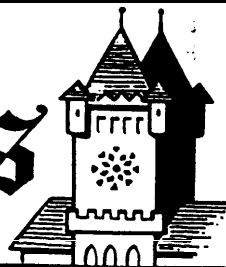


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STUDIES IN BAPTISM

by Ray R. Sutton

No. 8: The Sine Qua Non of Baptism (II)

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ?.. (Rem. 6:13). For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... (Rem. 6:5). For if thou were cut out of the olive tree which is wi/d by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree,.. (Rem. 11:24). Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit (John 15:2).

The previous essay on the sine qua non of baptism attempted to accomplish two purposes. First of all, in order to indicate the central importance of incorporation several problems were noted — problems that occur when protestantism avoids obvious statements to the effect that water baptism unites to Jesus. For instance, *re-translation* has been a problem in that the main baptismal formula, "baptize into," has been translated "baptize in," whenever the passage obviously refers to water baptism (e.g., Matthew 28:19). Baptism in the sphere of God's name has seemed safer to some than saying that one is baptized "into."

Again, *re-definition* of the kind of baptism in passages such as Remans 6 is often resorted to. But context does not indicate that the passage speaks of Holy Spirit baptism, exclusively at least, because Paul uses similar language in passages where he unquestionably refers to water baptism (Acts 22:16).

The second purpose of the previous essay was to alert the reader to the problems involved with the *relationship of symbol to reality* as they concern the doctrine of incorporation. The *realist* believes the sacraments automatically convert, whereas the *nominalist* fails to see any relationship between the symbol and the reality of salvation. It is only a symbol, and an empty one at that. The *Trinitarian*, however, holds that the symbols are real, and therefore incorporate (signs and *sea/s*). This brings the discussion to the present study — real incorporation. Specifically, its purpose is to develop the Scriptural foundation, and to offset *realism* from real incorporation.

First, therefore, real incorporation is distinguished from *realism*. It is unfortunate that similar words have been used to denote *different* positions because this similarity of vocabulary has blotted out important distinctions. One, realism, normally the Roman Catholic view of the sacrament, does not *really* believe baptism is a real *sign*. The sacraments cease to be signs at all, and become the reality. For instance, in the Eucharist the bread does not symbolize Christ's body, it *is* His body. Thus, both Trinitarians and realists believe baptism incorporates, but the mode of operation is different — a difference that makes all the difference in the world. For the realist, baptism *ceases* to be a real symbol, whereas trinitarianism maintains the *realness* of the symbol. God is really present, using the Word made visible to incorporate.

Two, the realist believes the first sacrament, baptism, *infuses grace*, but the Trinitarian position is that it *incorporates*. The difference between incorporation and infusion is that the former would not *necessarily* incorporate unto grace. There is a *dual aspect* — it could be an incorporation unto death as well as life. It depends on *whether faith* is present, which means the Trinitarian does not believe in automatic grace. Nevertheless, he does believe that *incorporation* is automatic. But the major difference at this point is that an infusion view, realism, essentially denies real incorporation. Having pointed out these discontinuities, attention is now turned to the Scriptural basis for *real incorporation*.

All the Scriptures at the beginning of this essay have direct bearing on the doctrine, but the central passage is Remans 6. It provides a *point of contact* with Remans 11 and John 15. Paul says in verse 3, *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?* In verse 5, however, he describes *baptism unto death* as being *planted together in the likeness of his death*. Baptism into Christ is the same as being *planted in Him*. This Edenic vineyard imagery establishes that other passages which use similar language, speak the same way of the *church's union with Christ*.

The image itself, that is of being planted (Rem. 6:5), grafted (Rem. 11:24), or pruned (Jn. 15:2), clarifies and amplifies theological language that is not comprehensive enough to cover the aspects of Biblical truth. First of all, it is clear that real incorporation is indicated when the Bible says the church is united with Christ

the way a branch is to a vine. Any interpretation indicating that the union is *unreal*, is contrary to Scripture. For example, the Reformed view of the Church, that it is visible and invisible, is sometimes presented as saying that the visible is not necessarily real. The statement is made, "the baptized infant is baptized, and therefore visibly in the church, but it is not *really in union with Christ*." The Bible, however, does not speak this way, 'and the visible/invisible vocabulary should not be understood to deny *real* union.

