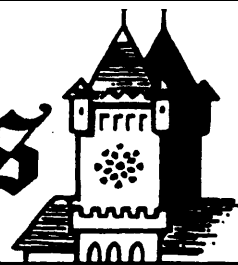


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LITURGICAL NOTES

by James B. Jordan

No. 1: A Liturgy of Malediction

As the Church in America begins to recover a vision of her privilege before Her Divine Lord, she is beginning to take formal public worship more seriously. Liturgical renewal is in the air, not only in apostate (liberal) circles, but among faithful Christians as well.

Because we have received numerous requests, we shall provide in this space samples of various liturgical forms which we either use or have developed (using the resources of Scripture and Church history) here at Westminster Presbyterian Church. (Westminster Presbyterian Church sponsors Geneva Divinity School and *The Geneva Papers*.) This month we present a Liturgy of Malediction.

Malediction is the opposite of benediction, and means "curse." In the Book of Revelation, "seven stars" are seen in the right hand of the enthroned Jesus Christ (1:16,17), and these are identified as the "angels of the seven churches" (1:20). Since the letters are addressed to these angels (2:1, 8, 12, etc.), the angels clearly are rulers in the Church on earth. Probably each was the presiding elder (later called "bishop") for all the congregations in his city, according to the pattern set out in Exodus 18:21.

This unmistakably sets up the theology of the Book of Revelation. Sadly, the point is almost universally missed, and it is assumed that the word "angel" as used in the remainder of the book has reference only to heavenly, spiritual beings. We have to remember, however, that the Christian church, particularly during sacramental public worship, is "in the heavenlies" (Eph. 2:6; Heb. 12:22-24). Thus, John's being caught up to heaven on the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10; 4:1) is at least analogous to the position of the Church during worship each Lord's Day.

The Book of Revelation as a whole is organized as a worship service, and is a model for us. Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy will be done *on earth as it is in heaven*." Thus, the heavenly model is to be reproduced on earth. In light of this, the seven angels who sound trumpets in Rev. 8 are to be connected with the proclamations of the angels (officers) of the seven churches. Either what is pictured is the actual work of Church officers, or else it is the heavenly model which earthly Church officers are to emulate. Either way, it is of immediate practical import for the Church.

It is the Church which binds and looses on earth, and the Book of Revelation shows how she is to do so: by proclamation and prayer. She is only to bind on earth what she knows has been bound in heaven, but concerning that there is no mystery, for she has been given the Word of God, the Bible, to show her how to act (Matt. 16:17-19).

As various agencies of state and federal government bring attacks against the Church, church officers need to hold formal services of malediction to call down the curse of

God upon those persecuting His bride. Recently, the elders at Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) were forced to excommunicate a woman who had been a teacher in the church-run Christian school. At that time, she resigned her employment with the school. Later, she formed a conspiracy with a couple of other excommunicated persons and appealed to the Texas Employment Commission for unemployment compensation in connection with her employment at the WPC school. This was a deliberate attempt to get WPC engaged in controversy with the state. The state does not have any jurisdiction over the Church at all, for the Church is established by Christ, not by the state. This is particularly the case concerning hiring and firing practices of the Church, since employment by the Church is determined by God's office-bearers, and entails spiritual considerations which the state has no right to judge.

Initially, it appeared as if the state were summoning the Church to a hearing. The only kind of response the Church can make in such a situation is to go before the state and explain that the state has no jurisdiction, and that the Church cannot be summoned. To do anything else would be to grant jurisdiction over God's Word to man, and sinful man at that. It appeared as if a hearing and bitter conflict might be brewing.

Before the hearing, a special service was held to ask God to confound the wicked efforts of the conspirators. After the reading of several passages of Scripture (2 Chronicles 26:1-23; Acts 4:1-31; Psalm 59), interspersed with the singing of several appropriate psalms (Ps. 2, 72, 79, 80, 83, 94), the following form was used:

Presiding Elder: "Dearly Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ has assured us that His Church is built upon Himself, the Rock, and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. To His Church He has committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven, saying 'whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.'

"In the Book of Revelation, the office-bearers of the Church are called the angels of the churches, and in the eighth chapter of that Book, these office-bearers are shown blowing the trumpets of the Word of God. As the office-bearers proclaim the Word of God, signified by these trumpets, and as the people of God pray for salvation, signified by incense that ascends to heaven, God is faithful and pours out fiery wrath upon His and their enemies upon the earth.

