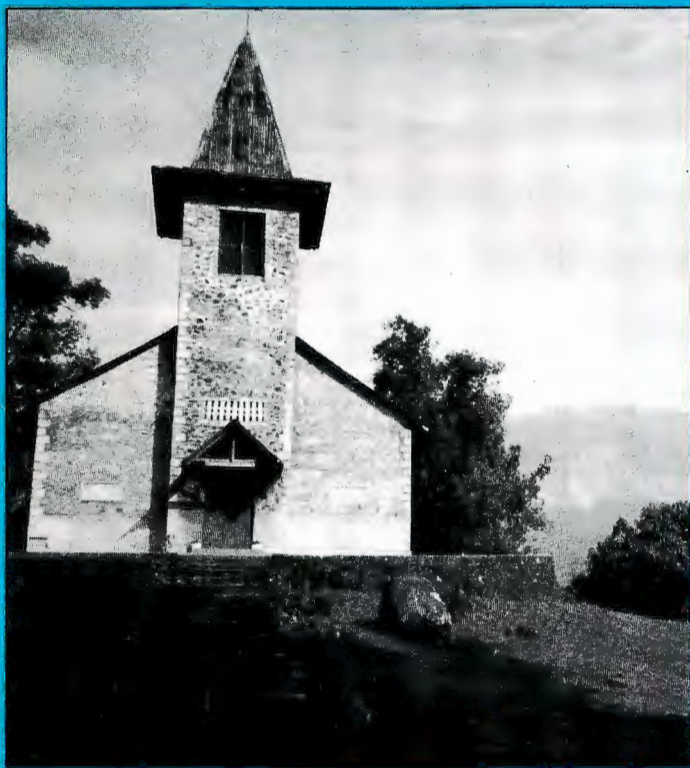
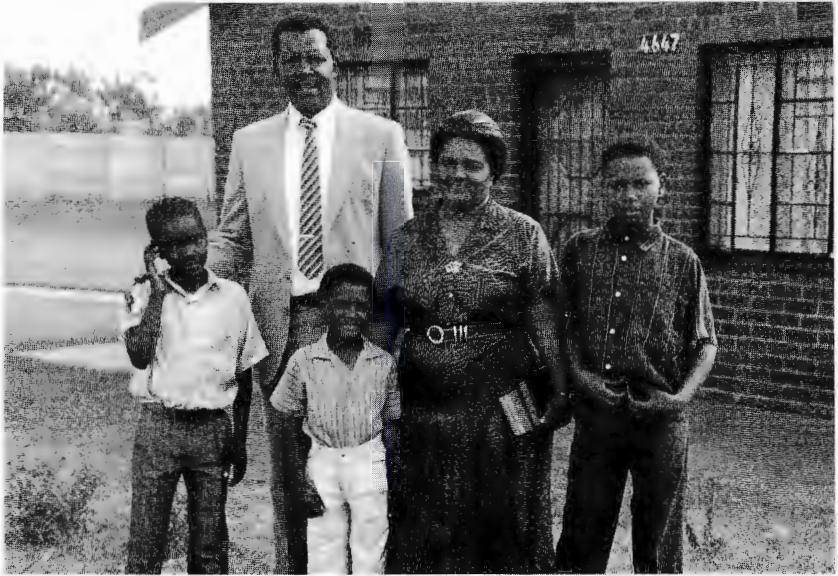

REFORMATION TODAY



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Pastor Alpheus Sbiya, his wife Nora and three sons. Alpheus pastors the church at Mdadene, Newcastle, recently visited by Peter Parkinson and Brian Vickers

The sixth International Baptist Conference, October 19-22, 1992, is sponsored by Toronto Baptist Seminary and takes place at Jarvis Street Baptist Church. The theme is THE UNIQUE CHRIST. For further information write to Toronto Baptist Seminary, 130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, Ontario M5A 3T4, Canada.

Those who have joined the IFRB are invited to meet in Toronto on Friday 23 October. Enquire from the Canadian agent for the venue.

The combined GRACE ASSEMBLY/CAREY MINISTERS' CONFERENCE is scheduled for 19-21 May, 1993 at Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Cover picture *The Baptist Church at Buea, S.W. Province Cameroon, where Samson Khama is the pastor. Mount Cameroon is in the background, the highest mountain in West Africa, a volcanic mountain last active in 1982.*

Editorial

Most of this issue is devoted to the subject of children.

Christians believe that their children are sanctified in the sense that the term is used in 1 Corinthians 7:14. The basic meaning of sanctified is to set apart. The children of believing parents are set apart as recipients of the means of grace in a way that is not the case in homes where there is no godliness. In a similar way the unbelieving partner of a marriage is sanctified (1 Cor 7:14. *hegiastai* – has been sanctified, perfect passive, denoting a past action with ongoing effects). But while both the unbelieving partner and the child are ‘sanctified’ in this way, neither has the right of baptism.

Inevitably this raises the subject of baptism. Many Presbyterians read *Reformation Today* and they are assured that the subject of children is brought forward on practical grounds and not for polemical reasons. As Reformed Baptists we accept fully the challenge of relating our children to the Church. While in South Africa I took part in a public debate between Baptists and Paedobaptists. That debate was conducted in a good spirit. Spurgeon said, ‘If I disagree with a man on 99 points, but happen to be one with him on baptism – this can never furnish such ground of unity as I have with another with whom I believe in 99 points, and only happen to differ upon one ordinance’ (Sword and Trowel, XXIV [1883], p 83). The

position we hold is that we preach all our distinctives as set out in the 1689 Confession and we expect our Presbyterian brethren to do likewise with regard to their Westminster Confession. Obviously when we exchange pulpits we respect the differences.

Our position with regard to children is that we see only one baptism in the NT: the baptism of those who repent and believe. A credible profession of faith is the only grounds for baptism reported in the New Testament. Those born of Christian parents or who have one parent who believes are the subjects of privilege in the sense of having spiritual instruction, pastoral care, the prayers of the parents, or parent, and of having the advantages of being within the congregation and under the nurture of the church. When the child comes to faith and possesses a credible profession then the way is open to baptism, church membership and the Lord’s table.

Christian parents of both Baptist and Paedobaptist conviction are equally concerned to use all the privileges and advantages of the Christian faith for their children. When those who have been baptised as infants come to faith, unless they embrace the truth of believers’ baptism, there is no biblical ordinance available which will highlight and crystalise the momentous nature of what has taken place in their coming into union with Christ. I telephoned the denominational headquarters of Paedobaptist denomina-

tions in the UK and every one said that they regarded Roman Catholic infant baptism as valid which is one reason why Baptists regard infant baptism as a legacy of sacralism.

The central issue between Reformed Baptists and Paedobaptists continues to be that of the unity and discontinuity of the covenants. Hebrews 8:8-10 is the hinge upon which the whole matter turns. The context is unmistakable. The Mosaic Covenant is in view. The Lord took the nation of Israel by the hand, a nation in covenant. The Mosaic Covenant was monolithic in form. It embraced all without exception irrespective of whether the law was written in their hearts.

That covenant was inadequate. It became obsolete (Heb 8:13). It was replaced by a new and better covenant the basis of which is that every member is required to have a credible testimony to knowing the Lord. That fact represents the radical discontinuity referred to in Hebrews 8. The basis of entry was no longer by way of birth and covenant status, but by way of repentance and faith. Of course there are other features of discontinuity such as the universality referred to in Galatians 3:26-29. But Hebrews 8:8-10 itself defines the nature of the radical discontinuity between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant. *NOT like that, but like THIS!*

The complaint made by Paedobaptists about the Baptist view of the New Covenant is that it is atomistic (individualistic). Inasmuch as no individual has the right to it without a

credible evidence of knowing the Lord it is individualistic. Furthermore it is urged that grace should not eat up nature, that is family unity. But our Lord gave a stern warning that if there is rebellion and unbelief in a family then division is inevitable. There need not be. Happily in most cases in our families there is not. Nevertheless the warning is faithful. Jesus said: *'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — a man's enemies will be the members of his own household'* (Matt 10:34-36).

When it comes to the practical implications of bringing up children in an average evangelical Christian household there is no difference between Baptists and Paedobaptists. Both enjoy the means of grace as supplied by a loving caring church and home. Children born of believing parents are indeed the children of privilege, but as far as original sin is concerned, there is absolutely no difference as Bob Sheehan shows in his article. Prayer is the only means of grace that is directed toward God. It is important that parents see that praying for their children is a priority. Hence the article with that title.

We continue to have enquiries as to a new edition of David Kingdon's *Children of Abraham*. David is unwilling to publish a reprint until he has the time to update his work. The synopsis will at least provide an outline of the reasoning.

Original Sin and Children

by Bob Sheehan

The parent, Sunday School teacher or minister who views the children under his care as 'little innocents' will no doubt have a different message and methodology than those who categorise them as 'little sinners'. The work of child evangelism obviously requires a biblical evaluation of the spiritual state of children, for a wrong diagnosis of the situation will inevitably lead to a faulty remedy.

