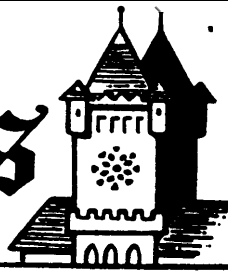


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LITURGICAL NOTES

by James B. Jordan

No. 3: The Petitioner and the Circularizer

The reconstruction of the Church and its worship cannot take place apart from the reconstruction of Church government. This essay explores one area in which the latter is in serious disarray.

How should men act when they believe they have been unjustly treated by those in authority over them in the Church? There are basically three actions they may take. The first is to do nothing, and suffer the wrong, trusting in God for eventual vindication. This is often the best course, since the disruption of government can so easily partake of the sin of witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23).

Still, where possible, wrongs should be righted, and the Bible provides us a method for attempting to get matters right. It is the process of appeal, set out in Exodus 18:21f. There should be courts of appeal in the Church, so that if a lower court works an injustice, it can be corrected upon appeal.

Being sinners, however, men tend not to use the Biblical method. Instead they tend to form conspiracies and create an atmosphere of rebellion, in order to force their way upon the court by mob rule. One of the easiest ways to do this is to circularize, to mail out a letter to everybody and his brother, accusing those in authority of wrongdoing.

Let us take an example of this. The events recounted here really happened, but I have changed the names involved. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a small group of men at what we shall call Hardcore Orthodox Seminary decided that Prof. Poymain was in error in some of his teachings. They brought the matter up to Mr. Poymain's presbytery, part of the Hardcore Presbyterian Church, a denomination known for its conservative evangelical beliefs. Presbytery made a thorough investigation of the questions raised about Mr. Poymain's teaching, and determined that it was orthodox. This same faction in the Seminary also complained to the faculty and board of the Seminary, which also found Mr. Poymain's teaching to be orthodox.

Not satisfied with this, and apparently unable to submit to either of these two governing authorities, these individuals formed a conspiracy with a number of other persons, generally ignorant of the actual facts of the case, and composed a letter addressed to "Friends of the Hardcore Faith." This letter was sent to persons all over the world. It was mailed from a Post Office Box.

A lie told often enough begins to be treated as truth. Eventually, these conspirators raised such a stink that Mr. Poymain was dismissed from his teaching position without censure, "for the best interests of the Seminary," according

to a Seminary News Release. The Board made "no judgment whether Mr. Poymain's views as such contradict or contravene any element in the system of doctrine taught by the Westminster Standards." In other words, Mr. Poymain's teaching was wholly orthodox. Rather, Mr. Poymain was let go because "the controversy over Mr. Poymain has reached such dimensions and such tangled complexity that it appears unresolvable." In other words, the actions of the conspirators had succeeded in accomplishing their aim, which was to get rid of Prof. Poymain.

In all of this, Mr. Poymain avoided the rebellious tactic of circularizing, and simply made his appeals to the proper authorities. His lawful actions were not honored, however, by the academic court (though his Church court stood behind him, as did numerous faculty members).

This raises the problem: How do we handle circularizing? Eventually Mr. Poymain and his friends found it necessary to provide a letter of their own, which they made available to anyone who requested a copy. In this way, Mr. Poymain applied Proverbs 26:4, 5. He was not like the fool, in that he himself stuck with the Biblical appeal system, and refused to go with mob appeal. At the same time, he answered the fool according to his folly, so that the fool would not be wise in his own conceits (by making a public statement available to counter the circular of the conspirators).

In the local church this is also a problem. Rebellious persons find it easy to form conspiracies, lodge fantastic charges, and try to tie up Church courts. When they do not get their way, they resort to the circular, mailing letters to every member (and to others as well), attempting to get their way through mob rule. Generally, people at the local level see this for what it is, just as Mr. Poymain's presbytery and fellow faculty members did, because they know the people involved. When the talebearing goes up and down all the land (Lev. 19:16), however, the situation can become much worse, since people far away will tend to form opinions based solely on the half-truths presented by the conspirators. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that circularizers *never* tell the whole story. Honest men do not initiate the process of circularizing.