Baptist theology also tends to undermine real union with its doctrine of identification. It is true that baptism identifies, but it does so because *incorporation* occurs. John 15 usually presents problems to most Baptists for this reason. The passage speaks of two branches, the one bearing fruit and the other which does not. The sixth verse says of the latter that it is cut off and burned up. The problem for the Baptist is created by their doctrine of "once saved, always saved." How can a branch be in Christ, and yet be cast into the fire and burned up? Whatever the answer is, it must be faithful to Scripture. The Baptist's answers regarding this passage are less than equitable with the text and certainly the reduction of incorporation to *only* identification is unsatisfactory.

But what about the doctrine of "once saved, always saved," and this position that real incorporation results at water baptism? Does real incorporation lead to the view that one can lose his salvation? The answers are found in the *second* observation that needs to be made about the vine imagery.

Second, then, since one must conclude from John 15 that real union exists between Christ and the branch that does not bear fruit (e.g., Judas, and Simon Magus, Acts 8), there are two aspects to this union. One is unto death, while the other leads to life. One is temporary, and the other permanent. This is the way Scripture describes it, and so must its students.

An example helps to understand how one union results in death, while the other life. Scripture says that the wilderness people partook of Christ (1 Cor. 10:2ff.), and died there (Heb. 3:17). But they did not all die who partook of Christ in the manna and the water. Some lived who had union with Him. Thus Scripture forces one to see that union (incorporation) has dual aspects. It can result in life or death, and the difference is whether or not *persevering faith* is present. Over and over again the text distinguishes true from false faith in terms of *permanence* (Matt. 13:18-23, Heb. 6:1-9).

These observations lead to several applications. First, this view that real incorporation has two aspects means the warning passages of Scripture have direct application to everyone in the church. The *potential* of falling away is there for all because the Bible speaks of those who were "grafted," yet fell away (Hebrews 3:12). All attempts to negate the real possibility of falling away in Hebrews 6 by using Greek grammar, are unconvincing when one considers that the writer to the Hebrews is issuing a *warning*. And any interpreta-

tion of Greek syntax that removes this warning is wrong. The warning stands, and is a real threat because departure from the faith would mean that an individual or church (cf. Rev. 3) had been incorporated unto death.

As to "once saved, always saved," this statement is true in one sense, but not in another. From the point of view of the decree of God, which no man can penetrate, God's elect cannot be lost. From the point of view of the covenant, however, a man can fall away, which means he was never one of the elect. But man can only know God's *revealed* will in His covenant. Thus, he can know he is saved in covenantal terms, the sacraments and obedience (1 Jn. 2:3-4); but that same covenant says that it is possible to fall away from the faith (Heb. 3&6). This is the only interpretation which does justice to both the texts that speak of eternal security, and the ones that talk of falling away.

A second application centers around the effects of these positions on the *discipline* of the church. The view of real incorporation that has been developed says that there is one union, but two different aspects. The realist says that there is one union, but it always results in the same effect — automatic grace. The nominalist who cries, "once saved, always saved," is really not that much different from the Romanist. The Baptist also believes in an infallible union that results in automatic grace. Whereas Trinitarian thought, with the position that there are two aspects and the real possibility of falling away, preserves the discipline of the church. The first two positions cheapen grace, and they can lead to licentious living.

On the one hand, the Roman church created a tyranny by believing grace could be infused or refused automatically. Corruption entered the clergy as they controlled the automatic means, and the laity in that they learned to manipulate the clergy with indulgences so as to hold onto their salvation. On the other hand, the "once saved, always saved" doctrine in Baptist churches (and unfortunately most Presbyterian churches as well) makes it difficult to excommunicate apostates. After all, how can someone be excommunicated who has been brought into the church with the "believer's baptism" doctrine? He has been declared a "true" believer, and he can't lose his salvation, so how can he be excommunicated? That is why most churches only *ban* (Anabaptist churches are most noted for this) and do not excommunicate. The result of all this is that discipline eventually breaks down, and anarchy occurs.

