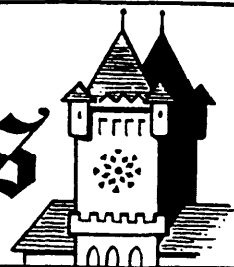


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STUDIES IN BAPTISM

by Ray R. Sutton

No. 7: The Sine Qua Non of Baptism (I)

Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. . . (Matthew 28:19) Know ye not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we. . . (Romans 6:3-4) And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. (I Corinthians 10:2)

According to reformers such as Calvin and Knox, and recent commentators, the sine qua non of baptism hinges on the preposition underscored in these verses. Most call this doctrine *incorporation* because these passages speak of union with Christ. Its relationship to baptism is obvious in that the latter incorporates (Matt. 28:19). But here is where the difficulties arise, and error at this point will completely overthrow the doctrine of baptism (*Corpus Christi*, by Geddes MacGregor, pp. 142-143).

For an introduction to the problems associated with *incorporation* one need only examine the translations of the Greek word for *into* in the critical baptism passages. The Great Commission (Matt. 28) literally reads *baptizing them into the name*, but is translated in the King James, *in*. The same word, however, is translated in Romans 6:30 *into*, and *unto* in I Corinthians 10:2 which reads, *And all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*. It is understood that this word can vary in meaning according to context, but what are the translators indicating about the doctrine of incorporation by this variance of interpretation?

In the first reference, Matthew 28:19, a more traditionally reformed view is indicated. By using the word *in*, the idea of *sphere* is conveyed instead of *actuality*. This position allows for a person to be placed in the church *visibly*, but not necessarily *invisibly*. A visible/invisible (or external/internal) distinction is generally all right; however, it is unwarranted in this passage. The major criticism is that the language of Matthew 28:19 in its context does not differentiate the two. Furthermore, the taking on of God's name in baptism must be considered a real union on the basis of other Scriptures. When Adam *named* Eve, union was established (Gen. 2:19ff.), and bearing the name of *Christian* was viewed as real union with Christ (Acts 11:26). Thus, nothing in the text or context indicates the traditional reformed paradigm can be substantiated here.

The translation in I Corinthians 10:2, *unto*, is even further from the idea of incorporation. This translation is toned down to the extent that only *identification* is meant.

Hebrews, however, speaks of Israel as being *inside* his house (Heb. 3:1-5), so the notion of Israel's being *inserted* into union with Moses should not be avoided.

The third reference quoted, Romans 6:3, conveys the concept of incorporation, but modern protestant commentators tend to re-define the baptism therein. They advocate that the baptism referred to incorporates, and a priori the decision is made that this could only be the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In objection to this interpretation, it must again be admitted that the Bible teaches baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2), but Paul speaks of water baptism in the context of Romans 6:3ff. When he refers to union with Jesus' death, it must be kept in mind that the cross was called a baptism (Mark 10:38). Moreover, Jesus' own water baptism symbolized this later cleansing-death-baptism. Thus it is clear how Christian baptism unites one to Jesus' baptism: like Jesus, he is baptized. This continuity between baptisms, which proves that Paul means water baptism in Romans 6, has apparently been recognized by other commentators.

Calvin says: "Paul, because he is speaking to believers, connects the reality and the effect with the outward sign (*substantiam et effectum externo signo coniungit*) in his usual manner. We know that whatever the Lord offers by the visible symbol is confirmed and ratified by their faith. In short, he teaches us what the truth of baptism is, when rightly received. Thus he testifies that all the Galatians who had been baptized into Christ had put on Christ (Gal. 3:27). We must always use these terms while the institution of the Lord and the faith of believers correspond, for we never have naked and empty symbols (*nuda et inania symbola*), except when our ingratitude and wickedness hinder the working of the divine beneficence. (Commentary on Romans 6:3-4)

Therefore, Paul speaks of water baptism in this passage, which means that incorporation has a direct relationship to baptism. Even if this interpretation is objected to, one must recognize that the doctrine of incorporation *cannot be avoided*. Whether from this passage or from one of the others, the connection between baptism and union with Christ must be discussed. And Calvin's comments about "empty symbols" touches on the issues involved. Namely, how could a "mere" symbol, baptism, insert someone into union with Christ? Thus, the problems associated with incorporation center around the *relationship* between symbol and reality.

