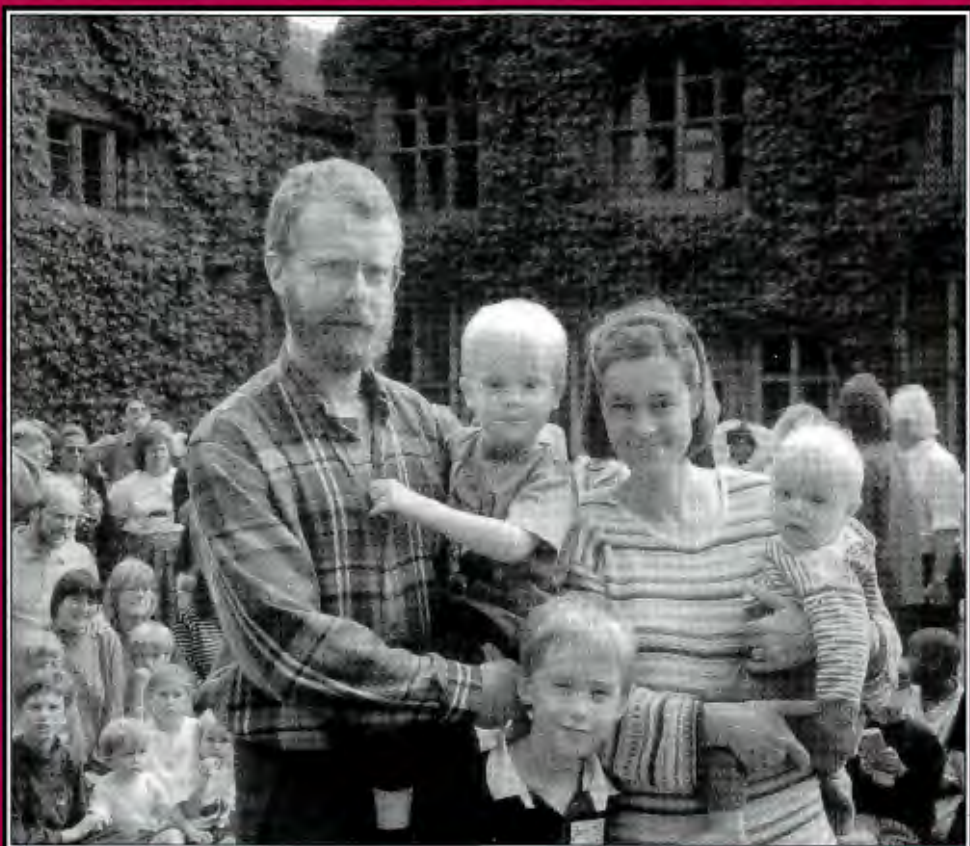


REFORMATION TODAY



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1996

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Featured above is Dr Stephen Tong whose ministry is acknowledged with gratitude in the editorial. The photo was taken during July at the opening of the new theological institute in Jakarta (see *RT153*).

Above on the right is Dr Robert Godfrey, President of Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California and Professor of Church history. He writes regularly for *Outlook*, the paper of the Christian Reformed Church, which denomination has about 900 churches. The article 'Holy, Holy, Holy' first appeared in *Outlook*. Dr Godfrey is due to give the first paper 'The vitality of Martin Luther' at the annual Westminster Conference scheduled for December 10th to 11th this year at Westminster Chapel, London. On December 12th Dr Godfrey is to speak at a day conference for ministers in Leeds, firstly on 'The genius of John Calvin' and secondly on 'The book of Revelation and the battle for my denomination'.

Other contributors to this issue are Bob Sheehan, minister of the Welwyn Evangelical Church and Bill James, minister of Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Leamington Spa. Jim Renihan, who contributes for the first time in *RT*, is pastor of Heritage Baptist Church, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA and is presently completing a doctoral thesis under the supervision of Professor Tom Nettles.

Front cover: Martin Bussey, his wife Claudia and children, Samuel, Peter and Andrew, taken at the Carey Family Conference at Cloverley Hall in August '96 prior to their return to Nigeria in September. Martin has taught in the Samuel Bill Theological College for 14 years (see detailed report in *RT152*). The college trains pastors for the 1,500 churches of the Qua Iboe denomination in Nigeria. Recently Martin wrote a 50 page thesis challenging Wayne Grudem's view of prophecy (see News). Wayne Grudem has a copy which he is consulting in his ongoing studies of the subject. Grudem's 1264 page magnum opus, **Systematic Theology**, was reviewed in *RT144*.

Editorial – What we owe to the Reformation

In writing this editorial I must acknowledge my debt to Dr Stephen Tong. He spoke eloquently on this theme at the opening of the new Theological Institute in Jakarta on July 21st this year. He spoke from the context of Indonesia. I look at this subject from the standpoint of Western Europe. The recovery of the Bible must surely be first in logical order as we look at this theme.

The 16th-century Reformers recovered the Bible

Before the Reformation the Bible was restricted to the clergy. Martin Luther translated the Bible into the German language so that all might read it. Contemporary with Luther was William Tyndale who was deeply irked by the darkness and ignorance of the papal clergy. Tyndale determined that the ploughboy should have the Bible and he was so inspired that he succeeded in translating the Scriptures for the English people. His example was to be followed in due time by innumerable reformers and missionaries.

As we move toward the beginning of a new millennium, we will be taking stock to see what progress has been made in the evangelisation of all nations (Matt 28:16-20). The progress this century in terms of Bible translation has been tremendous. All the major languages have their own Scriptures. (About 4% of the world's languages represent 76% of the world population). The spread of the Scriptures has largely been a Protestant phenomenon. Catholicism has continued to be sacramental rather than Bible-centred.

We note however that the remaining need is also immense. Agencies such as Wycliffe Bible Translators are working on 1,199, and there is need for translation into a further 925 languages. Those remaining represent much smaller groups of people, but each one is significant.

In Western Europe Protestantism is in decline. This has come about through liberalism and subsequent loss of faith in the Scriptures. But the overall advance across the world this century has changed the face of Protestant Christianity. Europeans probably now form less than thirty per cent of the whole. It is the Bible that has brought about this amazing growth. The Bible is the mainspring and source of ongoing reformation. The abiding principle of the Reformation is *Semper reformanda* (always reforming). There is always more work to be done in our own hearts, in our churches, in evangelism and in our missionary labours.

The principle of *Sola Scriptura*

With the recovery of the Bible came the principle of the sole authority of the Bible, *Sola Scriptura*. The Bible is the only source of authority for the Church in all matters of doctrine and practice. This formed the very basis of the Reformation. Many erroneous and harmful practices had accumulated in the Church based on tradition rather than Scripture. The principle of *Sola Scriptura* is the means by which the Church is purified and reformed. But we do not idealise the past. This purification and reformation is incomplete. Wherever we find ourselves following tradition rather than Scripture, we must be willing to change. Reformation is for today also!

Justification by faith as the way of salvation

What is a Christian? The Reformation placed this question at the top of the agenda. The personal experience of Luther highlights this vital question: 'How can a sinner be just before God?' In Luther we observe a dramatic transition from the hopeless quagmire of seeking justification by human merits to the glory of God's free grace: salvation by faith alone and by grace alone: salvation by the imputed righteousness of Christ. With such a salvation comes a full assurance of eternal life for the believer, an assurance which is despised and rejected by the Roman Catholic Church.

The recovery of the doctrine of the Church

With the question, 'What is a Christian?' came the question, 'What is the Church?' The second was especially relevant to Martin Luther when he was excommunicated in 1520. The Papacy taught that there was no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church. Luther and the Reformers recognised and embraced the doctrine of election and with that they saw at once that the Church comprises more than the papal church. They believed the doctrine of the universal Church embracing all those in union with Christ irrespective of visible affiliation.

Christ builds his own Church. Calvin showed from the Scriptures that there are specific marks for a church. There is the faithful preaching of the Word, discipline in the membership and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's table. These marks define a church and where they are absent that is no church.

