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STUDIES IN BAPTISM

by Ray R. Sutton

No. 1: The Family Structure of the Great Commission

*'Going therefore, **disciple** all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father**, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'* (Matthew 28:19, my translation)

Endemic to the Great Commission is a familial structure. Jesus makes this point in the way he expresses the commission. He says the *nations* are to be made disciples by baptizing *them*. The critical observation is that the personal pronoun *them*, differs in gender from its antecedent *nations*. Normally in the Greek language the antecedent of the personal pronoun is the same gender. In this case especially, the difference is quite important to one's understanding of how the Great Commission is implemented. Charlemagne, for example, failed to take note of this grammatical, but terribly important point, and baptized whole nations as such into the faith. Under the influence of an overly corporatistic interpretation, the plural *them* indicated national baptism. The difference in gender between the pronoun and its antecedent therefore went neglected. If on the other hand the gender discrepancy had been noted, the pronoun *them* would have been understood to indicate a group smaller than the nation.

The anabaptists and modern day baptists, on the other hand, tend to view the Great Commission from an exclusively individualistic interpretation. To them the *modus operandi* is the baptism of one individual at a time. The plural number of *them*, however, refers to a unit larger than the individual. Therefore, both groups have failed to take careful note of the language in the Great Commission. Consequently, the *family* has not been understood as the unit which best fits these Trinitarian dimensions of singularity and plurality.

First, the *family* interpretation of the pronoun/antecedent discrepancy is confirmed by the *immediate* context. The baptismal formula describes a similar unit to which they are united. They are baptized "into the name (one) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (many). The Trinity is similar to the family in that it is singular (one) and plural (many). Therefore, if the basic structure of the universe, the Trinity, is one and many, then the basic unit in creation, the family, should analogically resemble the Godhead. To have a unit in the world which is more basic than the Trinity in its

organizational structure is to elevate the creation above the Trinity. It is saying that man does not need to exist in a Trinitarian structure, but God does. Therefore, the baptismal formula sets a parameter for them, and establishes 'our interpretation. Furthermore, the family becomes the basic structure of the nation and church, which are co-extensive, yet separate in the Great Commission.

Second, the broader context of both testaments of Scripture reinforces the family view of the Great Commission. First, the cultural mandate was given to the commissioned (extended) family (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:24). God commanded male and female, not the man alone, to have dominion. Moreover, it was to be accomplished by being fruitful, bearing children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), and by being productive in extending God's dominion (Ephesians 1:22). Second, the nation of Israel was numbered (Nehemiah 3:15) and rebuilt by family units (Nehemiah 3:3ff., 7:6ff.). Third, in the New Testament the preaching extended God's claims to the children (Acts 2:39) as had the preaching of the Old Testament (Genesis 17).

The numbering system of the Old Testament by family heads, fourth, carried over to the New Testament. In Acts 44 the text expresses the number of conversions, "the number of men (husbands) was about five thousand." The transition husband ought to take preference over men because the original Greek word *aner*, most often refers to the husband of the house. Since more than men were obviously saved, the growth was numbered familiarly making it identical to the numbering system of Israel. In Numbers 11:10 for example, Moses heard the *families* weeping via the "man in the door of his tent."

Fifth, every time a household is mentioned in the New Testament it is designated as baptized into the church, proving the familiar implementation of the Great Commission. There are "in the Acts and Epistles the record of only ten separate instances of baptism. In two of these, viz., of the eunuch and of Paul, Acts 8:38; 9:18, there were no families to be baptized. In the case of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, the people of Samaria, and the disciples of John at Ephesus, crowds were baptized on the very spot on which they professed to believe (see also above on Acts 44). Of the remaining five instances, in the four cases in which the family is mentioned at all, it expressly said they were baptized, viz., the households of

Lydia of Thyatira, of the jailer of Philippi, of Stephanas, and of Crispus.—Acts 16:15, 32-33, 18:8; I Cor. 1:16. In the remaining instance of Cornelius, the record implies that the family was also baptized. Thus the apostles, in every case, without a single recorded exception, baptized believers on the spot, and whenever they had families, they also baptized their households, as such.” (*Outlines of Theology*, A.A. Lodge, p. 622) Therefore, the larger context confirms that the family is the basic unit of the Bible. Furthermore, it establishes the family interpretation of the pronounced antecedent discrepancy in Matthew 28:19. To alter the familial pattern of the New Covenant would shift the structure of the Bible to the individual. Consequently, it creates the Baptist’s dilemma.

