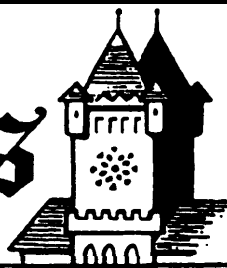


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STUDIES IN BAPTISM

by Ray 'R. Sutton

No. 19: Baptism and Circumcision IV

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you (Genesis 17:10-11). "

We have been studying continuities and **discontinuities** between circumcision and baptism. Up to this point we have primarily emphasized continuities. In this study we want to begin to probe some of the legitimate dissimilarities.

First, the most obvious discontinuity lies in the application of the Old Covenant initiatory sacrament to males only. Since the rite of baptism extends to both genders, several considerations are in order.

One, it should be remembered that there was a form of female circumcision in the Old Testament. An example of this is the reception of a warbride into the nation (**Deut. 21:10ff.**). For her to make the transition she must "shave her head, and pare her nails. And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in **thine** house, and bewail her father and mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife."

This is initiatory language. Shaving the head and paring the nails are a form of cutting back. They refer to circumcision. The Hebrew word for "pare" is the same word used for the "performing" of the covenant (**Deut. 4:13**). In particular, this has reference to the keeping of the ten commandments. In general this involves all the covenant, which consists of "performance" through circumcision.

From a **biblical/theological** framework, the hair of the woman is her glory as the beard of the man is his (**I Cor. 11**). To cut her hair is to remove the old glory. Moreover, the disrobing/robing language is also connected with initiation into the covenant. Her old clothing pointed to a previous culture/life. Divestiture precedes investiture as repentance comes before faith. In previous studies we saw that the initiatory rites were clothing rituals. This language in reference

to the warbride is another example of the process.

Thus, we conclude that there was a form of female circumcision in the Old Testament. This observation is made not to remove the discontinuity entirely. But we want to show that the discontinuity, at least, is not as great as some would want to make it.

Two, in circumcision the whole is sanctified by that which is done to part. Applied to the sexual organ, man's whole life was separated unto Yahweh. Similarly, in baptism, water is placed on part of the body, the head, for the whole. (In a later study, we will examine extensively the mode of baptism.) This is a positive leavening process— In the **Old Covenant** implicitly, but in the **New Covenant** explicitly (**Lk. 13:21**). In the **Old Covenant** the sign was placed on the organ of reproduction signifying that the **Old Covenant** way of expansion was through generation. But even in the rite of circumcision was the promise that salvation does not come naturally. Thus, in the **New Covenant**, the sign is applied to the head, and clearly portrays the effusive movement of salvation. It comes from above *onto* man — not out of his organ of reproduction. Basic continuity surrounds an obvious discontinuity.

Second, the strongest case for an absolute discontinuity between circumcision and baptism is made by John Gill, an eighteenth century **Calvinistic** Baptist. In summary, his argument points out that circumcision was not given to all **Old Covenant** believers. At the time of Abraham, we know, for example, that Melchizedek believed in Yahweh. He is a type of Christ (**Heb. 7**). Yet circumcision was not given to that family/group. Gill concludes that circumcision was messianic in character, pointing to the advent of *The Seed*. If one in the messianic line refused circumcision, he was rejecting the specific promise God had given to him. Therefore, it does not have a one to one correspondence to baptism. Baptism is not applied to one family line. Also, the coming of the messiah has nothing to do with one's personal seed.

Gill's observations take note of a legitimate Biblical discontinuity. Circumcision was messianic in character in that the Messiah would come through the physical seed of Abraham. But closer examination discovers that this discontinuity does not break the **covenantal** correspondence between circumcision and baptism.

One, it must be pointed out that the New covenant itself makes a connection between these sacraments. **We** have pointed out already that Christ's death is called circumcision and baptism (**Col. 2:11ff.**). The New covenant people are called the "seed" of Abraham (**Gal. 3:29**). **Thus**, one must be careful in extrapolating any discontinuity to the degree that an obvious New Testament confection is destroyed.

Two, the phenomenon of groups of believers who did not **recieve** the new sign of the covenant recurs in the New Covenant. Luke records an encounter between the Apostle Paul and the disciples of John (**Acts 19:1ff.**). They had not received Christian baptism. **Were** they believers in Christ? Certainly. But they lacked the sign of the covenant in a similar way the family of **Jethro**, the father-in-law of Moses who was definitely a believer in Yahweh, had not been circumcised. Again, the discontinuity is not as acute.