Unlike other Anabaptists the Swiss Anabaptists were originally integrally related to the Reformation through Zwingli. They, in particular, saw the inconsistency of the magisterial Reformers in this question of the Church. They recognised that the magisterial Reformers were unable to face the implications of the doctrine of the gathered church of believers. They were vilified and suffered very severely

for their faith. Thereafter the Anabaptists were marginalised and the responsibility for some of their shallow teachings must rest not only with them but with their persecutors. In order to keep society intact the magisterial Reformers were obliged to continue with the sacral concept of all society being included in the Church. The Roman Catholic doctrine of infant baptism was the instrument by which this was maintained. Almost every denomination today that follows the magisterial Reformation accepts the validity of Roman Catholic baptism. We are reminded in the book reviews that this doctrine of infant baptism has been 'sanctified' by the name of 'covenant theology' but when it comes to practice Roman Catholic infant baptism is accepted.

Reformed Baptists acknowledge with gratitude the immense gains of the Reformation but with regard to the doctrine of the Church they see the Reformation as unfinished. According to Reformed Baptists, the argument of Hebrews chapter eight concerning the Old and New Covenants confirms that the New Covenant community is cemented together on the basis of a credible profession of faith and is not based on birth or physical descent. As we know so well tensions about this matter have continued ever since. This subject is addressed in the review of books which are available today.

This is the appropriate place to stress the importance of evangelical and Reformed unity. The *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* is a full expression of the legacies that have come from the 16th-century Reformation and the following Puritan age in England. That Confession expresses well the comprehensive unity of those in the Reformed tradition. This unity is vital and must be maintained in the face of the challenge of Modernism which attacks the foundations of Scripture and the challenge of the Charismatic movement which in a subtle way displaces the Bible with subjective feelings and experiences. Our unity is not monolithic or indiscriminate, but a spiritual reality based on truth

The consolidation of systematic theology

The Reformation produced Confessions and Catechisms of great value because these documents expound and clarify the foremost doctrines of the Bible and demonstrate their inter-relationship and cohesiveness. The Reformation provided the ongoing churches with solid doctrinal foundations. The best known Confession in Presbyterian denominations is the *Westminster Confession* from which is derived the *1689 London Baptist Confession* referred to above. Of similar value is the *Heidelberg Catechism*.

The Confessions serve to define the biblical message. In his review of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* published in 1994, Pastor Jim Renihan reminds us of the significance of this resource. Here we have an authoritative

source which outlines precisely Roman Catholic teaching. The whole idea of a catechism or a confession is to be as clear and lucid as possible. There is no virtue in obscurity.

The value of the Reformed Confessions is seen further in the world-view that they express. God is sovereign over every aspect of creation and humanity and the Scriptures must be applied to every aspect of life.

The sovereignty of God

The Reformers recovered the doctrines of election and predestination. God is in control. He is sovereign in his control of world history and in the calling of his people and the building of the universal Church. This is vital. When confronted with overwhelming opposition this truth sustained the Reformers. We should note that when the apostle Paul felt powerless in face of the unbelief and opposition of the city of Corinth he was encouraged by the truth of election (Acts 18:10).

‘One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city”’ (Acts 18:10).

Modern evangelicalism is largely at loggerheads with the truth of God’s sovereignty in salvation as expressed in chapters 3 and 9 to 15 of the 1689 Confession. The theological renewal of the last three decades has contributed significantly to getting the Church back on course in recognising the importance of the doctrines of grace. The natural mind is appalled that God should build according to a plan. But every house worth living in and every city of any beauty is built according to plan. As Christians we seek to plan our lives according to biblical principles. Why should not an all-wise holy God work according to his plan?

The truth of human responsibility

Reformed theology stresses the accountability of every person. Every person will give an account of himself to God. This accountability is applied to all believers. The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) stresses the importance of putting every talent to service and warns of the wickedness of sloth.

The leading characteristic of medieval Roman Catholicism was the division between the sacred and the secular. This idea was articulated by Eusebius as early as the 4th century. He taught that there were two ways of life given by Christ. The first was above nature and totally devoted to the service of God and

separate from the second which formed the humdrum of such things as farming and trading and other secular activities. To the second was attributed a secondary or lower grade of piety.

Martin Luther overthrew the idea that clergymen and monks and nuns were engaged in a holier work than the housewife and shopkeeper. William Tyndale declared that with respect to what pleases God there is no difference between the washing of dishes and preaching the Word of God. The English Reformer Hugh Latimer saw in the example of Christ the true dignity of all work when he pointed to the Son of God and his labour as carpenter in the workshop and declared that in his example he sanctified all kinds of occupations.

The Reformation has had a beneficial social and political impact on Western societies

The value of the Reformed Confessions is seen further in the world-view that they express. God is sovereign over every aspect of creation and humanity and the Scriptures must be applied to every aspect of life.

John Calvin taught the reality of God's common grace. Biblical teaching has had a vast effect on nations. The Bible has influenced education and politics. Of course this subject is relative and difficult to document as there are humanist influences at work as well as Christian influences. Here I will concentrate on just one factor and quote from Dr Stephen Tong's address referred to above when he declared:

'Reformed theology has empowered societies to break free from centralised power. Pre-Reformation societies never knew true democracy. In Socrates' era democracy was limp and illusive. To form a government the Athenians elected senators as their representatives. But not everyone in their society had the right to vote, only aristocrats. Calvin taught the image of God in man and human dignity. Any government that wants to establish true democracy should respect human dignity. Sinful man finds this concept hard to understand. The Chinese believe that a king should control his people. Chinese culture does not have any concept of democracy.' He also noted that Mao Tze Tung controlled a billion people but he himself was controlled by his wife.

Dr Tong is correct. We should note generally that those societies that have come under the influence of the Reformation have developed democratic government. Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden are examples. Some other nations are struggling desperately with tyrannies of dictators and with systems of government which stem from pagan ideas.

The Reformation tradition has produced the foremost defenders of the Faith

From generation to generation it is the Reformed constituency which has produced the foremost defenders of the Faith. This has been particularly noteworthy during the last 150 years when the Christian Church has been under attack from liberal scholars. It was C H Spurgeon who stood for the truth during the downgrade controversy of the late 19th century. Gresham Machen, Alfred Rehwinkel of the Lutheran Missouri Synod in the USA, and B B Warfield are examples of those who have defended the faith in a crucial way in this century and more recently Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Dr John Gerstner. One of the most encouraging features of the USA today is the emergence of evangelical leaders who are inspired by the teaching and example of the Reformers and Puritans.

It is important that we pray for and support such leaders and observe the great principles that motivate them. We should resist the temptation to carp about lesser issues over which we may differ. We rejoice in Luther. But how many of us would have been patient with him as he struggled toward justification by faith? How many of us today would tolerate the errors that remained in him afterwards, errors which were never eradicated? We must hold the truth in love. The graces of the Holy Spirit, love, humility, gentleness and holiness are imperative.

We live in the declining culture of the West. This decline is seen in increasing violence. This is the natural outcome of our postmodernism (see review *The Gaggling of God*, in RT 152). Yet we have a very important role to play as we have inherited the tremendous legacies of the Reformation. There is the battle at home, but there is at the same time the responsibility of sharing our heritage with the developing nations of the world. The universal urgent need is for biblical teaching which is reformed in character. We are encouraged to observe the emergence of leaders in the emerging nations of the world. Many more are needed. There is much to be done. Let us take heart and pray the prayer of Psalm 72 that all nations will be blessed in our Messiah. Let us pray that the Lord will do marvellous deeds and fill the whole earth with his glory.

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Holy, Holy, Holy

Robert Godfrey

One of the most powerful and arresting passages in Scripture about the holiness of God is found in Isaiah 6. There the prophet is given a vision of the greatness of God and his glory. The divine king is enthroned in his temple. His royal robes fill the temple. His royal courtiers – the angels – surround the throne singing of the holiness and glory of the Lord with a loud solemnity that shakes the temple itself. ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’

The splendid holiness of God evokes from Isaiah a recognition of his own sinfulness and the sinfulness of his people. He laments his own ruin as he sees his uncleanness in the light of God’s perfect purity and righteousness.