"Tonight we bring before you the names of _____, who have attacked the Church of Jesus Christ. We ask you to join with us in praying that God will pour out His wrath upon them, and upon all in alliance with them in this sinful act. When I have prayed God to deal with them, I shall ask the other elders to join me in solemn Amen, and then I shall ask the congregation to join with us in solemn Amen. Let us pray.

(praying) "Almighty and Most Terrible God, Judge of all

men living and dead, we bring before you _____ (here name the persons being cursed), who have brought an attack upon the integrity of Your holy government on the earth. We as Your anointed office-bearers now ask that You place Your especial curse upon these people, and upon all in alliance with them. We ask You to pour out the fire of Your wrath upon them, and destroy them, that Your Church may be left in peace, and our time free to pursue the advancement of Your Kingdom. We ask that You visibly and swiftly vindicate the government of Your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

(addressing the other elders) "Elders _____ (here say the names of the elders), do you join with me in invoking the wrath of God upon these people? If so, answer Amen."

Elders: "Amen."

Presiding Elder: "Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you join with us in asking God to visit His wrath upon these people? If so, answer Amen."

Congregation: "Amen."

The next day, when the hearing was held, representatives of the Church attended, explaining that the Church was not under the jurisdiction of the Texas Employment Commission, and that our appearance should be regarded as a "special appearance," and a courtesy. The Texas Employment Commission agreed, and stated that the Church is not under its jurisdiction. The enemies of the Church were put to confusion.

We dare not expect that every situation will work out as easily, but we should confidently ask our God to fight for us in these and like battles.

STUDIES IN BAPTISM

by Ray R. Sutton

No. 21: 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).

In the first study of this series, we began to develop a system of baptism from the Name of God. After several preliminary comments, pointing out the fact that sacraments convey systems of theology, we showed one's doctrine should square with God's Name. Then we developed the first implication growing out of the Trinity

To restate the first implication: Since the image of God is man, *male and female*, the domestic family is a reflection of Him. This comports with the Trinity which is a family. Families are created in the image of God, and families must be recreated and claimed in the image of God. Therefore, baptism of the whole family is consistent with the Name of God. If we begin with God's Name, we formulate an exact approximation of the system of baptism. Moreover, we see the rationale for household baptisms found on numerous occasions in Scripture (Acts 16). Having summarily restated the first implication, we are ready to move on.

Second, the name we are baptized with cannot be *separated, but distinguished*. Van Til makes this point time and again in his writings. God is one and three. The threeness of the Trinity is one so that the persons can be distinguished without being separated. Thus, even in their threeness, they are one.

Analogies attempting to capture non separation, but distinction, usually break down. Take the H₂O analogy as an example. H₂O can become three different forms — solid, liquid, and gas. In each case, however, H₂O takes a different mode. This is not so with God. He is all three while still being one. Thus, we pray to one God, not three different modalities. The human mind cannot fully comprehend the Trinity, but *understanding does not determine reality*. Such a

premise is rationalism, and reduces God's word to our own comprehension. God is not subject to the mind of man. Rather, God says He is a certain way, and we must operate on the basis of His Word, whether we understand it or not. If the Bible teaches that the persons of God are not separated, but distinguished, we must believe it.

When Scripture says to baptize in the "Name (singular) of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," it is clear that God is one and three at the same time. Having established this aspect of Trinitarian doctrine, we can begin to explore its significance for the doctrine of baptism.

The foremost issue at this point is the relationship between sign and thing signified. Both sacraments are called Christ. At baptism, Christ is put on (Eph. 4:22-24). At the Lord's Supper, Christ is eaten (John 6). For centuries the church has been divided over the sense in which Christ is the sacraments. Is He *really* the sacrament, is He only *nominally* (meaning in name only) the sacrament, or is there some other explanation of the relation between sign and symbol?

The "other" explanation is found in the Trinitarian formula which distinguishes, but does not separate. Christ, therefore, is to be distinguished from the sign. He is not physically equivalent to it. He does not change into water, in baptism, or wine and bread, in communion. Such a position has two problems. One, as the Reformers brilliantly observed, the failure to distinguish eliminates the signs completely. Bread, for example, that is not bread, but actually Christ, no longer functions as a sign. It is the real thing. Thus, when the elements are changed into reality, they obviously cease to be signs.