How does the Bible view the spiritual state of children?

1. Bearing Adam's image (Genesis 5:1-3)

In an allusion back to the creation account¹, Moses recorded that when God created man he made him in the likeness of God (v1). After 130 years of life, Adam fathered in his likeness, in his image (v3). This fact has been interpreted in two contrary ways.

It has been argued that Moses' intention was to point out that, in spite of the Fall, the image and likeness of God continued in man from generation to generation². Man may be fallen, but he is still distinctively a man not a beast. Hence in other Scriptures the continuance of the image of God in man is the basis for his careful treatment by others³.

The alternative, and more widely accepted understanding of the passage is to see a contrast in the verses. Whereas Adam was made in God's image, he fathered children in his own image⁴. The pristine purity once known in Adam was replaced by a marred replica of his sinful self in his son. Hence the blessing bestowed on Adam (v2) is replaced in subsequent generations by the curse of sin which is death. Genesis 5 has a haunting refrain which turns it not only into a genealogy but an obituary column – 'and then he died'⁵. Sinful parents give birth to sinful children.

2. Impure water from an impure source (Job 14:4; 15:14)

Whatever areas of disagreement existed between Job and his friends, in this they were united: it is not possible to bring something pure from an impure source. Reflecting on the difficulties the 'man born of woman' faces (14:1), Job draws this conclusion. Implicit is the idea that the parent, being impure, cannot

produce pure children. The context is of being under the eye of God's judgement. God sees the parents and the children as impure.

What Job states implicitly, Eliphaz asserts explicitly (15:14). Man's vileness, corruption and addiction to evil (v16) are traced to their source: the impurity of a child fathered by a man, the unrighteousness of a child mothered by a woman (v14). The wise men of olden days knew that impurity and unrighteousness had deeper roots than the mere following of a bad example.

3. Ever present sin (Psalm 51:5)

After his adultery with Bathsheba, David experienced intense conviction of sin which he expressed in his monumental 51st Psalm. While acknowledging his sin and its grievous assault on God, he confessed that he was sinful when brought into the world, ie at birth, and indeed from conception.

There have been attempts to suggest that all David was confessing to God was his illegitimate birth. However, there is no evidence that David's birth was illegitimate. Jesse, his father, has a morally untarnished record in Scripture. Also David always refers to his mother as 'God's maidservant'⁶. It is also difficult to see how being illegitimate could be confessed as a proof of David's sinfulness.

The more natural meaning to David's words is that he was recognising not only the wickedness of his recent sins but the deep-rooted hold that sin had on his very nature. When his parents conceived him, a foetus with a sinful nature was conceived. When his mother gave birth to him, a baby with a sinful nature was born. From this sinful nature came the actual sins he now confessed.

4. Our status in Adam (Romans 5:12-21)

Adam is a 'type' of Christ (v14). He pictures the relationship that Christ would sustain to his people. Adam and Christ are individuals. However, their actions were not simply private acts but activities which affect all related to them. All who are 'in Adam' die because of Adam (vs15,17), are condemned because of Adam (vs 16,18) and are 'made sinners' because of Adam (v19). In the same way, all who are 'in Christ' receive grace because of Christ (vs15,17), life because of Christ (v18) and the gift of righteousness by which they are 'made righteous' or justified because of Christ (vs16-19). Each one affects the many, each one affects those 'in' him.

The idea of being radically affected by the actions of others is not so strange to us as at first we might think. We live in a society based on 'one man, one vote' but the fact remains that the lives of most people even in this society are ruled and governed by people for whom they did not vote! A government imposed by the minority rules the majority.

The same is true of the army. The chiefs of staff are appointed to make decisions on which the lives of thousands of soldiers and civilians depend. It will not have escaped your notice that the decisions of military leaders are not subjected to our individual vote!

Similarly, when a parent sets out on a life of criminality, it can radically affect his whole family. Other people are caught up in one man's sin. This is an undeniable fact. There is a solidarity in life. It is not all atomistic. There is inter-relatedness.

The illustration that perhaps best explains the difference is the contrast between a cornfield and a tree. In a cornfield (the atomistic model) each ear of corn stands on its own stalk. With a tree the situation is different (the solidarity model). The roots, trunk, branches, leaves and twigs are all one. An axe at the root destroys the whole tree – so with Adam. Sustenance through the root renews the whole tree – so with Christ.

In Adam humanity is condemned, subject to death, viewed as a mass of sinners by God. This is our status and predicament. It can only be reversed in Christ. This position does not just apply to those who follow Adam's example and break an actual command (v14) but to all who are in Adam, because they are viewed as having sinned in him (v12). They are implicated in his sin.

5. Inciting anger by nature (Ephesians 2:3)

In his descriptions of man enslaved by the world, the flesh and the devil (vs1-3), Paul does not only describe what the Christians were before their conversion in their actions and attitudes, he also describes them as inciting God's wrath by their 'natures' (v3). According to its scriptural usage we are 'by nature' those things we are by birth, intuitively, because that is the way we are in our very being⁷.

What is it that incites the wrath of God? It is sin. God is never angry in the Scriptures except in the presence of sin. In our nature we anger God because in our nature he sees sin. This simply confirms the assertions of Moses, Job, Eliphaz and David that in ourselves we are viewed as sinful by nature. It confirms the teaching of Paul. In Adam we ourselves are viewed as sinful.

6. Conclusion

The scriptures we have considered are adequate to make clear that every child is conceived with a status before God in Adam which defines him as a sinner, under condemnation and subject to death and with a corrupt nature which will, in due course, break out into actual sin. His fundamental need is a change of status from one of the condemned to one of the justified, and a change in nature

from a heart of stone insensitive to God and at enmity with him to a heart of flesh, sensitive to God and in harmony with him.

It is within this context that all questions about the evangelisation and salvation of children must be asked. We shall now consider some of these questions which arise:

Questions about the salvation of children

1. If we are conceived as sinners and condemned in Adam, can a child be saved if he dies before he is old enough to hear the gospel?

Great care is needed in answering this question, for the Scriptures say little, some people say ‘nothing’, about it. What is revealed belongs to us but what is secret belongs to God⁸. Surveys of the varying views held in Church history have been written⁹. The main views are:

a. Submissive agnosticism. God has not made a clear revelation on the matter. We commit all such infants to the Judge of all the earth who will do right¹⁰.

b. Enthusiastic assertion. God has been pleased in sovereign mercy to choose to save all children dying in infancy, not because they are innocent but by redeeming them in Christ. Being purchased by Christ their status and hearts are changed by God¹¹.

c. Cautious assertion. However many sinful infants God has chosen to save (few, many or all – he alone knows) are redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit¹².

d. Covenant salvation. Children in covenant with God through their parents are saved. The fate of others is unknown¹³ or negative¹⁴.

e. Baptismal salvation. Baptised children are saved. Unbaptised children are not¹⁵ or are left to God’s righteous judgement¹⁶.

Such a vast variation of opinions among those who accept the doctrine of original sin should make us cautious about dogmatism. The number of scriptures quoted by the advocates of any of these views is very small¹⁷, and each is open to a number of interpretations because the issue of children dying in infancy is only directly addressed in one scripture¹⁸ which itself has been subject to contradictory interpretations. The other scriptures are dealing primarily with other issues and only give corroborating support to views already held! Perhaps submissive agnosticism is safest, although not most emotionally satisfying.

2. Are children relatively innocent?

Young children are sometimes described according to the weakness of their infantile state; a child may not know how to use such basic words as ‘mother’ or ‘father’; he may not know the difference between his right hand and his left hand; he may have no knowledge of good and evil⁹.

The doctrine of original sin teaches us that such an infant is a sinner by status and nature and, therefore, not innocent. The difference to be drawn between the sinful infant and the older sinner is not one of comparative innocence but of comparative wilfulness. Sin may be unintentional or defiant in older people²⁰; in a child not old enough to have knowledge of good or evil it must be unintentional. However, even such unintentional sin is sin and requires atonement²¹. Our Lord did not teach that ignorance of the law rendered a person guiltless, just the opposite. He did, however, teach that defiant disobedience earned a heavier penalty than ignorant disobedience²². Increased understanding adds to our responsibility and guilt.

3. Are children easier to convert than adults?

It must always be remembered that original sin gives to a child a sinful status and a sinful nature. Being a child does not exempt him from the effects of this corruption. The thoughts of a man’s heart are evil from his youth²³. There is foolishness in the heart of a child²⁴. The universal statements of Scripture asserting there is no-one righteous, no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God, no-one who does good and that sin has affected the speech, the actions and the mind include children too²⁵. Our children are sinful in the same way as we are.

Children are saved in the same way as adults. The root of their salvation is in the Father’s electing grace, the accomplishment of their salvation is through Christ, the application of their salvation through faith in Jesus Christ²⁶.

