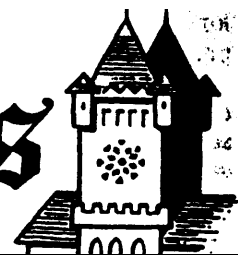


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STUDIES IN BAPTISM

by Ray. R. Sutton

No. 12: Nakedness and Baptism

They knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together (Gen. 3:7) . . . Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh;' (Gen. 6:3). Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality (Gal. 5:19). For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).

Nakedness and shame are the opposite of being clothed in Christ. Simply put, to be without clothing is to be naked. Since the fall, man has not been able to live in a state of nakedness. He has needed clothing, and God has provided it in the sacrament of animal skins. We have previously developed both the idea that baptism is a "putting on" or clothing event, and analyzed man in his naked state before he receives God's raiment. In this study we want to build on the biblical-theological concepts of nakedness and shame by looking at another idea closely associated with them. The term is *flesh*. But before we begin, it will be helpful to summarize the features of nakedness and shame which were noted in our last study.

First, nakedness and shame are presented in the Bible as having direct relationship to one another in that the former causes the later. Also, nakedness can be viewed as the more concrete of the two so that when the word 'shame' is used, its meaning comes to life if thought of as the result of nakedness. One feels shame, for example, when he is *exposed*. The Bible can refer to exposure, therefore, by using the word shame.

Second, further investigation of these words took note that they are *focused* in man's sexual capacity and activity. This is not a Freudian over-simplification unless one thinks of sex as only the sexual act. The Bible does not speak this way. Sex to the Biblical man, and particularly Adam, was more than pleasure. It was part of the cultural mandate. It was the multiplication of man to build and expand God's garden into a city-temple (Rev. 21; Heb. 11:10, 13-16). Thus, sex represented man's offspring, reproductivity, and his work, productivity. And this explains why the Bible portrays man in his nakedness as running to cover his genitals (Genesis 3). This really meant that Adam and Eve were covering all that would come from their loins, family and workers to help in their work.

It was further pointed out that this fuller understanding of sex explains why God's image in man is compared to man's image in his son. Genesis 5:1ff. parallels these two

activities, creation on God's part and re-creation regarding man, by using almost identical terminology in the word 'image'. Thus, we can say that the image of God is focused in the precise area where man is naked and ashamed. His image is in man's family and work. Therefore, having refined where he is exposed, we can make sharper observations about where he is clothed. That leads us back into the subject of baptism. But before we proceed to speak with greater precision on how God clothes His church at baptism, another theological concept, *flesh*, must be examined. It extends what was developed in the previous essay because of its closeness to nakedness and shame.

First, by definition *flesh* is man's skin. When the Bible speaks of skin diseases it uses the same word in Hebrew that is used in more theological contexts (Lev. 14:9). This is key to developing the relationship between nakedness and *flesh*. But *fresh* is, in its most concrete sense, the *exposed* epidermis of man. As a matter of fact, whenever the Bible refers to man in his sinfulness, it uses the word 'fresh.' And it speaks of man as clothed when noting that he is saved. Thus, 'fresh,' as a term, means skin, and that has reference to nakedness. Even in our society, this is illustrated: We refer to pornographic literature as having too much "skin."

Second, 'fresh' has a broader theological meaning. The clearest reference is Genesis 6. God says that the reason *He strives with man* is that he is *flesh*. Moreover, God says *He will judge man as flesh*. The negative connotation is clear. Man as mere *fresh* is wicked, and the theological context spells it out.

The first verse of the chapter says, *Now it came about as man began to multiply... the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose*. This indicates that they were *multiplying* the wrong way. That involved the wrong use of sex, and with our fuller view of sex, it meant they would reproduce the wrong kinds of families, and ultimately the wrong type of world-civilization. It is clear why God had to judge the world. But this passage surfaces the same theological ideas we found in nakedness and shame.

Genesis 6 speaks of *fresh* as sex and family, and *fresh* as producing ultimately a civilization that was anti-Yahweh. These distinctions can be categorized as *narrow* and *broad* theological aspects of *fresh*. What was seen, therefore, in nakedness and shame, comes into sharper focus with the word 'flesh.' But understanding the relationship between these ideas and *flesh* is helpful as one approaches the New Testament. The former terms are rarely used, and 'fresh' becomes the main word used to describe man's sinful condition. The narrow/broad variation, as it is deve-

loped in the Old Testament, brings a Biblical grid to such passages as Galatians 5:19ff.