Two, the failure to distinguish sign from reality confuses God with the physical world. Although we do not want to *dichotomize* the natural world and Christ, to the extent that we cannot conceive of His involvement with the world, neither do we want to mix them such that lines of distinction are obliterated. Such a position would eventually remove the need for redemption. And the natural world would take predominance over redemption. "Natural law" in contradistinction to God's commandment/law would take priority. The physical world would be equal to God. And the end result would be a pantheistic, evolutionary conception with God as an extension of the "natural" mind of man.

This has been the case with the Roman Catholic church. Beginning with the 11th century, the church started to confuse nature and grace. The doctrine of transubstantiation replaced the Augustinian view of the Trinity. Instead of the proper *distinction* between Christ and the sacrament being maintained, it was taught that the sacrament changes, in substance, to Christ. What this really meant was that the natural world becomes God. This evolutionary doctrine has emerged in Roman Catholic scholars such as Hans Kung, and Pierre Teilhard de Chard in. They have taken the doctrine of transubstantiation to its necessary conclusions.

On the other hand, we must be careful not to *separate* Christ from the sacrament. Separating Christ from the sacrament results in two serious errors. One, the sacraments are dissociated from the written Word as a source of life. Their observance and the life that extends from them cease to be the high water marks of covenant life.

Putting it another way, they really fail to be the signs and seals of the covenant. Historically, the church has tended to substitute other practices for the sacraments. It has been said that the sacraments are static, but irrational activity is dynamic. With this view we also find, of course, that irrationalism is needed to curb rationalism. Thus, revivalism, mysticism, and forms of confirmationism (second filling movements etc.) are substituted for sacramental ethical living. These attempts have placed the dynamic of the Christian life outside the sacraments. The Bible, however, says that life begins with baptism into Christ, and centers around

communion with Him. These other substitutes should not be placed above the Word of God. Since Scripture says that life is sacramental, we cannot make it mystical.

This raises the second problem associated with separating Christ from the sacrament. It concerns the reduction of the sacrament to the act itself. By this I mean the sacraments become mere symbolic ordinances that are not connected with life.

Christ is present (non physical sense) in the sacraments, and not to be separated from them. Thus, because of His presence, the sacrament cannot be reduced to the act itself. The sacraments, in other words, are dynamic. They demand life and obedience. If one does not live the life which is expected to accompany the signs and seals, Christ has been separated from them. We are told in Scripture that Christ's judgment falls on the one who does not live consistent with the sacrament (1 Cor. 11:25ff.). This makes the sacraments dynamic and associated with life. The tendency for protestants to reject this kind of Biblical sacramentalism, creates the very problem they are concerned with. They do not want "deadness" in the church. But connecting life with other practices not tied to the sacraments kills the church quicker than anything. It produces an irrational deadness. The church becomes a passive blob seeking its own stimulation. To the contrary, Christ should not be divorced from the sacraments. The Word of God creates an inviolable union. And by joining faith and life to practice, obedience is not abstracted.

In conclusion, the Trinitarian Name of God lays down a controlling concept helpful to the system of baptism. As the Godhead is distinguished/not separated, so Christ must be distinguished/not separated from the sacraments. God's Name simultaneously avoids the problems of not distinguishing and separating Christ from the sacraments.

AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Gary North

No. 21: Visible Blessings

Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked (Prov.10:6).

The second half of this verse is obscure. The King James translators contrast violence and blessings: both are visible. Violence "covers" the mouth of the wicked, while blessings cover the head of the righteous. But the New American Standard Bible translates the Hebrew word translated "covet" as "conceals." The New English Bible translates it as "choked."

The meaning of the verb is debated, but there can be no doubt that the violence is associated with the mouth of the wicked, whether his mouth conceals it, is choked by it, or is covered by it. The mouth is the place where violence lurks. The schemes of the wicked man are set forth verbally. Eventually, his plans become plain. The tongue is compared to an untamed beast which requires a bridle to control it (Ps. 39:1; James 1:26; 3:2). The righteous man will control his tongue; the unrighteous man cannot. It eventually reveals what he is.