On the one hand, the Bible speaks as though the signs themselves give life, or in this case, incorporate into Christ. Paul for example, says of his own conversion that he was told to, *be baptized, and wash away thy sins* (Acts 22:16). On the other hand, Scripture teaches that God creates this union between Christ and His church. Paul says to the church at Ephesus that union with Christ occurs through His sovereign ordering (Ephesians 1:3-

14). Thus, the church has struggled to put these passages together in such a way that justice is done to all of them. The symbols of the covenant incorporate, it is admitted, but what is incorporated? And to what is one incorporated at baptism? The answers to these questions have generally fallen into three categories.

First, the *realist* group believes that the sacrament *actually* inserts one into Jesus. Thus, because the sacrament itself is effectual, salvation is *automatically* or mechanically controlled. All one needs for *initial* salvation is be baptized, and to *remain* saved he takes communion regularly. Ironically, both Romanist and Protestant groups have advocated a realist view of the sacraments. Most are familiar with the regenerative view of water which Rome has, but are unaware that immersionist groups such as the Church of Christ also believe that the waters regenerate. Essentially, there is no difference in viewpoint because they both believe that the water or baptism in part of whole carries life. Thus, each group believes its baptism is necessary for salvation.

Second, the *nominalist* group says the symbols are empty. As Calvin put it, *nuda et inania symbola*, when referring to this position. For them, baptism is understood as identification *only*. Indeed baptism identifies the church with Christ, but there is much more, and this position does not avoid some sort of incorporation. For one thing, *Jesus* is identified with the subject baptized. Baptism is *Jesus'* sign first, and the recipient's second. Too often, this position looks at baptism from the subject's viewpoint, which indicates the nature of nominalism. But at least, for them baptism *pictures* incorporation.

For another, baptists are forced to believe that baptized people are incorporated, whether they see baptism as the instrument or not. It must be remembered that these same groups believe in "believer's baptism," so, logically as well as practically, it follows that all baptized people are united (incorporated) with Jesus. The result is that nominalism and realism are not so far apart after all. Rome invests the sacrament with grace, whereas nominalists invest the one who baptizes with the grace to discern "true" believers. The effects have been devastating.

Realism, in its *failure* to distinguish between symbol and reality, tended to create a continuity of power between God and man. The source of this power became the laver or the "Holy Grail." On the other hand, nominalism separates symbol from reality, thus mitigating and even destroying the institutional church. Since the sacraments, in part, are the keys which open and shut the door of the kingdom, their relationship to binding and loosing cannot be minimized (John 20:23). To be more specific, if the symbol of communion has no meaning then excommunication loses its significance. This is precisely what has happened in western culture. The world no longer takes seriously the courts of the church because they are impotent most of the time, and virtually non-existent the rest of the time. If, however, one partakes of the eucharist unlawfully, the judgment of God will fall (I Cor. 11:26ff.), because symbol and reality are connected.

The third group, contrary to both of these positions, adopts a Trinitarian view which says that symbol and reality are distinguished, yet not separated (cf. No. 3 of this series, "Watery Profession"). The symbols incorporate, but they do not *automatically* save — there is no power in the sacrament itself. They do, however, represent the name of God, and God stands behind *His* symbols. So they are not empty, but neither are they effectual. The precise connections established by incorporation will be developed (D.V.) in the following essay.

In conclusion, the purpose of this essay has been

twofold. One, the problems surrounding the doctrine of incorporation have been isolated in order that its relationship to baptism might be better understood. Two, once the critical nature of the connection between symbol and reality is pointed out, the importance of this doctrine can be appreciated. Indeed, without *incorporation* there is no sacrament of baptism.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CALENDAR

by James B. Jordan

No. 13: The Sabbath, Labor, and the Death Penalty

"And you shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it [the harvest] drop, and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

"Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease; in order that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as the stranger [in the land], may refresh themselves." (Exodus 23:10-12)

The keeping of a day as the sabbath was not only a ceremonial figure of the completion of the probation, as we have discussed in previous installments in this series, but it is also a physical necessity for life in the first creation. In the nature of things, we cannot experience the life of God, as His images, in the same way as he experiences it. God is eternally active and also eternally at rest, in Himself. We, as creatures who live in time, must experience activity (work) and rest in an alternating pattern. God chose to rest on His seventh day (Gen. 2:1-3), not because He had to, but to teach man to do so (Ex. 20:11). According to John 5:17, Christ could work on the sabbath day because, as God, He was both continually at work and continually at rest. It is not so with us, at least in our pre-glorified bodies.

