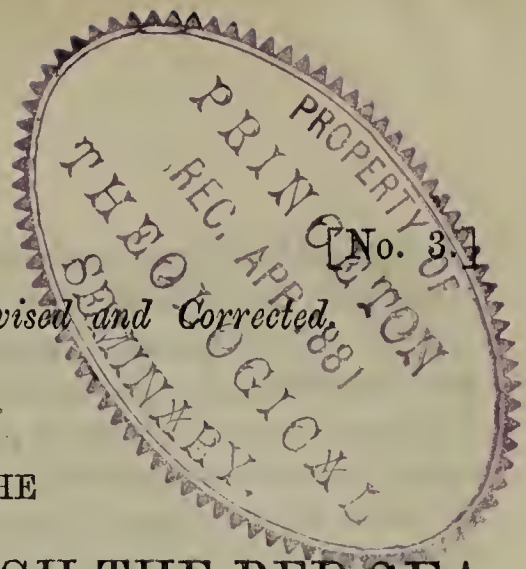


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Second Edition, Revised and Corrected.

THE  
PASSAGE THROUGH THE RED SEA

A TYPE OF BAPTISM.

Mr. R. By Govett.

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea:”  
1 Cor. x, 1, 2.

THE escape of Noah and his family in the ark is presented to us as a type of Christian Baptism: 1 Peter iii, 20, 21. The escape of Israel through the Red Sea is also set forth by the Holy Ghost as a figure of the same ordinance.

Both events then foreshadowed baptism; but each presents it in a different point of view. The baptism of Noah sets forth the escape of the believer from the *wrath of God*, through death into the endless life of the resurrection. The baptism of the Red Sea represents the believer as escaping from the *bondage of the law and Satan, of the world and the flesh*, by the same path; his dying to them, and rising to a new life beyond their dominion.

There are three great baptisms, as there are three great dispensations of covenant and instruction from God: that of (1) Noah, of (2) Moses, and of (3) Christ Jesus. And in each case the waters have been the witness of God that the old dispensation was concluded, and a new one begun. They are also a witness of corruption on the part of man, and of the consequent necessity of purification from the hand of God. Thus, in Noah's day, the Adam-world became “corrupt:”

Gen. vi, 11, 12 ; therefore God would bring forth the waters as his destroying element to cleanse a guilty world. And through them believers were called to a new revelation of himself, and new instruction concerning his will. They passed into the waters, thus dying to the *old* world, and were miraculously borne through them, thus living to the *new*, and became disciples of Noah and of the covenant made with him. But in process of time the Noah-world became also corrupt, and in the history before us, it is represented by Egypt, the fertile, the rich, and the wise, yet full of earthliness, idolatry, and slavery. From this scene of corruption on the part of man, and of judgment on the part of God, the Most High again called his people to pass through the waters—the former path of deliverance for the children of faith ; and they were bound by covenant to him and to his new scheme of revelation set forth in the law ; and were made disciples of Moses, and enjoined to obey him. But yet once more, Israel, though once dead to the world in Egypt as the children of faith, are found to have fallen back again to it in another form ; and as the children of the letter, and of the form of the law, they died in unbelief, and crucified their Deliverer, Christ Jesus, though sent forth from God to be the revealer of a new dispensation of instruction and of salvation. Israel therefore, and Jerusalem especially, as the head of the Jews, are “*spiritually called*” “EGYPT :” Rev. xi, 8. It had become the *world* : and therefore of Jesus, though dwelling among the Jews, it is yet said, “He was in the *world*, . . . . and the *world* knew him not :” John i, 10. “*Ye are of this world* : I am not of this world.” “I speak to the *world* those things which I have heard of him :” John viii, 23—26. John therefore was sent to call the children of faith again through the waters, that by a fresh deliverance they might be saved, and condemn as corrupt and evil in the sight of God, the state even of Israel—God’s chosen nation. God re-

garded Israel now as Egypt, the house of corruption, earthliness, and bondage ; and required of his people anew to pass through the water, dying to Moses and his law, that they might listen to a greater than Moses. But this is the *Jewish* aspect of baptism, and this must be dismissed for its more general and *Gentile* reference.