If we may use a biblical analogy Jesus exercised the same life-giving power in raising Jairus’ twelve year old daughter from the dead as he did in raising the adult Lazarus. Both heard the life-giving command of Christ and lived²⁷; both were dead; both were raised. The raising of a child takes as great a miracle as the raising of an adult. The same is true in the spiritual realm. The raising of the spiritually dead involves the exercise of the same divine power that raised Christ from the dead²⁸. For children and adults the same saving power is needed. For God there is no difference.

From the perspective of man, however, as a responsible being it is true that the more steeped and set he becomes in the ways of sin the less interest in salvation and less confidence he has that he could be saved. ‘There is no fool like an old

fool' and the truths spurned in youth can often be despaired of and forgotten in old age. The elderly, hearing of salvation, do not so often hear a new message as a child does, but the old message they long ago despised. They console themselves in their sin with the conclusion, 'You cannot teach an old dog new tricks'.

It is this sinful hard-heartedness towards the gospel in so many of the old who have lived long without God that gives the basis for our Lord's commendation of the willingness of children to come when called and to be brought to him for blessing²⁹. Of course our Lord is commending the natural responsiveness of children; he is not teaching that children have spiritual ability that older people lack. It is the mark of children to show healthy enthusiasm when asked to do new things.

For the same reasons Solomon can exhort his readers to remember their Creator in the days of their youth before they are preoccupied with all the burdens of life and old age, and all the negative concerns that precede death³⁰. People are encouraged to think about God while they are young and healthy before they become too busy, too ill, too old to be bothered.

We can bring these two lines of thinking together in this way. In every heart, young or old, there is a native resistance to God, an enmity toward him, which only the sovereign, almighty power of God can overcome. No-one, young or old, is saved easily. However, the practice and progress of actual sin in the life has a hardening effect which makes a person even more resistant to God and which must either be dispelled by the mighty power of God or turned against the sinner in an act of judicial hardening. The person who persists in not wanting God may be granted his desire³¹.

4. Does a child have to understand less than an adult to be saved?

There is sometimes confusion in our thinking between the amount a person knows when he is saved (which varies vastly) and the amount a person needs to know to be saved. In fact, very little knowledge is needed to be saved. Those who wish to draw up a list of those doctrines which 'have to be believed before a person can be saved' are torpedoed by the biblical account of the salvation of the dying thief. He knew he was a sinner who had offended God. He knew Jesus was the King-Messiah. He pleaded for a merciful remembrance³². It may be summarised in this way, 'I'm a great sinner, you're a great Saviour. Help me!'

Before anyone screams 'easy believism' let us remind ourselves that there was nothing easy about the salvation of the dying thief. It was amazing and miraculous! He understood what everyone else was denying: this crucified Christ was not a defeated impostor but a King who would inherit a Kingdom.

Far from being an example of easy believism, the simplicity of his understanding and appeal for mercy are the evidence of a profound work of grace in his heart. He understood who Christ was, as Peter had, and for the same reason. Flesh and blood had not revealed it to him but the Father in heaven. God had been pleased to reveal his Son in him³³. He confessed the Saviour out of the conviction of his heart, his mouth and heart combined³⁴.

Whether as a child or an adult, a person needs to understand his sinfulness, who the Saviour is and to call on him for salvation. Nothing more is necessary. The basic issues of the gospel may be defined simply, but the heart that truly believes them is a heart which has experienced the profoundest of changes. Our concern must not be the extent of understanding but the source. Simple truths from reborn hearts are more significant than orthodox and articulate doctrinal statements from a heart untouched by God.

5. Can we require more of a child than a mere profession of faith?

The natural responsiveness of children requires great care on our part. Many have memories of being 'evangelised' as children. Children's responses to the plea to 'believe in Jesus' can be motivated by all sorts of childish reasons. Some children are very keen to please. Others are too timid to disobey. Even more will profess faith if a free book is offered to all who come forward! The application of external pressure by adults can always produce results. What a child, or an adult, needs is the internal compulsion of the Spirit that causes him to seek salvation.

What are we to do with children who profess faith in Jesus? The way in which we respond to a child should be no different from the way we respond to an adult. We assess the validity of a convert's claim by the change that occurs in his life. The repentant produce fruit in keeping with repentance³⁵. Time will soon reveal a profession of faith made without a change of heart, as Simon demonstrated in Samaria³⁶.

A child reveals the state of his heart by his actions³⁷. The supreme responsibility of a child in the Scriptures in his obedience to God is to show honour and obedience to his parents in everything out of love for Christ³⁸. A child's new heart will reveal itself in making him a more obedient child. Some change will be seen in motivation and action. The test for a child is not sinless perfection. That is not the test for the adult either! It is the fruit of repentance produced in the home, the school, etc.

The role of the parent in the care of a child who is wanting to be saved is exemplified by Eli in his dealing with young Samuel. At first he was not sure what the child meant, then when he realised that God was dealing with the boy he encouraged him to listen and obey³⁹. In the same way, Paul exhorts Christian

parents to admonish, encourage and bear witness to their children to live lives worthy of God⁴⁰.

We walk a tight-rope. We do not want to encourage children to have an enthusiastic but rootless faith⁴¹. Nor do we want to cause to stumble little ones who believe in Christ by discouraging them⁴². The only substantial test of a change of heart in a child or an adult is the life⁴³.

Conclusion

The questions which have been considered, and many others which have not, all arise out of the conviction that children need to be saved from actual and original sin. In the middle of all the other needs of our modern children, let none of us forget their greatest need is Christ.

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- 2 Murray, J. 1977 *Collected Writings of John Murray*. Banner of Truth. Vol.II p35
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- 4 eg Candlish, R. 1972 *Expositions of Genesis*. Sovereign Grace Publishers. pp75,76
- 5 vs 5,8,11,14,17,20,27,31
- 6 Psalm 86:16; 116:16
- 7 Galatians 2:15; 4:8
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- 9 eg Warfield, B. 1981 *Works: Studies in Theology*. Baker. Vol.IX pp411-444
- 10 eg Kingdon, D. 1973 *Children of Abraham*. Carey Publications. p98
- 11 eg Spurgeon, C H. quoted Pike, E H. 1991 *The Life and Work of C H Spurgeon*. Banner of Truth. Vol II p323
- 12 eg *Westminster Confession of Faith* X iii
- 13 eg. Matthew Henry quoted Warfield op. cit. p434
- 14 eg Calvin, John. 1844 *Romans*. Edinburgh. p142
- 15 eg Gregory the Great quoted Warfield op. cit. p143
- 16 eg John Gerhard ibid p424
- 17 Genesis 17:7; 18:25; Deuteronomy 29:29; Joshua 10:35; 2 Samuel 12:22-23; Luke 18:15-16; John 3:3-8
- 18 2 Samuel 12:22-23
- 19 Isaiah 8:4; Jonah 4:11; Deuteronomy 1:39
- 20 Numbers 15:27,30
- 21 Numbers 15:22-29
- 22 Luke 12:47-48
- 23 Genesis 8:21
- 24 Proverbs 22:15
- 25 Romans 3:10-18
- 26 2 Timothy 3:15
- 27 Mark 5:41; John 11:43
- 28 Ephesians 1:19-2:5
- 29 Matthew 18:1-4; 19:13-15
- 30 Ecclesiastes 12:1-7
- 31 Romans 1:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12
- 32 Luke 23:39-43
- 33 Matthew 16:17; Galatians 1:15
- 34 Romans 10:9-10
- 35 Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20
- 36 Acts 8:13, 18-23
- 37 Proverbs 20:11
- 38 Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20
- 39 1 Samuel 3:2-8, 9-10
- 40 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12
- 41 Matthew 13:20-21
- 42 Matthew 18:1-14
- 43 Matthew 7:20

Children of Abraham

by Bill James

What follows is a brief summary by Bill James of the argument of the book 'Children of Abraham' by David Kingdon (now out of print). Inevitably, such a summary cannot capture all the detail of the argument of the book. Nevertheless, it is valuable in reminding us that we can refute the arguments of the Reformed Paedobaptists without surrendering our Reformed heritage of a theology of the covenants.

As Reformed Baptists we claim the name 'Reformed' because we share a common doctrinal heritage with Reformed Paedobaptist brethren in that we confess with them unity of God's purpose of salvation expressed in his gracious covenants. Nevertheless we are also 'Baptist' in that we maintain the practice of believers' baptism. Some would suggest that, because the theology of the covenants is dominated by Paedobaptists, we should renounce covenant theology, and drop the title 'Reformed' as being inconsistent with a truly 'Baptist' position. But it will be seen that there is no inconsistency between being 'Reformed' and 'Baptist'. Indeed, it is Reformed Baptists who maintain a right and proper theology of the covenants; the Paedobaptist Reformed brethren distort covenant theology to their own ends.