(Note, by the way, that God's seventh day was Adam's first day, showing that man's works were to flow out of God's graciously given rest. Man's work flows out of God's prevenient, primordial rest, and flows back into eschatological rest. On the first day, man rests apart from his works, but on the seventh day man, like God, rests *in* his good works.)

Even though we live by New Covenant power, we live in the Old Covenant creation, and must live by the creation's rules. Among those rules is this: it is needful for man to rest in a regular pattern of one day in seven, and it is needful for the soil to rest in a regular pattern of one year in seven. To ignore this pattern is not only to diminish life, but it is also to disobey God's explicit commands. We are, moreover, commanded to *give* rest to ourselves and to our subordinates, even to the least of them (oxen, and the son of the female slave). Finally, we are commanded to *enforce* rest on the stranger in the land, on the unbeliever who lives in a Christian commonwealth (cf. also Neh. 13:19-21). Thus, the sabbath law has an ethical dimension which is distinguishable from the religious or symbolic dimensions we have been considering in our previous studies. While we do not keep the sabbath day, as such, in the New Covenant, we must keep a day as a sabbath. The Church has always held that the Lord's Day is to be *observed* as a sabbath.

The Hebrew word "sabbath" means "cease," that is, stop working. Genesis 2 and the Ten Commandments lay

all the stress on rest, though holy convocations for worship were part of the sabbath day in the Old Covenant (Lev. 23:3). The essence of the Lord's Day is judgment (Lord's Day = Day of the Lord), and thus worship. These two things imply each other, however, since rest in the full biblical sense is rest in God, and entails drawing into His presence for rest. Likewise, judgment and worship require a cessation from works, and a presentation of accomplished works before God. Thus, we may say that Old Covenant believers worshipped on the day of rest, while New Covenant believers rest on the day of worship. This manner of speaking seems to do justice to the difference in emphasis in the two covenants.

The Death Penalty

At this point I should like to make a few remarks on the death penalty for violation of the sabbath day. Let me remind the reader again that these essays are designed hopefully to advance the discussion of the sabbath, not to say the last word; and I am certainly open to correction.

The death penalty law for sabbath violation is found, significantly, not in the case law section of Exodus 21-23, but in the section detailing religious prescriptions for the Tabernacle (Ex. 31:14,15; 35:2,3). Exodus 31:14 states that the "profanation" of any sabbath deserves the death penalty, and working on the sabbath deserves excommunication from the church ("cut off from the people"). The weekly sabbath day, however, according to v.15, is particularly solemn, and work on it mandates the death penalty. (The festival sabbaths were not as solemn as the weekly sabbath; cp. Lev. 23:3 with 23:7.)

Even though this seems clear enough, in Numbers 15:32-36 the Israelites found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day, and we are told that they did not know what to do, "because it had not been declared distinctly what should be done to him." Note, it does not say that they did not know, but that God had not yet told them. In this case, because it was apparently a high-handed, self-conscious defiance of known law, God required that the man be put to death (this is clear from the context, Num. 15:30). In short, the man was not put to death simply for sabbath breaking, but for high-handed and blasphemous disobedience.

This indicates that the death penalty for sabbath breaking was not intended to be understood as applicable in every situation that came along, but that there were extenuating circumstances. In particular, I should like to suggest that it was certain kinds of work that mandated the death penalty, not all work in general. Any work on the sabbath day would have resulted in excommunication, but only certain "religious" works would have brought on the death penalty. The general clue to this is the fact that the law is found in the context of Tabernacle legislation. The specific clue is Exodus 35:3, "You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day," which immediately follows the death penalty law. I suggest that this specifies the kinds of work which bring on the death penalty.

Generally, Ex. 35:3 is seen in a *quantitative* sense, so that the meaning is, "you shall do no work, not even stoking up your fire." (The verb "kindle" is *piel*, indicating that you are not to *intensify* or stoke up your fire. If it were *qal*, it would mean you are not to *burn* a fire; if *hiphil*, it would mean you are not to *start* a fire. One cannot be very dogmatic here, but the verb is used in the Bible in all three forms. If any Hebrew expert would like to help me with this, please drop me a note at the address at the end of the newsletter.)