The picture of God’s holiness as presented in Isaiah is a very familiar one to many Christians. But we may miss something of the force of the passage if we neglect the context in which it occurs. Isaiah 6 begins with the words, ‘In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord...’ Perhaps when we read those words, we think that Isaiah is just giving us a date for his vision. But in reality we are being told much more. We are told about the backdrop against which this vision must be understood. Unless we understand the reign of King Uzziah, we will not fully understand Isaiah’s vision.

The life of Uzziah as king of Judah is recorded in 2 Chronicles 26. He was king a long time, actually 52 years. His death surely marked a key point of transition for Judah. However Isaiah’s vision reflects much more than just the end of a long reign. Rather the vision must be seen in relation to the fact that Uzziah was basically a good king, but like his father failed to serve the Lord wholeheartedly (2 Chr 25:2; 26:4).

The early years of Uzziah were filled with success given him by the Lord. He followed the counsel of God’s prophet. He defeated the enemies of God’s people in battle. He built up the fortifications of Jerusalem and increased the wealth of his people.

By the blessing of the Lord Uzziah became very powerful. But he began to forget that the Lord was the source of his success and became instead proud of his own strength and accomplishments. His pride led to a surprising action on his part. He

entered the temple of God to burn incense on the altar of incense. Although courageous priests warned him that his actions would provoke the Lord, he rejected their words. For his sin the Lord struck him with leprosy and he lived out his days in isolation. His epitaph read, 'He is a leper.'

Why did the Lord punish Uzziah so severely? To be sure, he had broken the law of God: 'Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on the altar... You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar' (Ex 30:7,9). But was this violation of the law so very serious? He was an anointed king in Judah. He had entered the sacred temple. He was intent on performing a sacred sacrifice. Was he not a holy person in a holy place for a holy task? He was indeed. His fault was that he was not acting in a holy way. God – especially in matters of worship – is as interested in how we serve him as he is in the service itself. He is as interested in our methodology as in our goals. Uzziah's sin was grievous because he did not follow the ways of God.

Uzziah was probably motivated to act sinfully by his proud desire to be like the other kings of the nations. Most kings in Uzziah's day were priest-kings. They led their nations not only politically, but also religiously. They offered sacrifices to their gods. Even the kings of Israel, the northern kingdom, offered sacrifice to God. We read of Jeroboam: 'He went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel to burn incense' (1 Kings 12:33). In his pride, Uzziah decided that he should not be left out. He was as holy as the other kings. He would be a priest-king. He decided to offer the Lord's holy sacrifices in a worldly way. The Lord in wrath punished him for his sin.

Isaiah was reminded in his vision that only the Lord is king in his temple. The temple is the palace of God. Only the sons of Aaron may serve him as priests there. Isaiah saw the holiness of God and the seriousness with which God takes his worship. Uzziah also saw the seriousness of God in the leprosy from which he suffered.

We can see that the presumption of Uzziah was really trying to take the role that belonged to the Messiah alone. Only Messiah would be the king of the Jews who was also a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Only Messiah would reign over his people as king and offer his own body as a sacrifice for their sins. Uzziah's pride caused him to raise himself to a role that he could never fulfill and the Lord cast him down.

The Hebrew word for pride that is used to describe Uzziah literally means that he was lifted up. He was proud because he had an inflated estimate of his importance and his role in God's historical dealings with his people. In Isaiah's vision he sees the Lord high and lifted up. It is not Uzziah or those like him who are the truly exalted ones in this world. The Lord alone in his perfect holiness is lifted up in true glory above all the puny pretensions of this world. When proud Uzziah finally died



Beryl, beloved wife of Martin Holdt, was taken to be with Christ on Wednesday 25th September, 1996. At the end she was surrounded by Martin and their five children who read the Word and sang her favourite hymns. Beryl will be sorely missed by all who knew her in South Africa and round the world. The funeral took place on Monday 30th September.

Around the time, Martin cancelled a number of preaching engagements but Beryl specifically requested that he fulfil the keynote 'state of the nation' address at the Baptist Union annual meeting in Johannesburg on the 29th September. 1500 were present. Martin took the text, 'God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Jonathan Holdt continues his theological training at London Theological Seminary. On October 15th Martin moved to the pastorate of Hermanus United Church in the Cape. We remember him affectionately and his family at this time of bereavement.

of his terrible leprosy, then Isaiah was given a vision of the One who was truly lifted up. He saw that the real glory of Israel is the Lord.

We must also notice that the vision of God's holiness calls forth from Isaiah the cry that he is unclean. The cry 'Unclean!' was the cry of lepers (Lev 13:45). Isaiah recognises that he and the people are afflicted with sin that is as filthy and destructive as leprosy. He teaches us that as we carefully contemplate the holiness of God, we will recognise the horrible reality of our sin and our helplessness in it. In ourselves we are all like Uzziah. 'For the Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty...the pride of man will be humbled, and the loftiness of man will be abased, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day' (Isa 2:12,17).

God himself must act to save and cleanse. And he does. He sends an angel – a messenger – to cleanse the prophet. From the altar and its sacrifice come forgiveness and healing. And from what altar does the coal come? The altar of incense! The very place that Uzziah defiled God uses to bring redemption. God's way brings God's blessing.

The leprosy of Uzziah broke out on his forehead. Perhaps that is a reminder to him and to us that the sacrifices belong to the priests of God alone. The high priest was to wear a headpiece from which hung a stone before his forehead. On this stone were engraved the words: 'Holy to the Lord'. The priests ministered to the Lord because they were set apart by the Lord himself for his service. They were holy as they followed his laws and his ways. Uzziah was judged for not walking in the ways the Lord had laid out for him.

The sin and judgment of Uzziah as well as the vision and cleansing of Isaiah draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ. In him alone we find God's great king-priest, God's Messiah. He alone truly fulfills the symbols of the Old Testament and cleanses us from sin. Jesus is burned up on the altar for us so that we might be saved. In Jesus the temple is opened for us and holiness and mercy are enthroned there forever.

While we rightly celebrate the mercy of the Lord in Jesus, we must not forget that Jesus equally maintains and manifests the holiness of God. He is our Saviour, because he was the perfect second Adam, the obedient Israel. He continues to teach us that we must serve God in God's ways. God never allows sincerity or zeal to substitute for obedience to his ways.

Reformed Christianity in particular has had a passion not only to serve God, but to strive to serve him in his ways. This passion is a key to understanding why conservative Reformed people are so very concerned about issues of worship and church office. We are not just narrow-minded or troublesome nit-pickers. We have read the Bible and know the character of our holy God. He in his holiness calls us to holiness. To be sure we must be holy in our attitudes and words. But we must also be holy in our actions and in acting in the ways God has prescribed. We must not only offer sacrifices of praise, but we must offer them in the way he has commanded. This requirement rests on individuals, congregations and denominations.

God's call to holy obedience is extremely serious. The vision of God's holiness must not lead us to pride and self-confidence, but to self-examination and repentance. If we would join the angel chorus in crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy' we must do so in God's way or we will face the judgment of God. 'The Lord is with you when you are with him. And if you seek him, he will let you find him; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you' (2 Chr 15:2).

Dr Robert Godfrey, President and Professor of Westminster Seminary in California, is a contributing editor of 'The Outlook' in the April 96 issue of which this article first appeared.

The New Roman Catholic Catechism

*A review by Pastor Jim Renihan,
Heritage Baptist Church, Worcester,
Massachusetts, USA.*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church – Guarding the Deposit of Faith

The now infamous *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* document has produced a flurry of activity among professing Christians in America, and presumably abroad as well. Respected leaders of evangelicalism signed their names to a document arguing for close fellowship between evangelicals and Roman Catholics. In essence, the document called for mutual recognition as Christian communities, noting important differences between the two, but arguing that each community witnesses to the gospel in an authentic fashion, so that 'in view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytise among active adherents of another Christian community'.¹ Such a notion is startling to Reformed Christians, nurtured on the deep truths recovered in the 16th century and fleshed out in much detail in the 17th century. Has Rome changed? Have the issues of the Reformation been settled? We read of this development with the hope that perhaps a breakthrough has come, and that Rome has acknowledged her error,

repented of her heresies and confessed the truth. Has this happened?