In conclusion, the church's view of incorporation is important to the life that goes on within her. When it is believed that water baptism really incorporates, the role of the institutional church is underscored. Conversion at a revival is not enough; one must be baptized into the church. Furthermore, real incorporation has two aspects, life and death. These are essential to the government, morality, and discipline of the church. Thus, without real incorporation baptism is insignificant, and the church is devastated.

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE **BIBLE**

by Gary North

No. 8: The Prompt Payment of Obligations

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. Devise not evil against thy neighbor, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee (Pr. 3:2 7-29).

The prompt payment of one's debts is a moral obligation. The neighbor who comes and requests whatever is owed to him deserves full consideration. The person who owes his neighbor anything is supposed to pay him upon request.

In a world of debt, it pays the debtor to delay repayment as long as possible, other things being equal. The reason for this is the existence of uncertainty (opportunities for profit) and the existence of time preference (interest).

Interest is an inescapable factor in human action. It is not a phenomenon limited to modern industrial economies. It stems from the time-preference factor of all human decision-making. Men prefer the present use of a scarce economic resource to the use of the same asset in the future, other things being equal. Thus, there is a *discount of future goods as against present goods*. This discount is called the rate of interest.

We normally say that the debtor "has the use of the money." By this we mean that he has possession of scarce economic resources. These may be in the form of financial instruments, such as bank accounts, bonds or other interest-producing assets. They may also be in the form of capital assets, such as tools. The point is, it is the debtor rather than the creditor who is able to use these assets *in the present* for his own personal benefit.

Consider the case of a monetary debt. A man owes his neighbor twenty ounces of gold. He has the gold on hand, but he believes that the paper money-denominated price of gold is likely to drop. He plans to sell the gold for a few days, take payment in paper money, and then repurchase the twenty ounces later at a lower price. He then pockets the difference between the original sales price in paper money and the later, lower repurchase price. This is what is known as "selling short." It involves economic uncertainty, since no one can be certain of the economic future.

During the time that the debtor uses the gold for this purpose, the creditor cannot collect his property. He could make the same transaction. He could pocket the extra paper money that a successful "short" strategy would produce. Or he might want to loan the gold to someone else for an interest payment. Or he might want to buy a capital asset of some sort with the gold, especially at today's higher price for gold. If he cannot gain access to his gold, he loses the interest he might otherwise have received, or the opportunity to sell short, or the opportunity to buy the capital asset.

Because the debtor has possession of the gold, he has an *Instrument of personal gain* at his disposal.

The debtor wants the *present* use of the asset if he can avoid paying interest to the creditor. The creditor, on the other hand, has an economic incentive to repossess it on the agreed-upon date. Each man wants it *in the present*. There is a discount of future goods as against identical present goods. Clearly, if you can retain possession of a more valuable asset (the asset in the present) and pay for its use by means of a less valuable asset (the discounted future value you presently impute to the asset), you have an economic incentive to do so.

Who should receive it? The Bible is clear: the owner, the one to whom it is due at a particular time. The existence of such a moral prohibition on retaining another man's property for an extra period of time is a recognition on the part of God of a fundamental aspect of human action: time-preference, the foundation of the rate of interest.

To keep possession of it when it is in one's hand is an "evil" (v. 29). It is a form of *theft*. The debtor, for whatever particular investment possibility, keeps it from him whose asset it rightfully is. The rightful owner must therefore forfeit whatever investment opportunities are available to him for the duration of the period of delay. This loss has been forced upon him by the debtor, who is profiting at the owner's expense.

The modern version of this evil is the familiar refrain, "Your check is in the mail." The creditor asks for prompt payment, and the debtor lies to him. Instead of saying "tomorrow I will give," the debtor says, "in a few days, you'll receive your money." This lie is even worse: it implies that the debtor has, in fact, already fulfilled his commitment. The creditor is not patiently foregoing payment, as in the case of the neighbor in Proverbs 3:28 who accepts the word of the debtor that he does not have the money, but will have it the next day. The creditor is led in this case to believe that the obligation has been met.

