

IN RESPONSE - INFANT BAPTISM AND INFANT COMMUNION?

by Dennis Prutow
Volume III, Number 11

A reader sent this comment.

I enjoyed Infant Baptism and Evangelism very much.... I suspect, however, reading between the lines, that you might not permit children to partake of our second sacrament, L[ord's] S[upper] until you are "sure" they are born again.

If [the] Old Testament is appealed to for baptism, I trust you acknowledge Esau ate the Passover with his family and was perhaps the one, not as an observer but as a participant, asked the question, "What does this ceremony mean to you?"

I have come to realize that Jesus' time in his father's house was not his first trip to Passover but his first time of manly obligation as Bar Mitzvah.

There are two related issues here. The first involves the criterion for church membership. The second relates more pointedly to eligibility for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The implication is I hold to the position the new birth is the requirement for church membership. The second is I should hold to infant or child communion.

In the first case, the new birth as *the* requirement for church membership was discussed under the heading "Regenerate Church Membership."¹ There we showed only God can infallibly determine if a person is born again (1 Samuel 16:7). We are not privileged to judge the human heart in this fashion. The biblical criterion for church membership is a credible, believable, confession of faith in Christ (Acts 2:41).

Our position is that we wait until a young person makes profession of faith before he or she is admitted to the Lord's Supper. However, our reader argues that since we baptize infants we should also admit them to the Lord's Supper. Since they partake of the first sacrament, they should also receive the second. Although many people are using this argument in favor of infant communion, it could also be an argument against infant baptism.

What is the response? It is quite simple and requires real consistency in inter-

pretation. The hermeneutical principle or rule of interpretation we are following goes something like this. Guidelines for faith and conduct established in the Old Testament are binding in the New Testament era unless specifically changed in the New Testament. For example, the day of rest and worship in the Old Testament was the seventh day of the week. This was changed upon the resurrection of Christ. Although the Fourth Commandment applies to Christians, the day of rest and worship is now the first day of the week. Similarly, the sacraments of the Old Testament were circumcision and Passover. The sacraments in the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper. The meanings are the same, the ordinances have changed.

In like manner, whether you agree with them or not is immaterial for our present argument, Calvin and Spurgeon and theologians of like ilk, tell us, although instruments were used in the temple worship of Israel and in fact were commanded by God in the sacrificial service (2 Chronicles 29:25), the use of instruments in worship is discontinued as a result of the abrogation of the ceremonial law by Christ (Hebrews 10:8-9). Singing in worship continues by virtue of direct apostolic command (Colossians 3:16).

The force of these examples is to show the consistent application of a vital hermeneutical principle. With regard to the specific case in point, the same principle must be applied. Is our reader correct in stating, "Esau ate the Passover with his family and was perhaps the one, not as an observer but as a participant, asked the question, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'"

I shall leave aside the fact that Esau despised his birthright long before God commanded the Passover observance (Genesis 25:34). The argument is that the children of each Israelite household partook of the Passover lamb. Exodus 12:4 says, "Now if a household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb." The im-

plication is clear. Each person in the household had a share in the lamb. If the Lord's Supper replaces Passover, does this not mean each person in a Christian home, adult *and* child, should partake of the Lord's Supper? Doesn't consistency demand this? After all, this was our argument with regard to baptism.

The answer is No. This is so because of the *New Testament* requirements for participation in the sacrament. If we take the position with regard to Passover just argued, we find the apostle Paul changes the requirements for admission to the Lord's Supper. After rehearsing the institution of the Supper, Paul adds these words in 1 Corinthians 11:26-29.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.

Paul is saying those who participate in the Lord's Supper must already know what they are doing. Failure at this point brings judgment.

In the case of the Passover, the argument is made that during the ceremony, as the children eat the lamb, they may ask, "What does this rite mean to you?" (Exodus 12:26). Explanation is then given *as all members of the household partake*. In the case of the Lord's Supper, there is dramatic change. Children may ask the same question but they must understand the answer *before* they come to the table. Eating at the Lord's Supper without an understanding of what this Supper is about is forbidden. Because of this change, we do not practice infant communion.

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¹ For a more complete outline of the argument, see *In Response*, Volume 3, Number 1.