We are not left to wonder and hope. In the same year that this document was issued, another of momentous significance came forth from Rome, both in an original Latin version, and in an English translation. Entitled *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*,² it is the fruit of six years of labor, consultations, commissions and examinations. Passing through nine draft stages, its final form expresses 'the result of the collaboration of the whole Episcopate of the Catholic Church'.³ It is a lucid presentation of Roman doctrine, clearly set forth and thoroughly documented. And it is authoritative. Writing in a foreword, Pope John Paul himself says, '*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which I approved June 25th last and the publication of which I today order by virtue of my Apostolic Authority, is a statement of the Church's faith and of catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium. I declare it to be a sure norm for teaching the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion'.⁴ Such words from the Pope himself ought to cause us to take careful notice. Here is an extensive exposition of official doctrine, widely available and clearly written, by which we may judge the current doctrinal milieu of Rome. When I purchased the book, I did so

with thanksgiving. I knew that I now had in my possession an authoritative guide to Roman teaching, and thus could make an informed judgment of the various claims put forth by some evangelicals, Catholics and the self-styled evangelical Catholics. I did not have to depend upon the writings of others, or on the second hand reports or even filtered theological pronouncements of 'born again' Catholics. I could learn first hand what Rome was teaching its adherents.

No one will be surprised to learn that the new Rome is the same old Rome. Listen to these words from the section of the work devoted to the seven sacraments of the church: 'Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit . . . and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word'⁵, and a few pages later we read, 'By Baptism *all* sins (emphasis in original) are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.'⁶ On Justification we are told, 'The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ"

and through Baptism . . . Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.'⁷ So much for *Sola Fide*, and the article of a standing church!

What about authority? The answer comes back to us clearly: 'The *Pope*, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.'⁸ The very idea sends shivers up the spine of the Reformed believer. Let the above statement set the context for these words about Scripture and Tradition: '*Sacred Scripture* is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And [Holy] (brackets are original) *Tradition* transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching. As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.'⁹ By this standard, only Rome can properly interpret and transmit genuine

Christian doctrine. If one differs from Rome, one differs from God. So much for *Sola Scriptura*.

The examples could be multiplied to fill many pages, but to do so is unnecessary. While the wolf may have learned how to make the sheep's clothing fit a little better, it is still a wolf. In our case, Rome is *Semper eadem*. The church has not changed any of its doctrines. It seems to want to press on, hoping that the issues raised at the Reformation will be forgotten or ignored by the sons of the Reformation. In this way, Rome will have won the victory while the vanquished happily join the throng bowing down to the Vatican. Those of us who are the heirs of the Reformers must take up the standard. We must view the adherents of the Roman communion as a mission field. They are held in the blindness and darkness of a sacerdotal system that will send them to hell, even while they faithfully follow its prescriptions. We must resist the blasphemous claims of John Paul who would name himself as the Vicar of Christ in the world, stealing from the Holy Spirit one of his rightful titles. We must declare without equivocation that Scripture alone is our source for all authority, and that the apostolic foundation revealed there is sufficient for our every need. The time for compromise has not come, nor will it. Only when Rome repents will we be able to receive its claims.

I am grateful to the Pope and to the hierarchy of the Roman Church for making this document available to us. It is an excellent resource for every evangelical and Reformed pastor. The stark contrast between the clear Word

of God and the skewed doctrines of Rome could not be more lucidly demonstrated than in their own words. No longer will it be necessary for us to try to sort through all manner of books and documents in order to determine the official position of the Church. All that we could want to know, and much more, has been provided for us by the papal establishment. Pastor, buy the book. Use it in your witnessing and evangelism. Use it with your people. Set out the fundamental differences between Geneva and Rome. This book should be a valuable asset in witnessing for the truth. Now we will be able to speak directly to our Catholic friends about the errors of Rome, using this *Catechism* as a definitive resource. No one will be able to say that we are attacking a straw man. We have the authoritative source. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* may be Rome's attempt to guard the deposit of faith, but it sadly fails. The Reformed Confessions are far superior as guides to the faith once delivered to the saints. May God use the darkness of the errors of Rome to make the truth appear all the more brilliant.

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3. *Ibid* p 4.
4. *Ibid* p 5.
5. *Ibid* p 312.
6. *Ibid* pp 321-22.
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9. *Ibid* p 26.

News



*Wayne Grudem, Tom Nettles, the editor and Raymond C Ortland, Jr.
Wayne Grudem is President of the 'Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood'
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USA

A report by the editor – I refer to some highlights of my recent visit.

Deerfield, Illinois – Tom and Margaret Nettles are very involved members of the Southern Baptist Church, Libertyville, led by pastor Steve Farish. Tom, who is a leader in the Southern Baptist Founders' Movement, has almost completed his work of revising *An Introduction to the Southern Baptists* (the present edition which is nearly sold out is a Carey Publications title). This is a particularly important work on the history of the Southern Baptist Convention, reminding them of their foundations in the doctrines of grace.

Camp Alonquin Family Conference, Rhinelander, Wisconsin – The venue for this camp has the advantage of being sited beside a lake excellent for swimming and aquatic sports and is equipped with tennis and volley ball courts ideal for young people. The organising leader of this camp is Ken White, pastor of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Rhinelander. The camp is supported mostly by Sovereign Grace churches from several states. Pastor Danny Roten, missionary from Mexico, was present with his family.

The preaching schedule was shared between myself and pastor Conrad Merrill of Louisiana. At this camp the love for preaching is evident. A high



Tom Wells and Erwin Lutzer, minister of the Moody Memorial Church, Chicago. In the background is a portrait of D L Moody. The Moody Memorial Church is a fine building in the Byzantine style of architecture. It seats about 5,000 and is well filled weekly. Newton Bush and Tom Wells are pastors of The King's Chapel, West Chester, Cincinnati.

proportion of those present were young people and I especially enjoyed involving them as participants in presenting the subject of the Covenants:

Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and the New Covenant

West Chester, Ohio – The King's Chapel is led by pastors Tom Wells and Newton Bush and sets an example in the high profile given to prayer and support of missionaries. A highlight during my stay at West Chester was a visit to Southern Seminary, Louisville, KY which was founded in 1859. The seminary had slipped far from its foundations but extensive reformation has taken place under the leadership of President Albert Mohler. George Martin, well known among our friends in Indonesia, is the tutor in missiology at the seminary which has 2000 students. I took 'The Great Commis-

sion' as my subject at chapel and concentrated on the nature of that power which our Lord guarantees is with us when we are actively engaged in fulfilling the great commission. Before returning home, Tom, Newton and I visited Mitchell and Kimberley Jones. Mitchell is pastor of Kosmosdale Baptist Church, Louisville.

Whitefield Fraternals – The idea of ministers' fraternals which are motivated by a desire for reformation and revival originated in the 1970s in Sussex, England. Dr John Armstrong of Reformation and Revival Ministries has organised three locations in the wider Chicago area as centres for regular Whitefield Fraternals each of which has its own body of leadership and programme. I spoke at each fraternal taking John 17:20-23 as the theme. One of the locations is Moody Memorial Church where Erwin Lutzer is pastor.

Edgewood Baptist Church, Anderson, Indiana – Pastor Tom Lutz – I have known this church well over many years and at each visit have noted growth, not only in the quality of the members but in the size of the congregation. The assembly is now moving toward a building programme which will provide better accommodation. While with Tom we visited the Whitefield Fraternal in Warsaw hosted by Joe Flatt. John Armstrong was speaking. He outlined the burden represented by David Wells in his book *God in the Wasteland*. Included in the issues being faced today is the propensity of churches to resort to ‘methods’ for church growth instead of faith in the means of grace.

Grace Baptist Fellowship, Peru, Illinois – Following nine years of pastoral experience in Germany, Pastor Russell Kennedy has led GBF, Peru for four years. I was asked to speak on the subject of the history of revival and revival today.

The reports on Ukraine and Serbia are from Roger Weil.