This Reformed Baptist position has been maintained by such representatives as Bunyan, Gill, Abraham Booth, Alexander Carson, and Spurgeon.

Baptism and the Covenant of Grace

Reformed Paedobaptists would claim the argument of covenant theology that in the Abrahamic covenant (and throughout the OT) the blessings of the covenant come to Abraham and his seed. This principle is carried forward into the era of the NT and provides the foundation for infant baptism. Such a view of infant baptism does not imply sacramentalism, and provides a positive theology of children.

As Reformed Baptists, we would agree that there is unity between the Testaments which teach one Covenant of grace throughout all ages, one people of God, one way of salvation, and one destiny for all saints. However, as will be demonstrated, we also maintain that there is diversity in the covenants which has been underplayed in Paedobaptist theology.

Circumcision and Baptism

Central to the case of the Reformed Paedobaptists is the analogy between circumcision and baptism. If the Covenant of grace is for both believers and

their children and in the OT the covenant sign was given to infants, then so in the NT baptism (which replaces circumcision) must be applied to infants. Hence, it is claimed, it would seem so natural to baptise infants that it is not surprising that there is no command in the NT to do so. On the contrary, if the Baptist case were true, we should expect a positive prohibition of infant baptism in the NT to contradict what might be expected within the covenant.

In making a response, we would point out that the covenant made with Abraham had two aspects. There is a twofold seed of Abraham. In the OT the numerous descendants of Abraham were evident in the physical multiplication of the nation of Israel. But in these 'last days' the promise is fulfilled in those who belong to Christ by faith: the new children of Abraham (Rom 4:16, Gal 3:27-29). There are children 'after the flesh' and children 'after the Spirit' (Gal 4:21-31). Circumcision is a fleshly type of the inward antitype of regeneration (Phil 3:3, Rom 2:29). Now that the age of preparation has passed, the principle of believers and their seed no longer has covenantal significance.

The New Covenant is different from the Old Covenant in that the emphasis has shifted from external ceremonies to the possession of inward spiritual life (Jer 31:31-34). There were many under the Old Covenant who were without the knowledge of God (Rom 2:17-29), but in the New Covenant 'they shall all know me'. This universal knowledge of God is true of the visible church (2 Cor 6:16).

The baptism of John is a clear sign that the principle of birth connection is abrogated. It is a baptism of repentance. John did not baptise infants because they could not confess their sins. Likewise, Christian baptism is not by virtue of birth, but by repentance (Acts 2:38).

Finally, any insistence that the children of Gentile believers should be baptised is clearly inconsistent. If it is acknowledged that the physical link has been set aside by the spiritual link of faith, then the physical link cannot be suddenly resurrected.

A Critique of Covenant Theology

It is right and proper that the unity of the Testaments and the Covenant of Grace should be maintained. But the Reformed Paedobaptists overplay the continuity of the covenants and underplay the differences. It is in the interests of the Paedobaptist case to identify circumcision as closely as possible with baptism, going beyond the realm of analogy towards identity. There is a tendency to read the terms of the NT administration of baptism back into the OT administration of circumcision, and vice-versa. But the following important differences between circumcision and baptism must be acknowledged:

1. In the OT era, the household servants of Abraham were circumcised on account of his faith because they lived within his jurisdiction (Gen 17:10-14). It

surely cannot be suggested that the personal servants or slaves of believers should be baptised today.

2. There is no evidence in the OT that lack of personal faith on the part of a member of Israel disqualified his offspring from circumcision. Yet faith is required of parents today in the Paedobaptist system if their child is to be baptised.

3. In the OT order even Ishmael was circumcised, although he did not participate in the blessings of the covenant. This cannot be paralleled in the application of baptism.

In view of these differences, it must be acknowledged that the relationship between circumcision and baptism is one of analogy, not identity. Circumcision is a physical type or shadow of the spiritual reality. Just as the Abrahamic promise of the physical land of promise must now be received as a picture of heaven, so the physical qualifications for circumcision must be seen as a picture of the qualification of personal faith now required for baptism. The children of Abraham are not now according to flesh, but those who share his faith (Gal 3:7).

Towards a Baptist Theology of the Covenant

A proper covenant theology will allow the light of the NT to shine upon the shadows of the Old, and to define for us the true meaning of the term 'seed of Abraham'.

The Abrahamic covenant is prominent in the NT: it has come upon those who walk in the steps of Abraham (Rom 4:12). The seed of Abraham are seen in the NT to be not the physical descendants, but believers. Believers alone are the recipients of the promise, not believers and their physical children.

The term 'seed' or 'descendants of Abraham' is used in three senses in the NT:

1. The Seed who is Christ (Gal 3:16ff). The people of Israel is a type of Christ.
2. The literal seed of Abraham (Rom 9:7, John 8:37,39).
3. The true or spiritual seed of Abraham (Rom 4:16).

In the NT it is Christ and believers who are at the forefront as the seed of Abraham. There is no suggestion that as there was an Israel 'after the flesh' there is now a church 'after the flesh'. Sons of God are 'not of blood . . . but of God' (John 1:12-13).

As there is a threefold presentation of the 'seed of Abraham' in the NT, so there is a threefold presentation of circumcision:

1. The 'circumcision of Christ', that is the spiritual and moral regeneration of a man (Col 2:11).
2. The purely physical circumcision in the flesh (Eph 2:11).
3. Spiritual, inward circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29, Phil 3:3).

If believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, then they are spiritually circumcised. Baptism is the New Covenant sign of this reality.

The following features of this interpretation should be emphasised:

1. We believe in covenant grace. This Baptist theology is not Arminian, but Reformed. While we emphasise the necessity of repentance and faith to enter into the benefits of salvation, yet this rests upon the grace of God, not decisionism or subjectivism.
2. Our view of the church is not perfectionist, but takes seriously the NT picture of the visible church being vitally united to Christ. We insist that, as far as humanly possible, the membership of the visible church should give credible evidence of faith in Christ. This positive view of the church does not confuse the church with other God-given institutions of the state and the family.
3. We avoid the assumption of the Reformed Paedobaptist that his children are already in the covenant at birth, or even regenerate. As Reformed Baptists we regard our children as non-Christians to be called to repentance and faith. We avoid lulling our children into a false sense of security; we avoid false hopes and false expectations; we avoid false sentimentality in the instruction of our children.

Children in the Old Testament

The place of children of the OT will be examined in three relevant areas:

1. Entry into the Covenant Community

The physical seed of Abraham was included in the covenant as soon as practicably possible after birth by the sign of circumcision. There was no later 'confirmation' ceremony, and while breach of the covenant would require exclusion, one could not decide to 'opt out' of the covenant. There is no OT parallel of the confirmation ceremony of the Paedobaptists.

2. Status within the Covenant Community

It was recognised that children were not responsible adults. For some years the child did not know the difference between good and evil. As a child, he was under instruction. Nevertheless, while still children, these young Israelites were regarded as full members of the covenant (participating in the Passover, etc.). It therefore seems inconsistent of the Paedobaptists to deny the Lord's Supper to their children.

3. The Remnant

As Israel's history progresses, the teaching of the righteous remnant becomes increasingly clear. This 'marks the future transference of religion from a nationalistic to an ecclesiastical basis'. (Wheeler Robinson). Physical descent is seen to be insufficient for membership of the true Israel of God. Now while all circumcised males would be members of the covenant community, they would only be part of the remnant if circumcised in their hearts. It is inconceivable that a child should be considered part of the remnant by virtue of being born into a 'remnant family'. As the terms of the New Covenant are announced (Jer 31:32ff), it is clear that membership depends on personal spiritual rebirth, not physical descent. There may well have been children who were within the remnant, just as there are children who are within the New Covenant, but only if they have been spiritually reborn.

Children in the New Testament

John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the apostle Paul all challenge reliance on physical descent from Abraham as grounds of membership of the people of God. There must be personal repentance. It is within the framework of this polemic that NT teaching on children is to be understood.

The teaching of our Lord will be examined first, followed by other NT teaching.

1. The Teaching of Jesus

Jesus makes positive references to children in Matt 18:1-6 and 19:13-15. Clearly Jesus cannot be teaching that children should be accepted on the grounds of descent from a godly line. That would contradict the polemic against reliance on physical descent. Rather, there are other lessons to be drawn from these texts.

In Matthew 18, Jesus is teaching His disciples that we can only possess the humility necessary for entrance to the Kingdom if we are prepared to be insignificant as children were in the ancient world (cf. Tasker). The child's position of lowliness and obscurity is the illustration the Lord uses. He is not saying that children possess special spiritual qualities, or that all children, as children, are within the Kingdom. He does make special reference to certain 'little ones' (Matt 18:6,10), but they are those who believe in Him and not children in general.

