Israel from one realm to another realm, generally from an inferior place to a better place. In the Flood God destroys the world, with its violence and corruption, with the purpose of bringing forth a renewed world (although it is not the perfect, consummate world). In the Exodus, Israel leaves the

[46]Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: a Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 55f.

[47]Just as Paul designates the Exodus-event as a baptism into Moses, so Peter draws the analogy between the Flood in Noah's day and baptism in the Christian church (cf. I Peter 3:21ff.).

[48]Man's heart inclination is still evil after the Noahic flood. See Genesis 8:21; cf. 6:5.

harsh and oppressive environs of slavery and enters into a period of courtship with the LORD. According to her need, God provides Israel her food and water, even her meat (cf. Hosea 2:14). In crossing the Jordan River, Israel enters the Promised Land of Canaan in order to dispossess the corrupt and wicked inhabitants of that land. The melting-hearts of the Canaanite inhabitants demonstrate that they understand the power of YHWH, even as they understand that he has decided for Israel and against them (Joshua 2:9; 5:1). Thus Noah's family and later the people of Israel both emerge alive when they pass through their respective bodies of water, while their enemies, who are also guilty before God, are destroyed or conquered. Kline correctly says that these were "acts of redemptive judgment wherein God vindicated the cause of those who called upon his name and condemned their adversaries."[49]

Moreover, the actions of the Exodus are clearly miraculous in a physical, external sense. As noted above, the divine cloud and the parting of the sea did not effect any accompanying change in the human heart or in human nature. The apostle, then, is not expounding in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff. a full-orbed teaching on the sacrament of baptism. For every sacrament, as a sign, teaches a correlate reality: the transformation of the heart.

The groundwork for the New Testament's teaching on baptism and the Spirit is laid out in Ezekiel 36:24ff. The efficacy of baptism lies in the saving action of God. He sprinkles clean water on his people as he gathers them from all the nations of the earth. He cleanses the sinner from all impurity. He provides the new heart as he spiritually removes the unclean heart. He pours out the Spirit into the very lives of his people so that there is genuine obedience to his laws (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). We learn from the Old Testament that one must be "born again" by water and the Spirit. This is what baptism both signs and seals as a sacrament. Not that baptism itself effects that reality. The external administration of the sacrament does not effect such

[49]Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, 56. Kline adds: "The exodus ordeal, with Israel coming forth safe and the Egyptians overwhelmed in the depths, strikingly exemplified the dual potential of the ordeal process."

internal transformation. This was true for Israel in the Exodus, and the same is true for the Corinthian Christians (and all the members of the church) in the new covenant administration.

That the sheltering cloud and the parting of the sea were powerful, divine wonders underscores the intention of the LORD, namely, to present to Israel in tangible tokens that she "possessed the visible pledge of Divine blessing and salvation. This miraculous crossing separated them thenceforth from Egypt, the place of bondage and idolatry, exactly as the believer's baptism separates him from his former life of condemnation and sin."[50] Thus we are brought close to the essence of the sacrament: a visible pledge of God's gracious good will. Later, at Mt. Sinai and beyond, God adds the words that will interpret the events of the Exodus (cf. Exodus 19:4-6). Just as the divine word is added to an outward element (e.g., water, bread, and wine) in order to produce the sacrament, so too in the Exodus-event the divine word is given, the word that exegetes and makes more explicit that event, in order to demonstrate pointedly its sacramental character.

Thus Paul is ready at several places in his epistles to remind his readers of baptism in order to make an ethical point. 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2 and Romans 6:1-4 make similar appeals. Romans 6 speaks against any libertine notion of Christian living, as if, presuming upon divine grace, one who has been baptized may sin without penalty. In fact, baptism declares that this cannot be, for baptism is a representation, a sign and a seal, of union with Jesus Christ, a joining together with him in his redemptive work (his death, burial, and resurrection). While the rite itself does not alter or transform the heart, nevertheless, the apostle can appeal to baptism as that which serves as a proper foundation for Christian living. Baptism directs our faith, our thinking, and our actions (cf. Rom. 6:1-4). Similarly, 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2 addresses those who presume upon the baptismal rite (or any other sacramental participation, for that matter). Baptism does not allow one to flirt with idolatrous pagan festivities without consequences, for baptism actually points to

[50]Godet, *First Corinthians*, 481.