We have then to consider the meaning of baptism as it applies to us Gentiles. And the principle on which we are to interpret the historical and ceremonial parts of the law, when applying them to ourselves is, the taking *spiritually*, what under the law is spoken *literally*.\* For the service of the Christian is not that of the *letter*, (which is the characteristic of the law,) but of the *spirit* ; as the Savior announced at his first interview with the Gentile woman of Samaria ; in studied contrast to the worship of Moses : “The true worshippers shall worship the Father in *spirit* and in truth :” John iv, 23. And Paul gathers up into a single sentence this foundation difference between the two dispensations : “ *We are delivered from the law . . . . . that we should SERVE IN NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT, and NOT IN THE OLDNESS OF THE LETTER :*” Rom. vii, 6.

We find then that the miracle of the Red Sea was intended to deliver Israel finally from Egypt, from Pharaoh, and the Egyptians.

\* Both the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, and its literal acceptance have their beauty and their place. It is Satan’s device to throw them out of their sphere, and thus discredit both. In interpreting the *historical and ritual* parts of the law, we must *spiritualize*, in order to make them appropriate to ourselves. But in interpreting the *prophets*, we must take them *literally*, as describing the *earthly* blessings belonging to the earthly people Israel. Satan has just reversed this. He has taught men to argue *literally* from the *Jewish ritual*, and hence infant baptism, dresses, and ceremonies, the union of Church and State, &c. He has taught them also to *spiritualize* the *prophets*, and hence confusion has resulted, and many look upon them as a part of the word of God not intended to be understood.

What then is intended by Egypt? We may discover by its character as set forth in Scripture.

1.—It is the place of the *smiting* and *judgments* of God. “I will stretch out my hand and *smite Egypt* :” Ex. iii, 20. “I (will) lay mine hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies and my people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by *great judgments* :” Ex. vii, 4. “Thus I will execute judgments in Egypt :” Ex. xxx, 19. But the *world* is now under judgment, “Now is the *judgment* of this *world*,” John xii, 31 ; iii, 19 ; xvi, 8.

2.—It is the scene of the *wisdom of the flesh*. “And Solomon’s wisdom excelled . . . . . all *the wisdom of Egypt* :” 1 Kings iv, 30. “Moses was learned in all the *wisdom of the Egyptians* :” Acts vii, 22. The *world* is the place of a certain kind of wisdom now, “Hath not God made foolish the *wisdom* of this *world* ?” 1 Cor. i, 20.

3.—It is the place of “the pleasures of sin for a season :” Heb. ix, 25 ; Numb. xi, 5 ; and of “treasures :” Heb. xi, 26. This also shows it to represent the world.

4.—It is the land of idolatry. “Defile not yourselves with *the idols of Egypt* :” Ex. xx, 7. Their “works were evil :” Lev. xviii, 3. And thus the Savior testified concerning the *world*, (John vii, 7,) that “*the works thereof were evil*.”

5.—Lastly, there the people of God were in tribulation and affliction : Ex. iii, 7 ; and under reproach : Heb. xi, 26. So is it with the world—“In the *world* ye shall have *tribulation* :” John xvi, 33.

Egypt, then, as applied to us, answers to the world. And from Egypt was Israel to be delivered. But there was a ruler of Israel who resisted their departure. To whom then does Pharaoh answer now? It is not difficult to reply. If Egypt be the world, the King of Egypt must correspond to the world’s prince, that is, to Satan : John xii, 31. He is the head and sower of *sin*, and identified with it. To him is committed the

power of *death*: Heb. ii, 14. Hence the Scriptures of the New Testament speak of both sin and death as reigning. "By one man's offence *death reigned*." "*Death reigned* from Adam to Moses:" Rom. v, 14—17. "Let not *sin reign* in your mortal body:" Rom. vi, 12. And the law to sinners is in fatal connexion with sin and death. Hence it is called the "law of sin and death:" Rom. viii, 2. "*The strength of sin is the law*:" 1 Cor. xv, 56.—And over all such as are under law sin has dominion, as we learn from the words: "Sin shall not have dominion over *you*, for *ye are not under law*, but under grace:" Rom. vii, 14.