In Matthew 19 we see that Jesus says of children that 'of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'. Comparison with Mark 10:13-16 shows that Jesus is commending the children because they freely come to Him and receive Him. They give a picture of the ideal response to the Lord. They receive the Kingdom because they receive Christ. Jesus welcomes all children to come to Him.

There is no hint in either of these passages of the salvation of all children, or of distinctions between the children of believers or unbelievers.

2. Other NT Teaching

It may be noted in passing that Paul makes reference to children in his epistles. This is not relevant to our argument; a child need not be baptised to be instructed or admonished!

Acts 2:39 is sometimes hailed as a 'Paedobaptist text'. It should be noted, however, that the promise of the Spirit involves sons and daughters prophesying (2:17). This hardly applies to infants. Furthermore, Acts 2:39 itself contains the condition 'as many as the Lord our God shall call'. When the children are called by God and regenerate they may be baptised.

The oft-quoted 1 Corinthians 7:14 is also of little help to the Paedobaptist. He would claim that the child may be presumed to be a Christian child because of the one Christian parent and should be baptised. But if this is the case, the verse also teaches that the unbelieving marriage partner should be presumed to be a Christian as well, and should be baptised. In fact Paul is teaching that the presence of the believer sets apart the family for salvation through the witness of the Christian partner.

Children and Regeneration

Four points will be made under this heading. This subject is fraught with difficulty as biblical data are so scarce.

1. It must be maintained that all, without exception, are born 'in Adam'. Children, just as much as adults, need regeneration (John 3:6, 1 Cor 15:50).
2. Children must be regenerated on the same grounds as adults. Children, like adults, are sinners who are saved only by the grace of God. We cannot say what is the destiny of children dying in infancy, but if some or all are saved it would only be by the grace of God and not on account of their innocence.
3. There is no express warrant in Scripture for belief in universal infant salvation. We can only be hopeful agnostics on this issue. Paedobaptists baptise their infants on the grounds of presumptive regeneration but there are no sure grounds for this belief, and certainly no grounds for being more certain of the election of believers' children than the election of unbelievers' children.
4. Believers' children are to be treated as unconverted until they heed the message of the gospel and are saved. They are privileged in that they are born within the sphere of gospel teaching and the nurture of the church.

The Priority of Praying for our Children

Although he lost his mother when he was only six, James Haldane testified that her influence upon him as a child was so effective and pervasive that it never left him.

James and Robert Haldane were brothers born into an aristocratic family in Scotland during the 18th century. Both were converted young and both enjoyed prolonged and famous careers in the Christian ministry. Robert (1764-1842) aspired to be a missionary in Bengal. That door did not open to him. Instead he spent his life in Scotland and Europe. In 1816 he experienced a remarkable spiritual awakening in Geneva. That led to the publication of his best known book, a commentary on the letter to the Romans. James (1768-1851) was the first Congregational minister in Scotland. His church in Edinburgh seated more than 3,000. He ministered there for almost fifty years and also travelled a great deal as an itinerant evangelist.

Recently the Banner of Truth published *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane* (706pp hardback £12.95). It is fascinating to read about the role played by James' and Robert's mother. 'From their infancy she laboured to instil into their minds a sense of the importance of eternity, particularly impressing upon them the necessity of prayer, and teaching them to commit to memory and understand the psalms, portions of the shorter catechism, and of Scripture.'

Prayer does not save our souls. It is the work of Christ and his atonement that redeems us. Yet in the process of coming to faith the Holy Spirit involves Christians and their prayers. Especially vital is the intercession of godly parents for their children.

Praying for our children is an integral part of bringing them up in 'the training and instruction of the Lord'. This phrase in Ephesians 6:4 could be translated 'in the discipline and counselling of the Lord'.

Of foremost importance is the example that we set as parents. If we do not live out the Christian faith before our children day by day then our formal spiritual exercises will be blunted and lack credibility. We run the terrible danger of destroying the power of the gospel for them. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling us that we can provide an example which is sincere and compelling. Our example and teaching needs to be characterised by the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Have you ever met a parent who is not self-effacing about this matter?

Ten reasons why we should pray for our children.

1. The glory of God should always be first in our minds. We should pray for

our children's salvation so that their lives will bring glory to our Triune God.

If we live for the glory of God we will have a high regard for prayer. We need daily to pray on our own. We should intercede in detail together as husband and wife at least once every day. As our children grow we need appropriately to ensure a lively form of family worship. Our intercessions are required for the whole body of Christ, for our local church in particular, for sister churches, for missionaries in their work, and especially for nations in their desperate need of the gospel. Also we need to pray for the poor and needy, refugees and those organisations set to help them, something we are often reminded of by the news media. Burning in our hearts should be the desire for a global revival to forward the salvation of multitudes of perishing souls. The apostle Paul urges that 'requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and for all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:1,2).

Our prayers for our children should be in the context of our comprehensive responsibility of intercession. We should not be self-centred. Likewise we ought not to be child-centred in any obsessive sense, yet we need to employ to the full our privilege to pray that our children's lives will bring glory to God.

2. We should pray for our children because an eternity is at stake for each

one of them.

We need to plead for our children because a happy eternity is a prize beyond description.

*No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those
who love him (1 Cor 2:9).*

Alternatively the miseries of a lost eternity are a disaster so great that no language can describe it.

In the light of eternity we must surely appreciate the importance of praying for our children. Now is the time to pray. Soon it will be too late.

Possibly the finest evangelistic book ever penned was by Richard Baxter, recently transposed into modern language by John Blanchard and published under the title *Invitation to Live*. Baxter based his work on the text, 'The Lord has no pleasure in the death of the wicked' (Ez 18:32). That declaration is a reassuring help to us in our prayers. We need always to be motivated by the knowledge that whenever a soul is rescued from Satan's clutches and brought out of darkness into light it magnifies our Saviour. The angels of heaven do not need to be telephoned with news about a sinner coming to faith. They know that and rejoice. Our joy and theirs unite when our own children come to repentance.

Sometimes those who have been the subject of intercession for many years are converted late. I know of one family in which six of seven children early came to faith. But one was a prodigal. But other members of the family did not despair but continued

to pray for him faithfully. Eventually he came to repentance when he was past forty years of age.

3. We should pray for our children because we cannot rely on others to do it for us.

Salvation comes about through means, principally prayer and preaching, intercession and instruction. There are great advantages in belonging to a spiritual church. In many churches the members covenant to pray for and support each other. If that is the case there will be many who pray for your children. But think of all the children in the world with no one to pray for them.

I am a member of a church in which a number of members are involved in caring for those who were homeless and who never knew the meaning of parental love. We are often reminded of the contrast between those who are prayed for and cared for and those who have never known parental care and affection, still less prayer.

4. We should pray for our children because nobody else is likely to pray with the same concern as we have.

Hannah was alone in her concern for Samuel. First she prayed that she might have a child. Before he was born he was dedicated to the service of Jehovah. That dedication was borne out in practice because Hannah later gave Samuel literally to the service of the Lord at Shiloh (1 Sam chapters 1,2).

Sometimes the privilege of prayer and caring for children is shared by

grandparents. For instance Paul says of Timothy that he knew the Scriptures from infancy and was the subject of both his mother's and grandmother's tuition.

The case of Charles Haddon Spurgeon illustrates the role played by both parents and grandparents. Charles was the eldest of a very large family of seventeen, eight of whom survived infancy and early childhood. Because of family pressure Charles was taken to live with his grandparents. His grandfather was a minister in the Puritan tradition who had inherited one of the finest libraries in the land, full of Puritan classics. As a child Spurgeon was not only surrounded by these books but was constantly under the preaching of his grandfather whose large church was filled to capacity.

James Spurgeon was quite outstanding as a preacher and years later people came down to London to hear the younger Spurgeon, declaring that they would 'run their legs off to hear a Spurgeon!' As a child Charles was the constant subject of affectionate prayer. He became thoroughly conversant with theology as well as hymnology, being rewarded for every hymn he learned by heart. When converted at the age of 15 this background was lighted up so we should not be surprised that he possessed a lightning-quick spiritual and doctrinal discernment. At seventeen he pastored and filled the church at Waterbeach and at the age of twenty became the foremost preacher in London, soon leading the largest congregation in the world. His published sermons eventually reached 63

volumes, well beyond those of any other preacher on record. He owed much to the prayers of his godly parents and grandparents.

5. We should pray for our children because there is nobody else as likely to know their needs and interests as well as we do.

By creation we are intimately bonded to our offspring. Their disappointments are ours. Their happiness is our happiness. Their pains are shared by us. In technological terms the latest expression of this fact is illustrated by the sound recorder for infants which transmits their every whimper to other rooms in the house. The union between parents and children is extremely personal, the affinity all embracing. In this unity we have the privilege of prayer for our children and must guard against sin hardening our hearts and causing us to be indifferent to our children's needs.

We are daily involved in the most personal way in the lives of our children and so will be able to take all the relevant factors into consideration for prayer. Often we need wisdom as we share with them and counsel them. We need to recall the promise, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him' (Jas 1:5).

'Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it' (Prov 22:6). This is an observation and not a promise that can be absolutised. It is certainly a principle that can be pleaded. The Hebrew word 'train' can be translated, equip, catechise or dedicate. It

certainly involves and embraces all these factors. But all training, equipping and catechising should spring from prayer.

6. We should pray for our children because that will bring freedom and enjoyment in teaching them and sharing company with them.

The great commandment to love the LORD our God with all our hearts is expressed in Deuteronomy 6:4: 'These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.'

Skill and imagination is required to make family worship edifying, varied, instructive, attractive and stimulating. These qualities emerge out of prayer, especially intercession that all you do will contribute toward that great end which is the salvation of your children.

But it is not as though we only share the Bible and Bible songs with our children. Christians should have a worldview. We are interested in all spheres of creation and human activity and intelligently explore and interpret with our children both the good and the perverse of the world around us.

7. We should pray for our children because that will help us through times of stress.

Praying for our children will help us through those times which are tiring, taxing, or unpleasant. Often the hardest work is correction. Obviously love and wisdom need to be in balance

with the best interests of our children in mind.

We should recall the words of Hebrews, 'For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it' (Heb 12:7-11).

8. We should pray for our children because our prayers will counteract evil influences that invade their minds.

The issue of secular schools to which most parents are obliged to send their children is a relevant and controversial one. Understandably we hear the protest, 'How can you submit your children to teachers who are anti-Christian?' But isn't it inevitable that our children will be exposed to anti-Christian philosophy and behaviour? How have the Russian Christians and Christians in totalitarian Communist lands survived the atheism and total secular evolutionary humanism and materialism of their schools and of their society? We are finding out that they have not only survived but actually multiplied under these adverse circumstances. Surely the answer is that believers in Communist nations have prayed for their children and at the same time equipped them day by day with knowledge to with-

stand the deluge of anti-Christian worldly propaganda. I heard of one very simple instance of a child dealing with an atheist lecturer sent to promote Communism in a school in Russia. A child began the question time by directing attention to the marvel of creation by asking the lecturer if he could explain why he had a moustache but his wife did not? The lecturer was totally nonplussed.

In 1990 in Toronto I heard the testimony of Georgi Vins and that of his daughter Natasha who translated for him. Pastor Vins described how he spent eight years in prison because he would not compromise his faith under pressure from the Communist regime. He testified that he was given grace to prevail in prayer for Natasha when the atheistic system was used to attempt to indoctrinate her and destroy her faith. Natasha gave testimony that her father's prayer and witness was instrumental in preserving her faith when she was under intense pressure to compromise.

Praying for our children will alert us to shield them as much as possible from bad company. Have you ever noticed that Proverbs begins with an appeal to avoid bad company? (Prov 1:10-19).

Prayers for our children will help remind us to analyse the influence of television on them. Programmes have increased in their focus on promiscuity *as normal*, blasphemy and taking the Lord's name in vain *as the norm*, as well as presenting a high profile for pornography, crime and violence. Is it possible to make Philippians 4:8 the standard for our family viewing? 'Whatever is right, whatever is pure, lovely, admirable — if anything is

excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.’

9. We should pray for our children because they will need divine help and protection as they grow up.

Surely while we have opportunity we should surround our children with our prayers which should include the supplication that they will be brought safely through inevitable disappointments, trials, temptations and conflicts.

One of the great examples of such prayer is that of Monica, the mother of Augustine of Hippo (354-430). Augustine was converted in 385 and baptised in 387. He became one of the great leaders and theologians of the early church. His father was a pagan but his mother Monica pursued him with her prayers and tears. From the famous *Confessions of Augustine* we can appreciate that Monica had much to discourage her but she did not relent in her prayers for her wayward son.

10. We should pray for our children because that will help us talk to them about spiritual issues.

Have you noticed how some Christians are able very naturally to

witness spontaneously to others and able to reason and answer questions with consummate ease? Yet most seem to find speaking about crucial spiritual issues difficult and embarrassing. Some find talking to their relatives the most daunting of all. Though it is easier to talk to children than adults, some parents find it by no means easy to have a heart to heart talk about the gospel with their own children.

A very delicate balance exists between nagging, which is unhelpful, and the need to be forthright and clear, and that in a way which is natural, not sanctimonious or authoritarian. Prayer should truly help in this sensitive matter and result in joy and confidence as we share the great issues of the gospel.

Notes

In preparation of this material I acknowledge the writing of William Scribner which appears in the *Anthology of Presbyterian and Reformed Literature*, volume four, published by Naphthali Press, P O Box 141084, Dallas, Texas 75214. These volumes which are filled with rare Puritan classics are mostly out of print. Some of the concepts are exceptionally helpful. However the style is dated and a complete rewrite is necessary.

My Call and Work as a Medical Missionary

Dr Charles Woodrow, District Hospital, Marrere, Nampula, Mozambique

During my last year of university study, the matter of foreign missions was laid on my heart. I was slow to accept this since it was far removed from my former ambitions but during the following years I obtained medical, surgical and language qualifications suitable for medical missionary work.

The call to Mozambique came in 1985 after I began praying for specific direction, particularly desiring that my area of work would first be a legitimate mission field, where the local church was non-existent or unequipped to fulfil the great commission in its local area. Second, that it would be a place where sophisticated, expensive medical care was uncommon, so that a mission hospital could function on a thrifty budget yet still provide better treatment than was otherwise available. Third, that it would be in a country closed to full-time teaching missionaries. A medical missionary would thus satisfy the greatest need by concentrating on an area where those proclaiming the gospel would otherwise be barred.

My attention was directed to Mozambique and on researching I was amazed to discover that, from what was known in 1985, it fitted the above criteria almost better than any other spot on earth. The four million strong Makua-Lomwe tribe in the region of Nampula was thought to be the largest unreached people group in sub-Saharan Africa and possibly the world. Only two nations had fewer doctors per capita and at the same time there were not even five missionaries in the entire country because of the current government's Marxist orientation. In the end I concluded that God had put the three criteria in my head as a means of guiding me later as I sought to know his will in this matter.

The importance of the Reformed faith in the missionary setting

One of the legacies bequeathed to us by the fathers of the Reformation is an unambiguously God-centred religion. This God-centredness lends a different perspective to virtually every aspect of Christian life, including evangelism and missions. The man-centred view of missions sees man's need of salvation as the great motivation propelling us to mission work. Since from man's perspective there is scarcely anything more important than himself, since he is the focal point around which all things revolve, this has become the supreme driving force behind the missions movement for much of Christendom.

Indeed, men do need to be saved. Without Christ they face an eternity of suffering. But there is another motive for missions which is even greater than this. As far greater, in fact, as its object is greater than man. The common motive arises out of a concern for man and his need. The greater motive, which seems to be disappearing from view in many churches, arises from a concern for God and his glory.

This concern for the greatness of God and the glory due to his name has always been the bedrock undergirding biblical missions. David, the man after God's own heart, wrote in 1 Chronicles 16:24, *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples.* What was his motivation? What was the passion driving him to missions? He revealed it in the next verse. *For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise.*

The chief motive for missions ought to be God's glory. Among those who are truly

aflame for God, what ought to send a shudder down our spine and propel us into missions faster than anything is the awful report that 'there is a place where people do not worship God! — a dead and blackened spot upon the globe from which no praise ascends!'

Where is this motive in missions today? It is buried and lost in the concern to get men saved exclusively for the benefit they derive from it. Certainly that is no small matter. And if compassion for the lost is not present within us it is unlikely we will draw many to the Saviour. But if it eclipses everything else, it is unlikely we will ever please him who taught that next to our love for Christ, even the devotion we have to our parents, wife and children should be of a secondary magnitude (Luke 14:26).

Besides a qualitative difference in the motive that stimulates us to work and keeps us sticking at the post, we find the Reformed faith naturally produces a difference in strategy as we go about the work of missions.

The hospital provides a rich field for evangelism. My Makua helper and I make evangelistic rounds regularly and we are never shut out by those whom we have served medically. It is wonderful to have such an opportunity ready and waiting whenever we have 30 minutes to devote to it. And we do feel obliged to work at this, for we know preaching the gospel is the means God has appointed for calling his people to himself.

We want to see people founded and built up in the faith. Consequently the vast majority of the time devoted to spiritual ministry is spent training those hungering to grow in grace, even to the point that evangelistic opportunities must sometimes go begging.

I see a very different emphasis among missionaries who believe the eternal fate of those on their field hangs entirely on their ability to get the message out. If they fail to preach the gospel to anyone, that is one person who might be in heaven but for their own lack of time or effort. Such

pressure to evangelise isn't all bad, but it does have one inevitable, disastrous consequence, that is, the compulsion to go for many superficial decisions rather than spending the greater time it takes to establish a smaller number firmly in the faith.

