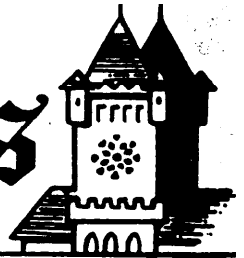


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STUDIES IN BAPTISM

by Ray R. Sutton

No. 20: God's Name, Baptism's System

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20).

At the beginning of Cornelius Van Til's *Survey of Christian Epistemology*, two ways of acquiring knowledge are outlined. One view says man learns by knowing the *parts*. The other stipulates that knowledge comes by comprehending the *who/e*. The former, Van Til calls a correspondence theory of knowledge. The latter, he describes as the coherence theory. One of Van Til's greatest contributions has been the recognition that Trinitarianism encompasses both. The God, who is one and many, imparts knowledge (revelation) that is organic and particular.

This Trinitarian formula is stated in the verse under consideration. The name of God, singular, is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, plural. Since this formula is applied at baptism, it sets up the *system of baptism*.

What do we mean by *system of baptism*. One must not think of baptism as merely a study of immersion versus sprinkling, or "believer's" baptism versus covenantal baptism. These are important issues, but there is a systematic interpretation of the Bible that inescapably informs one's view of the sacraments. This explains why the method of interpreting Scripture, hermeneutics, is so critical. It creates a systematic approach to the Bible, as a whole, that effects how one comes to the sacraments.

The reverse is true also. One's view of the sacraments represents his system. Of course, everyone claims that his interpretation deals the most fairly with Scripture, but each interpretation must be checked and rechecked with the Bible. Nevertheless, the sacraments point to a larger system.

A few years ago, some friends of mine started reading the theology of American Puritanism. They liked many of the particular loci of Reformed theology. They liked the Puritan emphases on Sovereignty, law, and dominion. But they never came to grips with the basic system. Then they discovered that this system was inextricably bound to a particular view of the

sacraments and church.

Overnight, they completely reversed their directions. The law, dominion, and the Sovereignty of God were quickly discarded. The covenantal interpretation of the sacraments signalled to them a larger system. Whatever the system, they were presuppositionally committed to a certain view of the sacrament. They were not about to change. Thus, their commitment to a particular position on the sacraments determined their complete theological direction, and we see why most churches will allow someone to believe almost anything, except in the area of the sacraments. One's interpretation of *them* sets up a structure for approaching all of the Bible.

Although this situation illustrates the relationship between one's system of theology and the sacraments, we must rest our case on the Name of God. It is the systematic framework on which the sacrament of baptism stands. We must allow it to determine our theological system and view of the doctrine of baptism. Thus, God's Name should be *the* check and balance on our views. If our interpretations do not square with the Triune Name of God, we know that this contradiction will drive our entire understanding of Scripture askew.

Therefore, this essay, along with the ones to follow, begins a study of the Biblical formula attached to baptism. In the end, we want to allow the doctrine of the Trinity to establish the system of baptism. In previous essays, we have noted that there are essentially three systems of theology—Nominalism, Realism, and Covenantalism. Each has many variations, and all religion can basically be categorized under these heads. For the moment, however, we start this series with an application of the Trinity to baptism.

First, the Name of God is three and one—individual and collective. He is personal, and exhaustive personalness involves a family of three persons. Thus, the Name of God is a covenantal *family*. The precise language is "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

One of the great debates in the church concerns the *recipients* of baptism. The Nominalist say that baptism is applied to the individual and not to his family. The Realists say that the sacrament is applied to the group, i.e. the "nations" (see verse 19). Covenant-

tal theology says both the individual and the group should receive baptism. Since the name of the Trinitarian family is received in baptism, the mirror of this practice is the placement of the sign on the household (Acts 16:33). This interpretation is confirmed by two arguments from Scripture.

One, beginning with the immediate context, we know that more than the individual is implied. The text says the "nations" are to be baptized. We have previously pointed out the discrepancy between the gender of the noun "nations," and the gender of its antecedent, "them" (see No. 1 of this series). The best interpretation of this difference is that the "nations" are not to be forceably brought under the Gospel. Rather, the "nations" are converted family by family. Nevertheless, baptism is applied to a collective category, as well as, the individual.

Two, man as a *family* was created in the image of God. In Genesis we read, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5:1-3).

First, we see that the name of man and woman was called by the man's name, Adam. Gender, per se, is not in God, and that is not the point. The parents, together with their offspring, reflect His image. Second, Adam's recreative productivity is described in the same language as God's creative activity. There is direct parallel between the description of God's creation and Adam's offspring. Therefore, the image of God is not in the individual only. It is in the man's family, which of course includes the individual.

In concision, the Trinitarian formula settles the question, "who is to receive baptism?" When students of the Bible let God's Name control their interpretation of the sacraments, there is no difficulty in seeing why infants are to be brought under the covenant. In our next study, we will look at more aspects of the Trinitarian formula, and their effect on the subject of Baptism.