IN RESPONSE - LITURGY FOR LIFE AND WORSHIP, PART I

by Dennis Prutow

The last two lessons on worship concerned worship as service to God. My objective in those lessons was to show the link between worship and service performed before God as He prescribes. We began those lessons with a study of one of the words used in the New Testament translated either worship or service. The Greek word we studied in those lessons was *latrei, a*.

In this lesson, we continue our look at the concept of worship as service. The root questions are simple. Do we serve God in our worship? If so, is our worship guided by His commands? Or do we worship God according to the dictates of our own hearts because this is an area of indifference? I am convinced the former case is the teaching of Scripture.

The word with which we are concerned in these lessons is the Greek word *leitourgo, j*. Our English word liturgy comes from this Greek word. It means worship or service. The plan is to look at the fifteen uses of the root of this word formed as a noun or verb in the New Testament. We want to learn the implications for our own lives and worship.

Luke 1:23 is the first appearance of our word in the New Testament. "And it came about, when the days of his priestly service were ended, that he went back home." Zechariah was engaged in a special portion of the Old Testament temple ritual, the incense offering. This special offering was closely regulated by God. Exodus 30:1-10 outlines how the incense offerings were to be made morning and evening on a specially constructed altar. Exodus 30:34-38 gives the formula for the incense.

Why such strict regulations regarding the altar and the incense? This was a part of the holy worship of Jehovah. The priestly service of worship, the liturgy of the priest, involved carrying out the incense offering exactly as God prescribed. "You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar" (Exodus 30:9). When Nadab and Abihu failed to follow divine dictate in the incense offering, "fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:2). This seems strange and extreme to us. The point not

grasped by Nadab and Abihu must be grasped by us. Worship involves service. When God establishes the liturgy, the service, we must follow Him. This is part of the baggage the word we are examining carries with it.

Acts 13:2 leads us into New Testament worship. The scene is the gathered church in Antioch. "And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabus and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" We key in on the word ministering. The gathered church was in worship. The people were serving the Lord in worship. Several questions come to mind. Does worship or service here carry any of the connotations or implications of the Old Testament as we meet it in the New Testament context? In other words, is there a New Testament liturgy prescribed by God? The word used by the Holy Spirit seems to indicate this is the case. One thing for sure, by the example of the Spirit, part of the New Testament liturgy or worship involves the proclamation of the Word.

Romans 13:6 shows us a different side of the word for service. "For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing." The word servant might be rendered liturgist. Is there a definite way in which rulers such as governors, presidents, and kings are to exercise their authority? Yes there is. The liturgy, the order for their service, is set down in Scripture. Very few government officials view themselves as ministers, servants, of God. So they fail to follow God's rules and laws. This should never be the case in the church. The leaders of the church should always follow God's liturgy for their lives. This is particularly true in worship. Like Aaron and Zechariah, ministers in the church are liturgists. They should not offer "strange fire" before the Lord like Nadab and Abihu.

Romans 15:15-16 shows how Paul viewed his ministry or service.

I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given to me from God, to be a minister of Christ to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that

my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

First of all, Paul calls himself a minister, a liturgist. We again take this in a broad sense. It has to do with both life and worship. Note that Paul describes his service to Christ in Old Testament terms. He is a liturgist, minister, to the Gentiles, "ministering as a priest." He speaks of his "offering of the Gentiles." He wants this offering to be "acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." How can this be? Paul must carry out his work as directed by Christ. His liturgy for life and worship must be obedience to Christ. The word we are examining carries this force.

Romans 15:26-27 indicates ministry, service, or worship involves both the spiritual and the physical. "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them in physical things."

We are interested in the word *minister*. To minister, to serve, to carry out the liturgy, here means providing for the physical needs of others. Paul goes so far as to say a debt is incurred when spiritual blessings are received. This spiritual debt is paid through material offerings. Physical offerings are therefore a part of the New Testament liturgy of life and worship.

The point we are making is simple. Since we are servants of the most high God and since servants are obliged to carry out the will of their Sovereign, we are bound to do just that. We are not only bound to carry out the commands of Christ in life generally, we must also follow his will in our worship. There is a liturgy for life and worship. As we have marching orders with regard to life in general, and we are to follow those marching orders, we are given directions in worship. We are not to worship God in ways we devise. Continued in Part 2.