The deliverer of God finds Israel enslaved in Egypt and under the dominion of Pharaoh, and at the word of the Most High brings down the plagues on the rebellious land. But none set Israel free. Then the lamb of the passover is slain, and blood effects what the power of the plagues could not. Pharaoh thrusts forth the redeemed by blood. He can retain them no longer. They are become the children of *faith*; they are no longer under the dominion of the *law*; as it is written, "*Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood*, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them:" Heb. xi, 28.

Moses and his people therefore journey at once that they may leave Egypt. Nor do they go alone. "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud *to lead them the way*: and by night in a pillar of fire *to give them light*:" Ex. xiii, 21.

They are led out of Egypt however by a way which man never would have devised, and which appeared to Pharaoh and his Egyptians foolish. They did not take the *near* way, the regular caravan-road across the sands, but are commanded to encamp before the sea. This stirred up the covetousness, the contempt, the malice, the daring impiety of Pharaoh and his people. "It was told the King of Egypt that the people fled." And they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let

Israel go from following us?" Ex. xiv, 5. They pursue, therefore, and overtake Israel encamping in front of the sea; and cause much fear and disquiet to the unbelieving.

In all this we may trace the steps of the believer's deliverance. The blood of the Lamb applied to his heart first frees him from the dominion of sin, and he becomes the child of faith, no longer a subject of the prince of the world, but one of "*the church of the first-born*, which are written in heaven." And as the cloud becomes the leader of Israel out of Egypt, even thus does the Holy Spirit guide the redeemed by blood. "As many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, they are the sons of God:" Rom. viii, 14. And as the cloud led Israel at once down to the water, so does the Holy Spirit direct the convert, as his next step of faith, to baptism. Thus it was at Pentecost. No sooner did the three thousand believe in Jesus as the Messiah, inquiring with zealous earnestness, "What shall we do?" than the Holy Spirit (then manifested in the tongues of *fire* because it was night) directs them to be baptized—"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins:" Acts ii, 38. Thus we are taught that *faith in the blood of Jesus should precede baptism*.

The rising up of Pharaoh and his people in order to enslave Israel again, sets forth that which the believer often experiences, that after a short interval of peace, the lust of the flesh and the bondage of the law, after appearing for awhile stunned and powerless, again rise up and threaten to bring him into subjection. The Egyptians, as I judge, answer to the lusts of the flesh: as it is written, "The people *fled*." Now it is from Egyptian lusts that we are commanded to flee. "*Flee* also youthful *lusts*:" 2 Tim. ii, 22. Concerning covetousness, it is written: "Thou, O man of God, *flee these things*:" 1 Tim. vi, 11. "*Flee fornication*:" 1 Cor. vi, 18. And in the chapter whence the present subject is

taken—"My dearly beloved, *flee from idolatry*:" 1 Cor. x, 14. They go forth against Israel in martial array, armed for war. And this also is the attitude of the lusts of the flesh. "*Lusts war* in your members:" James iv, 1. "Abstain . . . from *fleshly lusts which war* against the soul:" 1 Pet. ii, 11.

Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel was in effect the putting forth of a claim to them as his runaway slaves. But he must know that they are God's, now that they are redeemed by the blood of the lamb. 'Those are mine,' said Pharaoh in his heart, 'and they shall return to bondage again.' The claim of the King of Egypt was tried in the Red Sea, and there was his cause lost, and himself and his people in it.

