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### Development of a Biblical Paradigm for Ministry to Unbaptized Seventh-day Adventist Children

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Seventh-day Adventist children**

**Wagatsuma, Seizou, D.Min.**

**Andrews University, 1987**

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DEVELOPMENT OF A BIBLICAL PARADIGM FOR MINISTRY  
TO UNBAPTIZED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHILDREN

A Project Report  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
Seizou Wagatsuma  
August 1987

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TO UNBAPTIZED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHILDREN

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3 August 1987  
Date approved

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENT OF A BIBLICAL PARADIGM FOR MINISTRY  
TO UNBAPTIZED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHILDREN

by

Seizou Wagatsuma

Chairman: Reuben A. Hubbard



ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPMENT OF A BIBLICAL PARADIGM FOR MINISTRY  
TO UNBAPTIZED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHILDREN

Name of researcher: Seizou Wagatsuma

Name and degree of chairman: Reuben A. Hubbard, D.Min.

Date completed: August 1987

This paper represents an attempt to clarify the status of the unbaptized child in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to implement an acceptable status.

Problem

Traditionally, Seventh-day Adventists have believed that children of Adventist parents are the "younger members of God's family." However, while the term "church" is often used synonymously with the term "God's family," children, who, on one hand, are recognized as part of God's family, are, on the other hand, officially excluded from church

membership. Their names are not listed on the church membership records--though they are recognized as members of the Sabbath School of the church.

Because of this ambiguity, I believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to clarify the status of children biblically and theologically in terms of their membership in the church and in God's family, defining what church membership really is.

#### Method

In Part 1, the biblical and theological bases for the status of children in the church are investigated through an exegesis of key Scriptural passages in light of recent scholarly research and discussion focusing particularly upon the issues of children's membership.

#### Results

Both in the OT and NT the status of the believer's children is clearly that they are incorporated into God's family. They are the children of God by birth through faith-relation with their guardians.

To establish this status of children, Part 2 recommends that at the official child dedication service the names of the children be recorded in the church books as younger members of the church. (The service is based on the dedication of Jesus and the enrollment of His name in the Temple.) Though they are little, children may be

Christians in accordance with their years. They would have to be baptized of their own will later on becoming mature Christians.

The child-blessing service may be used for any children who are brought to Jesus. Participation in the church ordinances of footwashing and the Lord's Supper would help unbaptized child to understand more fully the mystery of God and so guide them toward Christ.

#### Conclusion

The names of church members' children should be recorded in the church record as younger members through the rite of child-dedication.

#### NOTE

This Doctor of Ministry Project-Dissertation falls under the category described in the Seminary Bulletin as Project II, a paper completed in fulfillment of requirements for an alternate curriculum plan under which the candidate prepares two related papers--a theological position paper addressing some issue or problem that exists in the Seventh-day Adventist church in a theological setting and a professional paper addressing this same issue or problem from the standpoint of ministerial practice.

IN DEDICATION

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit

All the Saints in Christ Our Lord

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
<u>ANCL</u>	<u>Ante-Nicene Christian Library</u>
<u>AUSS</u>	<u>Andrews University Seminary Studies</u>
BDB	<u>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,</u> F. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, eds.
BH	Biblia Hebrica. Stuttgartinsia.
COT	Commentary on the Old Testament, Keil and Delitzsch, eds. Co.
<u>DNTT</u>	<u>Dictionary of New Testament Theology,</u> C. Brown, ed.
EGT	The Expositor's Greek Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<u>IDB</u>	<u>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,</u> Buttrick, ed.
<u>ISBE</u>	<u>The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,</u> Bromiley, ed.
JB	Jerusalem Bible
KJV	King James Version
LXX	The Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
<u>NCOT</u>	<u>A New Concordance of the Old Testament,</u> Even-Shoshan, ed.
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NEB	New English Bible

<u>NovT</u>	<u>Novum Testamentum</u>
<u>NPNF</u>	<u>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</u>
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<u>SDABC</u>	<u>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Nichol, ed.</u>
<u>TDNT</u>	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Kittel and Friedrich, eds.</u>
<u>TDOT</u>	<u>Theological Dictioary of the Old Testament, Botterweck and Ringgren, eds.</u>

TRANSLITERATION OF HEBREW AND GREEK ALPHABETS

1. Hebrew Alphabet

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	ק	ר	ש	ת	י	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	ק	ר	ש	ת
א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	ק	ר	ש	ת	י	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	ק	ר	ש	ת
א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	ק	ר	ש	ת	י	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	ק	ר	ש	ת
א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	ק	ר	ש	ת	י	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	ק	ר	ש	ת

## 2. Greek Alphabet

α	a
β	b
γ	g
δ	d
ε	e
ς	z
η	ē
θ	th
ι	i
κ	k
λ	l
μ	m
ν	n
ξ	x
ο	ō
π	p
ρ	r
σ	s
τ	t
υ	u
φ	ph
χ	ch
ψ	ps
ω	ō

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To a foreigner such as myself who came to the United States when already in my forties and had never practiced English until this age, it requires much assistance to study and especially to write well in English. I am indebted to all those persons who have made possible the completion of this project.

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The last but deepest gratitude is reserved for our Lord God who made the impossible possible with steadfast loving kindness. Be Thy name glorified forever. Amen.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to examine the biblical and theological understanding of the status of unbaptized children and to develop a paradigm for application to unbaptized Seventh-day Adventist children.

In my sixteen-year ministry as a pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I have often observed confusion among members about the status of children in the church. For example, if I ask parents whether their children belong to God's family, they unanimously reply "Yes." On the other hand, if I ask whether their children are church members, they hesitantly answer "No!"; it seems as though they want to say, "Yes, of course." This same confusion can be observed at the time of footwashing and communion services. Some parents wish to allow their children to participate in the rituals--especially at family-oriented communion services--even though the children are not yet baptized.

Recent research papers and articles by scholars of other denominations indicate that there exists a general feeling of need for the churches to deal with the theology of the status of children regarding their membership,



baptism, education, or participation in church rituals.<sup>1</sup>

Although some materials which relate to the theology of children and its practical implication can be found in publications of other denominations,<sup>2</sup> I have found among Seventh-day Adventist publications hardly a paper or book on the theology of children which deals especially with such current issues and problems as the membership of children, participation in the rituals of the church by children, or the meaning of child dedication.

Here, one must note the following admonition by

E. G. White:

The fact that there is no controversy or agitation

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<sup>1</sup>Several doctoral dissertations address the issue; see, i.e., Lewis Craig Ratliff, "Discipleship, Church Membership, and the Place of Children among Southern Baptists: An Investigation of the Place of Children in a Baptist Church in View of Christ's Teachings on Discipleship and the Baptist Doctrine of the Church" (Th.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1963); Stephen Thomas Shifflet, "The Christian Nurture of Children through the Sacraments" (D. Min. dissertation, United Theological Seminary and the Minnesota Consortium of Theological School, 1982); Gary T. Deane, "An Investigation of the Child's Conception of Christian Conversion, Baptism, and Church Membership Compared with Jean Piaget's States of Cognitive Development" (Ed.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982); see also Keith Watkins, "Children in Worship: A Problem for the Christian Church," Encounter 44 (1983):263-276; Finlay MacDonald, "Baptized Children, Confirmation and Holy Communion," Scottish Journal of Theology 33 (1980):551-565. The writer of this paper goes beyond these other researchers by recommending that the status of believers' children as younger members of the church be registered on the church records through a child-dedication service and at the same time a child-blessing service be established for the unbelievers' children.

<sup>2</sup>See list in n. 1, above.

among God's people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what. Until thus tested, they knew not their great ignorance. And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe, but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness.<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, Seventh-day Adventists have believed that their children are the "younger members of God's family."<sup>2</sup> However, here is a problem. The term "church" is often used synonymously with the term "God's family." Yet the children, who on one hand are recognized as part of God's family, are on the other hand officially excluded from the membership of the church. Their names are not listed on the church records as the members of the church-- though they are recognized as members of the Sabbath School of the church. Because of this ambiguity, I believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to clarify the status of children biblically and theologically in terms of their

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1882), 5:707.

<sup>2</sup>E. G. White's writings often use the expression: Parents "should look upon their children as younger members of the Lord's family..." (Desire of Ages [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1888], p. 515). See White's other books; i.e., Child Guidance (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1954), p. 486, 487; Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1913), p. 113; Adventist Home (Nashville, Tenn: Southern Pub Assn., 1952), p. 486.

membership in the church and in God's family, defining what church membership really is.

In Old Testament times, children in Israel were apparently regarded as belonging to the family of God. The male child in particular bore the sign of membership in God's family through circumcision. This membership does not seem to have been discarded in New Testament times. We observe in the Gospel accounts the way of Jesus in dealing with children. He seems to have regarded them as part of God's kingdom.<sup>1</sup> However, as pointed out above, Seventh-day Adventists do not officially include children as members of the church, a term which is often used as identical to "God's family" and "the kingdom of grace." How can Adventists correlate the biblical evidence with current church practice? It appears crucial that serious consideration should be given to this question.

At present, children often suffer from broken family ties.<sup>2</sup> Many children are lonesome in an individualistic society and a nuclear family life-style.<sup>3</sup> In the past,

---

<sup>1</sup>See Matt 18:1-14; Mark 10:14.

<sup>2</sup>For further discussion of this problem, see Ira L. Reiss, Family Systems in America, 3rd ed. (New York, : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980); Reece McGee, Social Disorganization in America (San Francisco, CA: Chandler Pub. Co., 1962). See also James C. Dobson, Love Must Be Tough (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1983), pp. 11-14, and Kenneth Keniston, The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society (New York: Dell Pub. Co., Delta Book, 1965).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Dobson, pp. 12, 13.

the status of children in the church has not been such a problem because family ties were strong and any children of church members could have a feeling of "belonging" to their family and to their parents' church. Thus, Adventist theology did not need to deal with the issue of belonging--membership. However, today people have a greater need for some outward sign of belonging in order to feel accepted.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the biblical and theological basis for the status of children in the church is investigated here through an exegesis of key Scriptural passages in light of recent scholarly research focusing particularly upon the issues of children's membership in the church, or God's family, and of their participation in church rituals.

At the same time, the following questions related to the status of children in the Christian church are briefly considered: What is the relationship between membership and baptism? What is the function of circumcision, infant baptism, child dedication, and other rituals, and how do they in particular relate to children's status in the church?

The recent debate over children's participation in church rituals--raised especially at the meeting of the

---

<sup>1</sup>For a study on the Seventh-day Adventist Church on this point, see Charles C. Crider and Robert C. Kistler, The Seventh-day Adventist Family: An Empirical Study (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), pp. 194-196. "The rate of family disorganization and divorce might be as high as 15 to 17 percent overall," among Seventh-day Adventist members in 1979.

Church Manual Committee of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1980--are also considered on the basis of correspondence received from the chairman of the committee and several other leading Seventh-day Adventists.

Based on a biblical and theological understanding of the status of children in the church, a paradigm is designed and proposed to clarify the status of children in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Thus, the final goal of this project is to clarify the biblical and theological status of children in the church and to provide a paradigm for application to children in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It is expected that the project will encourage members, both parents and children, of Seventh-day Adventist churches to adopt an appropriate view of children so they may establish God's kingdom of grace on earth and be prepared for entering into God's kingdom of glory.

It is also anticipated that a better understanding of children's relationships to the church will trigger an evangelistic effort for children as a potential for church growth.

This research is descriptive. Further research, especially empirical research,<sup>1</sup> must follow for the

---

<sup>1</sup>For example, statistics must be sought for the following: How do Seventh-day Adventists, especially parents, view their unbaptized children with regard to

effective implementation of the proposal. Materials are limited only to those written in English and Japanese and obtainable at James White Library and through the inter-state library with a computer search.

### Assumptions

There are several assumptions in this research.

1. "Church" must be equal to "God's family" or Abraham's descendants, the community of God's people who are separated from the world and belong together under God's covenant grace.<sup>1</sup>

2. The merit of Atonement by Jesus Christ on the cross must be applied to everyone who will not reject it; especially, this merit should be considered available to children who are under believing guardians though the children are unbaptized.<sup>2</sup>

3. Hermeneutics in this project will be followed according to what was approved by the 1986 Annual Council

---

their status in the church, outside of the church or inside of the church? How do Adventist children view their church before and after their baptism with regard to a sense of belonging?

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Matt 18:18-20. Ellen G. White also admonishes in MS 5, 1896, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI: "Never allow your children to suppose that they are not children of God until they are old enough to be baptized."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Matt 18:10-14. "They do not remember," E. G. White comments about parents, "that these little ones are bought with a price and are the purchased possession of the Lord Jesus"; MS 65, 1908, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 7-14.<sup>1</sup>

Among the items which were approved at the Council, the following issues are worthy of note here: (1) the sixty-six books of the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, are the infallible revelation of God's will and His salvation; (2) the Bible, the word of God, alone is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested;<sup>2</sup> (3) Seventh-day Adventists believe that "God inspired Ellen G. White, so, her expositions on any given biblical passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without exhausting their meaning or preempting the task of exegesis";<sup>3</sup> and (4) the historical critical method is unacceptable to Adventists.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See the report by Bible Study Committee to the Annual Council; "Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods," Adventist Review, January 22, 1987, pp. 18-19. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, Biblical Interpretation Today (Lincoln, Neb.: College View Printers, 1985), pp. 100-111. These presuppositions, principles, and methods of Bible study are taken into account in this project as a basis of biblical interpretation.

<sup>2</sup>"Bible Study: Presuppositions" report, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 19. See also White, Testimonies, 5:665, 707, 708; Evangelism, p. 256; and Counsels to Writers and Editors, pp. 33-35.

<sup>4</sup>"It is operated on the basis of presuppositions which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible" ("Bible Study: Presuppositions," p. 18).

In part one, first of all we exegetically trace several Scriptural passages which give us some hint about the status of unbaptized children in church. Then, we briefly look into the various individual and denominational views concerning the status of children. Lastly, consideration is given to several theological issues which are related to the status of children, such as baptism, child-dedication or child-blessing service, and participation in church rituals.

Part 2 of this study seeks for an application of the biblical and theological understanding of the status of children who are unbaptized in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and proposes a paradigm of establishing their status in the church and enabling them to participate in church rituals, especially in the communion service.



**PART ONE**

**BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY**

## CHAPTER I

### TOWARD A THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATUS OF CHILDREN: AN EXEGETICAL SURVEY OF CRUCIAL BIBLICAL EVIDENCES IN LIGHT OF PERTINENT EXTERNAL SOURCES

Several Scriptural passages which are selected here represent the texts that contain important notions in order to understand how the status of children of adult believers was regarded in the biblical world.

#### The Old Testament

##### Genesis 17:9-14 Circumcision, Sign of the Covenant

<sup>9</sup>And God said to Abraham, 'You on your part shall keep My covenant, yourself and your seed after you, to their generations. <sup>10</sup>This is My covenant which you shall keep between Myself and you<sup>1</sup>, and your seed after you: all your males must be circumcised.<sup>2</sup> <sup>11</sup>And you shall be circumcised on your foreskin, and it shall be a sign of covenant between myself and you. <sup>12</sup> Every your male-child, eight days old, must be circumcised, to your generations, no matter whether he be born in the household or bought for money in any foreigner child who is not of your seed. <sup>13</sup>They must surely be circumcised, both one born in the household and one bought with your money. And My covenant shall be in

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<sup>1</sup>Plural form of "you": bênêkem.

<sup>2</sup>Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, A Commentary on the Old Testament (COT) 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1975), 1:59, translates this verse as follows: "This is how you shall keep my covenant between myself and you ...: circumcise yourselves, every male among you."

your bodies for a covenant in perpetuity. <sup>14</sup>And an uncircumcised male, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, such a man shall be cut off from his people: he has violated My covenant.<sup>1</sup>

Genesis 17, according to Westermann, is a literary construction patterned on a narrative.<sup>2</sup> The division of the chapter is carefully thought out right down to the finest detail; "it is an artistic composition."<sup>3</sup> Westermann continues to point out that "basic to the understanding of the structure is that God's speech, set between his appearance in vs. 1a and his withdrawal in vs. 22, is divided into two parts: there is the preamble (vss. 1b-3a) and the divine speech (vss. 3b-21)."<sup>4</sup>

The latter part, the divine speech, is further divided into three parts: vss. 3b-8, 9-14, and 15-21. The first and the last parts of the division are promise and the middle part is command. It is very important to know from this literary structure that the promise is dominant; the command is given to the one who has received the promise; the command rests on the promise.<sup>5</sup> The sections of the promise have communicated what God will "accomplish"; then the command section, vss. 9-14, turns to the human

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<sup>1</sup>Translated from MT.