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Gaty North

No. 20: Harvesting in Due Season

He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame (Prov.10:5).

Timing is practically everything. This is a continuing message in the Bible. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Eccl.3:1). An overriding concern of the godly man should be his lack of time. The strength of youth is not to be wasted. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not,

nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain" (Eccl.12:1-2). Jesus' words reflect this same concern: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4).

Solomon does not say that sleeping is wrong. What he says is that *sleeping during the harvest time* is wrong. The sleeper has failed to understand the relationship between *timing and success*. He has assumed that he can rest at his discretion. The Bible says no. People are to work for six days; they are to rest on the seventh (Ex. 20:10). The sabbath rest comes at the end of time when the ethical battles of life are over. We celebrate the sabbath before the final day of judgment because we honor ritually what God has promised definitively. But Paul's image of the athletic event, especially the race, points to the necessity of running fast and hard while the race is in progress (1 Cor. 19:24; Phil. 3:14; see also Heb. 12:1).

The image of the harvest was used by Jesus to motivate His disciples: "Thus saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into the harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38). The wealth potential of the harvest is enormous. It is so great that the few harvesters "available to do the work are insufficient, compared to the extent of the crop. In other words, the value of the laborer's output is high because of the extensive crop. But time is short. The burden on the existing harvesters is very heavy, not because there is an insufficient potential return on their labor, but the opposite: there is a huge potential return, but also *huge potential waste* if the crop is not gathered in due season.

This verse testifies to the existence of *rhythms* in life. A man must pace himself according to the conditions of the market. No successful runner runs equally fast throughout a long race, irrespective of the conditions of the course the distance remaining, his energy reserves, and the speed of his competitors. Similarly, the farmer must pace himself in terms of the seasons. There are times during the year when the pay-off for hard labor is relatively low. There are times to sit and sharpen scythes, and there are times for working intensely from dawn to dusk, in order to take advantage of the brief period of the harvest. A dull scythe will wait another day in the dead of winter; in due season, the harvest will not. Whatever is not harvested on time will rot.

The imagery of the harvest points to an "all or nothing" situation. It comes once a year. All the work and capital that has been invested in order to produce a crop is "on the line" during the harvest season. *The labor theory of value is a myth. So is any cost-of-production theory.* Just because the labor or capital inputs were valuable at the time of planting in no way guarantees a profitable return on the investment. The unharvested crop is worth only what mulch is worth,

no matter how much capital and labor was invested at the planting. The person who indulges himself and rests during the harvest throws away the potential value of the crop. If he sleeps, then he has placed a *very high price tag on his slumber-not* the value of the capital and labor over time which he invested (which is gone whether he sleeps or not), but *the value of the crop*. He has calculated foolishly, and he brings shame on his father, who is expected to have instructed him in wisdom.

Maximum production is achieved by proper pacing. The person who treats the whole year as if it were the harvest will deplete his resources without gaining a continually high return on his investment. He will waste his emotional and physical reserves, as well as his stock of capital. Life does not offer equally high rates of return every day. What is important is *tots/performance over an entire life span*. There is a sort of "average rate of return" for an entire life. This is what men are responsible for.

The man who neglects the harvest is a fool. His investments' rate of return is totally dependent on his ability and willingness to harvest his crop in due season. The higher the value of the harvested crop, the higher his average rate of return on his investments over the whole year. If he fails to gather the crop during the harvest season, his total rate of return drops to zero and so does his average rate of return. If the value of the harvest is zero then the value of the investment is also zero. This is an agricultural application of the universally applicable economic doctrine of "sunk costs." In the ground the present value of the seeds, the fertilizer, and the worn-out equipment is utterly dependent on the *expected future value* of the crop. If the crop cannot be harvested, then the invested resources are of zero value. This investment is required if there is to be a harvest, but once in the ground it is gone.

An analogy is the student who works hard throughout the year, but who sleeps through the final exam. There are some schools (certain law schools, for example) that do not allow first-year students to make up exams, even if they get sick. The function of such a rule is to serve as a screening device to reduce the supply of future lawyers, not simply a motivation device for the student. The student who fails the exam, or worse, who sleeps through it, has just lost a semester's tuition payments, and he may have lost his opportunity to return again for the next semester. The failing grade is awarded irrespective of the amount of effort which the student put into his preparation for the exam, however important his preparation might have been, had he not slept through the exam. But the analogy of the harvest is even more stark, for the sleeping student at least retains some of the information he learned, even if he fails the final exam. The sleeping harvester has nothing left except perhaps some written receipts for labor and capital expended in a missed opportunity.

Once the harvest season is over, the formerly

sleepy harvester can do nothing to reap his return. This, of course, is analogous to the sleep of death. There is an irreversible aspect of time: ". . . it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Eastern religions often teach the doctrine of reincarnation, a theology of nearly infinite opportunities over nearly eternal cyclical time. But the Bible teaches the doctrine of *linear time*. A lost harvest is forever lost. A lost life is forever lost. There is "only one life per customer."