In this instance, as in the case of Noah, the *sea* represents *death*. It is the limit of Pharaoh's empire—"the *Egyptian sea*:" Isa. xi, 15; and death is the limit of the reign of sin. "*Sin reigned unto death*." That it is still the same unchanged element of wrath and destruction, as when at the flood it swept nations away in its might, we behold in the overwhelming of Pharaoh and his host. In both cases the waters are death to the unbeliever, but God's way of escape for the children of faith. For in this instance still more remarkable than in the case of Noah, God's way of escape differs from man's, and is opposed to it. Man's plan would have been to have crossed the desert sands and to have fled into Palestine, leaving the sea to his right and *escaping from it*. But God's way of deliverance was, that they should *escape through it*. The Egyptians tried the human way when too late. "Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the *sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared: and the Egyptians fled against it*: (but in vain,) and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea:" Ex. xiv, 27. It was the attempted *escape of unbelief*, and met with *destruction*. But faith's path, as of old, lay *through it*. "*By faith they passed through the Egyptian sea* as by dry land; which the

Egyptians essaying to do were drowned :” Heb. xi, 29. The Egyptians were condemned as soon as they entered the sea-depths. It was the very sphere and place of judgment, which none can cross but the covenanted by blood. But justice was suspended for awhile till Israel was safe : as the waters of the flood waited for Noah’s entry into the ark. Even so the world now is under judgment and condemnation, and when the numbers of the elect are completed, the wrath already sentenced and awaiting its execution, will be sent forth to destroy.

But let us notice the aspect of the passage through the sea as it regards Israel.

I. It was a delivering them up to the guidance and authority of Moses. “They were baptized unto (or *into*) Moses.” In virtue of this they might say, “We are Moses’ disciples.” They put on Moses, as we put on Christ. They were shut up to the laws and ordinances he gave : for his baptism was from heaven, in a far more evident manner than even John’s. Their instruction was to commence after they were brought into the desert, as said Moses to Pharaoh : “We know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither :” Ex. x, 26.

But II. The waters were to them, as well as to their adversaries, DEATH. They were (1) *death to Egypt*. Its cucumbers, melons, and leeks—its fish and its flesh-pots were for ever cut off to them. They passed out of it by a way which cut off all hope of return.

2. It was *death to Pharaoh and his Egyptians*. His dominion over them ceased. His claim to their persons was made void, and their oppressors ceased to be. They died to their taskmasters, and their taskmasters to them. “Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea shore :” Ex. xiv, 30. Baptism in the sea sealed their liberty : they were no longer slaves, but freemen enfranchised of God. They trod on ground never subject to Pharaoh’s jurisdiction : the waters of an impassable ocean-depth rolled between them and all that yet survived in Egypt.



God's sentence therefore was at once pronounced and executed ; and in the escape of Israel, God set forth their acquittal.—“Not worthy of death or of bonds.”

Even thus it is with the baptism of water appointed by Christ. It binds us to discipleship. It pledges us to obedience. We take his name into whom we are baptized.

His new baptism of water teaches us, that Moses and his law are, to the Israel of God, no less bondage under the elements of the world, than were Egypt and Pharaoh to the earthly Israel. To us it is as necessary as to the Israelite, to escape through the waters of baptism ; for it is God's appointed typical death to the world, and its lusts, to Satan and the law and sin. Thus we show that our only hope is a passage through death, to the life and inheritance, and glory of the resurrection. The children of faith escape now as in Moses' day, *through the waters*. They are known to the angel by the passover blood, and over them the Spirit's cloud is spread, and to them this fire gives light. Death is to them no longer death, but sleep. The sea is sea no longer, but dry land.

The waters as in Noah's day, are the barrier between two worlds—that of the law and of judgment ; and that of grace, and liberty, and blessing. *Before* the waters lies Egypt, once fair and fruitful, but now battered by hail, burnt by lightning, and devoured by locusts ; *beyond them* lies the wilderness—the place indeed of trial, yet of the presence of God and of heavenly food and drink. Egypt was full of the beauty and glory of *sense* ; but the wilderness is full of the glory and beauty of *faith*. He who would escape from Egypt, deceitfully fair, and the place of bondage and of wrath, into the place of freedom and the light of God's presence and blessing, should pass through the waters. This is God's appointed way. The passage through the waters of baptism bespeaks you an Egyptian by birth ; a child of wrath by nature even as others. But

it shows you also to be a child of grace, trusting to the lifted rod and the journeying cloud, to make you a passage to the camp of Israel.