Circularizing is an act of rebellion, of witchcraft. It indicates a thoroughgoing rejection of God's ordained way of resolving conflict. Even when a higher court decides against us wrongly, we are still told to submit, realizing that God will vindicate us in the end (Dt. 17:11, 12). The circularizer, with his campaign of half-truths, distorted information, lies, and smears, is appealing to mob rule, and totally rejecting God's ordained governmental process. He may win in the short haul, but in the long haul God will bury him.

STUDIES IN BAPTISM

by Ray R. Sutton

No. 22: God's Name, Baptism's System (Part 3)

"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).

God's Name embodies the-Biblical system of baptism. In our first study we saw that God's Name is three and one. God is a Family. Thus, the correct application of the Name of God is to *families*, as well as individuals.

The second study noted that the members of the Trinity are distinguishable, but not separable. Thus, Christ should not be separated from the sacraments, for that empties them of any real meaning (nominalism). Failure to distinguish symbol from sign, on the other hand, transforms the sacraments into reality they are supposed to signify (realism). This fallacy confuses creation with Creator, making the former into God. In the present study, we want to move into a third aspect of the Trinity which is stated in the *Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith*. It says of the Trinity, "These three are one, equal in power and glory." In other words, the members of the Trinity are *equally ultimate*.

The *equal ultimacy* of the Trinity separates Christianity from *being* religion which perceives deities as greater and lesser in potency on a continuum. Ultimate being (God) is at the top, and those with hardly any being are demons at the very bottom. Man is somewhere in between. The clearest example of this top to bottom continuity of being religion is the totem pole of the American Indians. Their gods are on top of each other in ascending and descending order. Whereas, Biblical religion, as expressed in the *Shorter Catechism*, reveals the members of the Godhead as *equal/y ultimate*.

Therefore, the equal ultimacy of the Holy Trinity is of the essence of true religion. To deny it, creedally or practically, results in the demise of Christianity. The doctrine of baptism bears this out.

Personal and Cosmic

First, the application of the *Trinity* at baptism portrays the Godhead as equally ultimate. The one is equally ultimate with the many, and this can be seen in the glory cloud around God's throne. The Father is pictured as sitting on the throne (Ps. 110:1ff.), the Son is at His right hand (Col. 3:1ff.), and the Spirit provides the environment around the throne (Ezk. 1). Thus, God is presented as a Person in an environment which He Himself provides.

At creation, God reflected this one and many idea by creating a world with personal and cultural aspects. The Father spoke the world into existence (Gen. 1:2ff.); the Son was also present at the creation (Col. 1:16); and the Spirit hovered over the water (Gen. 1:3). God (Father) not only created man, He (Son) fed him, and He (Spirit) formed the perfect environment or culture to sustain him. Creation, therefore, was both a singular and plural event. All the members of the Godhead were involved, and God reproduced His image in man and his culture.

The salvation of the world is also one and many. The Father predestinated, the Son redeemed, and Spirit regenerated. This salvation was not accomplished only by one Member, nor did it exclude any of the Members. It was a Trinitarian event, and as such all the world was recreated with the same equal ultimacy of the personal and cultural dimensions that we found in creation. God sent His Son to redeem the world (*kosmos*, Jn. 3:16), not just the individual. Thus, to speak of salvation in purely personal terms breaks down the imagery conveyed in the Trinity. Some have been known to think that personal salvation is not concerned with

social issues. Fundamentalists, for example have tended to separate politics (cultural aspect) and redemption. This is not the same as saying they have *ignored* politics. Fundamentalists have never ignored the subject. In recent years conservatives have spoken out on many issues: Communism: presidential candidates, and prayer in public schools.