In the late medieval era, when all interest payments from loans to fellow Christians were prohibited, money lenders developed a way to get around the prohibition by means of the ethics of this passage. Lenders would lend money, but only because the debtor made a verbal, unrecorded commitment to delay payment on the loan. Then the borrower would make a penalty payment — not technically an interest payment — to the lender because of the delay. The lender could go into a court of law or a church court, if necessary, and defend his acceptance of this extra money as a legitimate return for late payment (*more debitoris*). This was one of several legal technicalities (ethical subterfuges) by means of which a market for loanable funds was maintained in spite of an official prohibition on all interest payments. (Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* [Oxford University Press, 1954], p. 103.)

The reason why men resorted to such subterfuges is that the ecclesiastical authorities had misinterpreted the Old Testament passages that prohibited interest from a *charitable* loan to an *impoverished fellow believer*. They had interpreted these passages as

universal condemnations of *all* interest, which they called "usury." Thus, they established a price control — a ceiling of zero — on "the price of money," meaning a price control on the inescapable discount of future goods as against present goods. The result, predictably, was a shortage of funds — at the artificially low price — on the legal loan markets.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CALENDAR

Part 14

by James B. Jordan

The Sabbath and Authority

"For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death" (Exodus 35:2, NASV).

One of the problems facing the Christian is how to reconcile the sabbath rest with the need to find a job in pagan civilization. The purpose of this essay is to try to come to grips with this problem.

We have to say that the sabbath has both a personal or individual dimension, and also social and ecclesiastical dimensions. At the personal level, the Old Covenant believer was to keep the sabbath day as a sign of his faith in the future Messiah. Sabbath day-keeping was of the essence of personal saving faith. This is not true in the New Covenant. The individual keeps personal sabbath by continual faith in the continual New Covenant rest of Jesus Christ.

At the social and ecclesiastical levels, however, things are different. It is the duty of office bearers in church and state to institute and to maintain, by disciplinary measures, healthy patterns of community life. Considered as a social law, the sabbath pattern is not optional. The church must have times for holy sacramental convocations, and the state must protect these times as well as ensure that every laborer gets a day of rest.

How does this work out in history? Well, when God tailed Israel out of Egypt, He set up their social and ecclesiastical structure in such a way that there was no problem with keeping a day for rest and worship. The individual had no excuse for working during the sabbath; and continual defiance of Divine Law at this point could result in his execution. God protected His

people with miracles and with an army, like a hot-house plant.

In the gospel age, the church is far stronger, since the Spirit has been poured out. The church as such is no longer given the special physical securities of the Old Covenant. The church is no longer a hot-house plant, but an aggressive vine, growing everywhere like kudzu.

When the church penetrates a pagan culture, she cannot institute the sabbath pattern immediately. Most converts will still have to work every day; pagan holidays might occur three or four times per month, but not necessarily according to anyone-in-seven pattern. The individual is called, under these circumstances, to keep the sabbath in its essence by faith, and keep the sabbath day-pattern only so far as he is able, for the day-pattern is not of the essence of the sabbath under the New Covenant.

When Christianity emerges ascendent in a culture, as it did under Constantine in the West, the laws should be changed to enforce a sabbath (rest) day on society. Since the state must not bear the sword in vain, the death penalty for contumacious high-handed sabbath breaking might once again become part of social law.

In modern America, we are between times. There are still some blue laws here and there, and many businesses still close on Sundays. The Christian man, however, is commanded to provide for his family, and if that means taking a job which requires him to work on Sunday, he is to take the job. The sabbath is a social law, and it is enacted by the office bearers of the state, not by the anarchic actions of individuals who would "rather starve than work on Sunday." Such an attitude demonstrates that the individual does not understand the New Covenant sabbath. He should work on Sunday, if he must, while working in society toward a time of reformation. Meanwhile, he has to keep the sabbath by faith, just as he would under any circumstances, and keep such times of rest as he is able.

God commands the magistrate to execute evil-doers (Romans 13). It is not the duty of the individual to execute evil-doers, but it is his duty to work in society for the reform of law, so that the time will come when evil-doers will be dealt with by the magistrate. In the same way, the individual keeps the sabbath in the way prescribed for individuals: by faith, and by action as he is able. Only when the magistrate has been persuaded to enforce sabbath legislation will Christians be free to keep the day of rest as they would like to.

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