Ukraine

Church planting – Through the Roundwood Trust we heard of some pioneer work being blessed in a small new church in Odessa, a large city of some 2 million people. As a large sea port there is much scope for criminal activity and there is a serious narcotics culture and untamed Mafia.

The small and vigorous new church is an off-shoot of the unregistered church there and works in one of the huge housing estates in that city. Some 20, mostly young people, had professed conversion in January this year. Meetings were held in a kindergarten. Evangelistic activity was based on nine discussion groups in homes and many totally unchurched folk were saved. Open air work also reached children and young people some of whom took the good news home to their startled parents. One six year old was teaching her parents the Lord’s prayer! The group is well organised and has a computerised printing facility and a trading operation dealing in large quantities of Christian books, a small pre-school children’s group and special young people’s meetings and summer camps. The potential for preaching the gospel seems almost limitless. A gymnasium in another part of the city was rented on Saturday mornings and eight young workers took two groups of thirty children for an hour of games followed by illustrated Bible teaching, all well organised and disciplined. The Sunday service is held in the afternoon and lasts between two and three hours. Those wishing to be baptised attend instruction classes followed by examination by elders. Their lives are expected to match up to their profession. In July 22 people were baptised in the sea and joined the church. This small church has several full-time workers and their salaries are paid for by sale of books. After our departure we were sorry to hear that the kindergarten had been taken away from them. In the Ukraine the Orthodox Church has influenced the government to forbid religious gatherings in public buildings. Now the church must seek alternative

premises or take the big step of building their own on ground donated by an American mission.

The bookshop – This city-centre project was purchased by Roundwood Trust and has a full-time staff. About fifty persons visit each day to browse, ask questions and purchase books. On Sunday evenings there is a discussion group to which weekday visitors are invited. We were asked to bring a short gospel message. The shop is in the same street as the hotel I had stayed at seventeen years before during the time of Communism. I little thought then I would later preach the gospel in the same street! The seemingly invincible Communist empire has gone the way of all flesh but the Word of our God shall endure forever.

The Bible College – This was the brain-child of Sergei Sannikov who, in the Communist period, had planned and organised an underground ‘school’ on a small scale. With American help at the start of ‘Perestroika’ he bought a fine site on the outskirts of the city and today there is a school for 40 full-time and 160 part-time students. We were able to meet some of the students and have sent a number of books and commentaries to them. Many of the full-time students have no income.

Serbia

Simo Ralevic

In January a young person committed suicide in Belgrade. When the police searched his flat they found occult literature, but also one of Simo’s books. During the Communist period in Yugoslavia Simo was regarded by the



Simo Ralevic

authorities as an enemy of the régime and of the Orthodox Church. His vigour and prolific distribution of his own books throughout the country was specially offensive to them. Their animosity to him has not abated and finding one of his books in the home of the suicide was an opportunity to wage a full-scale war on him in the national press. In February he wrote:

‘Dear brother, I have no words to describe the enmity towards me and to the work – this is straight from hell! You would not believe what they have written about me in the State newspapers every day for nine days. Some people have written condemning me and returning my books. It’s a real inquisition. Behind all this I know for sure is the Orthodox Church and no doubt the other forces will show themselves. Pray for us that we may stand firm and in a sound mind...’

Unfortunately in early September the incident repeated itself in a town in eastern Serbia, Majdanpek, but this

(continued at foot of page 19)



*Greg and Tricia Elmquist
of Orlando, Florida, USA
at the 1996 Carey Family Conference*

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hosted by Orlando Grace Church, USA

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Tom Ascol

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pastor Greg Elmquist

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the IFRB.

The Subjects of Baptism

Bob Sheehan

The New Testament record

The Gospel records

Whether or not Jewish proselyte baptism pre-dated or post-dated John's baptism, it is evident that his baptism was something addressed to those who could themselves repent and not to infants. Hence the Presbyterian commentator Dr William Hendriksen has no problem in asserting in his commentary on Matthew with reference to John's baptism, 'Without confession of sins, no baptism.'¹

On the same passage John Calvin comments, 'That men might come forward in a right manner, to be baptised, confession of sins is demanded from them: otherwise the performance would be nothing but idle mockery. Let it be observed that we are here speaking of adults.'²

(continued on page 20)

NEWS *(continued from page 17)*

time it was a young woman aged 26. Because one of Simo's books was found in her home among several others, Simo was pilloried in the press for causing her death. Simo writes:

'It is unthinkable how Satan attacks us. I know that my literature has attacked his kingdom and wounded him... My wife was in bed one week because of this and I too feel deep wounds. Pray for us, we trust in God!'

We have written to him to express our sympathy and solidarity with him in this painful experience. We reminded our dear brother that this is only the latest stage in a warfare he has been enduring for thirty years and in a sense, although so painful, the slander is not new. We also felt it might be helpful to remind him that at the beginning of

Spurgeon's ministry when he came to national prominence Satan mounted a similar attack on him. At the Surrey Gardens Music Hall a group of wicked men caused panic by raising a cry of 'Fire, fire!' and making a pretended rush for the exits. The dense crowds in the three balconies rushed for the staircases and in the ensuing mayhem seven people were trampled to death and many more were injured. The press blamed Spurgeon and the poor young preacher felt himself near to losing his reason. Deliverance came when he realised that it was not his reputation that mattered providing his Saviour's name was exalted. So we draw the parallel, 'You look after his Name and he will look after yours!' And our hope is that he will see his place as but a servant of the ever maligned Saviour.

THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM *(continued from top of page 19)*

When later our Lord and his disciples also baptised, the people who were baptised are described as those who had been made disciples. Dr Hendriksen notes elsewhere that 'the term 'make disciples' places somewhat more stress on the fact that the mind, as well as the heart and the will, must be won for God'.³ A disciple is not made so passively. He is a pupil, a learner, brought under the discipline of Christ.

The great commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel also exhorts the Church to follow in the footsteps of John, our Lord and his disciples. The command to go, make disciples, baptising and teaching them has been variously interpreted. Dr Hendriksen explains the significance of the terms used: 'The concepts 'baptising' and 'teaching' are simply two activities, in co-ordination with each other but both subordinate to 'make disciples'. In other words, by means of being baptised and taught a person becomes a disciple, with the understanding, of course, that this individual is ready for baptism and is willing to appropriate the teaching. The context makes very clear that Jesus is here speaking about those who are old enough to be considered the objects of preaching. He is not speaking here about infants.'⁴

John Calvin agrees. He argues that from other passages infant baptism may be deduced but not from the great commission. Of this he says, 'Christ enjoins that those who have submitted to the Gospel and professed to be disciples shall be baptised... As Christ enjoins them to teach before baptising, and desires that none but believers shall be admitted to baptism it would appear that baptism is not properly administered unless when it is preceded by faith.'⁵

Apostolic practice

On the Day of Pentecost the crowd was exhorted to repent and be baptised 'upon the name of Jesus Christ'. The Anglican commentator Dean Alford explains this, 'i.e. on the confession of that which the name implies' and asserts that this baptism 'was conferred on the profession of repentance and faith in Jesus as the Christ'.⁶ The text of Acts itself, of course, makes this clear for we are told that those who received the word were baptised.⁷ Receiving the word, as the Lutheran commentator R C H Lenski reminds us, is 'consenting to the word, giving it entrance'⁸ – a conscious activity not fitted for infants.

The next baptisms mentioned in Acts are those at Samaria. As Dean Alford notes, 'All were baptised who professed belief in Jesus as Messiah.'⁹ In the same chapter there is the record of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. There is a debate over

the textual integrity of verse 38 but this does not affect the obvious fact that this was the baptism of a believer. The Lutheran R C H Lenski states, 'A confession of Jesus as the Christ was always a pre-requisite for baptism.'¹⁰

The individual baptism of the new convert Paul is followed by the baptism of Cornelius and his associates. Who were these people who were baptised? They were the relatives and close friends whom Cornelius had gathered to hear the gospel. They are a group upon whom the Holy Spirit had come as they heard the message. They all heard, all received the Holy Spirit and on this basis were baptised. Peter affirms that they received the Spirit as believers. Dean Alford comments on Acts 11:17 that "believing" belongs to both them and us'.¹¹ Lenski agrees, 'The unmodified participle *pisteusasin* is to be construed with both *autois* and *hemin*: "to them as also to us as having come to believe".¹² Those baptised at Cornelius' house were believers.