Once a fellow has made an outward decision for Christ, these missionaries speak as if his eternal destiny is clearly known and for ever secure. There is immediate relief and joy. I cannot help but imagine that continued growth in the faith would be seen as a relatively minor thing in comparison to bringing yet another person over the much more cataclysmic threshold that separates the eternally lost from the eternally saved. Thus I suspect careful training of young Christians takes a back seat to more evangelism.

Indeed, given the fact that there isn't time to do everything, that we all have to pick and choose what we will give ourselves to, it is not surprising to me that missionary letters often speak more of decisions made for Christ than of spiritual growth on the part of those under their ministry. The most important measuring stick is clearly the one that records numbers of conversions.

Those holding to the doctrines of grace know a positive response to the gospel is often transitory, a temporary fascination with religion which may emanate entirely from the flesh. It does not necessarily imply that God is at work. One sees the same response by men to Eastern religions, Islam, the occult, or whatever may be popular in their area of the world. Consequently, our optimism, joy and relief is somewhat guarded until the fruit of genuine salvation is evidenced by true spiritual growth and endurance over time — the perseverance of the saints.

I believe that the long term attitude results in a stronger church, one which in the end contains more genuine believers capable of edifying one another and leading the lost to a true saving relationship with Christ. Time will tell if that actually happens here in Nampula. In any case, our

understanding of how God works in the lives of his people constrains us to take this approach in evangelism and Christian training.

Specific examples of divine intervention in Marrere

We came here with a government contract to work at the large regional referral hospital in Nampula. On our arrival the local health director asked me to work instead at the smaller 120 bed rural hospital in Marrere, a district about five kilometers outside the city. Built by the Catholics on a hill overlooking the city, it was a beautiful facility in the days before independence. A Canadian relief organisation recently undertook the job of refurbishing it and provided a part-time Canadian doctor. Since I was the only other doctor in Nampula who spoke English, they asked me to work there too.

Being the principal doctor in a two doctor hospital I have a lot of say in how things are done and complete freedom to evangelise as I work. I have even preached from the hospital steps. We continue to thank God for such a 'tailor-made' work assignment.

The Lord also provided just the right man to work as my Makua interpreter and surgical assistant. His name is Arnaldo. Arnaldo grew up in a nominally Muslim family. A few months before our arrival a Christian co-worker began witnessing to him. Her efforts kindled an interest in spiritual things. Soon after I began distributing copies of John's Gospel to patients and workers I noticed that Arnaldo was reading his copy over and over. When I suggested we meet together for regular Bible study he jumped at the opportunity. Over the following months, it became clear the Lord's hand was on him. Starting as a curious seeker, he grew into a zealous Christian, reading the Bible during work breaks, actively witnessing to our patients, praying unashamedly with them in the operating room, and distributing copies of John's Gospel in the clinic and on the wards.

Arnaldo has always been a strong right hand man, but during my first months

here as I struggled to communicate with these patients who did not speak Portuguese, I often longed for an interpreter who could help address the spiritual needs that are so great. Little did I guess that in God's providence the man already standing there beside me was the answer to my prayers!

Another one of our prayers during the first term was that God would raise up six men who could be established in the faith and who would one day become pillars in a church planting ministry. Besides Arnaldo, the Lord has already brought eight other men to us, seven of whom are teachers in their secular jobs! Their commitment to our studies has been unwavering. As a direct result of their enthusiasm we now have a substantial waiting list of people hoping to 'register' when there is time to open an additional Bible study class.

In retrospect, we see clear evidence of God's hand at work in the selection of our mission field. When I first began praying about this matter I had never even heard of Mozambique. Even from what I subsequently read, I could not have guessed it was such a fertile field for evangelism and Bible instruction. We do not have to preach the gospel of grace in the teeth of a firmly entrenched Jewish, Muslim, or Catholic mindset, as characterises much of the mission field today. We are not labouring in a 'post-Christian' culture nor is government opposition to the gospel any longer a factor. In this we see the hand of God behind the timing of our arrival. A few years ago even a pastor was not allowed to pray in the hospital with one of his own parishioners. I anticipated carrying on our work amidst repression and hindrances on every side. But today everything has changed as Mozambique is shedding its former ideology with a vengeance.

In this regard, what would be the most astounding manifestation of God's sovereign hand at work could be unfolding now. On a recent trip to Maputo I met with the vice-Minister of Health who said that the government wanted to give the hos-

pitals they nationalised at independence back into the hands of private organisations who could be trusted to operate them for the benefit of the people. He wanted to know if Grace Missions would be willing to 'accept' Marrere! He even offered to continue subsidising it with the same funding it currently receives from the government!

Five years ago, when it was still illegal to pray in a hospital, no one could have guessed such things as these would be happening today. But God, who directs the affairs of men, has sovereignly placed us in the right place at the right time. We have found it a thrilling experience to have him lead us, even though at one time it seemed we were truly heading to the end of the earth!

Present and future goals

We want to see a Christian mission hospital functioning as an effective witness to the local population both through words and works. By God's grace we are looking to the day when no one leaves Marrere without hearing at least once a clear, complete presentation of the gospel. Over time, this would provide tremendous evangelistic coverage as there are 350 to 400 thousand people in the area served by the hospital.

Another reason for staying where God has placed us is that Nampula is the commercial, educational and cultural centre for the northern third of Mozambique, the most densely populated part of the country. We hope that from Nampula a church planting

ministry can be established that will eventually spread outward throughout the rest of the country. For this to succeed, a seminary staffed by men firm in the truth would be necessary. Nampula is a strategic location for such a seminary.

We are eager to benefit already established churches as well. There are many relief programmes channeled through local churches by foreign religious organisations, but apart from one other missionary family, there is nothing available to strengthen them spiritually. We would like to open a bookstore stocked with Bibles and sound Christian literature. There are two Brazilian publishing houses that specialise in translating material written by sovereign grace writers. Many excellent books are already available but need channels of distribution.

We would like to organise conferences where gifted men could expound what to local Christians are still the 'mysteries' contained in the Word of God. Even disregarding the fact that these seminars would come from a sovereign grace perspective, such careful Bible teaching would be most unusual here.

Prayer is urged for this strategic work. If the government offer referred to above materialises, much additional help would be required as well as short-term practical and long-term medical and teaching personnel.

This article was first published in Reformation Africa South, Box 1404, Honeydew 2040, South Africa.

Cameroon

Mike Gaydosh, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Amityville, New York, USA and I were very encouraged by the warm reception we received in South West Province. We were with about 30 ministers for four days, preached in several well attended churches and ministered in the Baptist High School. There is an urgent need for a Christian Bookshop to serve the area. A branch of the Evangelical Library is under way at Limbe.



Samson Khama and Mike Gaydosh

Uganda

A report by Martin Holdt

Derek Stone and I went to Uganda from 1-9 May 1992 to meet with pastors from the Soroti and Mbale areas of North-Eastern Uganda. The remarkable way in which God answered prayer was a great encouragement. Visas were granted to us in spite of the fact that South African citizens are forbidden to enter Uganda. The sense of peace and assurance that the providence of God had prevailed once more was a source of comfort. We were exceptionally well received and looked after.

The people of God in Uganda have passed through a baptism of fire and blood. Hardly a family amongst those we met and ministered to had not been affected by some of the atrocities under the regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote. Many of the men who attended the Seminar had experi-

enced imprisonment for the faith, intimidation for being followers of Christ, and harassment in the course of their duties. For all that, they have emerged from their trials refined and renewed in their zeal to extend the Kingdom of God even more than before. It was significant to note that when persecution first began, the Church was reduced in size as half-hearted professors of the faith deserted the fold and disappeared. Those who remained took up in earnest the confession of their faith and the ensuing growth of the Church was nothing less than remarkable.

Derek taught on the subject of *Church Government* and also dealt with *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. Although it was an inter-denominational gathering and most were Pentecostal, the solid teaching of God's Word, especially with respect to the person and work of the

Holy Spirit, was exceptionally well received. I was asked to teach *Homiletics* (the exercise of the gift of preaching) and added to that an exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith. I was also asked to teach on *Biblical Evangelism*.

We were moved and warmed by the response of men who are thirsty for truth and we were humbled to be invited again next year to continue the ministry of instructing pastors in the field. Of the more than three hundred pastors who attended this Seminar, not one owned a vehicle. They came by public transport, by bicycle and even on foot, one man walking as far as 40 kilometers.

Patrick Okabe is doing a sterling work in endeavouring to make available whatever resources he can to pastors who are poor and do not have the necessary tools for a good ministry. He has set up two libraries, one in Soroti and the other in Kumi and although the supply of books is scant, he hopes to expand them considerably and also to set up a library in Mbale. The limited resources available are being eagerly used by pastors who travel considerable distances to make the most of this facility. Patrick also plans to furnish the libraries with cassette recorders so that men may listen to recorded messages from other parts of the world and in so doing derive benefit from the preaching and teaching gifts God has bestowed on others.