<sup>2</sup>Claus Westermann, Genesis 12-36, trans. John J. Scullion, S.J. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub., 1985), p. 254.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *ibid.*

side, i.e., to the observance which now falls to Abraham with the inauguration of the communal relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Walter Brueggemann argues that the promise to Abraham is most fully and solemnly asserted. The promise does not simply crop up at incidental times. "It is thematic and is carefully placed to guide the narrative."<sup>2</sup> The promise according to him (a) is linked to creation, for the language is the same (vss. 6, 20; Gen 1:28), and Abraham is the bearer of what is intended in creation; (b) is a royal promise (vss. 6, 16, 20), undoubtedly connecting Abraham to the Davidic hopes of 2 Sam 7; (c) is an eternal promise (vss. 7, 8, 13, 19) assuring permanent well-being in the land; and (d) concerns the fundamental relation of Yahweh and Abraham as belonging to each other--the promise concludes, "I will be their God" (vs. 8).<sup>3</sup> Then, "the central portion of the text (vss. 9-14) is concerned with circumcision, the sign and seal of trust in the promise and entrance into the covenant."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Gerhard von Rad, Genesis, rev. ed., trans. John H. Marks, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>See Walter Brueggemann, Genesis, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 153-154. He points the following texts as references: Gen 1:22, 28; 9:1,7; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27b; 48:4; and Exod 1:7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

On the part of God<sup>1</sup> it was to consist of promises as indicated above. As a pledge of this promise, God changed Abram's name<sup>2</sup> to Abraham.<sup>3</sup> In this name God gave him a tangible pledge of the fulfillment of His covenant, as much as a name which God gives cannot be a mere empty sound but must be the expression of something real, or eventually acquire reality. On the other hand, God, on the part of Abraham,<sup>4</sup> required that he and his descendants in all generations should keep the covenant (vs. 9), and that as a sign of "My covenant" he should circumcise himself and every male in his house (vss. 11, 12): the visible and ineradicable mark that a man belongs to God's chosen community.

Circumcision was practiced in the ancient Near East by many peoples, including the Egyptians and most of Israel's immediate neighbors except the Philistines (1 Sam 14:6), as is clear from the passage in Jer 9:25, 26 and Ezek 31:18; 32:19. According to Aalders, it was also practiced among the Phoenicians and has even been discovered among various tribes in Africa, South America, and

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<sup>1</sup>'ānî, the pronoun "I," placed at the beginning absolutely in vs. 4: "so far as I am concerned, for my part."

<sup>2</sup>"High father."

<sup>3</sup>"Father of multitude" from 'ab and rāhām, Arabic meaning multitude.

<sup>4</sup>vss. 9-14; 'attāh, the pronoun "you," being the antithesis to 'ānî, "I," in vs. 4.

the Islands of the South Pacific.<sup>1</sup> It is said that normally circumcision was a rite practiced about the age of puberty or immediately preceding marriage among those people.<sup>2</sup> Evidently, God did not establish the rite of circumcision as an entirely new practice. Instead, He takes this widely practiced rite of initiation and transfers the act of circumcision from puberty to the eighth day after birth, transforming its meaning to be the sign of the covenant, stressing the fact that the covenant relationship is something received, not something that depends upon personal choice and decision.

Thus, without God's given meaning,<sup>3</sup> the practice of circumcision among God's people is nothing, as Paul declares in Gal 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love." As The Torah: A Modern Commentary<sup>4</sup> points out, it confirms the circumcision practitioner's

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhard C. Aalders, Genesis, vol. 1, Bible Student's Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), p. 308.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. COT, 1:58.

<sup>3</sup>W. Gunther Plaut, ed., "Genesis," in The Torah: A Modern Commentary (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), p. 118, says: "Surgical circumcision alone is by no means the equivalent of b'rît mûlāh. The act obtains its value not from the physical operation and its presumed medical benefits but from the idea and the history that underlie it, from the prayers that accompany it, and from the father's affirmation that his child will be brought up in the religion of his fathers."

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

special relationship to the God. So, hence, if the practitioner cut off this relationship with God in actual life --as did the Scribes or Pharisees in the time of Jesus Christ with the rejection of Him whom God sent for them-- there is no wonder that his practice of mere circumcision was of no avail. If there existed, however, a true meaning in his observance, neglecting to circumcise was more than a mere neglect of a rite; it was a rejection of God's sign and a breach of the covenant with God, and the practitioner was subject of divine punishment, being "cut off from the people," i.e., from the covenant; the uncircumcised was to be exterminated from His people.

It is important to note that circumcision was to be extended not only to the flesh and blood descendants of Abraham, but to all the males in his house, even to every foreign slave not belonging to the seed of Abraham, whether born in the house or bought with money, and to the "son of eight days," i.e., the male child eight days old (vss. 12, 13). Westermann says:

The extension of the prescription to circumcise to the household can only mean that...the whole household is a cultic unity, and that the circle of worshippers of Yahweh is expanded by the slaves beyond the members of the Israelite people. This shows a certain openness, conditioned by the strong bond of family unity, which includes the slaves. At the same time the significance of circumcision undergoes adaptation and it becomes explicitly religious. This is to meet a concern that the slaves can take part in family worship.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Westermann, p. 266.

Thus, the covenant relationship was extended to every household member: not only to all of Abraham's kin--like Lot who wanted to voluntarily accept the covenant in which the Lord, El Shaddai, promised He would be a God to them after receiving circumcision as a sign of that covenant--but also to slaves who as members of the household followed the religion of their master--even to infants or children who received the sign through their guardians' will (vss. 12, 13).

So, in the Old Testament time, children, even infants who were merely the passive recipient of the sign of the covenant and were unconscious of its meaning, were placed as members within the covenant community by God's clear commandment of giving circumcision, a sign of the covenant, to the children on the eighth day after their birth.

In this first formal step of godly education the parent acknowledges his obligation to perform all the rest. Also, on the command of God, it is the formal admission of believing parents' offspring into the privileges of the covenant. This admission cannot be reversed except by the deliberate rebellion of the child. Thus the visible church, the community of God's covenant people, is not merely a voluntary association but includes infants, too.



Exodus 12:1-20; 12:43-13:2  
Passover and family

12<sup>1</sup>And Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2"This month is to be the chief of months<sup>1</sup> for you; it shall be the first of months of the year for you. 3Speak to the whole community of Israel, saying, On the tenth day of this month they shall take for themselves a flock animal<sup>2</sup> according to a household of fathers, a flock animal for each household. 4If the household is too small for a flock animal, he and his neighbor next to his house shall take, according to the number of persons, each one by the mouth of his eating. You must take into account as to the flock animal. 5A flock animal, a perfect one, a male one year old, shall be to you; you shall take it from either sheep or goats. 6And it shall be for you to keep until the fourteenth day of this month; and the whole assembly of the community of Israel shall slaughter it between the two evenings.<sup>3</sup> 7And they shall take from the blood and put on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat. 8In this night, they shall eat the flesh roasted with fire and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. 9Do not eat any of it raw nor boiled at all in water, but roasted over the fire; its head with its legs and its entrails. 10You shall not leave any of it until morning: whatever is left till morning you shall burn with fire. 11You shall eat it like this; with your waist girded, sandals on your feet, and a staff in your hand. You shall eat it in haste: it is a passover to Yahweh. 12This night, I will pass through in the land of Egypt and strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, man and beast alike, and on all the gods of Egypt I shall execute

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<sup>1</sup>r'ōš hōdāšîm "head" or "first" of the "new moons," i.e., lunar months.

<sup>2</sup>seh includes any flock-animal, one of a flock, i.e., a sheep or goat, according to BDB, pp. 961, 962. Vs. 5 makes this clear.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), p. 919, says, "In Jewish orthodoxy the time of the slaughter is specified as in the afternoon, before sunset; especially, the time of approaching sunset. The Mishnah implies that any time after noon was valid for the slaying (Pesahim 5:3). Samaritans, Karaites, and Sadducees specify the time as after sunset and before darkness. The latter probably designates the more archaic practice." The NEB translates here, "between dusk and dark," and the NIV "twilight."

judgments; I am Yahweh!. 13And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and I will see the blood; I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy as I smite the land of Egypt.

14"And this day shall be a memorial for you, and you shall celebrate it as a pilgrim-feast<sup>1</sup> to Yahweh for your generations; you shall celebrate it as a law forever. 15For seven days you must eat unleavened bread.<sup>2</sup> On the first day you are to clean all leaven out of your houses, for anyone who eats leavened bread from the first to the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel. 16And on the first day a holy calling-together shall be, and again on the seventh day it shall be to you. On those days no work is to be done; only what must be eaten by each one, that alone may be done by you. 17And you shall observe the unleavened bread<sup>3</sup>, for it was on that same day I brought<sup>4</sup> your armies out of the land of Egypt. Keep this day for your generations, a law forever. 18In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day and until the evening of the twenty-first day, you are to eat unleavened bread. 19For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, because anyone who eats leavened bread will be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he be alien or native of the land. 20You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread."

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (BDB) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 290-291. hag means "religious festival" or "pilgrim-feast."

<sup>2</sup>In this paragraph, vss. 14-20, the rite of Unleavened Bread is given.

<sup>3</sup>The NEB points massōt as misōt (commandments). LXX uses éntolé.

<sup>4</sup>COT, 2:20 in vol. 1, points out that, judging from the past tense of "I brought out," "Moses did not receive instructions respecting the seven days' feast of Matzoth till after the exodus from Egypt; but on account of its internal and substantial connection with the Passover, it is placed here in immediate association with the institution of the paschal meal."

43And Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron,<sup>1</sup> "This is the ordinance of the Passover: every son of an alien shall not eat of it. 44But every men's slave bought for money, you shall circumcise him, then he may take part. 45No stranger and no hired servant may take part in it. 46It is to be eaten in a house alone, out of which not any of the flesh is to be carried outside; nor shall you break any bone of it. 47The whole community of Israel shall prepare it. 48And when a stranger shall stay with you and wish to celebrate the Passover to Yahweh, let him, every male, be circumcised: he may then be admitted to the celebration, and he shall become like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may take part. 49One law shall be to the native and to the stranger, the one staying in your midst." 50And all the sons of Israel carried out as Yahweh commanded Moses and Aaron. So they did. 51And it was on this same day Yahweh brought the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt by their armies.

13<sup>1</sup>Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,<sup>2</sup> 2"Set apart all the first-born to me, the first issue of every womb, among the children of Israel, among man and among livestock; it shall belong to me."<sup>3</sup>

This section constitutes an intrusion into the narrative of the tenth mighty act by Yahweh in Egypt at the time of Exodus. Here a series of laws are introduced which were uttered through the mouth of Yahweh Himself and covered three of "Israel's socio-cultic observances":<sup>4</sup> Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the Dedication of the First-Born.

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<sup>1</sup>v. 43-49 gives ordinances for the Passover.

<sup>2</sup>In this section, 13:1-16, the rite of the Dedication of the First-Born is introduced.

<sup>3</sup>Text translated from MT. Here in vss. 1-13, the Lord gives the Passover rite. These verses belong to the long section on the Passover, the feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Dedication of First-Born, 12:1-13:16.

<sup>4</sup>The Interpreter's Bible, 1:915.

The passage Exod 12:1-20 consists of a speech of instructions regarding the Passover that God Himself gave to Moses and Aaron who in turn conveyed it to the people. Vss. 1-13 deal with the preparation for the Passover, while vss. 14-20 are concerned with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Chapter 13:1-2 is also the word of God concerning the dedication of the first-born to Yahweh.

The regulation for the observance of the Passover had to be given to "the whole community of Israel" (vs. 2), but they had to gather in household units to prepare and celebrate the festival: "...they shall take for themselves ...a flock animal for each household. If the household is too small for a flock animal, he and his neighbor next to his house shall take, according to the number of persons..." (vss. 3-4). The Passover festival at the time of Exodus was a private domestic celebration: each lamb was to be partaken of only by members of one family, or of two families living side by side, including any children in the household. And so, the sacred meal did not require to be eaten at a sanctuary, though, at Josiah's time, the celebration presupposes that the Passover meal was eaten at the sanctuary in Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> and that during the time of the exile this domestic celebration must have been revived because of the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C. as well as of their deportation to Babylon.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. 2 Kings 23:23.

From the time of the Exodus to Jesus the Passover festival was one of three major feasts for Israelites: according to the Jewish calendar all males were obligated to appear before the Lord three times each year.<sup>1</sup> On those feasts, "all are subject," the Mishnah says, "to the command to appear before the Lord except a deaf-mute, an imbecile, a child, one of doubtful sex, one of double sex, women, slaves that have not been freed, a man that is lame or blind or sick or aged and one that cannot go up to Jerusalem on his feet."<sup>2</sup> According to Jeremias,<sup>3</sup> the word for "a child" is defined by the school of Shammai as "One who is not able to go up the Temple hill riding on his father's shoulders"; and by the school of Hillel, "One who is not able to go up holding his father's hand." In other words, even far before the mature age, children in the community of Israel attended the passover feast.

Concerning the Jewish custom of a child's participation in the Passover feast, Jeremias gives another illustration:

The priest Joseph even brought his children, not yet of age, and his household to the second Passover, that is to the Passover held a month later (Mishnah,

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<sup>1</sup>Deut 16:16.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Temple of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Pesahim ix) for those hindered from coming to the main one.<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

Even after the time when the ceremony sacrifice was offered at the temple instead of at a family setting, a Jewish zealot like Joseph the priest tried to have his whole family, including children who were not yet of age, to be involved somehow in the feast.

The Passover at the time of the Exodus is differentiated from its annual memorial festivals in the smearing of the blood on the lintels and doorposts and in the signs of haste and preparedness. The original feast was for those about to be delivered, and the memorial repetition was for those who had been delivered. While the first Passover made the covenant possible, the latter ones were all intended, in various ways, to maintain the covenant once Israel had come into it. There is, however, a common message in spite of those differences--"salvation of God's people by Yahweh through the blood of innocent sacrifice." The message of atonement exists through the death of Jesus Christ--"our paschal lamb."<sup>2</sup>

A flock animal, lamb or kid, was slain in the houses of the Israelites (vss. 3, 4). Every householder was to take a flock animal, without blemish, of the first year,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 5:7: "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed."

and, after keeping it four days in the house, was to kill it. This is emblematical of things in the Christian economy. Christ is the Lamb of God.<sup>1</sup> He was taken from amongst the flock in the vigour of manhood. He was ordained to be slain from the foundation of the world.<sup>2</sup> He was without moral defect.<sup>3</sup> He was slain on Calvary.

The blood of the animal that was slain was to be sprinkled on the two door-posts of the houses of the Israelites (vs. 7). It was not enough to kill the animal; its blood had to be sprinkled on the two doorposts of the house if the inmates--every family member including infants or children--were to be safe. And it is not sufficient for the safety of men that Christ died; his precious blood also must be sprinkled on the hearts of men. The mark of a Christian life should be evident to the world and easily discernible. At Passover there was no difficulty knowing which houses were of the Israelites. Now the house of a good man should be known by the token of the Cross upon it.

The slain animal of Passover was to be eaten by all the members of Israelites (vs. 11): by every household member, of course, including any children. It was not to be eaten raw nor boiled with water; it was roasted with fire. None of the animal was to remain. All were to eat all of

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<sup>1</sup>John 1:29, 36.

<sup>2</sup>Rev 13:8; also Eph 1:4.

<sup>3</sup>1 John 3:8 and 1 Pet 2:22; cf. 1 Cor 5:21.

it. During the repast, their loins were to be girt and their feet were to be shod.

So today every soul must appropriate Christ; it all must participate by eating His meat, "the word,"<sup>1</sup> and drinking His blood, "His nature,"<sup>2</sup> all must be mindful of their pilgrim condition, and must cultivate an attitude of moral haste,<sup>3</sup> to be saved by Him.