But their argumentation is not from Scripture because they have limited the Scripture to personal salvation. Their presuppositions limit their understanding of Scripture and force them to argue from "nature" or 'natural rights,' rather than from redemption. The prayer in public schools issue is classic. Most of the time their position tends to argue that man has a natural right to worship the God of his own choosing, and inalienable rights entitle him to prayer in the public school. Such an argument can be turned, as has been in the past, to say that since man *naturally* worships many gods, therefore no one religion can be asserted over another. If argued on natural grounds only, conservatives will never win, even if they return prayer to the public schools. In that case, pagans will be praying pagan prayers.

The correct way to argue is that God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) because of the death of His Son. That means the whole world, politics included, must submit to Christ. Our founding fathers never intended what they called natural law (and there really is no such thing) to oppose redemptive law. The Constitution was framed in a distinctively *Christian* context. Thus, one cannot reassert the intentions of the founding fathers by arguing with 'natural rights.'

Nevertheless, it is not surprising that predominantly baptistic conservatives argue this way. The problem stems from a faulty doctrine of baptism. How? The basic flaw of baptist theology is to *individualize* to the exclusion of the covenantal unit. Thus, when a man is saved, his family is understood to be outside of the covenant, and not necessarily to be brought under the covenant with him. In other words, his natural seed is separated from his spiritual seed.

The correct view, however, builds on the model in the Trinity-the Name placed on the individual at baptism. It says that as the Trinity is corporate and personal, so is salvation.

Moreover, born to a believing parent(s), the child is claimed by God through the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism since salvation is due to God's claim and not man's volition. It is precisely because the infant is born in sin and cannot be saved naturally that he or she needs redemption through sovereign application. Thus, the equal ultimacy of the personal and cosmic is maintained in regard to the natural child of a believer whose birth is not insignificant, but not enough to gain him salvation.

What about the role of the Spirit? The Spirit works out the salvation. If the Spirit does not transform one who is baptized, then the one baptized will fall away. Thus, the work of the Spirit is just as important as that of the other Members of the Godhead. The plan of God is one. What He creates, redeems, and sanctifies will be saved. The tendency on the part of conservatives to separate the individual from his family breaks down the work of the Godhead, which is equally ultimate.

On the other hand and in contrast to the Fundamentalists, liberals speak of social issues apart from redemption. They want to apply benevolence laws of the Old Covenant to those outside the covenant. Men such as Ron Sider, for example, interpret the poor of Scripture in a purely *natural* sense, rather than covenantally. Anyone who is poor according to this position must be given, or actually entitled to, the blessings of the covenant. In other words, their natural condition guarantees the blessings of the covenant.

The poor in Scripture, however, are always the poor who are submitted to the covenant. It was not just any poor per-

son who ~~was~~ entitled to help. The Canaanite woman who wanted food from Jesus's table made a confessional statement first. She acknowledged salvation at His table. Thus, she was granted access.

Even the stranger in the land of the Old Testament had to comply with the law of the covenant to receive any benefits. His natural birth gave him nothing. In the context of redemption, his creation became a blessing.

We conclude, therefore, from this first point that the work of the Godhead has continuity because of redemption. Why the emphasis on redemption? Because sin occurred after creation, and the continuity of creation-life broke down. Thus, the work of the Godhead would not have had continuity without the death of Jesus and the baptismal washing of the Holy Spirit. With this unified plan salvation is complete, and this is the picture in baptism. The work of God has continuity and is one. The creation and/or man's culture does not predominate, nor is it neglected.

Sign and Seal

Second, another aspect of the equal ultimacy of the Trinity is manifested in baptism as a *sign* and *seal*. As a sign, baptism teaches and is prophetic. As a seal, baptism corrects and disciplines. Which is more important? Because of the Trinity's involvement in teaching and correction, signing and sealing, each has to be considered equally ultimate.

This means that preaching and discipline stand together in the same way the sacraments are signs and seals. As the signing and sealing functions should not be separated, neither should preaching and discipline. Actually, they are both administrations of the revealed Word of God which was written and incarnated. This does not mean, however, that they are equal to the Word of God. Nothing man does can be considered equal to God.