The Baptist’s Dilemma

The first aspect of the dilemma is the inherent *exclusiveness* of the Baptist structure. According to the Baptist viewpoint the basic unit of the New Covenant is the individual. Therefore, those formerly included in the church of the Old Testament, the children, are now excluded from the covenant. It is necessarily the case since one is added to the visible church by baptism (Acts 2:41; note that the baptized are considered to be the ones *added* to the church) and the Baptist does not bring his infant children for admission by baptism. Herein is exclusiveness. It is built into their viewpoint because the covenantal unit has been reduced to the individual. Jesus condemned this exclusiveness when his disciples were discouraging people from bringing their infants to him (Luke 18:15-16). By keeping the children away, they were excluding people who rightfully belonged to Jesus. If Baptists were consistent with their exclusivist theology they would not tolerate prayer with or instruction of their children. John Bunyan the famous Baptist, attempted that kind of consistency. Most contemporary Baptists are not so consistent. They teach their children, “Jesus loves *me*, this I know,” and build Christian schools. Some Baptist churches even dedicate their children to the Lord because they know the Bible teaches to raise their children “*in the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4), not outside of Him. The way to add someone to the Lord’s body in a visible sense, however, is through baptism, not dedication (Acts 2:41). Even so, Baptists continue to fracture the family by excluding their own.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the exclusivist theology appears in other places. Since Baptists define the covenant in terms of the individual and his experience, they have an immediate distrust for anyone without *their* experience. Many Baptists, for example, cannot conceive of the salvation of Presbyterians or Episcopalians, because they do not believe in immersion. In fact, some Baptist groups will not accept the baptism of another Baptist church. The problem begins, however, with their errant approach to their own children.

A second aspect of the Baptist’s structural problem is communalism. Ernst Troeltsch in *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (trans. by Olive Wyon, London/New York, 1931, pp. 365 ff.) says, “various Baptist sects were already propagating (1500’s)... advocacy of Christian Communism... the essential mark of the sectary type.”

Troeltsch’s observation was sadly illustrated in the Pilgrim expansion to the New World. When they landed, a communal, individualistic organizational structure was created. The result was virtual starvation and failure. It was not until the Puritans, who had a more familial view of organization, taught them the biblical concepts of division of labor and private ownership of property, that this situation was changed.

The *rationale* for this incipient communalism, however, can be understood by examining the *authority* structure of the Baptist organization. Under individualism, everyone becomes equal in authority. For example, in a Baptist church, the congregation votes on *everything*. In civil matters, however, they vote via the representative they elected. It is Republican (Presbyterian) government, and contrary to the equalitarianism of their church. When everyone is functionally equal in authority, however, there must eventually be redistribution of wealth to carry out this equalitarianism. Hence the structure of organization leads to the very thing most Baptists do not want, communalism and the complete loss of individual rights. The solution to this dilemma is the familial structure which Jesus described in Matthew 28:19.

Judgment begins at the house of God. We must no longer break down the family structure by cutting off our own children. No, on the contrary, we must not cut them off, but claim them the way God has instructed. The nations are captured family by family until “they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest” (Hebrews 8:11) Cutting off our children obliterates the *modus operandi* of the Great Commission, and will bring God’s judgment on us until a generation is raised up who will “know its master” (Isaiah 1:3)!