After the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts of the house, the Israelites were safe from the stroke of the avenging angel.<sup>4</sup> They were protected because they complied with the ordinance of God for their safety. People are safe only when they have yielded obedience to the terms of salvation which God requires. The Israelites might have done many wise things and availed themselves of many preventatives against the destruction of the angel; but if they had not sprinkled the blood upon the door-posts they would have perished. Likewise, men today may strive to do many things to ameliorate their condition as sinners, but the Cross of Christ is their only real protection.

It is very important, however, to note that infants could do nothing to protect themselves at all. Their safety

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<sup>1</sup>John 6:63.

<sup>2</sup>John 6:53-58, 63; Luke 22:19, 20; and White, Desire of Ages, pp. 389, 390.

<sup>3</sup>Matt 6:33.

<sup>4</sup>Exod 12:13.



was totally dependent on their parents' or guardians' faith and act. Those infants and children were simply separated from the Egyptians and kept inside the house on which the blood was sprinkled and where the meat was eaten. Still, those children--or any other family members who had no power to care for themselves by their own will--were safe when they consented to the action of a man of faith in their household and followed or remained in his care. Their tie to other men of faith makes it possible for them to receive Christ's merit: salvation.<sup>1</sup>

Passover mercies and unleavened duties are joined by God. Days of deliverance by Yahweh should be followed by days of unleavened feasting in His honor. The apostle Paul advocates in 1 Cor 5:8: "Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Yahweh gave the Ten Commandments and laws to the Israelites after delivering them from the bondage in Egypt so they may know the principle of God's kingdom and comply with His truth. This intention was already indicated in these ordinances.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Matt 18:18-20. Jesus Christ says: "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The believer's tie on this earth continues to the heaven. If the believer wants his child to be saved, and he is obedient to God's will, what will be the status of his child in God's family?

Every member of the household, especially children, was expected to be well instructed concerning the peril and the mercy of God to His people thorough the rituals; children especially had to be highly involved and well instructed (vss. 26-27).

The stranger who wished to keep the passover was to be circumcised (vs. 48); no uncircumcised person was permitted to eat thereof. Faith and obedience made all proselytes as home-born, as the children of the Church. A slave born in the house would naturally be circumcised, thus eligible. Even a slave "bought for money" could eat it if circumcised (vs. 43), because, as a possession, he was part of the family. Thus, none of the children who belong to the family and whose guardians or parents are believers and are willing to comply with the moral requirements of the service must be excluded from the participation in the feast. Today, this would mean that children should be included to the sacrament of the Lord's supper.<sup>1</sup> The merit of the sacrifice is offered to every one who is under the covenant relationship as God's family.

It was the duty of the Israelites to set apart all the first-born to Yahweh, the Lord (Exod 13:1, 2). The most excellent of their possessions, the most valuable, and that which was viewed with the greatest regard was His also.

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<sup>1</sup>In our environment it should be asked, "How"? A later discussion on this matter will address: How to make our children participate in the ritual.

Qaddeš<sup>1</sup> means "to set apart for sacred use," "to regard as sacred," "to sanctify," or "to prepare by sacred rites: to purify." Regardless of his age, the first-born infant or adult must be set apart for sacred use. This was required by the divine commandment. This setting apart was grateful acknowledgment of the divine mercy in sparing the first-born at the midnight destruction. It was associated with their national deliverance from the bondage.

Later, in the wilderness, after the tabernacle service was established, the practice of consecrating the tribe of Levi for service in the Lord's sanctuary was instituted as a substitute for the offering of the first-born.<sup>2</sup> But the first-born were still to be regarded as the Lord's, and they were to be bought back from the priest by a ransom for which their father had to pay five shekels.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the law for the presentation of the first-born was made particularly significant. While it was a memorial of the Lord's wonderful deliverance of the children of Israel, it prefigured a greater deliverance to be wrought by the only-begotten Son of God.<sup>4</sup> As the blood sprinkled on

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<sup>1</sup>Piel imperative form of qādaš, "to be holy." Cf. Benjamin Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), p. 654.

<sup>2</sup>Num 3:11-13, 45.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Luke 2:27; and Mishnah, "Berakoth," 8. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Apostle Paul says of Jesus Christ in Col 1:14-15: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the

the doorposts had saved the first-born of Israel, so the blood of Christ has power to save the world.<sup>1</sup>

"The first-born of every creature," Christ the Lord, delivered God's people, Israel, from the bondage of sin by dying Himself on the Cross as the death of the first-born of Egypt and the blood of the flock animal enabled the people of ancient Israel to be freed from their bondage. The Lord avenged Himself on the hardened, sinful people who oppressed others, and at the same time He ransomed His people for their sins by His own life. As every household member of Israel who obeyed the will of God was rescued at the passover, so every Christian family member--including unbaptized children in the household--will be saved by His atonement.

Most commentators agree that the history of all these rites goes back to a time before the Exodus, whether among the Hebrews or among other groups. The Torah: A Modern Commentary says:

The festival that in Jewish history has become known as Passover received its character and importance through the Exodus which made a preexisting festival into the celebration of deliverance. More precisely, there were probably three, and certainly two, separate observances which the Torah tradition combined into one great feast and which subsequent generations endowed with unique distinction.

The two major traditions that contributed to the Passover which we now know were the Passover sacrifice

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forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature?"

<sup>1</sup>Cf. White, Desire of Ages, p. 51.

and the feast of Matzoth: while the dedication of the first-born was likely also a separate observance that became absorbed into the festival as it developed over the centuries.<sup>1</sup>

According to the same book, the feast of Matzoth was an agricultural festival that celebrated the beginning of the grain harvest in the spring when an offering of the first fruits was made and unleavened bread eaten. The festival which started on the 15th of Abib at the time of Exodus was "apparently known to the Israelites in Egypt," though it was not celebrated during their years of captivity. This is "most likely" the basis of Moses's original request of Pharaoh: "Let the people go into the wilderness for three days so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert" (Exod 5:1; 10:9).<sup>2</sup>

The passover sacrifice was also probably a spring festival of much older standing,<sup>3</sup> a thanksgiving rite of

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<sup>1</sup> W. Gunther Plaut, ed., "Exodus," in The Torah: A Modern Commentary (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), p. 464.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>L. Elliott-Binns, From Moses to Elisha, The Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), p. 96. He says: "Though we have no certain knowledge of its existence previous to the exodus, yet in view of the many features which seem to point to something behind the interpretation given to them; in view of what we find in the observances of related peoples, so far as these are known to us; and in view of the development in the case of all the other great feasts, and the historical interpretation which came to be given of them---it is probable that we have here another instance in which Israel's religion takes up, transforms, and appropriates an existing institution." See also, Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 188, 189.

nomadic or seminomadic background.<sup>1</sup> Semitic nomads kept a festival during the first full moon in the spring when the lambs and kids were born, when they would head for new summer pastures before the start of the dry season. Their livelihood depended upon the successful alternation of feeding seasons between the cultivable land during the summer and the edges of the desert during the winter. The passover festival, then, functioned to assure protection against the many dangers---the roads, the uncertain state of the summer pastures, and the many threats to the lives of the young animals---involved in the annual migration in the spring from the desert to the cultivable land.

The Exodus experience also established the tradition that Israel as a people was God's first-born; "This is what Yahweh says: Israel is my first-born son" (Exod 4:22).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Roland De Vaux, The Early History of Israel: To the Exodus and Covenant of Sinai, trans. David Smith (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), pp. 366-367. He says, "It was celebrated without any sanctuary, without a priest and without any altar. The victim was taken from the flock or herd and roasted, not boiled. It was eaten with the unleavened bread of the bedouins and with desert herbs. It was also eaten in a dress which was that worn by herdsmen. It was, moreover, celebrated at night time and, what is more, on a night of full moon, because this enabled them to see."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. The Torah, p. 465, n. 4. The footnote points out some opposition to this theme, that God at times overlooks the first-born and chooses a younger sibling like Jacob, Moses, or David.

As for the biblical origin of the Passover sacrifice and the dedication of firstborn among these festivals, we may trace back to the time of the beginning of human history immediately after the fall. God provided garments of skin for Adam and for his wife by sacrificing an animal. Then, there was an Abel's offering to the Lord "from some of the firstborn of his flock" (Gen 4:4). From the phrase, "the firstborn of his flock," we may infer that God's garment which was given to Adam and Eve also might have been the same, some "firstborn of flock." Noah also sacrificed burnt offerings on an altar taking some of all the "clean animals" (Gen 8:20). Noah's offering resembles in some way the passover sacrifice: "A flock animal, a perfect one, a male one year old, shall be to you" (Exod 12:5). Abraham had not only sacrificed animals to the Lord but also, following the instruction by the Lord, was about to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, the first son from Sarah and Abraham, on the top of Mt. Moria. The Lord then provided a ram for Abraham's burnt offering instead of his son (Gen 22:1-14). We may observe in these offerings a long-term practice among God's people--animal sacrifice and the dedication of first-born to God or at least some relation to the rite.

Thus, Israel possibly did have "new moon sacrifices" as in the passover sacrifice at the time of Exodus, long before Sinai. Although they are commanded in the law

of Moses,<sup>1</sup> there is no suggestion that this was a new observance, and the custom was widespread in the ancient world. There is no theological objection to such a view: circumcision<sup>2</sup> and, apparently, the Sabbath<sup>3</sup> were also part of Israel's religious tradition long before the law.

On one hand, the critical view has held that these separate festivals were not combined until about the time of the Exile or later. This view argues that the Pentateuch was compiled from various sources by some redactors about the time of the Exile or later; thus, the passover account in the book of Exodus reflected the experience of the time of redactors and not of Moses. At the time of Moses those festivals were still separate ones, according to this view, and later redactors, due to the grand experience of Exodus, compiled various traditions as though those festivals were established as one by Yahweh at the time of Exodus. It was a retrospective account from the view point of redactors.

On the other hand, since both here and in the book of Deut 15:19-16:8 the laws of these rites are published as a single block, some conclude that two or all three of them are different aspects of one basic rite which maintained itself from the beginning.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Num 28:11.

<sup>2</sup>Gen 17:10.

<sup>3</sup>Gen 2:3.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. The Interpreter's Bible, p. 916.



Whatever other traditional echoes may have continued to cling to these rites, it can be assumed, as The Interpreter's Bible points out,<sup>1</sup> that each of the three was kept in honor of Yahweh. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia also says; "Whatever the exact prehistory of the Passover, the festival cannot be separated from that historic moment in Israel's past that brought miraculous deliverance from Egypt."<sup>2</sup> While there might have been the regular sacrifice of a lamb at the full moon, Israel's "passover" was a special instance and had a special significance. In Israel all three rites attain a new meaning. All three commemorate the Exodus revelation. They all attest that every household of Israel belongs to Yahweh because of His redemptive action at the Exodus. But, further, all are representatives for the events of His mighty work through the salvation history in which He is able to redeem any people who comply to His will or any persons who are under the control of a believer.

In fact, it is not our main interest here to argue the matter which source critics like to deal with. The real question is what these festivals meant to Israel and what

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>M. R. Wilson, "Passover," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, fully rev. ed. (1986), 3:676.

historical act of God they commemorated in later days; and of this there is no doubt.<sup>1</sup>

To raise a question, for example, about the origin of these Israelite festivals is just as irrelevant as it is to raise questions about the origin of circumcision, which certainly existed as a rite widely used for countless ages before Abraham.

It is sufficient here to point out that due to the mightiness of the Passover event at Exodus in the history of Israel, especially toward the end of the NT era, the one term "Passover" was generally used to designate the integrated celebration of what had begun as two or three festivals,<sup>2</sup> and also that in the NT the Passover event of the Exodus, which includes several aspects of festivals, leads one to focus on the cross of Jesus and the experience of His followers as the climax event for the foundation for salvation in history.

In other words, historical evidences of the passover rites which could be traced back to Eden far beyond the time of Exodus as their origin indicate not only the importance of each ritual itself as a symbol or monument of God's act of mercy but also the weightiness of

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. R. Alan Cole, Exodus (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), pp. 103-104.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. ISBE (1979), 1:676. Josephus indicates that "Passover" was commonly used to refer to both festivals: passover sacrifice and the unleavened bread feast.

the Exodus experience. The event of the Exodus served to remind every one of God's people of all the experiences which had been symbolized in several rituals and also which God's people could have had or would see in the future through the salvation history. Later it came to its first climax at Christ's first coming; the final climax will be experienced on "the sea of glass" when God will renew everything in heaven and earth and God's people will sing "the song of Moses."<sup>1</sup>

Malachi 2:15  
Godly offspring, zera`

15No one man did so<sup>2</sup> to whom there was a vestige of spirit<sup>3</sup>. And what did the one<sup>4</sup> who was seeking a godly

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Rev 15:2, 3 and 21:1-5.

<sup>2</sup>Translated from MT. The object of `āsāh, "to work or to make a thing into something," must be supplied from the previous sentence--what they were doing, that is, "to put away the wife of their youth."

<sup>3</sup>Rûah (with no article), according to COT, 10: 452, "denotes here, as in Num xxvii. 18, Josh v. 1, I Kings x. 5, not so much intelligence and consideration, as the higher power breathed into man by God, which determines that moral and religious life to which we are accustomed to give the name of virtue."

<sup>4</sup>COT, 10:453, and Herbert Wolf, Haggai and Malachi: Rededication and Renewal (Chicago, Ill: Moody Press, 1976), p. 93, think that hā'ehād, because of the definite article attached to 'ehād, "one," must refer to Abraham (cf. Is 51:2), "the well-known one" to the readers and "the renowned giant of the faith," who had sought a seed of God and could have at last had a son, Isaac, through Sarah, the wife in covenant from his youth, by the power of God, the Spirit to him. Though Abraham by mistake got Ishmael through an Egyptian woman, Hagar, he did not divorce Sarah in seeking the godly offspring. He took heed to God's instruction and succeeded in having a godly seed.

seed? So you are aware by your Spirit, and let anyone not deal deceitfully with the wife of your youth.<sup>1</sup>

The author of the book is not known. "Malachi could be translated "my messenger" or "my angel." It may be an editor's title for an anonymous title. On the other hand, Targum indicates that the Aramaic translators understood Malachi as a name or title of Ezra the Scribe.<sup>2</sup> Calvin was inclined to think that Malachi is Ezra's surname.<sup>3</sup> Baldwin concludes: "In the absence of compelling arguments to the contrary, it is logical to accept that the prophet was called Malachi."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>According to JB footnote on this verse, p. 1545, the verb yibggōd, Qal, future, 3rd person singular masculine form of bāgad, "to deal falsely or treacherously," in the Masoretic text of the Old Testament, is probably read as tibggōd, Qal, future, 2nd person singular masculine form, with the Septuagint, the Targum, the medieval Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament, and the Latin Vulgate version. In LXX, the verb is used in form of second Aorist, 2nd person, singular masculine of ἐγκταλείπō, "to forsake or to leave helpless," and in subjunctive mood for forbidden. So, the translation of the last part of the text is the following: "Forsake not the wife of your youth." And if it should cling to the Masoretic text as it were, the text must be translated best as the following from RSV: "...let none be faithless to the wife of his youth." The verb yibggōd must be taken as Jussive force; cf. J. Weingreen, A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Joyce G. Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), p. 212; see also COT, 10:423-425.

<sup>3</sup>John Calvin, Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets, 5 vols, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1950), 5:460.

<sup>4</sup>Baldwin, p. 212.

As for the date, all are agreed that it was the post-exilic era because of the mention in Mal 1:8 of a governor which is used in Neh 5:14 to indicate Nehemiah's rank.<sup>1</sup> There is no consensus among scholars concerning the exact date when Malachi worked.<sup>2</sup> In fact, we can only estimate the date of Malachi's ministry because there is no historical incident such as a battle and no mention about any such thing as a king's name in the book which might give us a clue to the date. Baldwin argues that due to the absence in Malachi of reference to recent legislation by Ezra and Nehemiah seen in Ezra 10:3 and in Neh 13:13, 23-27, and also because of a surprising reaction to Ezra's day of repentance even before Ezra preached,<sup>3</sup> Malachi preceded their times. Some take the position that the date between Nehemiah's two visits to Jerusalem is correct.<sup>4</sup> It seems that this view has stronger support. As Smith points out,<sup>5</sup> there is a kinship between the book of Malachi and that of Nehemiah. The same social and religious conditions prevail

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<sup>1</sup>COT, 10:425. See also Wolf, pp. 56-58; Ralph L. Smith, Word Biblical Commentary: Micah-Malachi (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), p. 298.