When later at the Council of Jerusalem Peter defended his evangelisation of the Gentiles, he made it abundantly clear that the Gentiles who heard the gospel from his lips believed and that the gift of the Spirit was God's witness to this fact.¹³

The baptism of Lydia and her household is sometimes held up as a proof, at last, that infants were baptised along with their parents when the parents believed. However, as the Presbyterian theologian Louis Berkhof concedes, 'It may be said at the outset that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptise children, and that there is not a single instance in which we are plainly told that children were baptised.'¹⁴

In the case of Lydia the likelihood of there being infants in her household is not great. As households are usually referred to with reference to their head, the fact that Lydia is regarded as the head suggests that she was either unmarried or widowed. In such situations babies do not abound!

Whatever Lydia's household may have contained in the way of members, the fact that her household was baptised does not prove that they were baptised without faith. The fact of their baptism is recorded in Acts 16 not the reason for it. As the commentator David Brown asserts on this passage, 'The question of infant baptism must be determined on other grounds.'¹⁵

Later in Acts 16 we read of the conversion of the Philippian jailer. He is told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and he and his household will be saved. Lenski is most concerned that we should not misunderstand this passage and presume that the faith of the father can save the rest of his family. He asserts, 'He must do the believing, every individual in his household likewise, for no one can do the believing for others... The jailer's believing will certainly not save his wife, children

etc... As he must believe in his person, so must each member of his house in his or her person.’¹⁶ He notes not only that the whole family was baptised but that they all rejoiced for ‘the entire family believed’.¹⁷ A family exulting with their father over the gain of salvation is not an advertisement for infant baptism without faith.

The baptism of those who believed in Corinth is next recorded and then the baptism of twelve disciples of John at Ephesus.¹⁸ No infants are found in these passages.

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul also recorded his baptising of Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanas. The only thing we know about the household of Stephanas is that they were the ‘firstfruits’ of Achaia and addicted themselves to the service of the saints. The Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge comments, ‘The family of Stephanas were the first family in Achaia that embraced the gospel... Of the family of Stephanas it is said that they devoted themselves to the service of believers.’¹⁹ This description of a family devoted to serving their fellow Christians does not imply the presence of infants, especially as Paul goes on to require the Corinthians to show submission to such.²⁰

New Testament inferences

Those who teach infant baptism often recognise the paucity of evidence for their practice within the New Testament. Louis Berkhof concedes, ‘The New Testament contains no direct evidence for the practice of infant baptism in the days of the Apostles.’²¹ However, it is argued there is indirect evidence which infers infant baptism. Three New Testament passages are adduced in support of this claim.

1. Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17. This incident recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels refers to the bringing of children, including babies, to Jesus for his blessing. John Calvin sees this passage as a vindication of infant baptism, as do many Paedobaptist commentators. However, it needs to be noted that the children were not brought for baptism but blessing, following that well rehearsed Jewish procedure of bringing children to the rabbi for his blessing. Unlike baptism this procedure occurred time and time again in Israelite life.

The interpretation of the passage centres on the significance of the words ‘of such is the kingdom of heaven’. Does it refer to those who are childlike or the children themselves, or both? In what respect is their childlikeness commended as fitting a person for the kingdom? Various answers have been given. Children are said to be full of trust, humble etc, but probably the similarity lies in the utter dependence of children on others. It is this entire dependence that brings a person into the kingdom of God.

2. Acts 2:39. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter told his hearers that the promise of the Holy Spirit was 'to you and your children and all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call'. R C H Lenski enthuses, "And to your children" is a most significant addition when we bear in mind that the Old Covenant included children. Certainly the New Covenant will include them likewise.'²²

However, there is a fundamental flaw in this interpretation. We may not take the phrase 'and your children' and wrest it from the whole sentence. The complete sentence teaches that the promise of the Holy Spirit is not to every Jew, Jewish child and Gentile *per se*, but to each of them who is called of God. The Apostle was asserting that the promise of the Spirit was not limited to one generation or nation but would be fulfilled in ages to come as well as that age, and in any land where God called men to himself by grace.

3. 1 Corinthians 7:14, Paul's reference to 'holy' children, has been readily taken up by Paedobaptists. Charles Hodge argues, 'This passage recognises as universally conceded the great scriptural principle that the children of believers are holy.'²³ With this Baptists entirely agree. Our children are 'holy'. The real question, however, is what does 'holy' mean? We notice that in this passage not only the children of a believer are called 'holy' but also the unbelieving partner. He or she is sanctified also. The set of words involved in sanctification or holiness can mean either to cleanse something or to be morally separate or to be set apart for a religious purpose.

Charles Hodge wants to give two different meanings to these words within this one passage. The unbelieving partner is sanctified or rendered holy in that he was set apart to the service of God, as the guardian of a Christian woman and her covenant children. The children are set apart or rendered holy by being 'included in the church'.²⁴ The unbelieving partner's 'holiness' consists in his being set apart as the guardian of Christians and he remains unbaptised. The unbelieving children's holiness consists in their being treated as Christians and therefore baptised.

Baptists see the holiness of the unbelieving partner and the unbelieving children as one. All are 'holy' because set aside from mankind in general to be under the constant influences of the gospel. All share the same privileged status of having a Christian witness in their house and ready access to the gospel ministry of a church. As unbelievers none of them is baptised, but neither are they in the same position as pagans who have never heard the gospel.

The Old Testament argument

Paedobaptists generally feel much happier when arguing from the Old Testament with regard to baptism than the New. The key to their position lies in their inter-

pretation of the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 17. The Covenant may be divided into several parts:

1. The promise to Abraham to make him the father of many nations and kings (v4-6).
2. The promise of adoption (v7).
3. The promise of the land of Israel (v8).
4. The promise of the maintenance of this Covenant with him and his descendants (v7).
5. The sign of circumcision in all the males born into this family and progeny (v9-14).

Baptists, as well as Paedobaptists, believe that this Covenant is very important. They notice, however, that it has a dual fulfilment: fulfilment on the physical and spiritual levels.

On the physical level the promise to make Abraham the father of many nations and kings was fulfilled. The Lutheran commentator H C Leupold reminds us, 'The Ishmaelites and the sons of Ketura, as well as all Israelites, acknowledge him as father.'²⁵ He also comments, 'The future nations descended from Abraham are to produce out of their own midst their own competent heads worthy of the name of kings.'²⁶

In the same way, on the earthly level, the promise of adoption was fulfilled in the nation of Israel. Did not God call Israel his 'firstborn son' and adopt the nation on the basis of the Covenant as his treasured possession?²⁷

Nor may the promise of the actual land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants be ignored. Even to this day, on the basis of this promise, the land of Israel is claimed by the Jew.