Promotion of the Doctrines of Grace in Brazil

The EDITORA FIEL ('Faithful

Publishing Company'), Caixa Postal 81, CEP 12201, Sao Jose dos Campos, SP, Brazil, aims to promote sound teaching in the country of Brazil, with the publication of helpful literature and also an annual Conference. Last October FIEL held the seventh leadership Conference. 170 adults were present including 54 pastors. 50% of those attending were Baptists and 40% Presbyterians. Ministry was provided by Bill Clark from the UK and Tom Nettles from USA.

Opposition from the Baptist Convention

The official publication of the Baptist Convention of Brazil, the *Baptist Journal*, has recently explicitly opposed Calvinistic teaching. Richard Denham of FIEL has written to 700 Brazilian pastors seeking to rectify the distortions of the Doctrines of Grace contained in the *Baptist Journal* and has supplied reprints of articles from the same journal from the time when it endorsed these doctrines.

A leading Reformed pastor, Sillas Quirino, was removed from his post at the Convention Baptist Seminary in Campos because of his Reformed position. Other Seminary professors resigned in protest. Pastor Quirino and others have sent booklets in defence of the Doctrines of Grace to 4,000 pastors.

We need to pray that the materials provided by FIEL, by Pastor Quirino and others would have a mighty impact in this great land, where Evangelicalism has grown so fast, but where depth and stability are often sadly lacking.

Steady Advance in the North of England

A report of the North of England Conference, Whitby, North Yorkshire, May, 1992



Whitby, The jaws of a whale (large enough to swallow Jonah) with two conferees, Ian Drake and Mike Betts in the foreground

About 170 church officers attended the fifth North of England Conference at Whitby in North Yorkshire. The conference is organised by experienced pastors in the North of England, Peter Brumby, Bill Dyer and Graham Heaps. The church in Whitby pastored by Peter Brumby for a number of years has commissioned him to a wider ministry of church planting in the North of England. Twenty years ago the Reformed constituency in the North of England was tiny. This conference is a great encouragement since it reflects a considerable increase in the number of Reformed churches in the North of England. 20 years ago the attendance at a conference of this kind would have probably been about 20.

The gathering begins on Friday evening and concludes in late afternoon on Saturday. This year there were three speakers. Iain Murray expounded the message of Jude in a thoroughly edifying and thought provoking manner to which we will return. In a structured and meticulous way Derek Prime handled the theme, *Pressure on Public Worship*. The pressure comes from the charismatics who criticise what they derisively describe as the Non-conformist sandwich: *hymn, prayer, hymn, reading, sermon, hymn, benediction*. They call for

more freedom and more participation, more freedom by way of spontaneity and also room for popular songs and choruses to be repeated as many times as they are enjoyed. Derek Prime urged that instead of rejecting these views outright, they should be carefully considered since there is often much lacking in worship services. However the way to improvement is not by replacing one form with another since every form will in due course become familiar and be in danger of becoming stale and lifeless. He stressed the necessity of preparation and content for the services not only for preaching but also for the public prayer. He also urged thoughtful variation in the order of service.

Derek by-passed the great underlying theological issue which continues to divide evangelicals across the world, namely whether 1 Corinthians 12-14 is applicable today or whether it belongs to the transitional period from the Old to the New order. If 1 Corinthians 12-14 still applies then the form of worship required is essentially different from that which has prevailed since the apostolic era. Room would need to be made for tongues and interpretation, prophecies and revelations.

The conference concluded with Paul Cook presenting the subject, *Lessons from Spurgeon*. The most helpful were:

1. Spurgeon showed unbounded confidence in the preaching of the gospel – do we?
2. CHS drew everything that was best from his predecessors (his Puritan library was probably the best in Britain!).
3. Spurgeon consistently exposed the evil of liberalism and refused participation with Modernists.
4. CHS is an example of a preacher who stressed the primary issues rather than secondary subjects.

Part of the conference agenda was devoted to reports from some of the churches. Several pastors gave brief reports of their work, the general impression being one of slow growth with no spectacular increase. The only churches in the North of England circles represented by the conference which continue to show exceptional growth are Garston Bridge Chapel in Liverpool where Bill Bygroves is the pastor, and Pontefract, where Bill Dyer is the minister. We should note that in both instances the leaders are men with unusual evangelistic ability and fervour. That prompts a concluding observation. We should strive to be more effective in our evangelism, at the same time stressing missionary work abroad. With right doctrine, continued reformation, fervent evangelism, faithful intercession, and the Lord's favour in granting a spiritual awakening there is no reason why the North of England should not be won for Christ. One of the Puritans said that the Lord lights up a candle when he has lost coins to seek. The lights have multiplied across the north of England. May it be for the salvation and nurture of many souls.

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life

Donald S Whitney, Nav Press, USA, 1991. 254pp.

Review by Sharon James

This book is highly commended. Hopefully it will soon be made available in Britain (in affordable paperback format). Whitney manages to treat the fundamental disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, and so forth, in a fresh and vigorous way. The book reads easily, with a refreshing range of contemporary illustrations. The author has read widely and there is also a wealth of allusion to the Puritan and Reformed heritage of writing and sermons. The result is a book which does not sacrifice depth.

The text is broken up with headings and there is much helpful application of the biblical truths explored. Throughout, the cultivation of holiness through discipline is presented as the right response to the grace of God, rather than as a legalistic duty. Whitney demonstrates that there is a true freedom and enjoyment when godliness is sought by means of a rigorously disciplined lifestyle. This is a 'Puritan' work. For instance the excellent treatment of the subject of meditation is typical of the Puritan tradition. Yet the style throughout is thoroughly contemporary. There are telling and persuasive encouragements to memorise the Word. The chapter on prayer is stimulating and full of encouragements from the testimonies of some of the giants of the past, such as Baxter and Müller. Meditation is seen as the 'missing link' between Bible intake and prayer and Whitney helpfully points to how this can be undertaken. Further chapters deal with worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, keeping a spiritual journal and learning. All these are edifying and tend to stir the reader to action. Occasionally the cultivation of the disciplines is viewed in an unhelpfully individualistic light, but as a true pastor Whitney stresses the role of fellowship in the practice of godliness. In a telling section he chides our readiness to substitute 'socialising' with fellow Christians for real fellowship which he defines as 'bi-directional communication of spiritual life' or 'sharing the life of Christ in both word and deed' (pages 230-231).

The tone throughout is challenging and encouraging. As the author affirms, everything we do is for eternity, 'nothing has an impact only in this life' (p 236). Faithful Christ-centred practice of the spiritual disciplines for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim 4:7) is surely essential if we are to redeem time in this life and prepare for eternity.

Baptism in the Early Church

Professors H F Stander and J P Louw.
175 pp paperback. 1988. Didaskalia. P O
Box 905-031, Garsfontein 0042,
SOUTH AFRICA

A Review

Many dogmatic claims have been made for an early start for infant baptism in the early Church. Professors Stander and Louw of the University of Pretoria have conducted a very thorough examination of Greek, Latin and Syrian sources on this subject for the first four centuries. The result shows that in the majority of instances it was persons of responsible age who were baptised. Particular attention has been given to what baptism actually meant in the early Church.

‘The person baptised becomes a new person. The old life permeated by sin is cleansed. Therefore remission or washing away of sins played a central role in the rite of Christian baptism throughout the early stages of the Christian Church.

Going down into the baptismal water symbolised participation in the death of Christ on the cross and performed at the same time a washing away of sins so that the person emerging from the water is performatively cleansed and regenerated symbolically, by sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ. The theology underlying these conceptions was linked to Paul’s statement in Romans 6’ (p 163).

‘In later full and lengthy descriptions of the actual rite as preserved, for example, in the writings of Cyril, Basil, Ambrose, Etheria, Chrysostom and Theodore in

the 4th century, regeneration was also symbolised by the removal of clothes when entering the baptismal water and thus descending naked into the font as if to completely part with one’s old life. This act was then followed by the candidate’s ascension from the water, as if he were a new creature; this would be followed by his receiving new, often white, clothes’ (p 164).

Baptists today are content to point to the symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial, resurrection, and the washing away of sins without the additional features described above.

The subject of immersion raises the problem of an adequate water supply in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost. How is it possible to immerse 3,000 converts? Following his work which appeared in *RT 109*, Murray Adamthwaite has recently completed a further scholarly treatise. In an illustrated 44 page thesis with 55 footnotes he documents the fact that in Herodian times ritual immersion was the universal practice, both in the private homes of the devout, and as mandatory practice for entry to the Temple. He shows that adequate water supplies for these purposes are now well attested archaeologically. Murray’s address is 9 Tunley Close, Endeavor Hills, Australia 3802. If you request this material please enclose five pounds sterling to cover copying and postage expenses.

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