Instating the deeds of the flesh, Paul starts the list with sexual sin when he says, *sexual immorality, impurity, and sensuality*. Now we know why the Apostle would begin with that type of sin, and then progress to broader sins that affect all of man's activities. Therefore, fresh focuses man's sin in his misuse of the reproductive capacity which God has given him. That has broader reference to man's failure to build and carry out the mandate originality given in the garden. Moreover, these are the areas where his fresh needs to be covered with God's robe of righteousness. This brings us to the purpose of developing these ideas.

By refining the areas where man needs clothing, we can make better and more precise observations about the clothing Christ provides in baptism. In the previous study, we emphasized the more personal side of man's nakedness and shame. We could have developed the social dimensions, but that was left to be covered in our study of flesh. Hence, the concept of flesh, when understood in context of its Old Testament use, leads to important clarification of certain emphases in the New Testament that are tied directly to baptism. They could be called the social side of Christ's covering in baptism.

First, there is the family. A man is more sensitive about, defensive of, and quick to protect his family than anything else. Another way to put it is that he would cover, or clothe, them, before he would himself. He perceives their nakedness. But his family also reveals his fresh. A man's wife and children are images of himself (Gen. 5:1ff.). They expose him for what he really is, and herein is the explanation for why he is so defensive of them. He is defending himself. But specifically germane to our study, the place of the children in the covenant is understood in light of the Biblical-theological development of fresh.

The New Testament says that God claims the children of believers, without any explanation (Acts 2:39). But the New Testament was never meant to be read without the Old Testament. The writers of the New assume theological continuity in the minds of the audience, as did Peter at Pentecost. To him it was clear that man's seed (children) died in his state of nakedness and the fresh. When Adam sinned, his children died. The focal point of his fresh was his children. Thus, Peter, makes the focal point of Christ's salvation of the adults, the salvation of their children. To put it another way, in Adam their children were naked, but in Christ they have clothing. Galatians says we are clothed in baptism with Christ (3:27). The promise is always tied to the sacrament (Gen. 17:1ff; Gal. 3:27-29), so it is the place where one definitively, and officially, has God's clothing-claim put on his children. Then, his family is covered.

Second, there is work and productivity. Man is very sensitive to being criticized about his work, but we must understand productivity in God's terms. The emphasis of the New Testament is that man becomes productive for Christ, when he is converted. That is *normatively* viewed as taking place at baptism. Theologically, it is expressed in the statement, *as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ* (Gal. 3:27). Thus, when men are baptized, they receive new work-clothing. Paul uses the same word for *put on* in describing the "putting on" of the work of Christ in the sense of living righteously as a new man (Eph. 4:24). In his mind, there is to be continuity between the clothing received (put on) at baptism, and the clothing put on in obedience. Man's labor, therefore, must

become a work for Christ. When it does, he is clothed and not living in the flesh.

These observations about reproductivity and productivity, as they are endemic to the concept of fresh, sharpen our perception of the clothing received at baptism. That, in turn, should raise our view of the sacrament of baptism.

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Gary North

No. 13: Restitution and Impartiality

Men do not despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry. But if he be found, he shall restore seven fold; he shall give all the substance of his house (Prov. 6:30-31).

Theft is a crime against God and men. We cannot argue that a "crime against property" is ethically superior to a "crime against mankind," for property is simply "a bundle of rights of ownership," and these rights are possessed by men under God. A crime against property is therefore a crime against mankind. Theft transfers wealth to law-breakers and away from those who have not broken the law. It transfers wealth from those who have served consumers efficiently in a competitive market. It reduces the capital of those who have demonstrated their ability to meet the needs and wants of consumers at prices the consumers have been willing and able to pay. Theft therefore reduces the present wealth of individual victims and may reduce the future wealth of consumers who will not be equally well served by those who had benefited them before — the productive victims of theft who have been decapitalized by the thieves. Theft also increases everyone's uncertainty about his economic future, which in turn tends to raise the costs of protecting property, thereby lowering per capita wealth.

Another proverb announces: "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov. 30:8-9). Middle-class comfort is normally preferable to both poverty and great wealth, for both extremes involve temptations of sinning against God. Neither grinding poverty nor great wealth is generally beneficial to the majority of men.