The history just considered teaches us several points of importance.

I. It teaches us who are the *persons* that should be baptized: and II. The *manner* in which baptism should be performed.

(1.) As it regards the persons to be baptized. We are taught that faith is first necessary. Israel is redeemed from Pharaoh's power by faith in the blood of the Lamb. "By faith they kept the passover and the shedding of blood." Had it not been for the blood on their doors, they also had been swallowed up in the Red Sea. But once redeemed by blood they are no longer to tarry in Egypt. Thus are we instructed, that the first step of redemption is faith in the sprinkled blood of Christ; the second, is the leaving Egypt, testified by passing through the waters of baptism. Till the blood of Christ is upon the heart, the man is an Egyptian, and to him the water were only condemnation and destruction. Israel might pass through as the children of faith; but "the Egyptian essaying to do" it, is "drowned:" Heb. xi, 28. A believer should not delay to receive baptism. "And now why *tarriest* thou? Arise and *be baptized*:" Acts xxii, 16. Israel must not stay in Egypt when redeemed. He is saved by *blood* in Egypt; but he must typically escape *from Egypt through the water*. Blood saves the believer from the destroying angel: water represents the escape from Pharaoh and from Egypt. Israel was justified by blood; but the effects of justification in preserving unto new life were seen by their passage through the Red Sea.

(2.) Now, as infants cannot believe in the blood of Jesus, they cannot rightly be brought to baptism. They cannot believe; for as saith the Scripture, "*How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*"

Rom. x, 14. And until they believe in the blood of the lamb, they are Egyptians, to whom the water is only wrath and judgment.

(3.) Again, the baptism of infants changes and destroys the beauty and order of the typical history before us. First, with regard to their *position and place of abode*. The dwelling-place of the baptized is no longer Egypt, but with "the Church in the wilderness." But baptized infants grow up worldly and unbelieving, and manifest that their abode is yet in Egypt, and therefore the meaning of baptism to them is a mockery. It represents them as safe while in utter peril. It acts a falsehood, presenting them as dead to sin, while in reality they are living in it. Secondly, it is false as to the *persons*: confounding together the opposite classes of Israelite and Egyptian, affirming of those who have entered the sea, that they are all Israelites; though they have no faith. Thirdly, it reverses the two great *steps of salvation*. In the history of Israel THE BLOOD OF THE PASSOVER IS FIRST TO BE SPRINKLED, AND THEN COMES THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE SEA. But infant baptism supposes that THE RED SEA IS FIRST TO BE PASSED AND THEN THE BLOOD OF THE PASSOVER TO BE APPLIED. *Thus it teaches that the Red Sea may be safely passed as well by the Egyptian as by the Israelite—as well without the blood of the passover as with it!*

(4.) In this glass see also the unscripturalness of baptismal regeneration: which teaches that baptism *makes* the baptized a "member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." This is to suppose that the entranee into the waters *made every Egyptian an Israelite*. It shows also ignorance of the meaning of the waters of baptism, for they really represent *death*: but this doctrine supposes that they *impart life!* But who can doubt their nature that beholds them overwhelming and destroying all not possessed of previous faith? Had the waters *given life,*

the Egyptians had not been drowned. How sad then the doctrine which affirms of baptism—that “Being by nature born in sin, we are HEREBY MADE THE CHILDREN OF GRACE!”

II. But what may we learn from this history as it regards the *manner* of baptism?

We can tell what is the Holy Spirit’s mind concerning this point also, by observing the expressions used: “They were baptized unto Moses IN the cloud and IN the sea.”\* And again: “All our fathers were UNDER the cloud,” when baptized in the cloud. But one more expression is used concerning it, which completes the picture. “All PASSED THROUGH the sea.” Hence, the Holy Spirit’s mind concerning the baptized is, that they should be *in* the water, *under* the water, and lastly, *pass through* the water. Here is baptism completely pictured. Can this be done in any way but by immersion?