Three, the New Covenant refers to a connection between the seed of believers and the advent of Messiah. In this age, however, it is the second advent. Paul says, "notwithstanding she [the woman] shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (1 Tim. **2:15**).

The seed of a believer has something to do with the salvation of the woman. She is saved through the coming of her seed. If she rears them in the faith and not outside of it, neither she nor her seed will be cut off. **This** was the precise condition of circumcision. (**Gen. 17:14**).

Furthermore, the New Covenant states that the Ascended Christ will not return to the earth until the world is Christianized. The use of Psalm 110 in the New Testament is an **eschatological** guide which describes such a victorious return of Christ. Since it is only after every enemy has been defeated, we are to conclude that the Lord returns to a world under Christian government. It reaches this state, in part, through the process described by Paul in 1 Timothy **2:15**. Thus, there is a specific and general sense in which the second advent of Christ comes through the seed of New Covenant believers.

In conclusion, the **discontinuities** and continuities between the sacraments must be correctly placed. The primary discontinuity is that circumcision, and **even** the baptisms of the Old Covenant, explicitly symbolized death, and only implicitly pointed to **resurrection**. After the death/resurrection of Christ, baptism explicitly symbolized resurrection, and only implicitly signified death.

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Gary North

No. 19: Slack Hands and Empty Purses

*He **becometh** poor that **dealeth** with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich (Prov. 10:4).*

The Bible is quite clear about the chief cause of personal poverty. It is a person's unwillingness to work. The Book of Proverbs returns to this theme repeatedly. The cause-and-effect relationship between slack hands or folded hands and poverty is real, the Bible says. He who would avoid poverty must work diligently.

The Bible **does** not teach that poor people are always lazy. **The Book** of Ruth makes it plain that Ruth was a **righteous** woman, but she was poor. She had to **glean for a living**, indicating that she was extremely poor (Ruth 2). Gleaning was hard, low-paying work. **She** was faithful—so committed to her mother-in-law that **she** "was willing to leave her nation and journey to Israel to live. But it should be noted that Ruth did not remain poor. God delivered her into wealth through marriage to a generous wealthy man, Boaz (**Ruth 4**).

Similarly, the Book of Job teaches that poverty can come upon a man despite his high moral character. The mistake of three of Job's four "comforters" was in concluding that God must have been visiting judgment upon him because of some sin on his part (Job **4:7-9**). They understood the **usual** relationship between immorality and personal poverty; they failed to understand the sovereignty of God in His departure from this normal pattern in unusual circumstances. Again, it must be borne in mind that Job was subsequently delivered by God and elevated to an even higher position of wealth and status (**42:12**). He was not called upon to remain in poverty, although God made it clear to Job that it was well within God's sovereign right to cast Job down and keep him down, had it suited Him.

The slack hand reflects a moral weakness on the part of the lazy person. God calls men to work hard in order to exercise dominion. Man's work has been cursed since Adam's fall, but it is still man's moral responsibility to labor, to attempt to overcome progressively the external effects of the curse through moral behavior, which includes hard work. A man's **character** is reflected in his **attitude toward work**. A man who is unwilling to work long and hard is not to be regarded as a paragon of biblical virtue.

Slack hands produce poverty. The **cause-and-effect** relationship between slack hands and poverty mirrors the relationship between diligence and riches. This proverb appeals directly to men's **economic self-interest**. The moral virtue of hard work is an underlying theme in the Bible, but the appeal here (and in most other passages) is not to morality as such, but rather to the **economic fruits of morality**. It is the universal (or **nearly** universal) desire of men to improve their economic circumstances which is the underlying presupposition of **this** ● proverb. Only because there are God-created cause-and-effect relationships between morality and **hard** work, and between hard work and wealth, are large numbers of otherwise unconcerned and immoral men motivated

to **discipline themselves** by means of hard labor. Their production blesses themselves and their families, and it also blesses those who benefit through peaceful trade with them. Per capita wealth of many people is thereby increased.

in sharp contrast to the thesis of "liberation theology," God is not on the side of the poor as such. He is on the side of the *righteous*, including the righteous poor. Most of all, He is on the side of His own word, which sets forth the **moral and occupational** criteria for *escaping poverty*. Poverty is to be shunned, just as immorality is to be shunned. **Wealth** is a legitimate goal and reward for shunning immorality in one's occupation. More than any other "specified cause of poverty, the Bible singles out *morally dissipated living*, and its chief occupational manifestation is *slack hands*. "