I suggest, however, that we take it in a *qualitative* sense. Just as God has a fire on the hearth of His Tabernacle house, which signifies His judgment and the cooking of His sacrificial food; so man has a fire on his hearth. Ordinarily these do not conflict with each other, but for some reason on the sabbath day they do.

The fire on the altar-hearth of God's House is always ignited by Him alone, never by men, for it is the fire of judgment which consumes the food of the sacrifice, not the fire of man's will (Gen. 22:6; Lev. 9:22-10:2; 2 Chron. 7:1). If man brings his own fire to God, he is substituting his own judgment for God's, and God puts that man to death (Lev. 10:1,2).

On the sabbath day God's fire is *intensified*, because the daily holocaust is doubled (Num. 28:1-10). As God's fire is intensified, man's fires are to be kept at a minimum: they may be kept alive, but not intensified. Moreover, from Ex. 16:23, it appears that no cooking was to be done on the sabbath day. Only God might cook His food on that day.

Putting all this together, it appears that on the sabbath day, suddenly every hearth becomes an altar, all food becomes a sacrifice, and all fires become "strange fires." God's presence is suddenly extended all over the land, for a period of time, and the entire land becomes holy Tabernacle space. During that period, the entire land is God's house, only His fire may burn, and only His food may cook. For man to intensify his own fire during that time is to set himself in opposition to God, to assert autonomy. For man to cook during that time is to reject God's food.

This means that the death penalty was directly connected to a particular kind of sabbath breaking, one which was explicitly blasphemous in character. With the coming of the New Covenant, there are no more weekly holocausts, and the opposition of man's will to God's can no longer be tied to burning and cooking.

There is, however, an equity here. On the Lord's Day, men gather to worship God, and to eat the food of His Sacrifice (once and for all slain, but still eaten today). During this hour, other religions ought not to be allowed to meet. The Bible teaches that non-Christian religions may be practised in private, but not in public, and that they may not be promoted. The sabbath law, however, has to do particularly not with worship, but with the regulation of time. I suggest that in a Christian society, non-Christians may be allowed to practise their religions, but not on the Lord's Day, or at least not during the hours of Christian worship. They may not set their strange fire directly opposite God's holy worship. I suggest that the death penalty is still appropriate for the crime of worshipping another god on the Lord's Day.

Finally, the notion that the death penalty for sabbath breaking was tied to certain religious forms of sabbath defiance does not imply that no civil sanctions are proper against lesser forms of sabbath violation. In a Christian society, the Lord's Day is to be kept as a laborial sabbath, and the regulation of trade on the sabbath is a proper role for the state (Neh. 13:19-21). If a man keeps his shop open, and tries to force another man to work on the Lord's Day (that is, during the sabbath), the proper penalty is not, it seems to me, death, but rather a form of pecuniary restitution. The laborer should be paid double, perhaps, and the shopkeeper fined double his profits of the day. This would be an appropriate penalty for breaking the laborial dimension of the sabbath, which is the only dimension of concern to the civil magistrate in the New Covenant. Repeated offenses, demonstrating contumacy, can of course lead to the death penalty for incorrigibility (Deut. 21:18-21), but this would not be the same as a death penalty for sabbath breaking as such.

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Gary North

No. 7: God's Rigged Universe

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine (Prov. 3:9-10).

This is a very brief recapitulation of Exodus 22:29 and 23:19, regarding the requirement of the firstfruits offering, and Deuteronomy 28:8: "The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and He shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." The Lord commands His blessing upon those faithful to His law.

First, men are commanded to follow a requirement of the law. This is not a suggestion. The passages in Exodus are very clear: giving God the firstfruits is not optional. Exodus 22:29 reads: "Thou shalt not delay to offer first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give to Me." The people of Israel had seen what happened to the firstborn sons of Egypt. They understood just how serious God is about collecting what is rightfully His. The Levites had been established as the representative firstborn sons of Israel (Num. 3:12-13). They were wholly God's, dedicated to full-time service in the tabernacle (Num. 3:7).