<sup>2</sup>See Smith, pp. 298-299.

<sup>3</sup>Ezra 9:1-10:5.

<sup>4</sup>See COT, 10:427; Wolf, pp. 57-58. Cf. F. D. Nichol, ed., Seventh-day Adventist Commentary (SDABC) (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953-1957), 4:1121.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, p. 298.

in both;<sup>1</sup> tithing is stressed in both;<sup>2</sup> and divorce and mixed marriages are a problem in both.<sup>3</sup>

When the people and priests dishonored God and their worship of Him by their unfaithfulness to the marriage vow (2:10-16), by their social injustice (3:5), and by their harsh words bordering on blasphemy (3:13-14), Malachi assured his people that the Lord still loved them and was keeping his covenant with them (1:2-5). God calls for His people to repent and return to Him (3:7). If they do not repent, He will come and smite the land with a curse. At the same time, the book indicates that God knows those who fear Him and that they will be--in His words--His special possession on the day when He acts (3:17).

The text of Mal 2:15 is difficult to interpret. There appear quite different kinds of interpretation of the text. The end of this verse and its context, however, would be one key to understanding Malachi's intention. The former urges a husband to remain faithful to his first wife. The context deals with the marriage relation and charges them for their unfaithfulness.

The problem seems to exist partly in the translation of the word "one." The Revised Standard Version and New English Bible take it as the subject of the verb

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<sup>1</sup>Mal 3:5; Neh 5:1-13.

<sup>2</sup>Mal 3:7-10; Neh 10:37-39.

<sup>3</sup>Mal 2:10-16; Neh 10:30; and 13:23-29.

"made," and so attach it to God as "one God." Keil does not agree with attaching "one" to God through he regards it as the subject of the verb "made."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, King James Version, Revised Version, Jerusalem Bible, and New International Version take it as the object of the verb--one in this case means "one flesh" in Gen 2:24.

The interpretation of the following clauses depends on the first. Jerusalem Bible gives an interesting translation to the text, changing one vowel of š'e'ār, vestige, into š'e'er, flesh, it says: "Did he not create a single being that has flesh and the breath of life?" New International Version also follows the same way: "Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth." Besides, as its footnote indicates, there is another possible translation which Keil and Wolf follow; the footnote of Jerusalem Bible says, "But the one who is our father did not do this, not as long as life remained in him. And what was he seeking? An offspring from

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<sup>1</sup>See COT, 10:452. Keil argues; "The true interpretation of this hemistich is obvious enough if we only bear in mind that the subordinate clause, ûš'ār rūah lô, from its very position and from the words themselves, can only contain a more precise definition of the subject of the principal clause. The affirmation "a remnant of spirit is to Him: does not apply to God, but only to man."

God...." Here the "one" is specially referred to Abraham.<sup>1</sup>  
The argument by Keil is very persuasive.<sup>2</sup>

The Septuagint, on the other hand, gives a little bit different picture in its interpretation. It says, "And did not do well? and there is a residue of his spirit; But you said, What does God seek other than a seed? But keep yours safe<sup>3</sup> in your spirit and do not forsake the wife of your youth."

Whatever the possible interpretation is, one thing is sure; both the Lord and man of faith sought "seed" which the Lord had promised to give to Abraham. Thus, the Lord wants His people to be faithful in Spirit to the marriage vows of their youth. At the same time the man of faith clings to his wife in seeking "seed" like Abraham. Mal 2:14 speaks of "your wife by covenant." Marriage is indeed a covenant of God, as is also shown in Prov 2:17 and Ezek 16:8. Marriage was a permanent relationship to each partner, and the man was instructed to leave his parents and cling to his wife. Gen 2:24 says, "They shall become one flesh." In every sense husband and wife should be

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 36, n. 4 above.

<sup>2</sup>COT, 10:453.

<sup>3</sup>Aorist imperative form of phulassō, "to guard," "to keep watch," or "to keep." William D. Chamberlain, An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 86, points out that "the aorist imperative usually has a note of urgency in it" as in the seven imperatives in the Lord's Prayer passage.



inseparable. Divorce is a terrible thing, deserving of His hatred (vs. 16). These strong words at the start of vs. 16, "I hate divorce," underscore the divine view on the permanence of marriage.

Malachi's message is "particularly relevant to the many waiting periods in human history and in the lives of individuals."<sup>1</sup>

The time of Malachi is similar to our day. The situation in Israel at the time of Malachi closely resembles that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. With a fervent enthusiasm for reestablishing a prosperous kingdom, Israel returned to their promised land from the exile. The result, however, was not satisfactory to them. They could not see the glory of ancient time, that of David and Solomon's kingdom. As time passed, they gradually got tired and became spiritless; "formalism and a skepticism deeply intruded into their lives."<sup>2</sup> Seven times the priests and the people of Malachi's time were faced with the vital issues of real heart-religion; seven times they answered with "How?" and "What?"<sup>3</sup> They became rebellious rather than

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<sup>1</sup>Baldwin, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup>James Baxter, Explore the Book (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 267.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. "How have you loved us?" (1:2); "How have we despised your name?" (1:6); "How have we defiled you?" (1:7); "How have we wearied Him?" (2:17); "How are we to return?" (3:7); "How do we rob you?" (3:8); "What have we said against you?" (3:18).

frank or openhearted. We can see how their wrong attitude toward the divine promise cursed Malachi's generation.

Now we see that the same issues that the Israelites faced surround most churches today, especially the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Once they had been fervent waiting for His glorious second coming. As time has gone on and His coming has been delayed, the attitude of many toward the hope of Christ's return has become complacent indifference. They have no more feeling of urgency for "His coming soon." Especially later-generation Seventh-day Adventists do not know the meaning of living as Seventh-day Adventist; they just follow tradition. Divorce and remarriage is one of the vital issues--even among Christians in a so-called Christian country such as the United States. The roles of husband and wife in family life have collapsed among God's people. Children are left behind and suffer from their degraded environment in the family, in society, and even in the church. "The ancient boundary stone"<sup>1</sup> is in danger of being moved and shifted, step by step, as time passes.

In times of decline we should remember how precious in Yahweh's sight are the godly minority who fear the Lord and honor His name, revere His name, and talk with each other.<sup>2</sup> A scroll of remembrance<sup>3</sup> is kept; and they, God's

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<sup>1</sup>Prov 23:10.

<sup>2</sup>Mal 3:16 and cf. 4:2.

remnant,<sup>1</sup> are the "treasured possession" of the Lord Almighty in the day when He acts.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, consideration is given to the usage of the word zera`, seed. In the OT the Hebrew word of "seed," zera`, is, without exception, used 224 times<sup>3</sup> in singular form. Seed in its singular form points out both singular and plural meaning; that is, it means both descendant and descendants. Why is it used in the singular form?

In general, it is accepted that the word "seed" in Gen 3:15 denotes Jesus Christ, for it is in singular form. However, it cannot always be right to say so according to the usage of zera` in the Old Testament. The "seed" in Gen 3:15 may also be translated into "descendants" of the woman, Eve, instead of "descendant"; in other words, it may

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1</sup>Rev 12:17.

<sup>2</sup>Mal 3:17.

<sup>3</sup>See "zera`" in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 2 vols., ed. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, Ill: Moody Press, 1980), 1:582-583. It says: "Commencing with Gen 3:15, the word "seed" is regularly used as a collective noun in the singular (never plural). This technical term is an important aspect of the promise doctrine, for Hebrew never uses the plural of this root to refer to "posterity" or "offspring." The Aramaic targum pluralize the term occasionally but the Aramaic also limits itself to the singular in the passages dealing with the promised line. Thus the word designates the whole line of descendants as a unit: yet it is deliberately flexible enough to denote either one person who epitomizes the whole group (i.e., the man of promise and ultimately Christ), or the many persons in that whole line of natural and/or spiritual descendants."

mean at least some people among human beings. Judged from the context, the "seed" in Gen 13:16, 15:5, 22:17-18 is clearly used in plural form meaning the descendants of Abraham.

On the other hand, the apostle Paul gives both singular and plural interpretations to the seed in the OT. For example, he says in Gal 3:16:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

As clearly indicated here, Paul interprets zera` in Gen 12:7 or 13:15 as having a singular meaning.

However, in Gal 3:7, 9 he says, "Understand, then, those who believe are children of Abraham. So then they which be of faith are blessed with Abraham." All men of faith in Jesus Christ are "children of Abraham": zera` here has a plural meaning. Here is a collective and plural meaning of Abraham's offspring. Rom 4:16 also indicates the plurality of zera`: "That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his (Abraham's) descendants" (RSV). Then, how should one understand "the seed" in Mal 2:15?

From the evidences above, it is clear that "seed" in the OT has both singular and plural meaning. As is interpreted in the NT, the seed in the OT is fulfilled both by Christ, and at the same time, all of Abraham's spiritual as well as physical descendants: that is, the NT church.

Christ is the seed, but, as Gal 3:29 says, the seed promised to Abraham does not exclude Abraham's descendants through Christ.<sup>1</sup> "The promise met its supreme, but not exclusive, fulfillment in Christ".<sup>2</sup> Its fruition is met both in Christ and His church. So, on the one hand, Paul sees in Christ the accomplishment or all the features of the blessing which God's seed was expected to have. On the other hand, Paul sees God's people who are gathered and united in Christ's love, the true "Abraham's seed."<sup>3</sup>

Here we see a mysterious double feature of the seed: Christ and His people which are equal to the NT church. In fact, the relationship of the two are described as that between the Head and the Body of Christ<sup>4</sup> or husband and wife--"a profound mystery."<sup>5</sup>

Abraham's descendants in the NT are those who belong to Christ. They are symbolized as the "Body of Christ" and called as "His Church." As a people, they are plural, but as "one in faith," they are singular.

So, we may even say that Christ and His church

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Gal 4:22, 23.

<sup>2</sup>SDABC, 6:957.

<sup>3</sup>Gal 3:29. Notice here that Abraham's seed is clearly identified with the "churches in Galatia" when we compare this text with Gal 1:2.

<sup>4</sup>1 Cor 12:27.

<sup>5</sup>Eph 5:30-32.

"become one flesh."<sup>1</sup> In this sense of "oneness," the seed may always be used in singular form. The seed comes from a mysterious union of the two: Christ and His church. Christ, the "Immanuel,"<sup>2</sup> is the antitype of the church. His church, godly seed, is thus expected to be a reflection of Christ in the "profound mystery.

God the Father and Jesus Christ still more seek godly seed. In Christ's last prayer, He prayed: "for those who will believe in [Him] through their message, that all of them may be one."<sup>3</sup> As Abraham in the vestige of the Spirit and in faith sought godly offspring, we are also urged to seek it, that is, one unique people which includes all the related family members of the believers' as in Abraham's family, including every child, in guarding Spirit and faith and in being faithful to the marriage vow.

#### The New Testament

Matthew 18:1-14; 19:13-15  
"Do not offend little ones"

<sup>18</sup>At that time the disciples approached to Jesus, saying, "Who then is the greatest<sup>4</sup> in the kingdom of

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<sup>1</sup>Gen 2:24.

<sup>2</sup>Matt 1:23.

<sup>3</sup>John 17:20, 21 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>4</sup>Here is not the superlative form in Greek but the comparative, meizōn. However, according to a Koine Greek idiomatic usage, it is better to translate it like this. Cf. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), pp. 667-668.

heavens?" 2And Jesus, calling a child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3and said, "Truly I say to you, except you be converted and become as these children, by no means may you enter into the kingdom of the heavens. 4Whoever therefore will humble himself as this child, the person is the greatest<sup>1</sup> in the kingdom of the heavens.

5"And whoever may receive one such child in the name of Me, He receives Me. 6And whoever may cause to stumble one of these little who are believing in Me it would be profitable for him that an upper millstone might be hanged around the neck of him and be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7Woe to the world of temptations; for it must be of necessity for the offenses to come, but woe to the man through whom the offence comes. 8Now if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; it is good for you to enter into the life maimed and lame rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire. 9And if your eye causes to tempt you, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is good for you to enter into the life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into the gehenna of the fire.

10"Take heed that you do not look down on one of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels always behold in heavens the face of My heavenly Father. (11For the son of man came to save the lost.) 12What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them astrays, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to seek the wandering one? 13And if he happens to find it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that have never wandered. 14So, it is not your heavenly Father's will that one of these little ones should perish."

<sup>19</sup>13Then children were brought to Him, that He might lay on them His hands and pray. But the disciples rebuked them. 14But Jesus said to them, "Let the children come to Me and do not prevent them coming to Me, for the kingdom of the heaven belongs to such as these." And, putting His hands on them, He departed thence.<sup>2</sup>

According to the prevailing critical view of the synoptic problem, the principal source used by the Gospel

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Translated from NovT.

of Matthew was the Gospel according to Mark, which was also used by Luke. Ninety percent of the subject-matter of Mark is reproduced in Matthew in language very largely identical with that of Mark. However, Matthew "departs from Mark's order, the others keep it," "improves the roughness of Mark's Greek style," and "abridges many sections of Mark in order to make room on their scrolls for other material."<sup>1</sup> It is said, though not proved yet, that Matthew also used Q, a common source used by both Matthew and Luke, but not found. There also are many verses--more than 220--which are found only in Matthew.<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, some scholars, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, argue that this book was written in the Hebrew (Aramaic) language by Matthew, one of the twelve disciples, and later translated into our Greek gospel of Matthew by an unknown person.<sup>3</sup> Further, this Hebrew Gospel

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. A. W. Argyle, The Gospel According to Matthew (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>According to SDABC, 5:271, Papias of Hierapolis, about A.D. 140, stated that "Matthew wrote the oracles [sayings] in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able" (Eusebius Church History 3. 39 [NPNF 1:173]). Half a century later, according to Irenaeus, "Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the church in Rome" (Eusebius Church History 8 [NPNF 1:222]). And, according to Tasker, p. 11, Jerome concluded this tradition "by asserting that the converted tax-collector Matthew (for he identifies Matthew and Levi) was the first to compose a Gospel of Christ, and that he wrote it in Judaea in Hebrew for the benefit of Jewish



was the first book among the Gospels. Then, how could it be said that the book of Matthew borrows the Markan source? Besides, Matthew, some argue, had a first-hand source as an immediate disciple; he did not need to use or rely on a second-hand sources. This argument seems to be strong.

However, most modern scholars find it very difficult to believe that the present Gospel of Matthew is a translation of a Hebrew document. It is pointed out that:

(1) The Greek text of Matthew does not reveal the characteristics of a translated work.

(2) The uniformity of language and style convey the distinct impression that the book bears the mark of an original Greek composition.

(3) The Great linguistic similarities to the Greek of Mark in particular seems to explain the presupposition that the Greek Matthew used the Gospel of Mark.<sup>1</sup>

Then, some take the position that Matthew was originally written in Greek by Matthew.<sup>2</sup> However, as Tasker cites and gives comment,<sup>3</sup> the following assertion by Wikenhausen must be a "well-balanced statement" to do justice both to translation theory, the earliest tradition, and to the Greek-originality theory, which is assured from the modern study of the Synoptic problem:

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converts, but adds that it is not sufficiently clear who translated it later into Greek."

<sup>1</sup>SDABC, 5:272.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 5:271, 272.

<sup>3</sup>R. V. G. Tasker, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), p. 17.

It may be taken as certain that an Aramaic original of the Gospel of St. Matthew can be defended only if we regard the Greek Matthew, not as a literal translation of the Aramaic, but as a thorough revision made with frequent use of the Gospel of St. Mark. This is consistent with the decision of the Biblical Commission which declares explicitly that the tradition of the early Church is preserved if we uphold the substantial identity of Greek and Aramaic Matthew. Since there are no remains of Aramaic Matthew, and no one knows what it was like, we cannot make any more accurate or more definite statement about the two forms of St. Matthew's Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Then, if earliest traditions must be taken into account,

Tasker's conclusion seems to be relevant:

Our own tentative conclusion is that the Gospel of Matthew is not in fact the first of the four canonical Gospels, though it contains material which was originally recorded in Aramaic by the apostle Matthew before any of the other Gospels was written. As to who actually composed the Greek Gospel of Matthew we are as ignorant as was Jerome.<sup>2</sup>

And Matthew originally wrote for Jewish Christians in Syria.