Some churches have so elevated preaching that the preacher's words are equal to the Bible. The old saying, "the preacher's words are equal to the Bible in so far as they are true to Scripture; should cause some consternation. God's Word is in one sense totally unlike man's, and should always be viewed as being in another category. God's Word is infallible. It is the Word of the Creator, and the Church must be careful not to create a "pulpit pope." These observations take nothing away from preaching; rather, they put the proclamation of Scripture in proper perspective as an administration of, and thus not the same thing as, the Word of God.

The other administration of the Word has also been equated to the Bible. In the Roman Catholic Church, we find worship directed to the sacraments, and particularly the Chalice. Jesus's statement, "this cup is the New Covenant in my Blood," has been understood to mean the cup is equal to Christ. The verse does not say, however, the cup is equal to Christ, for the covenant is *in His blood*. Thus, the cup *represents* Christ, and is not equally ultimate to Him.

But this does not preclude the notion that the signing and sealing functions of the sacrament are *themselves* equally ultimate. Doctrine and discipline, preaching and the Word made visible are equally important. We have seen the problem with making these functions equally ultimate with the Word of God. Now we must take note of the problem of ascribing more importance to one or the other.

The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally placed the sacrament at the center and preaching on the periphery. Their architecture reflects this in that the sacrament table is in the center, and the pulpit is to the side. This table, however, represents more than the sacraments. It stands for discipline in the Church. Here, one is admitted into and dismissed from the Church. Because of this emphasis, the Catholic Church is known for its strict discipline. Even today, their laity respects its bishops, and for the most part fears

being excommunicated. Protestants, on the other hand, seldom know the meaning of excommunication, if they even believe it is still to be practiced.

The emphasis on discipline has also tended to make the Roman Catholics more concrete in their orientation. One, canon law is historically associated with the Catholic Church. Protestants have taken discipline so lightly that such a canon law system does not exist in their churches. The only exception would be the history of cases adjudicated in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Two, the Roman Church also usually has a hospital in every town, charity for widows and orphans, and other large benevolence programs for the needy.

In spite of these positive traits, for the most part the Roman Catholic Church has neglected *Scripture*. Their members rarely know much about the Bible because basically it has not been taught. This is what the Reformation reacted against, and thus Reformed churches moved the sacrament table from the middle, seldom observed communion, and placed the pulpit in the center. Consequently, they have been known for solid doctrinal preaching. With this attention to ideas has followed great centers of learning in Europe, America, and South Africa.

But the doctrinal emphasis carried certain problems. Doctrine, to the exclusion of discipline and practice, reduced the Christian life to the intellect. Frozen in rationalism, many in Reformed and Lutheran churches reacted with pietistic irrationalism in an attempt to revive their churches. Yet, these efforts hurt the Church in the long run. The history of irrationalism in Calvinistic churches has only resulted in the eventual encroachment of Arminianism, and eventually Pelagianism, in their schools and churches [See Gregg Singer, *A Theological Interpretation of American History*, (Craig Press: Nutley, NJ, 1975).].

Thus, both sides of the Western Church have failed to emphasize the equal ultimacy of sign and seal. Rome excluded preaching with its attention to discipline, and protestantism often excluded discipline with its efforts to restore preaching. To correct both tendencies, pulpit and sacraments should stand in the center together. Calvin, for example, believed that the Word should be made visible every time it was preached. Calvin's assessment was Biblical because this view more accurately reflects the Trinitarian image of God which is mirrored in the sacrament of baptism.

In conclusion, we have studied a third aspect of the system of baptism as defined by the Trinitarian Name of God. Equal ultimacy has great significance for the life of the Church, and it begins at baptism. We have seen two implications. One, equal ultimacy draws together the work of the Godhead, and means that God's claim in baptism is cultural as well as personal. Two, equal ultimacy makes the signing and sealing functions of baptism, and communion for that matter, of equal importance. Thus, the Church must have both good preaching and discipline.

A N ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Gary North

No. 23: Just Wages

The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin (Prov.10:16).

The contrast between righteousness and wickedness continues. The text informs us of two types of wages: life and punishment. The righteous man who works earns a wage. That wage is life. This confirms the teaching of the commandment to honor parents in order to attain long life (Ex.