Again. Baptism, rightly performed, must be in a *fixed place and depth of water, resting on a bed*. Does a *moveable basin* represent a *sea*? Or is there any resemblance to a sea in some *random drops sprinkled*? Or is there any greater resemblance in a little rill of water poured from the hand? It might resemble a *river*; but can it possibly represent a *sea*? Much less can it resemble *passing through* a sea. That supposes the *water stationary* and *Israel in motion*; but both *sprinkling and pouring* exhibit the *water in motion*, and the *baptized as standing still*. There must be a stationary locality and depth of water, in order to present to our eyes, the Egyptian’s *burial-place* and Israel’s field of deliverance. In a few drops or a stream poured on the baptized there is no figure of danger or death; no resemblance to the mighty waters that overwhelmed the ‘host of Pharaoh.’ Yet this is the scene that bap-

\* This shows that it should be translated “in” and not “with” in other passages also, as in John i, 26; Matt. iii, 11, &c.

tism is intended to call to remembrance. A sea is described by God as a "gathering together of the waters unto *one place*:" Gen. i, 9, 10. And such must the waters of baptism be, to represent the barrier and limit set by God between Egypt and the church in the wilderness. No doubt sprinkling or pouring are far more *convenient*, but God rejected the *convenient way of escape*, and so must the believer.

Objection 1.—But some may object—The very passage you treat of gives countenance and support to infant baptism; for you will not affirm that there were no infants in the host of Israel: and as *all* passed through the sea, *these also were baptized*.

Very true, we reply; only you forget the *principle of interpretation*, on which alone the history is applicable to us. In order to see the lessons which we are to receive from it, we are directed to take the events *spiritually*. Then Israel becomes spiritual Israel, or the Israel of God: and *literal infants* become *spiritual infants*, that is, "*babes in Christ*." And for such the ordinance of baptism is suitable and to be desired.

Objection 2.—But it may occur to some, that the great and principal part of the history before us, has nothing corresponding to it in baptism. Here is no miraculous escape. Israel went through the sea on dry ground. It is not so now with the baptized. He comes up from the flood saturated with water. How then does he resemble Israel? The answer is—that *the Egyptian and the Israelite meet in the same person*. The believer is a compound of the *old man* and of the *new*. As far as he is of the old man, he is an Egyptian; as far as he is of the new, an Israelite. As then he is in the flesh, he is plunged like the Egyptian beneath the waters, that the flesh may be buried as dead. But as he is an Israelite in spirit he comes forth unharmed, and escaping through the water. In baptism are combined both the drowning of the old man and the resurrection of the new.

Have you ever believed in the blood of Jesus? If not, then you are an Egyptian, and against you the angel of destruction is armed with the sword of God. You are an Egyptian, and you are heedlessly advancing through the suspended sea—to Israel a wall, but to you only the waves of death, ready to fall down and overwhelm when *once the longsuffering* of God is exhausted. To you I would say, O sprinkle the blood of the lamb *by faith* upon your doors! and then you are free to pass through the waters of baptism with the blessing of God, and with the certainty of salvation, for “He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved.”

To the believer in Christ Jesus, *who has never been baptized as a believer*, but as an infant, I would say—‘Brother, that was not baptism.’ It was not right as to the *manner*: it was not (as here described) a being *in* the water, *under* the water, and *passing through* the water. And secondly, it was not right as to the *subject* of baptism. You were then an *Egyptian*, and to the Egyptian baptism is only condemnation and wrath. *Be baptized as an Israelite*, that you may receive baptism aright. Escape from Egypt. Escape in God’s appointed way, through the water. The very reproach that the world casts on it, shows that it is the best way of escaping from the world. And remember! though fear is on the Egyptian shore, there are praises and songs on the opposite coast!

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