In the same ways successive generations of Jews have held firmly to the promise that God was not only a God to Abraham but to the successive generations of his descendants. In John the Baptist's day it was the proud boast of the Jew, 'We have Abraham as our Father.' In countering our Lord the Jews claimed, 'Abraham is our father.'²⁸

The sign of circumcision was also maintained by the Jews as descendants of Abraham. Every child born into the Jewish home, slave or free, had to be circumcised. It was a sign of Jewishness, or Abrahamic inheritance.²⁹

However, the Abrahamic Covenant also had a fulfilment on the spiritual level. The promise to make Abraham the father of many nations is seen in the New Testament as a prediction of his relationship to all who share his faith gathered from all the

nations of the earth. He is on the one level the physical father of Jews, Ishmaelites and Keturahites. On the spiritual level he is the father of all believers.³⁰

In its spiritual fulfilment the promise of adoption which applied nationally to Israel applies in the New Testament to all believers individually and the whole people of God collectively. It is a provision of the New Covenant for the New Israel.³¹

The promise of the land is seen in the New Testament as pointing beyond itself to a 'city with foundations whose architect and builder is God ... to a better country – a heavenly one'.³²

Up to this point many Paedobaptists and Baptists would largely agree. Together they would recognise the spiritual application of the Abrahamic Covenant in the present age. No Paedobaptist claims a home in Israel. However, Baptists are more consistent than Paedobaptists in their application of this principle. For when they come to the fourth part of the Abrahamic Covenant, the promise to Abraham and his seed, Baptists see this seed as also spiritual and not physical. God's promises are to me and my spiritual children not my physical children. Baptists note that in the New Testament the children of Abraham are always believers. Abraham's children do Abraham's works. Those who believe are Abraham's children.³³ Whereas in its Old Covenant form Israel was a mixed multitude, so that even Eli's sons who were priests did not know the Lord, under the New Covenant all in covenant know the Lord, from the least to the greatest.³⁴

In the same way, the fifth provision of the Abrahamic Covenant has to be understood in its spiritual application. Physical circumcision has its spiritual counterpart in circumcision of the heart. H C Leupold reminds us that circumcision 'suggests in a type or symbol what obligations were laid upon those who stand in covenant with God, namely primarily to put away the foreskin of their hearts (Jer 4:4), to circumcise the heart and be no longer stiffnecked' (Deut 10:16).³⁵ Physical circumcision pointed to the need of spiritual circumcision.

In the New Testament this need for spiritual circumcision as the mark of a true child of God is emphasised. A true Jew has heart circumcision performed by the Spirit. This circumcision is contrasted with physical circumcision done by the hands of men. Christians are the true circumcision.³⁶ Paedobaptists desire to find the fulfilment of circumcision in baptism, not regeneration. However, its real fulfilment is in regeneration. In his commentary on Colossians 2:11-12 Dr Hendriksen states, 'The definite implication is that baptism has taken the place of circumcision.' From this he tries to argue the case for infant baptism. However, in his footnote he has to acknowledge and concede, 'I am speaking here about a clear implication. The surface contrast is that between literal circumcision and circum-

cision without hands, namely, the circumcision of the heart as explained.³⁷ We must protest it is not the surface contrast but the main and only one. Indeed reference to his commentary will show that his whole exposition proceeds on this distinction between physical and spiritual circumcision.

Baptism does have reference to spiritual circumcision, the circumcision of the heart, just as physical circumcision does. However, it is the Baptist's contention that the Abrahamic Covenant in its New Testament form requires only the spiritually circumcised to receive the sign of that circumcision, and that to baptise the physical seed of believers is to introduce an Old Testament covenant procedure into a New Covenant arrangement.

For these reasons Baptists only baptise believers and not their infants and believe that the weight of scriptural evidence is on their side.

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Children in the Church

Bill James

A selection of currently available publications on baptism and children is reviewed here.

Marcel's book *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*, and more recently Booth's *Children of the Promise* make the case for infant baptism. The best response to such covenant arguments is David Kingdon's *Children of Abraham*, sadly out of print. In its absence, *Babies, Believers and Baptism*, and *The Testimony of Baptism* are recommended. *Should Babies be Baptized?* is also a useful tool in showing the weakness of Paedobaptist arguments. The little booklet *Baptism: The Picture and Its Purpose* is a positive statement of the Baptist position.

Baptism and Church Membership is a helpful resource for baptismal candidates, of particular value because baptism and membership are closely linked. *Baptism: The Picture and Its Purpose* may also be used to this end, or for those wanting something more substantial *The Testimony of Baptism* would be helpful, or the book *I Want to be Baptised* which is specifically written for this purpose.

The Baptist position is sometimes vulnerable to the criticism of having no theology of children. A new book *Special Children?* has been written from a Baptist perspective. In contrast, *Will My Children Go to Heaven?* is from a Presbyterian viewpoint.

All reviews are brief, and the list is not comprehensive. Any who would like to recommend other useful resources on baptism are asked to write to the editor.

All books are available through Evangelical Press and/or Presbyterian and Reformed (USA), except Marcel and Peter Masters' book, available from Tabernacle Bookshop, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant and Castle, London SE1 6SD, UK.

The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism

Pierre Marcel (tr. P E Hughes), James Clarke, Cambridge, 256pp, pb.

This is perhaps the enduring standard work on infant baptism. Marcel lays the foundations of his case carefully, defining the meaning of the term 'sacrament' before establishing the relationship between word and sacrament and rejecting sacramentalism. He then develops his argument according to the nature of the covenant of grace.

The unfolding purpose of God in salvation is seen as the seamless operation of one covenant which first anticipates Christ, and reaches its fulness in his person and

work. The scriptural teaching of a 'New' Covenant is downplayed. Marcel then continues by drawing a close parallel between circumcision and baptism, and Israel and the New Testament Church. According to this reasoning not only believers but the children of believers are included in the New Testament Church. The case for infant baptism is then made: baptism is the sign of someone's membership of the covenant, and if entry is by birth, then the sign may be given to the new-born infant.

For Marcel, then, the ground of baptism is '*identical both for adults and for children*' (p201, emphasis his), namely entry into the covenant. An unbeliever enters the covenant through repentance and faith in Christ; a child of believing parents enters by virtue of covenant promise at birth. Marcel acknowledges that children are only 'legal' and not 'living' members of the covenant; it is suggested the children are no different from adult converts whose profession may or may not be genuine. However, parents are assured that it is 'probable' that their children's membership should become a living reality and so children should be considered as 'having the life of the covenant' as long as they 'do not by their conduct give evidence to the contrary' (pp111-112). There is some confusion over the exact status of the child. Marcel does not hesitate to apply to such an infant the descriptions 'child of God', 'in Christ' and no longer belonging to the 'race of Adam'. Yet clearly, they may not be converted; they may not be 'living' church members.

In the matter of conversion, Marcel claims that the 'covenant child' has a clear privilege. He has a *right* (emphasis his) to fellowship with Christ, pardon and eternal life (p226). Furthermore the covenant child is in possession of a special sort of 'internal regeneration' by which God, according to promise, restores liberty of choice to the children of the covenant, with the result that, confronted with the alternative of life or death, they are able voluntarily and freely to embrace the one or the other' (pp 109-110). Here, then, is a new realm of soteriology?!

There is also some confusion as to the nature of the Church. We are told that the pastor's priority is to seek the conversion of those in 'legal' membership. When that is done, he can then turn to the conversion of the world, for "conversions" of proselytes are only possible with reference to a true Church, living in grace and pardon, and conscious of her riches in the gospel' (p134). So Marcel longs for a 'pure' Church, but his doctrine of baptism requires a mixed multitude.

Much of this book's complaints against Baptists are targeted at Arminians, or the straw man of churches who require wholly regenerate membership. In fact, Baptists require a credible profession of faith.

In response to Marcel there is only space to make one point. He fails to do justice to the 'newness' of the New Covenant. Reformed Baptists will have much sympathy with his arguments for the unity of God's purpose, but the NT makes it clear that certain elements of the Old Testament order were typical and symbolic and are transformed with the coming of Christ. Physical descent was merely a picture of the spiritual reality now revealed; the children of Abraham are now those who have faith in Christ (Gal 3:7). According to the NT (and contrary to OT Jewish

understanding) the promises were not made to Abraham and his physical seed, but only in a typical way, pointing to Christ (Gal 3:16). Marcel maintains that children of believers are heirs of the promise; the NT restricts this privilege to those who have faith (Gal 3:26-29). Membership of the New Covenant, the New Israel, is by faith in Christ (Heb 8:11, 1 Peter 2:4-5). It is for such, entering the Church, that baptism is to be administered.

Children of the Promise: The Biblical Case for Infant Baptism

Robert R Booth, P&R, 1995, 190pp, pb.

Randy Booth was a Reformed Baptist and became a Reformed Paedobaptist. He is familiar for example with David Kingdon's book *Children of Abraham* (now out of print), but found the arguments finally unconvincing. Booth is now intent on persuading Baptists of his position, and one might expect that he would give us a response to Kingdon and fresh arguments. Such optimism is disappointed; this is just a re-presentation of the familiar covenant arguments for infant baptism.