As for the first section, 18:1-14, here the text is dealing with the worth of the "little ones" and "children" as well as the second section does. It is the part of the fourth discourse by Jesus in Matthew. Commonly, it is further divided into three parts: vss. 1-4 on true greatness in the kingdom of heaven; vss. 5-9 on the evil of causing a little one to sin; and vss. 10-14 on restoration and discipline of a brother, "the lost sheep."

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Wikenhausen, New Testament Introduction (New York: Herder & Herder, 1958), p. 195.

<sup>2</sup>Tasker, p. 17.

This passage 18:1-14 is closely linked with 17:24-27 by a temporal phrase, en ekeinē tē (h)ōra, "at that time." Matthew frequently uses such a device to signal that what follows develops the theme of the preceding pericope.<sup>1</sup> In the former passage, Matthew indicates that Jesus paid the temple tax "in order not to offend tax collectors." Jesus, being the Son of God, the greatest, and the heir, does not necessarily have to pay any tax to the Temple of the Father. But lest he should give offence by withholding the tribute, He did that which He could not justly be required to do.

Then, in this passage, the book of Matthew reshapes this section by substituting vss. 3, 4 for the principle that the greatest one must be the servant of all, which in clear wording Matthew later uses in 20:26, 27. Only Matthew, in fact, gives vss. 3, 4 here, while, in the same context, it is not mentioned by Mark and Luke.<sup>2</sup>

In order to be greatest they who are the disciples must "be converted" (vs. 4); they must change their dispositions and hearts. And they must become like children: children are the norm for His kingdom. Jesus, calling

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<sup>1</sup>See Daniel Patte, The Gospel According to Matthew (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 247: Matt 11:1, 12:1, 13:1, 14:1, and 16:21 for "at that time"; Matt 8:13 and 26:55 for "in that hour"; and Matt 9:22, 15:28, and 17:18 for "from that hour."

<sup>2</sup>Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48. Both Mark and Luke insert this texts 18:3, 4, into Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18-15-17 which are parallel to Matt 19:13-15.

children to Him and setting them in the midst of disciples, addresses this important lesson of greatness in His kingdom to His disciples. In vs. 4, Jesus urges them to be humble in acknowledging their utter dependence upon their heavenly Father as little children are humble in their utter dependence upon their parents. These phrases signify the necessity of their repentance and the humility they needed to be like that of these children. In the following verses, Jesus admonishes that they should not be only repentant and humble, but also receive--being careful never to let anyone stumble (vss. 6-10), especially those that are "least among you"<sup>1</sup>: immature Christians. He cautions that they should never despise one of these little ones (vs. 10). In heaven's sight, however lowly and insignificant they may be in men's sight, those little ones are so important as to have guardian angels in the presence of the heavenly Father (vs. 10). It is not the heavenly Father's will that one of these little ones should be lost (vs. 14). Each of His disciples is a precious one in the eyes of God.

But, of course, we must not lose sight here of another emphasis. After a discussion regarding who is the greatest in the kingdom, namely, "whoever will humble himself as this child," we see a saying regarding receiving a child and not offending the little ones. In this saying by Jesus it is clear that not merely moral-sense/immature

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Luke 9:48.

adults but literal children are included. The parallel passages, Mark 9:36, 37 and Luke 9:47, 48, respectively, clearly indicate this evidence:<sup>1</sup>

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." (Emphasis supplied)

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all---he is the greatest." (Emphasis supplied)

So, though an emphasis in Matt 18:1-14 here as a whole is shifted on to those little ones who are old enough to be believers,<sup>2</sup> however, in the mind of Jesus we are convinced that He refers--as He utters the saying--not only to moral-sense children, those little ones who repent and humble themselves like children, but also to literal children.

This conviction of His deep concern for children is further ratified by the passage in Matt 19:13-15. Jesus now comes into the region of Judaea across Jordan. Great crowds follow Him, and He heals them there.<sup>3</sup> Then, some brought children for Him to lay His hands on them with prayer. This act of blessing was an old Jewish custom,

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<sup>1</sup>NIV.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. vs. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Matt 19:1.

usually accompanied by prayer.<sup>1</sup> But the disciples scolded, though they were instructed not to despise little ones in Capernaum. Then the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Let the children come to Me; do not prevent them to come to Me, for the kingdom of the heaven belongs to such." The disciples might think that children are too insignificant to interfere with Jesus' important work for which He has been surrounded with "great crowds" and has engaged in a serious discussion and teaching about marriage. When He sees the disciples' attitude toward children and their guardians, Jesus shows a rare attitude to His disciples: "He was indignant."<sup>2</sup> This shows how seriously Jesus is concerned about children--they are important members of God's family. Not only does Jesus declare the words above, further than that, He takes the children in His arms, puts His hands on them, and blesses them.

Thus, we see that the Lord is also concerned for literal children; the three Gospels equivocally declare, "For the kingdom of the heaven is of such."<sup>3</sup>

Matthew 21:14-17  
Children crying out in the temple

2114In the temple they, blind and crippled men, came to Him, and He ministered to them. 15But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonders, which He

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<sup>1</sup>See Argyle, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 10:14.

<sup>3</sup>Matt 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16.

did, and the children, who in the temple were crying out and saying, "Hosanna to the son of David," they manifested indignation, and said to Him, "Do you hear what they are saying?" Then, Jesus answers to them, "Yes, I do;<sup>1</sup> have you never known that "Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings You have provided<sup>2</sup> praise for Yourself?"<sup>1</sup> 17And, leaving them, He went out of the city into Bethany and lodged there.<sup>3</sup>

This passage is peculiar to Matthew, so, it must be especially important to him. Its style is also typically Matthaean. An action by Jesus or His disciples is followed by protests by the opponents, then Jesus responds to them with the Scripture.

In the triumphal entry, Jesus deliberately claimed to be the Messiah. He fulfilled the messianic prophecy in Zech 9:9. The following day<sup>4</sup> He cleansed the temple again; He did the same cleansing in His earliest ministry,

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<sup>1</sup>This "Yes, I do" is the translation from the Greek word "nai." According to "nai" in the book by Joseph Henry Thayer, trans., Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, rev. & enl. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901), p. 422, it is "a particle of assertion or confirmation" and means "verily," "assuredly," "truly," "even so," so and so.

<sup>2</sup>The Greek word has the first aorist, indicative, middle, 2nd person and singular form of katartizō. Notice the middle voice.

<sup>3</sup>Translated from NovT.

<sup>4</sup>In Matthew, Jesus entered Jerusalem, went to the temple and cleansed it. In Mark, Jesus went to the temple and after looking around, "went out to Bethany with the twelve" (Mark 11:11), returning on the "following day" to cleanse the temple (Mark 11:12-19). If one accepted Mark as the first written Gospel, it would appear that in some reasons Matthew has moved immediately to the climactic event. See for this point, Robert H. Mounce, Matthew, A Good News Commentary (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), p. 201.

according to John 2:13-16.<sup>1</sup> On both occasions, He drove out all who were buying and selling in the temple precincts; He upset the tables of the money-changers and the seats of the dealers in pigeons; and He declared to them, 'Scripture says, "My house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you are making it a robbers' cave.'<sup>2</sup> When the multitude fled from the temple, however, many remained behind and might have been joined by newcomers who were eager to reach Him, "their only hope";<sup>3</sup> the temple court was filled by the sick and dying.

It is especially important to note that the blind and the lame were present in the temple with Jesus surrounded by praise from children. According to Jewish tradition, taken from 2 Sam 5:8,<sup>4</sup> it was the custom among

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. R. V. G. Tasker, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>Matt 21:13: quotation from Isa 56:7 which says that God's house is to be "a house of prayer for all the nations." Mark completes the quotation by adding "for all the nations." These all nations, the Gentiles, were allowed to enter only to the outer court; it was called the court of the Gentiles. But it was here that "the commercialism was rampant" (Mounce, p. 201). It was not merely the commercialism but stealing; they cheated worshippers from abroad "by excessive rates of exchange and by the exorbitant cost of animals necessary for sacrifice" (Tasker, pp. 199-200). It was far away from functioning as the house of prayer for the Gentiles.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. White, Desire of Ages, p. 592.

<sup>4</sup>It says, "the blind and the lame shall not come into the house" [the LXX adds 'of the Lord'] (RSV). This saying arose out of David's statement that he hates "the lame and the blind." So, by healing the blind and the lame



Jewish people that the blind and the lame were excluded from "the house," that is "My house" or the temple. But now their exclusion from "the house" had been annulled. Their healing, in Matt 11:5, had already demonstrated that the eschaton promised by Isaiah has come,<sup>1</sup> but not yet in "the house." In the triumphal procession the day before, "the trophies" that Jesus' healing power had rescued from the oppression of Satan marched along shouting the saviour's praises,<sup>2</sup> but still not inside of "the house." Now Jesus sets about healing those who flocked to Him in the temple courts in "the house." By emphasizing that it is in "the house" that the blind and the lame follow Jesus and are healed, Matthew shows the function of the house of God and the true nature of Jesus as the son of David. Jesus not only removes the infirmity of the blind and the lame as well as recognizing the children, He also reintroduces them into the worshipping community, making them fit for it, and so, into His house of prayer.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus ministered to them (vs. 14). Now with glad,

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in the house of the Lord, the temple, in Jerusalem, Jesus as the son of David denies "the Jew's false deduction from David's statement" in which David might just express Jebusites as figurative expression: see Robert H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 413.

<sup>1</sup>Isa 35:5, 6; 56:3-8: cf. Deut 23:1.

<sup>2</sup>SDABC, 5:472.

<sup>3</sup>Patte, p. 288.

unrestrained voices the children sounded His praise. They repeated the hosannas of the day before; "Hosanna to the son of David."<sup>1</sup>

But the chief priests and the scribes were indignant when they saw Jesus healing the blind and the lame within the temple court and children shouting out praises to the son of David. For these religious leaders, the coming of the blind and the lame to offer sacrifices and especially the shout of children in the temple precincts seemed to be a violation of its sanctity, and it would have been promptly stopped by the temple police. They were in character: such men would be outraged by children singing hosannas to the Messiah. They thought it childish blasphemy and were blind to the real blasphemy of their own lives.<sup>2</sup>

When these leaders asked whether Jesus heard what they were saying, He said, "I do" and countered by asking if they knew the Scripture that says: "Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings you have provided praise." This quotation comes from the LXX text of Ps 8:2.<sup>3</sup> In the context of Ps 8, the outcome of this praise is the enemy's

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<sup>1</sup>Zech 9:9.

<sup>2</sup>See George A. Buttrick, "The Gospel According to Matthew: Exposition," The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon/Cokesbury Press, 1951), 7:506.

<sup>3</sup>According to Septuaginta (Stuttgart, Germany: Biblia-Druck Stuttgart, 1935), this text is Ps 8:3; this version counts a title of each chapter of the book of Psalms as verse one.

defeat. As Palm Sunday was to show, "the free confession of love and trust is a devastating answer to the accuser and his arsenal of doubts and slanders."<sup>1</sup> The leaders should have recognized that the events now taking place were in harmony with the teachings of Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

But here is some discussion. When this text, Ps 8:2, is applied in Matthew, Gundry comments that "Infants and sucklings do not quite correspond to the children in Matthew. The children are young people old enough to visit the temple and shout an acclamation." And he adds further, "Matthew can hardly change the OT text radically enough to avoid the discrepancy."<sup>3</sup>

It must be true, as Gundry argues, that the boys<sup>4</sup> who were shouting in the temple at that time were "old enough" to praise with a distinct voice to express "Hosanna to the Lord."<sup>5</sup> They might not be babes and especially not sucklings at all. But when Jesus quoted Ps 8:2 here in Matthew, what did He mean? Was Jesus trying to show the legitimacy of those children's behavior apologetically by

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Derek Kidner, Psalms 1-72, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), pp. 66-67.

<sup>2</sup>See SDABC, 5:472.

<sup>3</sup>Gundry, p. 414.

<sup>4</sup>The children in Matt 21:15 has masculine form in Greek, tous paidas, and so, they are boys.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Gundry, p. 414.

using some text, even though He knew that Ps 8:2 was not fitted to the situation in reality? Did He go against nature in order to defend His situation?

To seek a solution to this difficulty, some argue that both ʿôlel, "babes," and yānaq, "sucklings," here in Hebrew are those who are old enough to play, since Hebrew mothers suckled their babes for about three years. But the later word, yānaq, includes those who had just been born as well as babes who are nearly at the end of their suckling age.<sup>1</sup> Others try to say that the word "children" is used here in the passage as a figurative expression for the adult believers: that is, His disciples.<sup>2</sup> But this could not be so because the context does not show the necessity of any figurative expressions. Besides, as Jeremias points out, children, who are able to go up to the temple hill riding on their fathers' shoulders or who are able to go up

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<sup>1</sup>See this argument by Delitzsch in by R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1943), pp. 818-819.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 407, points out an interesting fact concerning the supposed relation between "children" in Matt 21:15 and "stones" in Luke 19:40, and some possible interpretation of children as a term for the disciples as the following: 'Since the Aramaic words for "children" and "stones" are almost identical (bnaiya/abnaya), it is reasonable to suppose that oral tradition spoke of children and of a response by Jesus along the lines of Luke 19:40 ("If these are silent, the stones will cry out"). In this case Lukan tradition would have interpreted "children" as a term for the disciples, and Matthew would have substituted a Scriptural quotation from the response of Jesus.'

holding their fathers' hand, are "subject to the command to appear before the Lord on the three major feasts<sup>1</sup> every year such as the passover, as in the case of Matt 21. There were sure to be many children among the multitude at the passover feast in the temple. Thus, there is no need to interpret "children" in Matt 21:15 as new believers, as in the case of Matt 11:25.

Then, following Lenski's argument<sup>2</sup> to solve this surfaced discrepancy seems to be reasonable. According to him, the main reason why the several arguments face some difficulty in solving the discrepancy is because "these efforts seek to figure out how praise can be gotten out of the mouths of these babes." He continues:

Neither the Psalm nor the use Jesus makes of it is concerned about this How, just as little as Jesus was concerned about how stones could be made to shout. All that Jesus says is that God will perfect praise for himself (note the middle), no matter how, if grown and intelligent men will not respond.<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

Anyhow, the chief priests and the scribes considered even these shouting boys as being too young to know what they were saying and doing. Then, Jesus stuns these wise men by holding the passage from the Psalm before them which speaks of praise coming out of the mouths of babes and sucklings: in the view those leaders, who could have been more

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>See Lenski, p. 819.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

immature and inappropriate than the children. But Jesus lets them have a sure place in His house. Now the official rejection of Jesus by the authorities stands in sharp contrast to his jubilant acceptance by the children.

It is interesting to note that Matthew, in fact, in our related context shows truth through an arresting contrast:

On the one hand are the priests and the traders in greedy collusion; on the other hand, a strange confraternity of suffering folk and children. On the one hand is an act of sacrilege which Jesus purged; and on the other, His healing mercy. The blind and the halt knew their need of God, and were therefore more fortunate than the hale, rich traders. The children sang in innocence: God was in the primal springs of their lives. So they perfected praise where rapacious men had silenced it.<sup>1</sup>

Here in this short passage of Matt 21:14-16 is shown the great "ironical"<sup>2</sup> contrast in the action by the authorities. While the most awful disorder of buyers and the sellers, haggling and dickering, cries of animals and sharp chinking of coin, and the sound of angry altercation between traffickers were acceptable to them, the singing of innocent children voicing their praise of Jesus and giving Him the title which His great deeds demonstrated was His due were intolerable to them. For them, it was inappropriate that Jesus be praised as the son of David.<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>Buttrick, p. 506.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Lenski, p. 818.

<sup>3</sup>Matt 21:15b-16a.

points out that their inability to recognize the validity of the children's praise is due to their ignorance or lack of understanding of Scripture: "Have you never known?"<sup>1</sup> While the religious leaders try to drive the children out from God's house, the temple, Jesus drives the leaders away and fully acknowledges and accepts the children, even babes and sucklings, as the ones who typify those to whom the kingdom belongs and even who can utter proper praise, quoting Ps 8:2; "Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings You have provided Yourself with praise."

It may be worthy to note here the comment by Kidner concerning Ps 8:1, 2.