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CALENDAR

by James B. Jordan

Part 7 The Sabbath: A Permanent Ceremonial Law

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“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy . . . For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore, the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it *holy*.” Exodus 20:8,11 (NASV)

“Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you . . . And you *shall* remember that you were a *slave* in the *land* of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore, the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.” Deuteronomy 5:12,15 (NASV)

These two versions of the fourth commandment give two different reasons for observing the sabbath day. The first reason is grounded in the sabbath as a creation or-

dinance, to be kept by all men for all time. The second reason is grounded in the sabbath as a redemptive ordinance, to be kept by the people of God as a memorial of the deliverance from Egypt, which deliverance occurred on a sabbath (Ex.12:14-16).

How are we to understand this? in particular, does this help us to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the cancellation of the sabbath in the New Covenant (Col.2:16-17) and the permanent status of the sabbath as a creation ordinance? i believe that it does.

What is the Old Covenant? The simplest way to understand the Old Covenant is to see it as the covenant made with the first Adam (Rom.5:13-14). As a result of Adam's sin, the holiness of God manifested to man under the Old Covenant could only kill men. Only by the death of Christ, the second Adam, would the Old Covenant be removed and the New Covenant be established in its place, in the sphere of the resurrection.

Now, the Old Covenant with Adam was originally designed to lead to life, not to death. The Old Covenant was eschatological in character. it was "earthly", but was designed to lead to the "heavenly"; it was psychical, but was designed to lead to the spiritual; its natural life was to lead to resurrection life (1 Cor.15:42-49). Man was given a task to perform; had he performed it, he would have been raised to the higher plane of existence which was to have been his reward. The Sabbath was a symbolic or ceremonial ordinance designed to give him a taste of this. Just as God rested after His labors, man would rest after his (Gen.2:1-3; 3:22). The Sabbath is the one ceremonial law which is binding on all men for all of history, for it is not fulfilled until history comes to an end in eternity.

Man's task under the Adamic Old Covenant involved reproduction and dominion, seed and land. When Adam fell, the Old Covenant became a killing judgment against him. Yet, the Old Covenant retained its eschatological nature. it did so by taking on a redemptive specification. The seed was given redemptive specification as the Messiah (Gen.3:15). The land was given redemptive specification as a type of the body of Christ, the Christian community (Rev.3:16 with Lev.18:28; 20:22). The Sabbath also received a redemptive specification as a type of the completed work of Christ, our salvation (Heb.4:10, which refers to Christ).

The redemptive specification of the Old Covenant has been fulfilled in Christ, because the entire Adamic Old Covenant has been fulfilled by Him. The success of the Old Covenant is no longer in doubt; those who are in union with Christ are guaranteed to progress to the resurrection or spiritual stage which was the goal of the Adamic Old Covenant.

Because Christ is the Seed, the genealogies of the Bible come to an end. Our "family" is in Christ. Because Christ's body is our environment, the land of Palestine is no longer "holy." Because Christ has finished His work, the Sabbath no longer points forward to a redemptive work yet to be accomplished.

At the same time, Christ republishes to His people the Adamic Covenant, though now no longer in the Old probationary form but in the New certain form, the New Cove-

nant. it remains the duty of Adam's seed to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with God-fearing seed, and the natural order of generation continues to fulfill that task, which we affirm in infant baptism.

It is still our duty, moreover, to take dominion over all the earth for the glory of God. And until we have finished that task, and entered into the resurrection of the body, the Sabbath remains a binding ceremonial law, a type of the completion of man's original, non-redemptive, creational task.

in concision, we are in a perpetual Sabbath as regards the redemptive specification, and thus day-keeping is no longer needed. We are not in a perpetual Sabbath as regards its original creational significance, for we have not yet come to the resurrection of our bodies, and thus observance of the weekly day of rest is still obligatory on us, to the best of our abilities.

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Gaty North

No. 1: Wisdom and Wealth

To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion (Prov. 1:2-4).

The early chapters of the Book of Proverbs are concerned with biblical wisdom: how to obtain it, cultivate it, and use it. The Proverbs also contrast biblical wisdom with the false wisdom of this world, which lures the unsuspecting into the lusts of the flesh. it is stated repeatedly that wisdom is a valuable asset: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. 3:13-17). Of all capital assets, biblical wisdom has the highest price.