the serious consequences that disobedience earns. In baptism the initiate is sacramentally united to the Triune God; the message of baptism is also then a call to live with and for this God from the heart. Says Oepke, "Forensic justification leads to pneumatic fellowship with Christ. The *iustitia Christi extra nos posita* aims ceaselessly to become the *iustitia Christi intra nos posita*."[51]

Baptized into Moses

Before looking at the import of the phrase itself, we should briefly give our attention to the verb used in verse 2, ἐβαπτίσθησαν. The manuscript evidence for the middle voice verb (ἐβαπτίσαντο) is relatively strong (p^{46c}, B [Alexandrinus], and Byzantine [Majority] texts). The Nestle-Aland 27 and the United Bible Societies 4th edition texts read the passive voice verb (ἐβαπτίσθησαν). Bruce Metzger notes that this reading receives a C rating.[52] The semantic difference, which may be slight, can perhaps be described as the difference between receiving the baptismal action from another (the passive voice: "were baptized") or understanding the middle voice to mean either "allowing themselves to be baptized" or even "baptizing themselves."

Of the two possible middle voice understandings, the latter should be excluded. Israel did not baptize herself in the cloud and in the sea. The Israelites entered the Red Sea only upon Moses' direction and only after God had miraculously heaped up the water. As to allowing herself to be baptized (or, accepting baptism), Israel in fact had no other option. For if she rejected

[51]Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:541.

[52]Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 559. Metzger writes, "On the basis of what was taken to be superior evidence and Pauline usage, a majority of the Committee preferred the reading ἐβαπτίσθησαν." But then he adds what appears to be a personal note: "[It is more probable that copyists replaced the middle ἐβαπτίσαντο (which corresponds to Jewish practice, according to which the convert baptized himself) with the passive (which is the usual expression in the case of Christian baptism, e.g., 1.13, 15; 12.13; etc.), than vice versa. B.M.M. and A.W.]"

God's "baptism" in the sea and Moses' leadership, she faced a return to Egyptian bondage and oppression or death at the hands of Pharaoh. Israel fled oppression and death and did so only because of the great and powerful things the LORD God had done for her. Israel had her collective eyes opened to stark realities—a dilemma only God could solve. Thus her movement through the sea—her baptism—was a desperate flight from a most miserable option to the divinely opened possibility. While Israel is not physically passive in her Exodus escape, yet the baptismal action is entirely God's doing. In our Christian experience we are passive and *receive* baptism, for we do not *baptize ourselves*.

Godet suggests that the middle voice is to be preferred because it is the more difficult reading, arguing that "it can be said that the copyists could easily have substituted for it the passive form, which is more generally used in the New Testament in speaking of Christian baptism."[53] In favoring the middle voice reading, Godet goes on to stress the "idea of faith in Moses as the *active* principle of the conduct of the Israelites."[54] In this connection he points to Exodus 14:31, which demonstrates that the Israelites acted in faith, identifying Moses with God's will and work. "Without faith in the *Divine* mission of Moses, Israel would not have followed him to the wilderness."[55] Indeed, Godet sees faith as the *ground* of baptism, for Israel was "incorporated into Moses" in order to become God's people, just "as Christians in being baptized *on the ground of faith in Christ* become part of the same plant with Him (Rom. vi. 3-5). . . ."[56]

Godet's use of Exodus 14:31 is not to the point, however. Israel was not baptized in passing through the Red Sea *because* she had faith. Exodus 14:31 says the following: "When Israel saw the

[53]Godet, *First Corinthians*, 481. Barrett (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 220) argues that the "middle is to be preferred, (a) because it was less common in Christian usage . . . and there would therefore be a tendency to change it into the more common passive, and (b) because the middle corresponds better to Jewish practice in which the convert baptized himself. . . ."

[54]Godet, *First Corinthians*, 481.

[55]Godet, *First Corinthians*, 482.

[56]Godet, *First Corinthians*, 481. Emphasis added.

great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses."[57] The Israelites had already undergone their baptism. In fact, Israel stood as witness on the eastside of the Red Sea. Only *after* she experiences deliverance, only *after* she passes through the sea on dry land, does Israel expresses her faith. Only then is she said to believe in the divine Suzerain and to trust his specially ordained mediator-leader, Moses. Thus when faith is explicitly mentioned, it occurs *after* the baptism in the cloud and in the sea, not before the event. Indeed, the Israelites' attitude prior to her baptism is that of great fear (Exod. 14:10, **וַיִּירְאוּ מְאֹד**) and bitter complaint to Moses (Exod. 14:11, 12). But this fear is replaced by faith after the great deliverance of the LORD from the cloud and the Angel of God through the sea upon dry land (Exod. 14:19ff.). Godet's appeal to Exodus 14 in support of a faith-first idea does not bear up under scrutiny.