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IN RESPONSE - LITURGY FOR LIFE AND WORSHIP, PART 2

by Dennis Prutow

Paul takes up the theme of service in giving and the same incident mentioned at the end of the last lesson in 2 Corinthians 9:5-7. These verses give background for verse 12 in the same chapter.

So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness. Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.... For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.

Verse 12 might read like this: "For the ministry of this liturgy...." The service or liturgy Paul is speaking about is the process of giving to the needs of the saints. If church people are to give for this purpose, collections must be arranged, moneys gathered, and gifts disbursed. All of this is part of the liturgy of the Christian life. The offerings themselves are part of the liturgy of worship under the headship of Christ.

There are several uses of our word in Philippians. "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all" (Philippians 2:17). Paul characterizes his ministry as a drink offering. The faith of the Philippians, as it works itself out, is a sacrifice and service, liturgy, in the cause of God. Liturgy means:

service to God or His cause; or manner of divine worship. The word is also used to denote any priestly action or sacred performance, and in a worldly sense to denote a service to the state or to the public.¹

We have seen this is the case. More importantly, service denotes accomplishing the desires of the One being served. This

means we must accomplish God's will rather than our wills in both our worship and service.

Philippians 2:25 adds, "But I thought it necessary to send you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is your messenger and minister to my need." Here our word is translated *minister*. Epaphroditus was a minister, a liturgist. The liturgy of this servant was to fulfill the needs of Paul. Putting this in terms of worship, the liturgy is not designed to fulfill the felt needs of the servant. The One being served comes first. His will, not the will of the worshipper, takes priority. This cuts across the grain of much current evangelical thinking which is decidedly consumer oriented.

Paul continues his thought in Philippians 2:29-30.

Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Here we see the service of Epaphroditus involved risking his life to round out the deficiencies of the Philippian congregation's ministry to Paul. This is certainly a liturgy divorced from personal needs and desires. It is others oriented. Our priorities in both service *and* worship must be similar.

The final references using our word are in the book of Hebrews. These citations again emphasize the characteristic of service in liturgy before the Lord. Hebrews 1:7 speaks of angels. "And of the angels He says, 'Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.'" Hebrews 1:14 asks, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" The angels are *ministers* and *ministering spirits*. Literally, they are liturgists. What do they do? They carry out the will of God on behalf of believers in the world. Their liturgy is to do God's will. What does this tell us regarding the priority of God's will in our lives? Should we be more concerned with God's desires or our own? Ideally, our desires line up with His. This is also the case in the liturgy of worship.

Jesus Christ is our example.

Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man (Hebrews 8:1-2).

Christ is a minister, a servant, in the true sanctuary of God. He performed the ultimate sacrifice, giving His life on behalf of sinners, in strict accordance with the plans and purposes of God. His liturgy required this of Him.

Hebrews 8:6 tells us, "He has obtained a more excellent ministry." Christ's service, liturgy, was and is of a higher order because of the supreme task to which He was called. The call to obedience for each of us, however, is no less. We have a liturgy to follow in both life and worship even as Jesus Christ did.

Hebrews 9:21 speaks of God's covenant with Moses. "And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with blood." The various utensils used in the tabernacle worship were part of that ancient service or liturgy. Each vessel had its assigned use. Today, believers are the blood sprinkled vessels of service in the liturgy of worship. We all have our assigned tasks. We are to perform them with grace before God.

Finally, Hebrews 10:11 informs us, "And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices." Our word is *ministering*. Once again, the priests are liturgists. They performed the strictly regulated worship of the tabernacle according to God's standards not their own.

What is the big lesson we learn from this study? We always follow some form of liturgy in our worship, formal or informal. The liturgy of our lives is *service* directed by God through His Word. The liturgy of our worship is also *service* directed by God through His Word.

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¹ Jac. J. Muller, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972), p. 96, n. 9.