This explicitly Christian perspective concerning time is what has made the West so industrious and hard-working. *The concept of linear time made possible the concept of economic development*. Prior to the Protestant Reformation, and especially the Puritans, neither theologians nor social philosophers, East or West, believed that long-term economic growth was possible. Long-term economic growth was not characteristic of Western culture before Christianity, and the rapid economic growth of modern times began in Protestant Britain and spread to Protestant America. It is still an imported phenomenon in pagan Third World nations, made possible initially by an alien imported idea and imported capital.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CALENDAR

by James B. Jordan

No. 25: The Calendar at Sinai

On the third new moon after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on this day they came into the wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 19:1).

A New Creation

Here we find that Israel arrived "on the third new moon," as the text reads literally in Hebrew, at Mt. Sinai. Since they had departed Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month (Ex. 12), this can only mean that they arrived at Sinai *seven* weeks later. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that this arrival occurred on the first day of the week. According to 19:2, they pitched camp on that first day.

Then, on the morning of the *second* day, Moses went up to God, and God told him He was going to make covenant with Israel. Moses then came down from the mountain and told the people, who rejoiced to have the LORD as their God (19:2-8a).

On the *third* day, Moses returned up the mountain to God, and told Him what the people had affirmed. God told him that He would speak to Israel from the cloud of glory. Moses then returned and told this to the people (19:8 b-9).

On the *fourth* day Moses returned to hear what God had to say next, and God told him to tell the people to prepare themselves to receive the covenant on the third day thereafter, which would be the *sixth* day of the week (19:10-15). Adam was created in covenant with God on the sixth day of creation week, and God

recreated humanity in covenant with Himself on this sixth day of the week. This re-creation was followed by sabbath worship with God on the seventh day (Ex. 24:4-11).

The Third Day

Why is the sixth day, the day of re-creation, called by God the "third" day? To understand this we need to have before us certain teachings of the book of Genesis, which would have been known to Israel when they arrived at Sinai.

The first recreation of the world came at the Flood, which ended 1657 years after the creation (1657 = 33 Jubilees of 50 years each + 7 years).¹ The Flood was a judgment upon man's evil at its point of eschatological culmination. After the Flood, on the basis of a comprehensive sacrifice of every clean animal and bird, God determined never again to permit man's evil to mature from youth to full age (Gen. 8:21). God thus determined to intervene in the middle of history with a judgment and resurrection, rather than wait until the end.

This mid-history or mid-week judgment is the judgment of the third day. Man, sinful from his youth, is redeemed before his evil can ripen to maturity. In the book of Genesis, we are presented initially with the theme of the *replacement of the firstborn*. To give some, though not all possible examples: Seth replaced Cain; Abram the Eberite replaced Chedorlaomer the Elamite (Gen. 10:22-24; 14:1-15:21); Isaac replaced Ishmael; Jacob replaced Esau.

Then, in the history of Joseph, we are given the additional theme of the *redemption of the firstborn* by the

younger son. The firstborn sons will not be separated this time; rather, they will be redeemed. Joseph was not the youngest of Jacob's children, but he was the one born on the other side of the removal of shame and the opening of the barren womb.² The four elder sons lost their positions through sin (Gen. 34; 35:22; 37:26).

The sufferings of Joseph on the behalf of his brethren form a picture of the future sufferings of the Second Adam on behalf of those in union with the First Adam (Gen. 45:5-8). The theme of the third day judgment/resurrection is highlighted in Genesis 40, wherein the baker and cupbearer are dealt with on the third day, and in Genesis 41:1, wherein Joseph is elevated from prison in the third year.

Moreover, Israel would have known that it was on the third day that Isaac was figuratively sacrificed for the sins of the world, and received back to life again (Gen. 22:4). They would have known that Simeon and Levi sinfully misapplied the judgment principle in falling upon the helpless Shechemites on the third day (Gen. 34:25). They would have remembered that Joseph elevated his brothers from prison on the third day (Gen. 42:18).

With this as background, Israel at Sinai could look upon God's visiting them on the third day as a token of judgment and resurrection.

(We shall continue this study in the third day pattern in the next installment in this series.)

1. This kind of Providential coincidence in numerology is quite common in Genesis, as U. Cassuto's commentary on chapters 5 and 11 of that book point out. Cassuto, Genesis (Jerusalem: Magnes Press).

2. Gen. 30:22-24. The removal of "reproach" or shame is the same as circumcision (Josh. 5:9), and the child born on the other side of it is the seed of the Spirit (Gen. 17). Leah had been bearing children for six years at this point, and the LORD had closed up her womb for a period (Gen. 29:35). Thus, Joseph was probably older than Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah. Theologically, though, he was the youngest.