This adoration is ardent and intimate, for all its reverence. The God whose glory fills the earth is our Lord: we are in covenant with Him. His praise is chanted on high, yet acceptably echoed from the cradle and the nursery. It is the theme of the whole psalm in miniature.<sup>2</sup>

Children, even babes, have a place in His covenant community with an important role of His praise.

Matt 21:15-16 deserves a place alongside Matt 19:15-16. As Buttrick points out,<sup>3</sup> these texts confirm the charter which gives children an indispensable place in the church. Children instinctively worship Jesus. "What better

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<sup>1</sup>Matt 21:16b.

<sup>2</sup>Kidner, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

testimony to Him? He loved them and found strength in their love."<sup>1</sup>

Can we see, as did Jesus, the importance of infants and children--as well as the blind or the outcasts--in our church? Are those important who are already inside of the house of prayer but who cannot offer, in a sense, any handsome worldly profits such as tithes and can do nothing but rather ask something for themselves? It is easy to acknowledge the rich, the intelligent, the high officials, or well-matured Christians in our church. But can we hear our children shouting His praise in our church? Do we accept them fully as persons for whom the Lord will prepare praise for Himself out of their mouths? Children, even babes or sucklings, can sound His praise with glad voices in "the house" of prayer--in His existing place or in His church--as important members of God's kingdom.

Acts 16:15; 16:31; 18:8  
oikos, "household"

<sup>16</sup>15 And when she was baptized and her household.

<sup>16</sup>31 And they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household."

<sup>18</sup>8 Now Crispus, the synagogue ruler, believed the Lord with all the household of him.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. In Hebrew the word for "praise," ִּזְבָּח, has a meaning of "strength"; and "to provide yourself with," יִסְדַּתְּתָא, has a meaning of "to ordain" or "to establish."

<sup>2</sup>Translated from NovT.



Traditionally, from the middle of the second century, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles has been believed to be Luke, the physician-friend and fellow traveller of Paul, and the only Gentile writer in the New Testament. External and internal evidences seems to support this view:<sup>1</sup> "the traditions have come to be regarded thus critically."<sup>2</sup>

From internal evidence "it is almost an axiom of NT scholarship that whoever wrote the third Gospel was also the author of Acts."<sup>3</sup> Then, "Only Luke is with me," in 2 Tim 4:11, would have provided the starting signal that led to the name of Luke because the author of Acts was with Paul even at his imprisonment in Rome by using the expression "we" after Acts 16:11 ff.<sup>4</sup>

Luke wrote for the Gentiles<sup>5</sup> the gospel preached

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<sup>1</sup>A detailed evidence is found in: Ernst Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 1-14 especially for the external evidence; cf. E. M. Blaiklock, The Acts of the Apostles: An Historical Commentary (London: Tyndale Press, 1959), pp. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup>Haenchen, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>David John Williams, Acts, A Good News Commentary (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), p. xvi.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>More directly for Theophilus. The name Theophilus means "friend of God" and has been taken to mean any friend of God, i.e., Christian reader in general. However, the use of "Most excellent" in Luke 1:3 suggests that he was a real man and also a man of some importance.

by Paul<sup>1</sup> in "the best Greek of all the Evangelists."<sup>2</sup> His historical narrative can become the "trusty tool" of Lukan theology.<sup>3</sup> The real subject of Acts is logos tou theou, the word of God and its growth.<sup>4</sup> Luke's theme was to "represent the hour of the Church"--though he does not yet use the word "church" in its present-day sense<sup>5</sup>--when the work of Jesus continues victoriously in the spreading of the Word over all the earth through the Christian proclamation<sup>6</sup> and when God's people wait for His parousia, His second Coming.

As for the exact date of writing, there is no consensus among scholars today. Due to its not being our concern in this paper, we do not discuss the issue. However, it is noteworthy that Luke might have written the Acts around A.D. 75, with Mark written perhaps in the late 60s or early 70s and Luke's Gospel soon after.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 13; this is according to Origen.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Haenchen, p. 13; he here quotes this statement from Jerome.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Williams, p. xxvi. See also Blaiklock, p. 17 --in the neighborhood of A.D. 62; G. H. C. Macgregor, "Introduction" in The Acts of Apostles, Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 9:22--about 85 A.D.; Josef Keurnizger, The Acts of the Apostles, trans. Anthony F.

In the expanding of the early church, these texts here are concerned with an important aspect of the practice of baptism in the relation of the word oikos, "house" or "household." What is oikos? Their context shows clearly that these are used as a metaphorical sense of family or household.<sup>1</sup> The term could indicate other members of the family, if there were any, business helpers, and servants.<sup>2</sup> Conversions of groups were quite common in the early church.

When it is said: Lydia "was baptized with her household"; the keeper of the prison in Philippi "was baptized with all his family" (NEB); or "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with all his household," were not any children in this household

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Fuerst (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. xii--towards the end of the year A.D. 63; etc. A comment by Everett F. Harrison, Interpreting Acts, Academic Books (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), pp. 23-24, seems to be reasonable: "While the dating of Acts around A.D. 62 seems the most likely in view of Paul's circumstances, one ought not to exclude the possibility that it appeared some years later, largely because Acts is later than the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel seems to show the writer's knowledge of Mark. Luke would then have to be dated before A.D. 60, and this many find difficult to accept. But the attempt to relegate Acts to the close of the century has no compelling reason in its favor."

<sup>1</sup>Cf. "House, Build, Manage, Steward," DNTT (1976), 2:248.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gen 17:13 and Exod 12:3. According to DNTT, 2:248, oikos and oikia, which are virtually used as synonyms, have the same range of meaning as in the LXX. In these contexts, it includes servants and slaves as well as each family member in blood, of course, including any women and children in the house.

included as being baptized? Did not those families have any children at all? This first hand "trustworthy history," by Luke, of the early church practice of baptism for households raises serious questions to the people who reject infant baptism.

Perhaps Lydia was a well-to-do woman, and when she was baptized, her household, i.e., family and slaves alike, would compulsorily follow her into the new faith.<sup>1</sup> And as with the half-proselyte Lydia, so with the Gentile jailer, his "household"<sup>2</sup> was baptized with him. The household was regarded as the unit. Also, notice the word (h)olos, "all," of sun (h)olō tō oikō. Crispus's entire household, Jews and other servant members of the family, received baptism. "Crispus with all his household" became believers "in the Lord" at Corinth.<sup>3</sup> The company at Cornelius' house similarly received a mass baptism.<sup>4</sup>

Given what is under consideration, we must seek to determine if there is some relationship between these household baptisms and Jewish proselyte baptisms in which children as well as women were baptized if the proselyte had any child. We need to seriously take into account what

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Macgreger, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>"House" is used in the simple metaphorical sense of family, household; cf. "House, Build, Manage, Steward," DNTT (1976), 2:248.

<sup>3</sup>Acts 18:8.

<sup>4</sup>Acts 10:48.

happened to the children in the house and what was the status of the children in the household baptism.

In the early church, anyhow, the church was set in each believer's house: "breaking bread from house to house" (2:46).

I Corinthians 7:14  
(h)agia, "holy"

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the brother; if it were not so your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.<sup>1</sup>

From chap. 7 to chap. 15, Paul commences a new section of the Epistle: he begins to answer questions or topics which were suggested by a letter of formal inquiry brought from Corinth.<sup>2</sup> In 1 Cor 7, Paul comes up against the difficult question of marriage among such other topics as things offered to idols, the Lord's Supper and love-feast, women in public service, spiritual gifts, etc.

There are crucial disputes on the interpretation of 7:14. Conzelmann well summarized the points as the following:<sup>3</sup> (1) To what extent is the unbelieving partner "sanctified" in Christian partnership?; (2) To what extent

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<sup>1</sup>Translated from NovT.

<sup>2</sup>I Cor 7:1: "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote."

<sup>3</sup>See Hans Conzelmann, I Corinthians (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 121.

are the children holy? and (3) What is the relation between vss. 14a and 14b?

Concerning the "sanctified," Jeremias holds that Paul is using Jewish ritual language.<sup>1</sup> Barrett also thinks that Paul is probably dependent on Jewish usage and conviction here.<sup>2</sup> According to Jewish rule, "If a pregnant Gentile woman was converted, there is no need for her son to perform ritual immersion." So, Jeremias thinks that the cleanness in question applies to children born after the conversion of the now-Christian parent, and from this, he says that it can be concluded that such children were not baptized.

But the analogy with proselyte baptism is not appropriate. The text gives no indication that Paul recognizes the cleanness of only some of children of these parents. Paul makes no distinction between baptized and unbaptized children. The important fact is that teknon, child, "refers not to age, but to parentage."<sup>3</sup> So, Conzelmann is right when he says, "Trouble can arise only concerning baptized children of mixed marriages."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Joachim Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, trans. David Cairns (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), pp. 44-48.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup>See Conzelmann, p. 121, n. 41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Then, what is the "holy" in Paul's usage? In fact, to him, to be holy, (h)agiazein, or sanctified, (h)ēqiasmenos, is normally the distinguishing mark of the Christian.<sup>1</sup> The Christians are the saints, (h)agioi, and as such radically distinguished from the rest of mankind. But this holiness does not necessarily mean that he or she is sinless. For, especially in vs. 14, the he or she who is said to be sanctified is an unbeliever. However, he or she "belongs to God" or "belongs to God's people." The Anchor Bible points out the importance of the perfect tense of the verb, "has been made holy," (h)ēqiaistai; "The Greek perfect is significant: the presently existing condition stems from an event in the past, i.e., the marriage."<sup>2</sup>

It is very important here to emphasize again that Paul makes no distinction between baptized and unbaptized children. Yet, these children are holy. Further, the parents of these children are clearly in mixed marriage; nevertheless, Paul points out the fact that Christians think their children holy. These children are under the covenant. Surely, as Jesus declares to His disciples, "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Parents cannot consider their children

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:1; etc.

<sup>2</sup>William F. Orr and James Arthur Walter, I Corinthians, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1976), p. 212.

as being separate from them in relation. Their children, regardless of whether or not they are baptized, are holy due to the close bond between them which enables them to again be bound together in heaven.

Christians should not loose this tie; the believing partner must not take the initiative in separation. As in the case of the servant of the centurion or the daughter of the Canaanite woman, on the other hand, though he or she probably is an "unbeliever," he or she has the effect of being sanctified by the Christian partner due to the covenant of grace. "The godliness of the one," said Calvin, "does more to 'sanctify' the marriage than the ungodliness of the other to make it unclean."<sup>1</sup> "Otherwise," adds Paul, if the Christian partner did not sanctify the relationship, "your children would be unclean, whereas in fact they are holy." Paul uses this truth, which he regards as self-evident, to clinch the matter. The Critical and Exegetical Commentary also points out that Paul "argues from the fact that the Corinthians must admit that a Christian's child is 'holy.'"<sup>2</sup> Then, as their children are holy, the unbelieving spouse, in relation to and by virtue of other's faith, is sanctified/separated to God, enjoys a status within the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Barrett, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, reprint ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), p. 142.



covenant, and comes into the sphere of evangelical action and promise with a hope of future conversion.<sup>1</sup> If this is so, when only one parent is a believer, how much more so, one might suppose, when both parents are confessing Christians.<sup>2</sup>

#### Pertinent External Sources

Related to the status of children, there are at least two external sources to be considered: Jewish proselyte baptism and evidence of the practice of infant baptism in the early church history.

It is obvious that proselytism was widespread among the ordinary people at the time of Jesus Christ. The statement in Matt 23:15: the Pharisees "compass sea and land to make one proselyte" suggests a vigorous and active proselytization.<sup>3</sup> Josephus also points out that in his day the inhabitants of both Greek and barbarian cities evinced a great zeal for Judaism.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 7-8. He adds the following comments in the same pages: "If the unbelieving partner will not continue the marriage, then nothing can be done and the general prohibition of divorce no longer applies"; on the other hand, in the establishing the marriage relationship "we must be careful not to extend it to mixed marriages which are contracted deliberately and unnecessarily."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. "Proselytes," Encyclopedia Judaica (1972), 13:1183, though it says that it "may possibly be an exaggeration."

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

According to Jeremias and Cullmann,<sup>1</sup> when Gentiles came over into Judaism, their children were subjected along with them to proselyte baptism. On the other hand, such children as were born after the conversion of their parents did not have to be baptized; they ranked as sanctified through their parents. A foundling child in "the midst of the land of Israel" received a baptismal bath because it might possibly be a Gentile child.

A concern of a certain regulation of the marriage law considered whether girls of proselytes were on a par with Jewish girls. According to Jewish laws,<sup>2</sup> Gentile girls who at the moment of change of religion were younger than three years and one day, were considered on a par with Jewish girls. Then, since in the case of girls, baptism was the only act of admission, these passages indirectly prove the baptism of Gentile girls as early as the beginning of the earliest age in the time of the first and the second century A.D.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 39. See Oscar Cullmann, Baptism in the New Testament, trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: SCM Press, 1950), p. 25; cf. also p. 25, n. 1 to see historical references to a relationship between Christian baptism and proselyte baptism.

<sup>2</sup>See Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 38, n. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 38; Jeremias uses here the term "the Tannaitic period." It means from the period of Hillel to the compilation of the Mishnah, i.e. the first and the second centuries A.D. Cf. "Tanna, Tannaim," Encyclopedia Judaica (1972), 15:798.

As a summary Jeremias says:

We see that the oldest rabbinic sources take it completely for granted that the children, even the smallest children, were admitted with their parents into the Jewish faith; the case is nowhere mentioned, and is almost inconceivable for the feeling of the times, where on the admission of both parents the children who were minors remained Gentiles. For the girls the act of admission was baptism, for the boys it was preceded by circumcision, which, as we saw in certain circumstances<sup>1</sup> had to be administered as early as the day of birth.<sup>2</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

Today the Jewish community holds almost the same view as in the time of the early church era; a person becomes a member of the House of Israel either by birth or by conversion.<sup>3</sup> By birth, he is considered a Jew if his mother is a Jew, even if his father is not. However, Reform and Reconstructionism Jews now recognize the child of a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother as a Jew if the child has been brought up as a Jew and become Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah.<sup>4</sup> Conversion implies full acceptance of the duties and obligations of the Jewish faith and people. The rite of

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<sup>1</sup>If a male proselyte "was born before the baptism of his mother, then he is circumcised on the first day. If he was born after the baptism of his mother, he is circumcised on the eighth day." See Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>This paragraph is based on Leo Trepp, Judaism: Development and Life (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982), pp. 318-320.

<sup>4</sup>See Trepp, pp. 349-350. According to his definition, "Mitzvah means commandment (plural Mitzvoth); Mitzvah is God's command, both religious and ethical; Mitzvah is also the Jew's response to the divine call, by way of action."

final acceptance of proselytes traditionally consists of circumcision for males plus immersion; for women, only immersion is required. Henceforth, men enjoy all the rights of a Jew and bear full responsibility for the performance of the mitzvoth. A certificate testifies to his admission. Admission to Judaism can be and is granted to people of all races and colors by even the most Orthodox rabbis, and these converts become full-fledged members of the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in a Jewish community in both the Tannaitic time and today, Gentile children have been accepted under certain circumstances into the community, through proselyte baptism, and circumcision for male children.<sup>2</sup> Its affinity to Christian baptism must be worthy to be taken into account in relation to the consideration of the status of a child in the church today.

Another important external source to be considered in relation to the status of children in the church is found in the practice of infant baptism in the course of Christian church history, though we cannot find any document which expressly mentions infant baptism until

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, pp. 38, 39.

Tertullian (c.160-c.225) at the end of the second century; and he was an opponent of the practice.<sup>1</sup>

The oldest account from outside the NT which seems to imply the practice of infant baptism comes from Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna.<sup>2</sup> On the verge of being challenged to revile the Lord, Polycarp witnesses: "For eighty-six years I have served Him, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"<sup>3</sup> Eusebius mentions that Polycarp journeyed to Rome between 157-161 A.D.<sup>4</sup> and suffered martyrdom in the seventh year--167/168 A.D.--of Marcus Aurelius (161-180).<sup>5</sup> From these evidences, his "eighty six years" of Christian life give us an implication, Jeremias infers, that Polycarp must have been Christianized at a very early age, possibly at his birth. If he, for example, became a Christian at the age of thirteen, his trip to Rome must have happened somewhere between eighty-eight and ninety-two years old; that seems almost impossible.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., see pp. 11-18 in "the sources," and especially the number 13, p. 13. Tertullian opposed to the practice; see On Baptism 18.3-6 (ANCL, 11:253).