IN RESPONSE - HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU HAVE A SOUL?

by Dennis Prutow

The Catechism for Young Children is a wonderful little document aimed at introducing the great truths of Scripture to youngsters. Our three daughters went through it as a preview to the Shorter Catechism. Several months ago I was given copies of a 1936 edition and I gave them to one of our church school teachers for use in her class. This teacher came back to me with a question about one of the questions. It was number 20. How do you know that you have a soul?

In the new editions, the question is answered simply and beautifully, "Because the Bible tells me so." In the 1936 edition there is a different and unexpected answer: "Because I can think about God and the world to come." "Which answer should I use?" asked the teacher. We agreed on the former because it is simple and easy to grasp and because this is the answer the teacher wanted to use.

Because inquiring minds want to know, I began an informal investigation. Why was this answer to question 20 changed? It does not seem to be important but perhaps it is.

The first query I made to the executive of a church publishing arm received this response. "I suspect it was thought that the original wording smacked more of Greek philosophical rationalism than of biblical truth and that therefore it was considered the best answer to simply affirm the Bible's teaching that we *are* spirit as well as body." This correspondent then directed me to a second source who responded, "Instead of a *cogito ergo sum* approach to answering this basic question, it was thought that it was better to simply state what the Bible says. I guess Descartes was good in math; his theology/apologetics left something to be desired. Unfortunately his influence crept into the pastor's thinking when he wrote the catechism."

End of debate? Not exactly. Further investigation is warranted. Preliminary comments are in order. Although the original answer to the question seems less straightforward, is it really the product of rationalism in contrast to the new answer which is undeniably the product of revelation? The discussion does take us into the realm of apologetics and the debate regarding natural theology.

As soon as I mention natural theology, most modern Reformed theologians throw up their hands in dismay. To speak of natural theology is to jump into bed with rationalism. Right? What is rationalism? Rationalism rejects revelation and makes reason the sole source of knowledge. This is not the position of natural theology. Natural theology is not the rejection of revelation. Natural theology is the product of interaction with natural or general revelation. It is the theology derived from the revelation of God in creation. If you separate natural theology from the revelation of God in creation, you no longer have natural *theology*, you have *naturalism* and *secularism*. This is important to grasp.

It is also important to grasp that *ultimately* every human being on the face of the earth has a natural theology. This is the case because whether they admit it or not, they do interact with the revelation of God in creation. This is the case because every human being is in the creation of God and is a part of the creation of God. Everything around us and in us reveals the Creator. The apostle Paul tells us this is absolutely inescapable. He also tells us fallen human beings reject their own *theology* and suppress it.

Once again, here is Romans 1:18-20.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Now look at what the venerable John Murray says about the words of Paul.

In characterizing them [God's attributes] as invisible, reference is made to the fact that they are not perceived by the senses. When at the same time they are said to be "clearly seen" this is an oxymoron to indicate that what is sensuously imperceptible is nevertheless clearly apprehended in mental conception. And this sense of the term "clearly seen" is provided by the explanatory clause "being understood

by the things that are made"--it is the seeing of understanding, of intelligent conception. Stress is laid upon the perspicuity afforded by the things that are made in mediating to us the perception of the invisible attributes--they are clearly seen.¹

Murray affirms the knowledge of God derived through general revelation. General revelation gets through. Natural theology is the result. Were this not the case, fallen human beings could not and would not be held "without excuse." Murray goes on to say,

We must not tone down the teaching of the apostle in this passage.... Phenomena disclose the noumena of God's transcendent perfection and specific divinity. It is not a finite cause that the work of creation manifests but the eternal power and divinity of the Creator.²

Murray jolts us. It is not *a god* perceived by men and women but *the God*. In other words, all human beings think about *the God*. They do so because of His revelation. Further, men and women and boys and girls not only have the ability to think about the God because of His self disclosure in creation, *they cannot not think about the God*. When they deny this they are liars.

The old version of the Catechism for Young Children is therefore *not* a manifestation of rationalism. It is not a rejection of revelation in favor of reason as the sole source of knowledge. To assert young minds can and must think about the Creator of the universe is to follow the apostle Paul. A rejection of Paul at this point is a rejection of the only true common ground we have with an unbelieving world, the ground we walk on.

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¹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973), pp. 38-39.

² Murray, p. 40.