The righteous man can be identified, this proverb tells us. He is known by the blessings on his head. Obviously, there is some literary reference here. Unless someone goes around wearing a crown of jurisdiction —and only kings, bishops, military officers, and beauty queens are identified in this way — blessings are not literally worn on a person's head. What is the frame of reference? Most likely, it is the oil of anointing. The words of Psalm 23 come to mind: "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (5 b). It is God who anoints David. This anointing is visible to his enemies,

The contrast between the righteous man and the unrighteous, between the wise man and the fool, is the underlying theme of Proverbs. There is a way of wisdom and a way of destruction. Those who travel down each path are eventually distinguishable, in time and on earth, according to Proverbs. What lies in the heart of a man eventually manifests itself. But this does not answer the question: Why visible blessings? Why not simply the differences in personal behavior?

The garden of Eden was to have served as a training ground for man. It was a place where Adam could have developed competent judgment. His skills as a keeper (protector) and dresser (gardener) of the garden were to have become visible. Eventually, he was supposed to have taken these judgmental skills into the world outside the garden, in order to subdue it to the glory of God.

The dominion covenant involves visible blessings. The beauty of the garden was to have been aesthetically more pleasing to man and God than the natural beauty of the untamed earth. A man's success in exercising dominion was originally planned by God to have outward manifestations. The very process of developing godly judgment was a process of understanding and applying God's standards to every area of life. Once applied, these standards were to have been visible, analogous to the *visible goodness of the creation* in response to God's perfect application of His own standards of performance. This is why He could evaluate his own workmanship and pronounce it "very good." (Gen. 1:31).

There are principles of cause and effect in the creation. Righteousness leads to blessings, both spiritual (inward) and dominical (outward). The works of the righteous man's hands are intended to shine before men, just as his personal behavior is to shine. The works of a righteous nation (Deut. 4:5-8) and the church (Matt. 5:14-16) are also to shine before men, calling attention to the superiority of the Bible's principles of administration (garden keeping) to all other principles. God did not do sloppy work in His own name when He created all things. Neither individuals nor nations are to do sloppy work in the name of God.

How are we to judge performance? By the *stated principles* of the worker, and also by the *results*. The righteous plant bears good fruit. By their fruits ye shall know them, Christ said (Matt. 7:20). But the analogy of the garden should point to the need for visible blessings: successful performance of the gardening assignment was itself a reward, namely, a more beautiful environment.

The *cause-and-effect universe* created by God enables us to judge the quality of a person's performance by the results he achieves. God sees to it that righteousness receives blessings. These blessings are to serve as *visible signs of the covenant* that call forth even more faithful adherence to that covenant: "... for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:18). *Blessings are to reinforce good behavior.* Visible blessings are to remind men of the reality of the covenantal foundation of society. *Good behavior is visible; so are God's blessings for good behavior.*

It may take time for these visible blessings to appear. If the mouth of the unrighteous eventually reveals the kind of character which lies behind it, why shouldn't the blessings of the righteous reveal the character of both the individual and the God who sovereignly controls the universe? Why should the power of God not be made manifest to all, just as the weakness of the unrighteous be made manifest? Why should we regard it as odd that the *rival cause-and-effect principles*, righteousness vs. unrighteousness, should produce *visibly different results*?

In the short run, evil men can be blessed externally, as a prelude to their destruction (Deut. 8:11-20). In the short run, righteous men can experience poverty and external curs-

ings (Job). In the long run, and in the aggregate (society as such), unrighteousness produces destruction (Deut. 28:15-68) and righteousness produces visible blessings (Deut. 28:1-14).

There is a tendency for pietists to recoil in horror to the idea that righteous behavior should produce visible blessings. Radical anabaptist pietists resent the biblical teaching that righteousness should produce long-term affluence and power, and that ethical rebellion should produce long-term poverty and weakness. They prefer, as do all socialists, to blame the poverty of the ethical rebels on the power produced by external adherence to God's law. They see the visible blessings of God exclusively as a prelude to God's coming judgment.