When Paul mentions "Moses" in 1 Corinthians 10:2, he does so without further elaboration. Apparently he is assuming a minimum level of knowledge among his readers since, as was noted above, he does not want them to be unaware (v. 1). His only other reference to Moses in this first epistle is at 9:9, where the apostle draws out an application from the Mosaic Law regarding appropriate compensation for one who works (Deut. 25:4).

Other references to Moses occur in 2 Corinthians 3:7ff. In that passage Paul refers to Moses the man, but his main interest is to press the point about the fading away of the old covenant.[58] Moses' face shone with glory, but the glory was fading. We, however, now reflect the Lord's glory (which is ever increasing), and we do so with unfading glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

The reference to Moses in 2 Corinthians 3:7, 13, 15, has a formal similarity to the 1 Corinthians 10 passage in that Moses and all he represents in relation to the older covenant privilege

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[57] וַיַּ֣רְא יִשְׂרָאֵל֮ אֶת־הַיָּד֣ הַגְּדֹלָה֒ אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָׂ֔ה יְהוָ֖ה בְּמִצְרַ֑יִם וַיִּירְא֤וּ הָעָם֙ אֶת־יְהוָ֔ה וַיַּאֲמִ֥ינוּ בַֽיהוָ֖ה וּבְמֹשֶׁ֥ה עַבְדּֽוֹ

[58] This becomes clear in 2 Corinthians 3:15: "when Moses is read," i.e., the old covenant of Sinai.

and position are set in contrast to what is now the privilege and position of the new covenant believer in Christ. The fathers were baptized into Moses, while we are baptized into Jesus Christ. The fathers ate and drank spiritual bread and water, furnished by Christ, while we have Christ's own body and blood.

But there is a formal difference as well. While the 2 Corinthians 3 passage is couched within a "how much more" argument, the 1 Corinthians 10 passage expresses the idea of similarity. In certain respects the fathers in Moses' time and New Testament believers today are the same. We have experienced a sacramental privilege that marks a transition from the realm of death to the realm of life. But the sacramental experience should never furnish any basis for the vain presumption that would allow for living that is careless and indifferent.

Paul's reference to Moses individually in 1 Corinthians 10, without any mention of Aaron, the priesthood, the kingship, etc., clearly depicts his unique role as covenant mediator at that stage in redemptive history. Israel's devout submission to Moses' leadership was critical to the nation's physical and spiritual survival. To return to Egypt meant for Israel at best, renewed bondage and enslavement, and worse still, death. Accompanying Moses' to the other side of the sea, however, meant life, escape from slavery, and progress toward the Promised Land. Thus being aligned and identified with Moses was no mere support for any revolutionary leader, a charismatic visionary who impressed the masses at that particular moment. On the contrary, Moses came with divine commission, a divine message, and even divine empowerment to deliver Israel from the nation that possessed such great power. "By following their God-given leader with confidence at that critical moment, they were closely united to, and, as it were, incorporated with Moses to become his people...."[59] Humanly speaking, Israel's fate lay in adhering to Moses. The actions of the divine cloud and the passage through the sea constituted the baptismal action of God, sealing Israel's union with the divinely appointed and sent mediator, Moses.

[59]Godet, *First Corinthians*, 481.

Furthermore, the phrase baptized "into Moses" has no Jewish parallel[60] inasmuch as it is based on the analogy with Christ in the baptismal formula of the Christian rite. The discussion proceeds from Christian usage which is projected back to a past historical event. Yet this is done with great cause, certainly not without adequate reason. For Moses is the great paradigmatic prophet of the Old Testament (Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 34:5; cf. Deut. 18:17ff.). Yet now, in the person of Jesus Christ, one greater than Moses has come.

The man Moses, then, serves on the one hand as the literal historical figure who led Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness for forty years. On the other hand, Moses is a rhetorical identification for the law, metonymy for the Torah. "The similarity between Moses' baptism and Christian baptism must be sought in their significance, or in part of it. In both cases, the baptism is a visible sign that the baptized persons are the disciples of him into whose name they are baptized."[61] To be sure, Paul does not so much develop this point here in 1 Corinthians as he does in Romans and especially Galatians. Moses will lead the nation out of Egypt, through the sea, and on to Sinai. But Moses as the Lawgiver cannot be the Lifegiver for the community of Israel. Although Israel must follow Moses, he cannot save Israel. Moses as mediator points to the Mediator.