The poor man in this example has succumbed to the temptation. He has stolen bread, a staple of life. He is not a professional thief. He was hungry, and he took bread to satisfy his hunger. Who can blame him?

God blames him. The law enforcement system blames him. He must pay "sevenfold" to the victim. Restitution is inescapable. Since he is poor, the extent of the restitution payment will bankrupt him; he has so little, that any extra expense disrupts his household. Nevertheless, he must pay up to "all the substance of his house."

We must understand that the details of this incident are not to be taken literally. The law of God requires double restitution for all theft (Ex. 22:4), except the theft and subsequent slaughter or sale of sheep (four-fold) and oxen (five-fold) (Ex. 22:1). Anyone familiar with biblical law knows that seven-fold restitution is a figurative term, like

the seven-fold judgment of God on anyone who might persecute Cain (Gen. 4:15), and Lamech's prideful boast of his ability to revenge himself 77-fold (Gen. 4:24), meaning eleven times greater than God's vengeance. Sometimes a number in the Bible is to be interpreted figuratively, not literally. The author of Proverbs knew that his audience would know the details of biblical law. What was his point in exaggerating?

Few poor men would really be bankrupted by double restitution for a loaf of bread. The point is, the economic burden of the restitution payment would be proportionately greater for him than for a rich man who would steal a loaf of bread. The required restitution payment has nothing to do with the criminal's ability to pay. The law does not play favorites. God is not a respecter of persons (II Sam. 14:14). Both rich and poor must make restitution. Income, whether of the thief or his victim, has nothing to do with the extent of restitution. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour" (Lev. 19:15). Restitution also has nothing to do with the victim's feelings about the criminal. The criminal's motivation is equally irrelevant. Rich or poor, hungry or fat, thieves must make restitution in terms of the value of the stolen property. The Bible condemns both *deeper-pocket jurisprudence* (deciding against the rich because they can afford the loss) and *shallow-pocket jurisprudence* (deciding in favor of the rich because they are powerful).

The author of Proverbs was warning the young man that if the Bible specifies punishment for a "trivial crime against property," how much more the punishment against adulterers, which is anything but trivial (w. 32-35). If a victim demands repayment from one whom he does not despise, will he allow his wife's seducer to go free? When biblical law is enforced, it will involve the death of the two adulterers (Lev. 20:10). Nothing less can assuage the wrath of the victimized husband. But his feelings are not the issue. His wife must die, too; the husband's feelings about her are irrelevant to the judicial outcome, one way or the other.

It is the predictability and impartiality of biblical law that are to undergird the social order. All those who break the law are subject to its penalties. This points to the final judgment. God does not "grade on a curve." All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). It may cost the guilty poor thief all that he owns to pay his debt to the victim; the debt must be paid. It will cost the guilty adulterer his life; the debt must be paid. It will cost every ethical rebel an eternity in hell; the debt must be paid. The point is clear: *the debt must be paid*. There is no escape, no appeal to "circumstances," no plea bargaining, and no suspended sentences. The law is rigorous, for the law's Author is rigorous.

All men are equally protected when biblical law is enforced. Rich men are defended from poverty-stricken thieves; poverty-stricken owners are defended from rich thieves. Economic uncertainty is reduced by the very certainty of the law's penalties. This benefits consumers and producers, who can meet together and make exchanges, confident that all parties will be protected by law from fraud and theft. It leads to greater output through a more extensive division of labor — a division of labor based on voluntary exchange and the protection of private property.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CALENDAR

by James B. Jordan

No. 18: Repetition, Variation, and Development

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease (Gen. 8:22).

There is an appointed time for everything; and there is a time for every activity under heaven . . . A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. (Eccl. 3:1,4).

Man's sin is defined as the desire to be as God, determining good and evil for himself. Since God is timeless, and exists in an "eternal now," man thinks of himself as deserving to live in the same kind of condition. Man rejects time, the succession of events, as a burden, and seeks to become eternal, timeless, and changeless.

Through the centuries Christian thought has not escaped the influence of such pagan ideas as these. How often one hears, even from supposedly competent theologians, that in the world to come we shall have the ability to be all places at one time, and experience all things at once; we shall be eternal. Apparently without realizing it, such people are really saying that in the next world we shall become divine: omnipresent and eternal.