<sup>2</sup>Martyrdom of Polycarp 18.3, in Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 59, n. 2; cf. pp. 59-63.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 9.3.

<sup>4</sup>Eusebius Historia Ecclesiastica 4.15.1.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 4.14.10-5.8.

Jeremias further gives a long list of examples of inferences for infant baptism in the early church.<sup>1</sup> One of them is the case of Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus, who might have been baptized as a child about 125 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Pliny's letter written in 112/113 indicates that the very young along with the adults belonged to the church.<sup>3</sup> The mummy of an Egyptian child who has the symbol of the cross in the right hand and which may have come from the time of Origen also suggests "Christian parentage."<sup>4</sup> Many attributes and symbols in the tombstone inscriptions of little children in the third century also allow us, Jeremias says, to infer that there existed a wide practice of infant baptism.<sup>5</sup>

The first church Father who is on record as definitely advocating infant baptism is Origen (c.185-c.284). He wrote:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 59ff. But notice that those facts are not clear evidences for the rite of infant baptism, only inferences.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 63. But notice that these facts are not clear evidences for the rite of infant baptism but "inference."

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 66; cf. pp. 66-68.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 75-80.

<sup>6</sup>See Henry F. Brown, Baptism: Through the Centuries (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1965), p. 26. See also Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, pp. 65-66.

therefore infants<sup>1</sup> also are by the usage of the church baptized.<sup>2</sup>

[...baptism is given] according to the custom of the Church, to infants also.<sup>3</sup>

For this reason, moreover, the church had from the apostles a tradition to give baptism even to infants.<sup>4</sup>

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage for some ten years before his martyrdom in A.D. 258, was the next leading advocate of the immersion of babes. According to Brown's quotation, one of the country bishops, Fidus, wrote him regarding the baptism of infants:

Should he wait until the eighth day as did the Jews in circumcision? Cyprian, surrounded by sixty-six bishops of North Africa, decided that the child should not necessarily wait, but be baptized if necessary as soon as it was born.<sup>5</sup>

The first council to prescribe infant baptism was the Sixteenth Council of Carthage in A.D. 418: "If any man says that new-born children need not be baptized, let him be anathema."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in the second century, we can trace the practice of infant baptism in the early church, though "the

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<sup>1</sup>ta paidia, "infants" or "children."

<sup>2</sup>Origen Homilies on Luke 14.2.22a.

<sup>3</sup>Idem, Homilies on Leviticus 8.3.12.2.

<sup>4</sup>Idem, Commentary on Romans 5.9.6.5-7.

<sup>5</sup>ANCL, 8:196-197. See Brown, Baptism: Through the Centuries, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Joseph Hefele, History of the Councils of the Church (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1876), 2:458.

distribution of the evidence is very uneven; the West supplies us with much more material than the more reticent East."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, we must notice that there is no clear mention of infant baptism until the end of the second century. Schaff points out regarding infant baptism: "No time can be fixed at which it [infant baptism] was first introduced."<sup>2</sup> He adds: "We should remember that during the first three centuries, and even in the age of Constantine, adult baptism was the rule, and that actual conversion of the candidate was required as a condition before administering the sacrament."<sup>3</sup> After giving several facts, Brown argues that "historical evidences point to the fact that infant baptism originated in North Africa, and through the influence of Augustine (354-430) soon permeated Christendom."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, one thing seems to be true: we have no evidence for infant baptism in the first century Christian churches, though the believer's children, even infants, have been always regarded as being within the believing

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1870-1891), 1:402.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2:255.

<sup>4</sup>Brown, Baptism: Through the Centuries, p. 27.



family of Christian community and they have never been considered as being outside regardless of infant baptism.

### Conclusion

From this survey of Old and New Testament references and several external sources (limited and selective as it has been), we may draw some inferences and tentative conclusions. In the Old Testament, children were surely part of God's family in participating in the passover. They were part of the blessed-seed by receiving circumcision, the sign of God's eternal covenant. They were the recipients of God's grace, not because of their belief or any acts but as part of "collective holiness"<sup>1</sup>--of their belonging to the community of believers and because of the Divine election, the "divine initiative of grace."<sup>2</sup>

Some say that with Christ's coming everything becomes new and changed. It is true in a sense. However, it is not merely new but becomes fully accomplished in Christ in this new age. Christ is "the guarantee of a better covenant,"<sup>3</sup> and the "plērōma," full appearance of the OT

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<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, p. 44: "...in the sense of a reception into the Body of Christ which follows not upon personal decision but upon birth from Christian parents."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Bromiley, Children of Promise, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Heb 7:22.

Yahweh; "God was pleased to have fullness dwell in Him."<sup>1</sup>  
He has fulfilled the OT promises.

As for the status of children who always belonged to the Israel of God, being given the sign of the covenant, their status is not changed with the new age. The coming of our Lord, incarnated in a baby and living His life from the manger in Bethlehem to the Cross, never despised the children nor relegated them outside of His church. Today, as always, they surely belong to His body, the church, from their birth. If we see His unchangeable concern for children, it confirms us in this evidence.

Children have indeed assumed an importance unique in history with the value Jesus placed on them by word and act. He found the child a fitting representative metaphor and demonstrated a warm and accepting manner toward children that was counter to the prevailing mood and practice of His culture.<sup>2</sup> Seeing the child as more than "Israel to be," He indicated that one can find the elements

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<sup>1</sup>Col 1:19 (NIV).

<sup>2</sup>When people brought children to Jesus in order for the children to be blessed by putting hand on heads and praying, His disciples resisted this interruption. Possibly they were reflecting the prevailing view which held that children were only a troublesome nuisance especially at the time when Jesus was on the way to the Cross: Matt 19:13-15. But Jesus rebuked His disciples. Incidentally, this tells us how deeply He cares children. According to TDNT, 5:646, "Judaism ha little understanding of the individuality of the Child." It continues to introduce an old Talmud anecdote: "Morning sleep, mid-day wine, chattering with children and tarrying in places where men of the common people assemble, destroy a man."

of Kingdom membership not so much on the basis of what it provides and produces as on the basis of what it does not and cannot proffer. Its very emptiness and openness to the provisions of an accepting, loving Father God make it a particularly fit representative of a kingdom comprised less of so-called "good" people than of forgiven people.

The focus, then, in Jesus' words to and about children reflects not only the importance and worth of children but especially the incredible love of God and the redemptive power of divine grace. "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me."<sup>1</sup> "Whosoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea."<sup>2</sup> "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."<sup>3</sup>

The so-called "household formula" found especially in the book of Acts, when compared with the term as used in the Old Testament, also indicates the unchangeable status

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<sup>1</sup>Matt 18:5; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48 (KJV).

<sup>2</sup>Mark 9:42 (RSV). Cf. Matt 18:6.

<sup>3</sup>Matt 10:42; cf. Mark 9:41. As we have pointed out, these sayings by Jesus in their original form did refer to actual children, they were not figurative.

of children in our church today. While there is no proof that there were children in these households in Acts 16:15, 16:33, or 1 Cor 1:16, they would be most unusual households for the Levant if none of their members had young children. It is in accordance with biblical usage to speak of households as including children as we have already seen in Gen 17:12ff or Exod 12:16-27. Moreover, children were apparently present in the Christian households in Paul's epistles<sup>1</sup> Paul here advocated Christian duties to members of households. It is interesting to note that children take a place alongside parents, husbands, wives, masters, and slaves, as a group with characteristic Christian duties.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Paul argues that the Corinthian church members take for granted the holiness of their children.<sup>3</sup> In this case some think that either these children were baptized or would be thought of as born after their parents' admission, and might not require proselyte baptism according to the Jewish proselyting custom. But as we have pointed out, in its context of 1 Cor 7:14, Paul made no distinction between baptized and unbaptized.<sup>4</sup> He was not

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1. See concise argument concerning "children in the Epistles," in The Biblical Doctrine of Baptism, The Special Commission on Baptism of the Church of Scotland (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1958), pp. 52-54.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>1 Cor 7:14.

<sup>4</sup>See pp. 72, 73 above.

concerned about whether or not those children were baptized but about their relationship to a Christian parent, and said that because of this relationship they are holy regardless of their baptism. We further need to give consideration later to its relation to the NT baptism. In any case, this argument by Paul also convinces us of a sure status of children among early church members.

This same status of children both in the OT and NT is even more convincing if we notice the relation between ancient Israel, so-called Abraham's seed and the NT Israel, the church. The apostle Paul comments in Gal 3:16 that Abraham's seed, zera`, pointed to Jesus Christ whose body is the church. On the other hand, Paul even identifies the church with the expression "the Israel of God."<sup>1</sup> He further says; "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."<sup>2</sup> To belong to Christ, that is, to be church members in a practical sense, is identified with belonging to Abraham's seed, that is, to be the members of the believing community of God's Israel.

In ancient Abraham's seed, their children belonged as the members of the believing community. Then, in the NT community of Israel, that is, in the church, any children of the believers who belong to Christ must also have belonged to the entity as its sure members. This continuity

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<sup>1</sup>Gal 6:16.

<sup>2</sup>Gal 3:29 (NIV).

of the OT and the NT would further convince us then of a sure status of children as the members in the early churches. We later discuss this relation between the OT and the NT in chapter 4.

We also need to survey how their status was and must be implemented: by circumcision, infant baptism, or some

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDREN AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

#### Views of Various Schools/Denominations

Various Christian schools and denominations have their own views concerning the status of children in the church. This status seems to be revealed somehow in relation with attitude toward infant baptism. Comparing each view with infant baptism, we would like to survey how children are dealt with in some churches and to seek some positive view of children's status and the implementation of it.

#### The Roman Catholic View

According to The Catholic Encyclopedia, without baptism there is no salvation. The Council of Trent pronounced: "Anathema upon anyone who says that baptism is not necessary for salvation."<sup>1</sup> For the Roman Catholic Church, the child is born in sin and as a sinner stands under the wrath of God unless the sacrament of baptism washes away the original sin and guilt. The church believes that "the effect of this sacrament is the remission of all

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<sup>1</sup>The Catholic Encyclopedia, ed. Charles G. Herbermann and others (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), 2:265.

sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin."<sup>1</sup> So, the church, believing that baptism is essential to salvation, baptizes all children presented for that ordinance even "without regard to their immediate parentage or remote descent."<sup>2</sup> To exclude from baptism means to exclude from heaven.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Catholic Encyclopedia says:

all who depart this life without baptism, be it of water, or blood, or desire, are perpetually excluded from the vision of God. Moreover, that those who die in original sin, without ever having contracted any actual sin, are deprived of the happiness of heaven.<sup>4</sup>

Augustine believed unbaptized infants would go to hell. Others have followed the medieval concept of limbo: that is, the child is not damned but just deprived of the vision of God.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the position of this church is based on its doctrine of original sin and on a magical operation of sacrament of baptism in which it believes original sin can be eradicated only through this sacrament.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (London: James Clark & Company, 1960), 3:561. He gives a detailed discussion in this book; see especially pp. 546-579.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 560.

<sup>4</sup>The Catholic Encyclopedia, 2:266.

<sup>5</sup>See Reinhold Seeberg, Textbook of the History of Doctrines, trans. Charles Hay (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1954), 2:117.



## John Calvin's View

According to Calvin, original sin carries with it original guilt. He argues in his Institute of Christian Religion that:<sup>1</sup>

even infants themselves, while they carry their condemnation along with them from the mother's womb, are guilty not of another's fault but of their own. For, even though the fruits of their iniquity have not yet come forth, they have the seed enclosed within them. Indeed, their whole nature is a seed of sin. From this it follows that it is rightly considered sin in God's sight, for without guilt there would be no accusation.

He defends infant baptism as God's sign which is communicated to a child as by an impressed seal confirming the promise given to the pious parent and declaring it to be ratified that the Lord will be God not only to him but to his seed; and that the Lord wills to manifest his goodness and grace not only to him but to his descendants, even to the thousandth generation.<sup>2</sup>

Then, what is the difference between the laws of Roman Catholic Church and Calvin? Both advocate original sin. Both point out the hope in baptism. But it is important here to note that for the Roman Catholic Church the sacrament of baptism itself is the efficient agent of forgiveness, while for Calvin God Himself is the one, and

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<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 20:251.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2:1332.

the sacrament is the sign of His forgiveness and His covenant.<sup>1</sup> Thus, he says, "We are not by the rite of baptism set free from original sin, but by it we make confession of faith."<sup>2</sup> So, in the visible practice both look the same. However, in its content there is a great difference. Especially when Calvin emphasizes God's sovereignty in the salvation of men, the "divine election," this becomes clearer. This divine initiative fits well in support of infant baptism in which children "receive" forgiveness and the seal of the covenant passively as well as unconsciously.

Another important notion in Calvin is seen in his debate with Anabaptists<sup>3</sup> arguing that baptism is to be associated with circumcision.<sup>4</sup> Both baptism and circumcision are signs of mortification.<sup>5</sup> As Abraham's descendants received the sign when eight days old, the Gentiles, who also were given access to God's kingdom after the separation-wall was broken down, have baptism in place of circumcision. Their children must be counted as under the covenant of grace. God works beyond our understanding. Those infants who are to be saved are spiritually

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2:1311.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 2:1332-1339.

<sup>4</sup>He cited Col 2:11: "circumcision of Christ."

<sup>5</sup>Calvin, Institutes, 2:1333.

regenerated. In baptized children, the Spirit operates so that the child grows into an understanding of his baptism.

#### Karl Barth's View

On May 7, 1943, before a gathering of Swiss theological students in Gwatt am Thunersee, Switzerland, Karl Barth threw a bombshell of questions about infant baptism; the explosion resulted in a heated discussion throughout Christendom, especially in continental Europe and England.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of baptism, according to Barth, is in essence the "representation (abbild) of a man's renewal through his participation by means of the power of the Holy Spirit in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and therewith the representation of man's association with the covenant of grace which is concluded and realized in Him, and with the fellowship of His Church."<sup>2</sup>

It was the subjective reception of the sacrament by the one being baptized that led to conclusions that made Barth's book a bombshell in the baptismal debate. On the part of the baptized, a baptism must be a "responsive act."<sup>3</sup> So, Barth had in mind infant baptism, the practice

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Barth, The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism, trans. Ernest A. Payne (London: SCM Press, 1959), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

of which is "not a mere chink but a hole" in all the great Christian confessions. Free grace in a free church is best represented in a "free and responsible baptism."<sup>1</sup>

The baptismal practice found in use, in fact, is "arbitrary and despotic."<sup>2</sup> Neither by exegesis nor from the nature of the case can it be established that the baptized person can be a merely passive instrument. Rather it may be shown, by exegesis and from the nature of the case, that in this action the baptized is an active partner and that at whatever stage of life he may be, plainly no infants can be such a person.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the body of Christ is wounded in the practice of infant baptism, and inflicted by a disorderly baptism; it is weakening for the baptized.<sup>4</sup>

As to exegesis: "Baptism is in the New Testament in every case the indispensable answer to an unavoidable question by a man who has come to faith."<sup>5</sup> It answers the question concerning the divine certainty and the divine authority of the word; it answers to man's desire for the sealing of his faith and to his acknowledgment of that which he has perceived as the object of his faith. The word

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 42. Barth indicates the following texts: Acts 8:28f; 10:44f; 16:13f; 16:32f; 18:8f.

must be heard not only by the minister and the congregation administering baptism but also by the one receiving it. Mathēteuein, discipling, is certainly no action that can be completed without the responsible decision of the one concerned.<sup>1</sup>

In the sphere of the New Testament "one is not brought to baptism; one comes to baptism."<sup>2</sup> For infants, i.e., for those who cannot yet of themselves ask or answer, there is no room in the order. Even in the household accounts, a sequence of the preaching of the word, faith, and baptism remains.<sup>3</sup> The NT proof of infant baptism is more than weak.

From the passages of Jesus' blessing,<sup>4</sup> Barth gives an interesting comment: "His kingdom is in fact greater than His Church," but plainly there is no proof that such children are to be baptized without question.<sup>5</sup> Children belong to wider sphere of His kingdom when compared with the church.