20:12). It is a universally pursued earthly goal. The wicked man's income is punishment ("sin" in the KJV). There is a predictable correspondence between each type of behavior and its appropriate reward.

The relationship between ethics and economics is obvious. God declares certain actions righteous and others wicked. There is life for those who act righteously, but people who defy God and pursue wickedness are punished. The context of this verse does not suggest an exclusively heavenly reward. The preliminary manifestation of eternal wages is temporal.

Paul's words parallel this proverb: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). His focus is more clearly that of the final judgment. But the proverbs make it plain that earthly affairs are indicative of the eternal condition each person can expect. There is a preliminary reward system which reveals, however imperfectly, the spiritual status of society's members.

This contrast between the two forms of wages refutes what was once known as the labor theory of value. The classical economists from Adam Smith through John Stuart Mill, including Karl Marx, relied on some version of this theory of value. They assumed that human labor is the basis of market value; the more labor that is used to manufacture a product, the higher its market price.

Many unsolvable problems were produced by the intellectual labor of those who held this theory. Why is it more profitable to invest in capital in a leisure-oriented industrial nation than in India or China, where there is so much human labor available at cheap wages to add to the production process? Why is a randomly discovered diamond mine or gold mine so valuable, compared to years of labor devoted to the development of a perpetual motion machine? Eventually, no matter how much "time and effort its defenders spent on it — and Marx's second and third volumes of *Das Kapital* (published posthumously) are lasting monuments to just how much labor they expended — the market value of this idea continued to fall.

Neo-classical economists after the early 1870's argued that the market value of labor is dependent upon the market value of labor's output. The production of a heavily demanded product or service which requires a specialized-type of labor (e.g., brain surgery) will highly reward those who possess the particular skill or resources involved. The high price consumers are willing and able to pay will tend to lure other laborers into the labor market for this particular service. It is therefore not the labor which gives value to the product, neoclassical economists argue, but market demand by con-

sumers. In other words, consumers' preferences and purchases are sovereign in the marketplace. Their subjective preferences, revealed through market competition, create an objectively determined market value (price) for products and therefore for both labor and land (resource) inputs that produce these products.

Two forms of labor maybe expended on a particular task by two different people. Their physically measurable labor may be identical. The righteous man in some instances may receive the same money wage as the wicked man, yet God rewards them differently eternally. But can their earthly wages differ? The Bible says yes. So does economic theory.

How can this be? Doesn't the free market pay equal wages for equal work? No. It pays equal wages for equal *net* value, after costs, produced by the workers. A lawless man is a higher risk employee. The employer wants hard working people who are honest and predictable on the job. He wants people with good reputations in the community. He wants people who will stay with the company for many years. The physically measurable daily labor output of two workers may be the same, but the net value of each man's output output to the employer (and therefore to the consumer) maybe very different in the long run. Their wages today may reflect this difference. The Bible's perspective is even more subtle. There is more to economic rewards than the market's rewards. There is also the sovereignty of God. Ours is a personal universe created and sustained by a personal God. He brings glory to Himself by rewarding those who abide by His commandments, and who thereby bring honor to Him. In the aggregate, righteous men buy themselves longer life spans. It is God, not the market, who enables them to exercise dominion, in the aggregate, longer than the wicked can.

Earthly rewards reflect the spiritual kingdom for which a person labors: two different kingdoms, two types of reward. Thus, there are limits to the market as an institutional source of rewards for productive service. God sees men's hearts, and He rewards them accordingly, although the market is one factor in the distribution of these rewards, since God does not bless or punish men in an historical or institutional vacuum.

Men who work hard for the kingdom of God, honoring God's laws and proclaiming His righteousness, receive more valuable rewards than drunkards who rob, pillage, and die young. The external earthly rewards of most citizens will reflect, in the long run, their ethical condition because their ethical condition regulates their economic performance. The more closely the social institutions of a society conform to those specified in the Bible, the more predictable the visible relationship will be between ethics and income.

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