Biblical Christianity does not allow for such a notion. Indeed, the very definition of a creature, as opposed to the Creator, is that the creature is "limited" by space and time. The creature can only be one place at a time, and time (the succession of moments) flows along at the same pace regardless of what he does. Rather than view this as a limitation, however, Biblical Christianity views this as the creaturely manifestation of the nature of God, the image of God. Man's creaturely infinity lies in the fact that he exists forever, with infinite possibilities of growth in the exploration of the character and creations of an infinite God. Similarly, man's creaturely power and knowledge approach the infinity of omnipotence and omniscience in the fact that they are cumulative; indeed, exponentially cumulative.

Time is not a bondage for man; rather, time is the very condition of freedom. Time provides opportunity, for at each moment of time a man has a choice, a fork in the road. He may choose to act responsibly or irresponsibly, wrongly or rightly, to do this or to do that; but time is the foundation of his choice. In a paradox, for orthodox Christian faith time is what is *predestinated* by God, yet time is the very foundation of human freedom of choice.

Paganism, however, does not rejoice in time, but views it as a limitation to be overcome. This *downgrading of time* may take the form of mysticism and escapism. Another form it takes is the ritualization of time, a ritualization designed to infuse the force of eternity into time and thus help divinize man. The observance of times and seasons in pagan cultures is for this purpose, and this notion of ritual has infected some parts of Christendom, particularly Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism.

Because in the Church the ritualization of time had come to be seen as part of a metaphysical scheme of salvation, drawing deifying and eternalizing forces into time to help move men up the scale of being, the Protestant Reformation rejected all ritualization of time and stressed that time is linear. Time never repeats, and there is no way to infuse eternity into time. Man the creature does not

develop into a god. Time is linear and therefore flat. Thus, the Reformers to a man rejected sabbath-keeping and did away with Christian festivals, in this sense,

At the same time, the Reformers recognized that the pattern of alternating work and rest, and the pattern of annual festivals, was valid. Thus Calvin, though denying that the Lord's Day was a sabbath, insisted on worship every seven days, and established three annual festivals in Geneva: Christmas, Easter; and Pentecost.

I have argued in the earlier essays in this series that the Reformers, though their instincts were proper, erred in two respects. First, they did not do justice to the rhythms or periodicities which are part of the first creation, in which we live. Generally speaking, it is true to say that the Reformers did not have a well developed doctrine of creation, and of creation ordinances. Second, they did not do justice to the sabbatical continuities between the Old and New Covenants. The Lord's Day should be kept as a sabbath, though we no longer keep a Sabbath Day.

Biblically speaking, the notion that history is linear and developmental is not in conflict with the idea of variations in times and seasons, nor with the idea of repetition. Indeed, God set up a ritual calendar for Israel in the Old Covenant, and if the sabbath day pattern continues to show us how to organize our New Covenant time into weeks, so also the occasional sabbaths show us how to organize the year.

The Biblical calendar was and is not for the purpose of overcoming time, but for instructional purposes. In Leviticus 23, the passage which sets out the sabbatical pattern, we are told in verse 3 that the sabbath day was to be a time

of holy convocation. The synagogue was established for this purpose of weekly prayer and instruction. Then, seven special sabbath days were set up, as part of the festival year: the first and seventh days of Unleavened Bread (vv.7,8), the day of Pentecost (v.21), the first day of the Seventh Month (v.24), the Day of Atonement (v.27), and the first and eighth days of the Feast of Tabernacles (vv.35,36).

Again we have to insist that if the weekly sabbath day pattern is still valid, the pattern of special festival sabbaths is also still valid, for the one follows from the other. The Puritan position, at this point, is simply untenable Biblically.

Variations in times and seasons manifest the diversity of the God Who is One and Three. To flatten out all time, or to allow only one kind of variation (work-rest), is rationalistic, and denies the richness of Biblical revelation.

Similarly, *repetition* is one of the most important tools of training, of indoctrination. The mere communication of information through preaching and teaching may satisfy the primacy of the intellect philosophy, but hardly does justice to a Biblical view of man, or to a Biblical view of pedagogy. The use of annual festivals, and of an organized church-year-pedagogy is not only warranted by specific Biblical example, but is also warranted by the Biblical view of man and of pedagogy.

In the future essays in this series, then, we shall explore the pedagogical significance of the ecclesiastical calendar God provided Israel in the Old Covenant, and how these patterns have been and can still be profitably used by the church of the New Covenant.

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