Another implication of Paul's wording here concerns the nature of the Christian community. The apostle sees the church as one. He argues forcefully that the Christian Church is a single and unified entity, the Body of Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 12). The idea of unity is also present in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff., as is evident from the fivefold use of the word πάντες. The entire nation is included in and represented by one individual. In the case of Old

[60]Barrett says (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 221), "There is no evidence for the existence of such a formula. Granted the analogy with which Paul was working it was natural for him to coin the phrase 'into Moses', not only because it had been Moses who (under God) had delivered his people at the time of the Exodus, but also because of the Jewish belief that the 'latter Redeemer' (the Messiah) would be as the 'former Redeemer' (Moses). . . ."

[61]Clark, *First Corinthians*, 152.

Testament Israel, the representation is in the person of the mediator, Moses. As Herman Ridderbos observes, inasmuch as Israel is included in and identified with a fountainhead figure like Moses, we see a "clear prefiguration of the corporate unity of the church in Christ."[62]

In summary, Paul sees within an earlier period of redemptive history a genuine type or prefiguration of Christian baptism. Moses leads all Israel under a divine cloud of heavenly glory through a sea that threatens death, and all Israel is delivered from slavery. Moses is a caretaker for Israel during the time of redemptive-historical adolescence. The Exodus provides us with the element (water), the divine direction (the cloud), and especially the divinely called and mandated mediator, Moses, into whom Israel is baptized and who would lead Israel to Christ.

Conclusions

The conclusions that may be drawn from this survey of Paul's teaching and exhortation in 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2 lie in several areas. First of all, we see that the apostle's use of redemptive history provides an enriched understanding of Christian sacraments, and particularly in the context of these two verses, the sacrament of baptism.[63] It is commonplace to relate the Old Testament practice of circumcision to the New Testament sacrament of baptism. Thus there is the correlation of a rite of blood corresponding to a rite of water. But Paul also sees redemptive history itself anticipating the New Testament rite. In the Exodus there is the divine presence (the cloud), the watery element (the sea), the human mediator (Moses), and the body receiving the "sacramental" action (all our fathers). In the Christian church, the Christian initiate receives the baptismal

[62]Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: an Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 393.

[63]Perhaps a valuable study could be made of the use of manna and water as typological elements that anticipate the elements of the Lord's Supper, thus taking traditional discussions beyond the unleavened bread and wine of the Passover as the Old Testament's typological elements of the Lord's Supper.

action, authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ (the true God-man mediator), so that the recipient of baptism is sacramentally joined to Jesus Christ and to his Body, the church. Yet whether it is redemptive history from the Old Testament or specific ceremonies and rituals from that dispensation, they all point to Christ. Similarly, the two sacraments of the New Testament look back to Christ before they can be firmly linked to their Old covenant anticipations.

Perhaps this can be sketched in the following manner:

Circumcision	→	Christ	←	baptism[64]
Exodus and Moses	→	Christ	←	baptism
Passover	→	Christ	←	Lord's Supper
Manna and water	→	Christ	←	Lord's Supper
All feasts and sacrifices	→	Christ	←	Lord's Supper

Second, the sacraments separate the covenant community from the world. This is true for Israel in the Mosaic period as well as for the church in the new covenant administration. The Exodus brought Israel definitively out of Egyptian bondage, at least in the physical sense. However, as a community, the Exodus-generation needs the leadership of a guardian until the divine rest could be reached. They also need the divine food and drink that only God could provide for them in order to have life—food and drink that was not available to the world.

Similarly, by baptism into the Name of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Christian church is set apart and distinguished from the world. Indeed, Christian baptism marks union with Christ and deliverance from bondage. Recipients of baptism come under the guardianship of Christ through his Spirit, even as they are called to walk by faith and turn to God in repentance. For New Testament believers also need the food and drink that only God can provide, the body and blood of Christ as spiritual food for their souls.