Like Marcel, Booth emphasises the unity and continuity of God's covenants. He draws a close parallel between circumcision and baptism, and emphasises family (household) solidarity. As God has one purpose, there is unity in the covenants, and one people of God; children circumcised in the OT point to infants baptised in the NT. There is no distinction to be made between the Testaments at this point. The book closes with an appendix, quoting Samuel Miller's arguments for infant baptism from Church history.

The author follows very strictly his hermeneutical principle that the teaching of the OT continues unless specifically abrogated. Hence infant baptism in the NT can be assumed, given the precedent of circumcision. So strong is his insistence on this principle of continuity that he dismisses as inconsistent Baptists who hold to the continuing validity of the ten commandments while claiming that the Old Covenant has been replaced by the New (p29 n8). According to Booth we cannot pick and choose; evidently he believes in the continuing claims of the Mosaic order. He states the view that '...the NT can be interpreted properly only in the context of the OT' p20, but nowhere could I find the admission that the OT should be interpreted in the light of the NT. So he reads Christ in the light of Moses rather than the other way around.

There is of course much material here to which a Reformed Baptist can give hearty assent. There is unity in the covenants. We strongly affirm that God has one purpose and one people in every age. The coming of Christ and his Church are indeed the fulfilments of the promises to Abraham. But like Marcel, Booth is guilty of pressing his case for continuity too hard, and he disregards any element of discontinuity between the covenants. His arguments are fully answered by David Kingdon; the two following books also deal with the Reformed Baptist view of the covenants.

Babies, Believers and Baptism

J K Davies, Grace Publications, 1983, 23pp, pb, £0.65.

This little booklet is based on David Kingdon's *Children of Abraham*. In brief compass, the author touches on the position of children and the covenant in Old and New Testaments, and the parallels between circumcision and baptism. This is a good little summary of some of the covenant arguments for the Reformed Baptist position. As far as it goes it is very helpful. But it is so tantalisingly brief that it simply makes you long for the fuller version: *Children of Abraham* which is, alas, out of print.

The Testimony of Baptism

Erroll Hulse, Reformation Today Trust (Carey Publications), 1982, 136pp, pb, £3.95

This is a positive exposition of believer's baptism. In short chapters, aspects of the symbolism and mode of baptism are explained. The NT teaching is expounded; there is also a helpful pastoral treatment of discernment of a credible profession of faith, and counsel in dealing with the sick and procrastinators. Believer's baptism is shown to be the way of entrance to church membership.

The error of infant baptism is demonstrated by showing the close biblical link between baptism and conversion. Then, in the second part of the book, the covenant position is developed in greater depth. A whole chapter is devoted to an explanation of our unity with Reformed Paedobaptists before our differences on the theology of the covenants is outlined. There is a brief summary of the differences between Old and New Covenants. A short survey is presented of different arguments for infant baptism, showing their weaknesses. There is a chapter on the attitude of Jesus to children.

This book provides much in short compass. It is useful to give to a baptismal candidate, or to those as yet unpersuaded of the Baptist position.

Should Babies be Baptized?

TE Watson, Grace Publications, 1995 (updated version of 1962 edition). 125pp, pb, £3.95.

It is good to see this little book back in print. The text has been amended so that references to 'infants' now read 'babies' for greater clarity. The biblical texts are surveyed, and the case for baby baptism is demolished. Covenant arguments are only treated briefly. The unique feature of this book is that all of the quotations which comment on the relevant texts are provided by Paedobaptist authors. Watson weaves together their quotations to show that they are at odds with one another (and sometimes themselves), and that the Paedobaptist house is in confusion in making its own case.

Sadly, this modern edition has occasional typographical errors. The work would also have been enhanced by using a contrasting font for the numerous quotations, and for footnotes.

Baptism: The Picture and Its Purpose

Peter Masters, Sword and Trowel, 1994, 24pp, pb, £0.70

This is a brief explanation of believer's baptism. The imagery of baptism is set out, and the proper mode of immersion is established. The case for infant baptism is opposed, and the variation amongst Paedobaptist views is briefly demonstrated. Covenant arguments are not developed and the author makes a sharp distinction between Old and New Testaments, refusing any parallel between baptism and circumcision.

Baptism and Church Membership

Erroll Hulse, Reformation Today Trust (Carey Publications), 1972, 24pp, pb, £1.20

This booklet is ideal to be given to the candidate for baptism and/or church membership. On baptism, the command to be baptised is shown, and the symbolism and mode are explained. It is helpful that an explanation of church membership immediately follows in the second part of the booklet so that the link is clearly demonstrated.

I Want to be Baptised

Eric Lane, Grace Publications, 1986, 124pp, pb, £2.25

This little book is designed for the baptismal candidate. The author therefore restricts himself to NT references, and does not refute the Paedobaptist position. We are shown the various elements of the symbolism of baptism, and taken through the commands and examples of baptism in the NT.

Immersion is assumed, but not established by argument. Similarly, there seems to be the assumption that the baptised will go on into church membership, but the link is not established clearly. It is a shame that 1 Corinthians 12:13 is not treated as a NT scripture touching on baptism. Nevertheless, the positive blessings of baptism for the individual are helpfully drawn out.

Special Children? A Theology of Childhood

Eric Lane, Grace Publications, 1996, 160pp, £5.95

Eric Lane began his ministry as a Paedobaptist in the Church of England. Having now been a Baptist for many years, he asks if we have any positive theology of the children of believers. Do they occupy any special place in the economy of the gospel?

We are reminded that our children are sinful by nature like all children and need salvation. We must not assume that our children are naturally in the kingdom of God, or enjoy some innate faith. However, they are 'special' in being received as gifts of God by their parents, and brought under the influence of the means of grace – the place of God's blessing. The place of children in Old and New Covenants is compared and contrasted. There is helpful and practical wisdom for parents on teaching and discipline in the home according to Christian principles, and a com-

mentation of sensitive evangelism which encourages the young to come to Christ. For those who die in infancy, the view of universal and automatic salvation is rejected, although the view of hopeful agnosticism presented is so very hopeful that the conclusion seems to be about the same and looks rather shaky.

Some question marks still remain. The theology of the covenants is not presented as clearly as it might be; the contrast between Old and New is sometimes too sharp and simplistic. Children's prayers and worship are assumed, but there is no discussion of the basis for such practice; this would have been helpful. Titus 1:6 is not dealt with, which begs some questions about family solidarity. And the section on admitting children to baptism and church membership left me with several questions.

This is an important beginning, but there is more work to be done. We must hope that someone will stand on the shoulders of Eric Lane and take our understanding forward in this important area.

Will My Children Go to Heaven? Hope and Help for Believing Parents

Edward N Gross, P&R, 1995, 177 + xiv pp, pb, £6.95.

The message of this book is as simple as it is misguided: all children of faithful Christian parents will be saved. Texts such as Acts 2:36-39, Acts 16:29-31 and other 'household' references both in Old and New Testaments are taken as promises not simply regarding the baptism of infants but their salvation. Paedobaptist covenant arguments are also applied to the Abrahamic promises to suggest that the physical seed of Christian believers are the objects of the promises of God.

Having presented us with a case for the unconditional salvation of our children through family solidarity, Gross then tells us that in fact there is a catch. These promises are not always fulfilled because Christian parents are not faithful. Like Lot they see family members lost from the kingdom of God through worldliness. Parents do not always teach and train their children, or do so in the wrong way. So Gross urges us to be diligent, sending our children to Christian schools, praying, disciplining and presenting a godly example. Gross thinks nothing of taking Proverbs 22:6 as a promise rather than a proverb, and is apparently unaware that the popular English translation might well be precisely the opposite of the meaning of the Hebrew text.

There is much positive material here on Christian parenting, but the fundamental thesis is wrong-headed. There is some weak exegesis, and poor theology. Are we really to believe that Ishmael and other sons of Abraham did not receive the promise because of bad parenting? Is this the reason why Jacob and not Esau received the birthright? Gross simply fudges the issue; in fact it demolishes his case.

Rather than giving hope and help to believing parents, this book gives only anxiety and guilt to those whose children never do turn to the Lord. It is disappointing that P&R have published such an unhelpful volume.

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