Conventional pietists also resent the doctrine of visible blessings. Such a doctrine teaches that redeemed men are given external blessings in order to confirm them in their faith, so that they might take on additional responsibilities. Conventional pietists resent the whole idea of the dominion covenant, of which the doctrine of visible blessings is a part. They prefer to believe that faithful men will be burdened only by internal responsibilities, and therefore that the blessings God pours out on His people will be limited to the internal, psychological realm of man's spirit. They reject the idea that righteous behavior produces external blessings. They are farther away from an understanding of God's dominion covenant than a reprobate like Ben Franklin was, for he was still influenced by the Puritan preaching of Cotton Mather (as he admits in his autobiography). He could write that "honesty is the best policy," not because he believed in the God of the Bible, but because he had seen the external results of such a God-ordained principle. Modern pietists look at the wealth that the Protestant ethic has produced, and they hide their eyes 'in disbelief, hoping to find another explanation.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CALENDAR

by James B. Jordan

No. 26: The Third Day

Resurrection entails cleansing from sin. Death was symbolized under the Old Covenant by dirt, since "of dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:10).¹ Anything dead or indicating the loss of life or power was termed "unclean" for this reason. To be cleansed, thus, is to undergo a resurrection. This is the meaning of the cleansing rituals of Leviticus 11-15. The covenant can only be reestablished in the sphere of resurrection, so the people were to cleanse themselves before the third day, when the covenant was to be made (Ex. 19:10-14). Indeed, they were to avoid marital relations (v. 15), lest there be any unintentional spillage of seed (Lev. 15:18).²

This is made even clearer in Numbers 19:11-12. The man who is unclean from contact with a corpse is to be cleansed on the third day and again on the seventh day. This *double resurrection pattern* is found all through the Scriptures. For instance, in John 5:21-29, Jesus distinguishes a first resurrection, when those dead in sin will hear the voice of Christ and live (v. 25); and a second resurrection, when those dead

in the grave will come forth (v. 29). The *first resurrection* comes in the *middle of history* to enable us to fulfill the duties of the old creation. The *second resurrection* comes at the *end of history* to usher us into the new creation.

Jesus Christ was raised on the third day, thereby inaugurating the New Covenant in the midst of the *week* of history. Christians live between the third and seventh days of history, spiritually resurrected and in the New Covenant, but physically mortal and assigned to complete the tasks of the Old Adamic Covenant. The fact that the Law was given at Sinai on the third day, and in the third month, was a provisional anticipation of the third-day resurrection yet to come in Christ. Some examples of third-day judgments and/or resurrections are the following:³

Judges 20:30—The LORD's destruction of apostate Benjamin came on the third day.

2 Kings 20:5—Hezekiah granted resurrection from his deathbed on the third day.

Esther 5:1—The Bride is judged worthy of reception by the King, and judgment begins to fall upon the Enemy.

Hosea 6:2—"After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up."

Jonah 1:17—Jonah was resurrected from the belly of the monster after three days.

The third-day resurrection was only provisional under the Old Covenant, so it had to be repeated year after year. Thus, each year, the third day after Passover, there was a waving of the first-fruits before the throne of God (Leviticus 23:5,7,10,11). This was a prophecy of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, which came three days after Passover; but Jesus' third-day resurrection was not provisional, but definitive, and never to be repeated.⁴

Israel was resurrected, as we saw in No. 25 of this series, on the *sixth* day (which was also the third day). This signified a resuscitation of the Old Adamic Covenant, analogous to the resurrection of Lazarus. On the basis of the coming work of Jesus Christ, God reinfected Spiritual life into the Old Covenant. Jesus Christ, however, was raised on the *eighth* day, thus inaugurating a New Creation, and the New Covenant. Salvation does not entail a temporary and provisional resuscitation of the First Covenant, but a definitive and final resurrection in the New Covenant.

It remains to be noted, in connection with the calendar at Sinai, that a careful study of the chronology of Exodus will show that this third/sixth day came very close to fifty days after the waving of the sheaf; that is, very close to Pentecost (Lev. 23:15f.). It might have been on Pentecost, as many Jewish scholars believe. It is, however, so close that the careful Bible student cannot help but make the connection. Just as the Church received the definitive outpouring of the Spirit when the day of Pentecost was "fully come" (Acts 2:1), so the Old Covenant people of God received a provisional outpouring of the Spirit on the Sinaitic Pentecost (see, for instance, Numbers 11:17).

3. See No. 25 in this series for some other examples of the third-day judgment.

4. The fulfillment of the waving of the sheaf is in John 20:22, the so-called "Johannine Pentecost" (called such by New Testament scholars who have never studied Leviticus 23). The fulfillment of the waving of the Pentecostal loaf, of course, is in Acts 2.

1. For more on this, see #12 in this series.

2. This command may also have been intended to highlight the consummation of the LORDS marriage to Israel (cf. Ezek. 16:8).

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