Second, the command offers a profitable result: *external blessings*. Specifically, honoring God with the fruits of one's labor results in economic growth. Furthermore, the words "barns" and "presses" are plural. The covenantally faithful person should expect overwhelming economic success. The writer has directed his injunctions to his son (3:1, 11), meaning a single individual. He is not speaking to a group. Thus, when the plural is used for barns and presses, it indicates wealth for an individual.

The relationship between blessing and firstfruit offerings is obvious. The firstfruits were corn and wine (Ex. 22:29, New English Bible). The blessings referred to by Proverbs are full barns and full wine presses. In other words, *that with which man honors God is that with which God will honor men*. God says "them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30). God establishes with men a reciprocal relationship with respect to honor. Give God honor, and He will give you honor. Give God of your substance, and He will return the offering.

A gambler would be happy to play a game of chance which was rigged by "the house" to pay him more than he put "into the pot." If he could deduct one coin to pay to "the house" each time he won, in order to get the management to continue to rig the game in his favor, he would be happy to make the pay-off. Gambling casinos are well aware of this possibility. "Pit bosses" roam the floor, looking for signs that the casino's card dealers are favoring a particular player. If a player continues to receive winnings above what is statistically normal — that is, if a player continues to win at all — then the management takes a close look at the dealer. The management assumes that the dealer might be being paid off by the winner.

God tells us that He, as the owner of the "house," has rigged "the game" in favor of those who honor Him. A

person who pays a mere 10 percent of his increase — above the capital he put into the investment — will be permitted to "stay in the game" and collect his winnings. Just as surely as there are statistical regularities when the law of large numbers operates, God honors those who honor Him by giving their firstfruits to Him.

Why is it that gamblers continue to play a game that is rigged against them, and refuse to work in a universe that is rigged in favor of those who pay a mere 10 percent to the Management? Why is it that even God's people refuse to acknowledge the relationship between tithing and economic success? *Because they believe in a world of cosmic impersonalism*. The gambler believes in a world of chance, fate, and luck. The serious ones also believe in statistical patterns, which is why they devote time to studying which cards have been dealt earlier in the game. They try to "beat the odds" scientifically, yet they know that the odds are against them from the moment they sit down at the table. They prefer to believe in impersonal "runs of luck" to overcome the impersonal "stacked deck" of statistical probability. In short, *their faith is in cosmic impersonalism, not God*. They prefer playing a supposedly impersonal game to working in a God-controlled personal universe.

These verses inform us of a universe which is totally personal. Its laws are established in terms of *persons*: God and men. Those who honor the person of God by paying a tithe on their increase will find that their works prosper in the sight of men. This relationship is supposed to reinforce the faith of the faithful in the reliability of the covenant (Deut. 8:18). It is also supposed to challenge the false religions of foreigners to the faith (Deut. 4:6).

Such a universe warns men of their ultimate destiny. They are headed for judgment. The visible things of this world testify clearly to the invisible things (Rom. 1:20). Thus, the predictable relationship between faithful giving and God's faithful returning challenges men's faith in the impersonal laws of probability. In an impersonal universe, there should be no predictable relationship of the kind proclaimed by the author of the Proverbs. Between hard work and output, yes; between future-oriented thrift and income, yes; between bribing an official and rewards, yes; but not between giving money to God's earthly agencies and of tithe-collecting and subsequent prosperity. Should such a relationship exist, the whole foundation of rebellious man's epistemology would be shattered. This is why rebels prefer gambling to tithing. Better to lose to a man-rigged, probability-governed wheel or deck of cards than to prosper in terms of a God-rigged universe. Better to honor with all of one's substance the criminal conspiracies that control the gambling tables than to honor God with ten percent of one's increase. The ethical rebel is a statistically predictable loser; he knows it, the "house" knows it, and God knows it.

Sadly, those Christians who decry gambling but who do not believe in enforced tithing have not understood the relationship between tithing and prosperity as well as they have understood the relationship between gambling and losing. They live in an "epistemological no-man's land," caught between the impersonal laws of large numbers and the cosmic personalism of God's law. They cannot make up their minds about which kind of law really governs the day-to-day operations of the universe. They are gambling on the outcome, failing to believe in God's law as a tool of dominion. Until they make up their minds, they will remain neither big winners nor big losers.

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