The Hebrew word in this verse for "slack" is translated as "negligent" in the New American Standard Bible. The contrast is between *negligence* and *diligence*. It is not a contrast between manual labor and intellectual labor. Solomon, who compiled these proverbs (10:1), and who spoke 3,000 proverbs altogether (1 Ki. 10:32), was obviously not a manual laborer, nor did God or men expect him to be. His reputation as a wise judge was world renowned, even among kings (1 Ki. 4:34). This brought glory to God, for by upholding the law of God, a nation builds a **foundation** of long-term prosperity, and this in turn elevates God's reputation throughout the world (Deut. 4:5-8). Rendering godly judgment in any occupation is as important a job as manual labor.

Nevertheless, God has **called** most men throughout history to be manual laborers. Not until the advent of the later phases of the Industrial Revolution, early in the twentieth century, was the capital base of the northern Europe, the United States, and Japan able to sustain a majority of working people in occupations that did not require hard-physical labor. Until this **period**, the social division of labor between manual labor and intellectual labor had always been weighted heavily on the side of manual labor.

Output had always been low for most manual laborers because of the **lack of capital**, including intellectual and entrepreneurial capital. Per-capita productivity did not permit the **average** family to store up a quantity of surplus products **beyond** basic survival needs sufficient to **permit** **extensive** trade. Pre-industrial society **was** not sufficiently 'productive to permit large numbers of intellectual workers and professional tradesmen to exercise their callings. Low output per capita kept supplies of surplus goods low, so the division of labor was retarded.

Of course, we can also look at per capita productivity from the demand side. **Until** the **laws and ethic** of the West sanctioned non-manual, non-agricultural labor as a legitimate calling for the masses, and until the West's favorable outlook toward trade, **money-lending**, and entrepreneurship encouraged the

development of a large number of non-manual laborers, the per capita productivity of the masses remained low. Since most workers **could** afford to buy only simple tools and could sell into only minimally developed markets, only a few of them could increase their per capita productivity over the long haul. Until they had an opportunity to buy the *mass-produced, price-competitive consumer and capital goods and services* of urban, industrial civilization, they had only mere survival as their primary incentive to sacrifice present income **for the sake of increasing their capital base of tools and education**—the primary means of increasing **productivity** in a society already marked by long hours of **hard** work. In non-industrialized societies, once agricultural laborers have produced a sufficient number of goods to insure their survival for one more season, they generally reduce their work hours and their rate of savings, thereby reducing their ability to trade with non-agricultural workers.

It was the **so-called** "Protestant ethic" of the West which enabled society to build up its capital base and simultaneously encourage the development of an extensive division of labor. The effects of this new world-and-life view were comprehensive. The entire **civilization of Protestantism** was transformed. This is what the Bible teaches men to expect. A shift in a civilization's theology has implications far beyond the confines of the sanctuary and the study. (This is why the continuing debate between "liberation theologians" and Christian **reconstructionists** is **more** than a mere quibbling over the interpretation of Bible verses.)

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CALENDAR

by James B. Jordan

No. 24: The Calendar Before Sinai, Part III

And He said, 'Returning I will return to you at the time of life, and behold, there will be a son for Sarah your wife' (Genesis 18:10). Is anything too hard for YHWH? At the appointed [festival?] time I shall return to you, at the time of life, and for Sarah there shall be a son (18:14).

In No. 22 of this series, we pointed out that the Hebrew term *mo'ed*, translated "appointed time," is not used for agricultural seasons, but is used for appointed annual festivals. The congregation which meets for these festivals is also called *mo'ed*. There are a few other "appointed times" in Scripture, where the term *mo'ed* is used for an appointment between two persons (e.g., Josh.8:14; 1 Sam.20:35; 2 Sam.20:5).

Before looking into the meaning in Genesis 18:14 and its fulfillment in Genesis 21:2, we should note a parallel occasion in the history of Elisha. According to 2 Kings 4:16,17, the prophet told the **Shunammite** woman, "At the appointed time (*mo'ed*), at the time of life, you will be holding a son." We are then told that "she bore a son, at that appointed time, at the time of

life, as Elisha told her." The reader can consult both passages for himself, and find that both Sarah and the Shunammite were standing in the doorway when the prophecies were made (doorways signify the place of birth). Both sons died and were raised to life again (Isaac in a type; the Shunammite's literally). Both son's deaths were types of the death of the Messiah (Isaac's as a sacrifice; the Shunammite's in that he died from a head wound, the serpent's punishment vicariously endured).