Third—and closely related to the second point above—baptism places the one baptized into the care and nurture of a

[64]Christ referred to his own death as a baptism (see Mark 10.38ff; Luke 12.50).

mediator suited for a specific dispensation of redemptive history. Israel was given over to the care of Moses and of all that Moses delivered to Israel from Sinai. The Exodus-baptism was "into Moses" (εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν).[65] One implication of the phrase used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2 is that the Mosaic Torah ("the Law," as the New Testament frequently puts it) now must guide and train the young child, the firstborn son, until the appropriate time arrives in God's redemptive plan. Thus, following the Exodus, Israel needed organization on many fronts: civil structures, cultic regulations, stipulations and practices that would continually impress upon Israel the distinction between the clean and unclean, the holy and the common, etc. "Moses," then, within the Sinaitic covenant, had the assigned role to teach Israel about sin and the need for the shedding of blood as the only way of atonement with God (Lev. 17:11). Such organization and teaching are provided in the comprehensive nature of the Torah. "This symbolical baptism united the Israelites to Moses as God's representative to them, the Old Testament mediator, in whom was foreshadowed Christ, the New Testament eternal Mediator, Deut. 18:18," says Lenski.[66] The clear implication therefore is that now Moses has been superceded by Jesus Christ, the better Mediator, the God-man, who actually writes Moses upon the tablets of the hearts of the elect (Hebr. 8:10; 10:16).

Fourth, for all the power that the sacrament conveys by way of sign and symbolic import, the sacrament itself does not and cannot transform the human heart. While we can see the distinction and discontinuity between the Old Testament redemptive event as sacramental in its cast and how the New Testament has placed the church in a new epoch of salvation,

[65]This is not to say that Moses was the *saving* mediator of the old covenant era. Moses also is clearly a sinner in his own person, a man guilty of murder, in fact (Exodus 2:11-14). Rather, as Lenski (*First Corinthians*, 391) writes, "The phrase εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν may be patterned after the similar New Testament phrase εἰς τὸν Χριστόν, but it can never be taken in the sense of '*into* Moses' or Christ. No baptism nor anything else could in any conceivable sense carry the Israelites 'into' Moses. The idea expressed is one of union: 'to,' 'unto,' or 'for Moses.'"

[66]Lenski, *First Corinthians*, 391.

nonetheless, there is a line of continuity and similarity in both covenant eras. The fathers' baptism was not a magical guarantee that, if they flirted with idolatry, they would overcome the power of sin and temptation. Similarly, the Corinthian believers (and, by extension, Christian churches in every age and place) may not dabble in pagan idolatry and presume that they will escape the pull and tug of that temptation. Christian baptism marks the external transition to a new order of things; it does not however in itself effect the internal transition of the human heart.

For this reason, Paul can issue his pastoral warning to run as one who seeks to win and obtain the prize. Oepke is right when he says, "In 1 C. 10:1-13 Paul energetically combats a materialistic and superstitious estimation of baptism and the Lord's Supper which would have it that their recipients are set free from every possibility of the divine wrath—a view which differs essentially from the objective and genuinely sacramental understanding."[67] *Historia salutis* clearly makes forward movement in Christ, but in the sacramental administration of the saving benefits of Christ, the realities of *ordo salutis* still must be given weight. One must be born again by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, something that sacraments in and of themselves cannot do.

Fifth, taking into account all that has been said thus far, we conclude that Calvin was right in seeing the Exodus as a true sacramental event, fully anticipating the New Testament sacrament of initiation and cleansing. All Israel received a true sacrament in the Exodus-baptism, although not all Israel received the truth (sacramental *virtus*) of that event.

And sixth, the pastoral challenge that Paul places before the church concerns the reality that Christian baptism marks our initiation into the Christian church, i.e., our gracious adoption into God's family of believers. Thus the baptized are separated from all false religions and may not allow themselves to be tempted by participating in any form of paganism (cf. the Second Helvetic, XX). In addition, the Reformed confessions teach how sanctification builds upon and is nurtured by the divine message

[67]Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I:542.

communicated to us by baptism. The Westminster Larger Catechism (Q/A 167) speaks of "improving our Baptism," a spiritual activity to be pursued throughout our life. This consists of "serious and thankful consideration" of the nature of baptism, its purpose, privileges and benefits, and the vow made in it. It also mentions "being humbled," something that did not characterize Israel when she sat down to eat and drink and then rose up to play. It also calls the Christian to a life of "endeavoring to live by faith . . . [having] our conversation in holiness and righteousness. . . ." Thus the Christian church in Corinth (and in all times and places) is called to avoid presumption in its use of sacred rites. Instead, the church is to live by faith—the very faith God graciously bestows—so that the external order defined by the sacraments reflects the internal order created by the Spirit.