The comparisons are revealing. Gold, silver, precious gems, long life: wisdom is greater than all of these. Long life, riches, and honor are closely associated with biblical wisdom, indicating that wisdom leads to these external blessings. We are reminded of the words of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). The old hymn, "I'd rather have Jesus than silver and gold" really misses the point. Better to sing, "I'd rather have Jesus and silver and gold." There is a relationship between the exercise of biblical wisdom, biblical justice, and biblical judgment to the outward signs of prosperity.

Solomon, of course, was noted both for his wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-34) and his wealth (1 Kings 10). in fact, the Queen of Sheba's words linked the two "And she said to the king,

It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (1 Kings 10W). (The Queen of Sheba was probably the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut, according to Immanuel Velikovsky: *Agas in Chaos* [Doubleday, 1952] ch. 3.)

The emphasis in Proverbs is not on the possession of knowledge as a mass of facts, including economic facts. Proverbs encourages the quest for wisdom, which is associated with honest judgment, justice, and fairness (equity). It is also important to have the ability to impart this wisdom to the less intelligent ("simple") and the young, who are impressionable. This indicates that knowledge of God's principles is not to be a monopoly of a priestly elite. "To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark [puzzling] saying" (Prov. 1:6). It is the translation of the mental puzzles of the wise into the language of the people which is deemed to be a sign of true wisdom.

Wisdom is not simply right knowledge, but also right action. It relates to ethics. There are cause-and-effect relationships in this world which must be respected if men are to prosper. The fundamental principle is this one: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). It is the awful (awe-full) fear of God which begins a man's education. This is the first principle of cause and effect. The wise man is a competent judge of people, as well as situations. He relates God's principles of ethics to the concrete events of the day. Solomon's wisdom in the case of the two women who argued over whose baby was whose — threatening to cut the child in half, and then seeing which woman agreed to give up the child to the other (1 Kings 3:16-28) — is almost the archetype of wise judgment by a ruler. Relating God's laws to men's lives is the essence of biblical wisdom.

The Book of Proverbs is an eminently practical book. The first nine chapters are devoted to a presentation of the importance of wisdom. The remaining 22 chapters give us the proverbs of Solomon (who had 3,000 of them, along with 1,005 songs: 1 Kings 4:32). The introductory section creates the interest of the reader in what is to follow, increasing the likelihood that he will take the proverbs

seriously. The proverbs are supposed to be considered carefully and then acted upon.

The proverbs represent a form of capital. Following them will produce an increase in personal wealth. The whole book is a kind of *self-help manual*. But an increase in personal wealth is not sufficient. This is one of the themes of the early section. What is needed is the wisdom to serve as a faithful steward of the wealth which is to come. To bring men a handbook for increasing wealth is not enough; they need moral capital to make proper use of the forthcoming income.

Capital, in the Bible's view, comes from conformity to the laws of God (Deut. 8:10-13; 28:1-14). Increasing per capita wealth is part of God's program of "positive feedback," wherein conformity to God's law increases a man's wealth (and a society's wealth), which is in turn to serve as a confirmation of the reliability of the covenant "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:18). To establish His covenant He gives faithful men their wealth. The progression is supposed to be: obedience.. increase.. greater obedience. ..greater increase ...dominion.

To integrate the laws of economics with the facts of economic life, we need a guideline. That guideline is the Bible. It is the revelation of God which gives men the interpretive framework for understanding economic cause and effect. Men are not to misuse their knowledge of economic cause and effect. This is why we are given the introductory section of Proverbs, to convince us that the ultimate goal of personal wealth is the increase of wisdom. To use the knowledge found in the Proverbs for any purpose other than the increase of wisdom is a form of rebellion.

The introductory remarks in Proverbs are an expansion of the closing remarks of Ecclesiastes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14). Wealth has a purpose. Wisdom tells us what that purpose is. We are to think God's thoughts after Him, bringing all things into judgment, according to His standards of righteousness.

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