What kind of *mo'ed* is this? Does it refer simply to God's appointment of a time for a birth, or does it refer to an already existing festival time, with which the birth will be coincidental? In the case of the Shunammite, we can be certain that the birth would coincide, at least roughly, with Passover. This is because the expression "at the time of life" refers to the Spring. We have seen that the expression "the cutting off of the year" refers to Autumn (No. 23 in this series). "The time of life" is rendered "the reviving season" in the New Berkeley Version, "when the time revives" in the New American Standard Version, and "the time of reviving" by Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon. The word for "life" is the ordinary Hebrew word for life, *hai*.

Thus, the birth of the Shunammite's son, whose death and resurrection would form part of Elisha's prophetic ministry to Israel, came at the time of the Passover. Passover was Israel's birthday, when they had come out of the bloodied doorways of their houses in Egypt, out of that defiled womb into a new life in the kingdom of God. That birth was a resurrection from the dead, made possible by the blood of the slain substitute which marked the doorways. And if God's bright noontime Day of the Lord kills the son thus born (1 Ki.4:20), those who repose faith in God's prophet can see the son restored to life.

How about Abraham and Sarah? Was there already a Spring worship festival? Did they worship God as the one who does not let the world decline to destruction, but revives it anew each year (Gen.8:21-22)? God had promised Noah that He would never again let the sinfulness of man's youth mature to full age, bringing about the destruction of the world. Thus, the alternation of the seasons was a sign that new life would always follow decline, so that declination would never lead to the destruction of the whole world again.

Possibly there was such a worship festival at the "time of reviving." On the other hand, Genesis 18:10 says that the child will be born in Spring, and then in v.14, when God reiterates His promise, He speaks of the Spring as the appointed time. Thus, in context, we are perhaps safer to view the appointed time as the

time already set up in the Spring promise of v.10.

Theologically, we should look at what events are connected with the Spring-prophecy and Spring-birth of the seed-son. Preeminently, we find that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah takes place the day after this promise (Gen.18-19), so that this destruction is in the Spring. When the two witness-angels arrive in Sodom, Lot prepares unleavened bread for them (19:3); no particular reason for this is given, but it surely forms a prophetic type. Lot's deliverance is an exodus (one of several in the book of Genesis; cf. ch.12, 20, 26, 31). Lot's failure to go straight up to the mountain (19:17), and his preference for Canaanite city life (19:20), are a prophecy to Israel, which they did not heed when they refused to take the promised land and pined for the leeks and onions of Egypt. Lot wound up living in a cave, a place of death (Gen.23), returning to the dust (Gen.3:19); and his daughters committed the sin of Ham, disrobing their drunken father of his glory and honor, and taking governance into their own hands. Thus the women, who had been righteous, fell and became Hamites, and their descendants simply became extensions of Sodom and Gomorrah (Zeph.2:8,9).

The birth-resurrection-deliverance of the righteous is simultaneously the destruction of the wicked. So it was at the Red Sea, and so it was in the first century (i.e., the correlation of Pentecost and Holocaust-70 A.D.).

Prophetically, this event helps color and fill out our understanding of the Exodus as a birth from the dead. This is particularly obvious when we realize that Isaac was born when Abraham was living in Gerar, which was not part of the land of Canaan (Gen.10:19), but which was controlled by the Philistines, who were descendants of Egypt (Gen.10:13,14). Thus, the birth of the seed-son in Egypt, from the dead womb, in the Spring, and his deliverance out of Egypt unto Mount Moriah (Gen.22), the site of Jerusalem, where he worshipped God—all this would be a prophetic oracle of hope to Israel as they endured persecution in the land of Egypt, as they looked to YHWH for deliverance.

Calendrically, this simply shows us once again that God has established his world and its seasons as part of His overall communication to man. To ignore annual religious events, to try to flatten out the year as if the seasons had no meaning, as in Puritanism, reflects a basic failure to understand the Scripture and the creation. Further, those who wish to argue that seasonal activities are only part of the Mosaic typology have been refuted by this and the preceding two essays, for clearly God's calendar was in effect before Sinai, and it is still something we must reckon with today.

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