Further, that the children of Christians are, according to 1 Cor 7:14, holy points again to that "wider Kingdom of Christ," but this does not signify that these

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. pp. 44, 45.

<sup>4</sup>Matt 19:13f; cf. 21:15f.

<sup>5</sup>Barth, Baptism, p. 43.

children are to be baptized any more than that being the case when it is said of the husband being sanctified by a believing wife or of a wife sanctified by a believing husband.<sup>1</sup>

The promise, according to Acts 2:39, holds good for "you and your children" and bears witness to its universality in space; but it does not hold that any of these children were to be drawn into the special, sacramental grace of baptism--automatically and without having given recognition to their place within it.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, Barth criticized the practice of infant baptism with any substitution of faith by godparents and by church and followed later by "confirmation"--the "ratification of the baptismal covenant"--in the Reformed Church,<sup>3</sup> and also the practice of double meaning of baptism in the Lutheran Church.<sup>4</sup> As for the Reformer practice, quoting words from Schleiermacher, Barth pointed out:

Schleiermacher says with simple truth: "Infant Baptism is a complete Baptism only when the profession of faith which comes after further instruction is regarded as the act which consummates it." But what is baptism in itself and as such, if it has no reference to the conscious acknowledgment of regeneration and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

faith, to the complete divine-human reality, which is portrayed within it; if it cannot be a matter of decision and confession at all? Is it in this case full baptism?<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the Lutheran practice, Barth says:

The later Lutherans taught that the faith of the child is first imparted through baptism together with regeneration. Since at the same time they held fast to the view that faith and the confession of faith, prior to baptism, is to be required of adults, they came to the strange position that baptism effects something quite different in children and in adults. In children it effects regeneration and faith, and to that end a ratification of their justification before God, which is to be made fruitful in riper years; but in adults, after they have already received the new birth and faith through the word of God and prior to baptism, simply, an obsignatio et testificatio de grantia Dei and there by an increase of their renewal and of the gift of the Holy Spirit. But no one is able to specify as to how precisely one should conceive this fides infantilis, which is presupposed and which is to be made effective through baptism.<sup>2</sup>

Thus he posed crucial questions about the meaning and function of the NT baptism. He advocated baptism as a cognitive act. The NT baptism must lead its subject to place himself in the darkness and the light of this fact: that is, in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, Barth adds: Undoubtedly infant baptism "offers a very drastic illustration of the Reformation teaching of the free antecedent grace of God." So, he also points out its important aspect in the admission of infants to the Lord's Supper; since by reason of their baptism they are members of the Church. This argument from "antecedent grace

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 47, 48.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 46-47.

of God" would carry weight, however, only if the rightness of infant baptism could have been proved in some other way. Though he then acknowledges the importance of the free grace of God, he concludes that "it can be illustrated more completely and exactly, in free and responsible baptism."<sup>1</sup>

Barth did not give a clear comment about the status of children in the church--on whether they have to be incorporated into the church in some way as church members if infant baptism is ceased. When he emphasized infant baptism as having no basis biblically and the NT baptism as cognitive act, he seemed to be satisfied with placing children in the Kingdom of Christ which is wider than the church.

#### Oscar Cullmann's View

In his book in defence of infant baptism which was threatened by Barth,<sup>2</sup> Cullmann shows a series of distinctive doctrines. The first is that of the "general baptism" of Jesus as summarized in Mark 1:8 and Luke 12:50; namely, baptism by water and baptism by the Spirit--the former is by His death and the latter by His resurrection and at Pentecost.<sup>3</sup> In His general baptism He justifies infant baptism as it belongs to the essence of this general

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Cullmann, pp. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup>See his discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 9-22.



baptism. It is offered in entire independence of the decision of faith and understanding of those who benefit from it.<sup>1</sup> Cullmann's explanation clarifies his point:

Individual participation in the death and resurrection of Christ in Baptism is possible only after Christ has completed his general Baptism; and this is the reason why he himself was baptized by John, and why those received into the Church today are baptized.<sup>2</sup>

The second doctrine which is used in his argument in favor of infant baptism is an assumption that is hard to justify: that children born of Christian parents belong only in the outer circle of the Kingdom of Christ, the "Regnum Christi," and not to the inner circle of this Kingdom, that is, to the earthly body of Christ or the church, the "Corpus Christi."<sup>3</sup> In the NT there is on the one side a humanity redeemed by Christ, and on the other a Church, a universal Regnum Christi and a narrower Body of Christ.<sup>4</sup> For the wider circle of the Regnum Christi there is that one historical baptismal event at Golgotha. For the Church there is a special event in every act of baptism. Thus, according to Cullmann, Golgotha and baptism are related to one another as are the wider all-inclusive

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Dale Moody, Baptism: Foundation for Christian Unity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 89.; see also Cullmann, pp. 43-44.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

Kingdom of Christ and the Church.<sup>1</sup> For all, whether baptized or not baptized, Christ died there. But for the members of the Church this same participation in the death and resurrection of Christ is connected with "being baptized into the Body of Christ" crucified and risen.<sup>2</sup>

However, according to Cullmann's exegesis of 1 Cor 7:14, the child of a mixed marriage, where at least one of the parents is baptized, "belongs already automatically to the Body of Christ purely by reason of its birth,"<sup>3</sup> as seen in the case of contemporary proselyte baptism.<sup>4</sup> In this case, Gentiles, including children were all baptized when they came over into Judaism. On the other hand, such children as were born after the conversion of their parents did not have to be baptized, that is, they ranked as sanctified through their parents.<sup>5</sup> Cullmann argues that both infant and adult Christian baptism are unnecessary for the children of Christian parents.<sup>6</sup> Thus the text, 1 Cor 7:14, "may certainly be said to presuppose an idea of collective holiness," even when the baptism of these children is here regarded as dispensable---collective

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

holiness in the sense of a reception into the body of Christ which follows not upon a personal decision but upon birth from Christian parents, who have received baptism.<sup>1</sup>

Cullmann concludes:

Whether Paul here denotes the Baptism of a child as unnecessary or not, it is certain that from the idea of holiness represented here there is a direct line to infant Baptism, but none to a Baptism based on a later decision of those sons and daughters who are born in a Christian home.<sup>2</sup>

So, Cullmann admits the possibility of infant baptism as corresponds to the practice observed in the baptism of proselytes; although he cannot see any evidence of it for the children of Christians in the New Testament. Further, Cullmann points out that there is no evidence of even adult baptism for the members of Christian family. It is an interesting comment:<sup>3</sup>

There are in the New Testament decidedly fewer traces, indeed none at all, of the Baptism of Adults born of parents already Christian and brought up by them.

Anyhow, for Cullmann, children belong to the Church under some conditions: automatically or by infant baptism.

#### The View of the Lutheran Church

One of the most notable scholars of the Lutheran church in this century who defended infant baptism must be

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

Joachim Jeremias. Much has been quoted from his book already. His defense for infant baptism is based mainly on the "household" idea, the oikos formula, and on the similarity of the Christian baptism with proselyte baptism in which the children's baptism was highly visible.<sup>1</sup>

According to Dale Moody, the real theological issue for the Lutheran Church is a combination of the Augustinian idea of original sin<sup>2</sup> as infant guilt and the Lutheran doctrine of infant faith.<sup>3</sup> Concerning faith of children, Luther says, when he puts questions to the Anabaptists:<sup>4</sup>

Who made you so sure that baptized children do not believe in the face of what I here prove that they can believe? ...What if all children in baptism not only were able to believe but believed as well as John in his mother's womb? We can hardly deny that the same Christ is present, speaks, and baptizes, why should not his Word and baptism call forth spirit and faith in the child as then it produced faith in John? He is the same who speaks then and now.

Moody points out that this argument of Luther's for an infant faith that is a gift of God leads to the conclusion that infant baptism, not adult baptism, is the norm for all baptism.<sup>5</sup> On this point there is a difference

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<sup>1</sup>See "Pertinent External Sources" in chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup>Jeremias follows the Augustinian view: see Jeremias, The Origins of Infant Baptism (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 76ff.

<sup>3</sup>Moody, pp. 160-161.

<sup>4</sup>Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 40:242-243.

<sup>5</sup>Moody, p. 161.

between Calvin and Luther; for the former the norm is the believer's baptism.

Thus, children have been accepted as part of the church membership through infant baptism, except in New Guinea where "infant baptism is withheld if the faith of parents or of the local congregation is obviously lacking."<sup>1</sup>

### The View of the Reformed Church<sup>2</sup>

In the Reformed tradition the concept of the covenant has been the center of reflection on the theology and practice of infant baptism. This is the "much debated question whether infants are to be recognized as lawful recipients of Christian baptism."<sup>3</sup>

In Switzerland the notion of subjective response of the individual, whether in terms of meeting (Brunner),<sup>4</sup> knowledge (K. Barth),<sup>5</sup> or obedience (M. Barth),<sup>6</sup> has given prominence to the cognitive element in baptism and looked with misgivings on infant baptism.

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<sup>1</sup>Hans-Ruedi Weber, The Militant Ministry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 4. This practice is the same as the Anglican tradition.

<sup>2</sup>This article based on Moody, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup>See T. M. Lindsay, "Baptism: Reformed View," ISBE (1979), rev. ed., p. 420; also Moody, p. 112.

<sup>4</sup>See Moody, p. 50ff.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 57ff.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 64ff.

On the other hand, Cullmann's corporate concept has, in a sense, defended infant baptism as incorporation into the body of Christ.<sup>1</sup> This, however, has run into difficulties, especially in the case of believers' children who, according to him, it is unnecessary to baptize, because when conditioned by the Augustinian idea of original sin that excludes the unbaptized from the body of Christ,<sup>2</sup> and because the Calvinistic notion of the "regeneration" which sign is infant baptism,<sup>3</sup> can never fall away.<sup>4</sup> Without infant baptism, there is no sign of eradication or regeneration, so, there is no incorporation into the Body of Christ.

Another major point of view that has come all too late avoids the extremes of both the cognitive and corporate views. Baptism for John Baillie is indeed the beginning of the Christian life,<sup>5</sup> but this does not exclude

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<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, pp. 20-22, 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 44; "If the child born of baptized parents belongs already automatically to the body of Christ purely by reason of its birth," then, he does not need to be baptized. And in this case, if infant baptism functions to remove original sin, what happens to this unbaptized child? This is the question to some.

<sup>3</sup>Calvin advocates spiritual regeneration by God and infant baptism as a witness to His work. See Calvin, Institutes, 2:1339-1340; cf. 2:1324-1359.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Moody, p. 112.

<sup>5</sup>John Baillie, Baptism and Conversion (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 14; see also pp. 41, 48, 76, 85, 87.

all the unbaptized from the body of Christ, and it does not include all the baptized.<sup>1</sup> It is a normative statement that has exceptions. Conversion, according to Baillie, has confused the covenant theology when theologians have insisted on evangelical conversion for all and before baptism. Infant baptism combined with Christian nurture is the norm for the Christian household. Conversion is needed in the cases of adult converts and those who depart from Christian nurture, but it is not required of all Christian children.

#### The View of the Anglican Church

In recent decades more progress has been made on baptismal reform among Anglicans than in any other communion in the ecumenical movement.<sup>2</sup>

Theological reflection has indicated the importance of sponsorship in bringing those baptized in infancy to confirmation, but the acute problem of how regeneration is related to baptism and confirmation has been confronted anew. A tendency, however, to think in terms of "the process of Christian nurture" rather than in terms of crucial points has relieved this tension to some extent.<sup>3</sup>

It becomes a kind of movement among Anglicans to

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Moody, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>See Moody, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

restore the ancient catechumenate and so to return to the practice of primitive wholeness in which baptism, confirmation, and first communion are received together.<sup>1</sup> In their earnest effort to bring all infants born of Christian parents to complete their baptism in confirmation, communion, and a consistent Christian life, a new interest in "the wholeness of the Christian life" and in "the unity of the sacramental rites of the church" has emerged.<sup>2</sup>

In due course, Bezzant advocates the reception of the infant with "catechumens" status only, postponing baptism.<sup>3</sup> Others reject the Augustinian doctrine of original sin as infant guilt.<sup>4</sup> These appeal for the restoration of the ancient catechumenate, and rejection of

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<sup>1</sup>G. W. Ashby, "A Service of Dedication of a Child," Theology 66 (March 1963):115-116; idem, "Letters to the Editor," Theology 66 (July 1963):292-293; see also Moody, p. 212, 214.

<sup>2</sup>Moody, pp. 214, 215.

<sup>3</sup>J. S. Bezzant, "Sin and Infant Baptism," Theology 62 (November 1959):452.

<sup>4</sup>John Burnaby, "Original Sin," Theology 62 (January 1959):12. See also his book, The Belief of Christendom: A Commentary on the Nicene Creed (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), pp. 164f. Burnaby himself defends infant baptism on the basis of incorporation into the body of Christ, but he deplores the havoc wrought by the idea of inherited guilt; C. E. Pocknee, The Rites of Christian Initiation (London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, 1962), pp. 27f, also does not propose an immediate discontinuance of infant baptism for the present, but he discourages indiscriminate baptism.



infant guilt leads one to focus attention on a service of child dedication.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the translation of theological reflection into actual practice tends to lead the Evangelical parties toward the restoration of the primitive wholeness that would restore the ancient catechumenate and return to the administration of baptism, confirmation, and first communion in one service of Christian initiation.

As yet there is not a major movement to abandon the practice of infant baptism where there is the promise that the unity of Christian initiation can be completed in "the process of the Christian life."<sup>2</sup>

#### Anabaptist Beliefs

Anabaptists, who wanted completely to reform the church on the basis of the Reformation principle Sola Scripture, argues that people must be baptized as believers whether or not they had been baptized previously. They advocate believer's baptism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. George Saunders, "A Service of Dedication of a Child," Theology 65 (December 1962):501-503.

<sup>2</sup>Moody, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup>Main reference concerning Anabaptists comes from Richard Meuller's articles: "Anabaptists: the Reformers' Reformers," Ministry, July 1986, pp. 11-13; "Identifying the True Church," Ministry, September 1986, pp. 17-19; "Anabaptists and Believer's baptism," Ministry, November 1986, pp. 7-9.

Only the faithful, the remnant, the congregation that is called out and obedient to the voice of the Lord, constitute God's people.<sup>1</sup> In other words, believer's are those who are repentant, leave the ways of the world, and are baptized on their confession of faith. Accordingly, Anabaptists refuse to allow their infants to be baptized.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Mennonite Encyclopedia,<sup>3</sup> Bender, a Mennonite scholar, summarizes their position. They criticized Luther's argument in two points: complete absence of Scripture for baptizing children and infant faith. They also criticized Zwingli's symbolic view which is likewise lacking, especially in regard to his argument from silence in the New Testament. But Calvin's covenant theology that argued for the sign of baptism for sanctified children was viewed as "peculiar."

Then, what do Anabaptists think about original sin of unbaptized infant? According to Menno Simons,<sup>4</sup> to advocate infant baptism in order for the infant to be saved from original sin is a "dangerous idolatry and an abominable blasphemy against the blood of Christ." There is no

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<sup>1</sup>John H. Leith, ed., Creeds of the Churches, 3rd ed. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 284.

<sup>2</sup>"Anabaptists," The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1974 ed., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>H. S. Bender, "Infant Baptism," Mennonite Encyclopedia (1955-1959), 3:34-38. See also Moody, pp. 224-228.

<sup>4</sup>See Mueller, "Believers' Baptism," Ministry, November 1986, p. 9.

remedy in heaven or on earth for our sins, whether original or actual, other than the blood of Christ. If we could be washed or cleansed by baptism, then the blood of Christ and His merits would have to be abdicated. This can never be.

The atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross was in behalf of the entire race; therefore it applies to all human beings, both adults and children, but after the age of accountability Christ must be received by faith. Thus children who die before they are baptized are under the grace of God: covered by the atonement of Christ. Before they reach the age of discretion, although they partake of Adam's transgression and sinful nature, God reckons them as being without sin, innocent: they are spiritually safe. They stand in need neither of any ceremony, such as baptism, nor of conversion. Prior to the age of accountability, they are not responsible before God, and they are not able to make the response necessary for being converted in the NT sense. The NT calls for the Christian nurture and teaching of children. And it is important to know that forgiveness does not come through water but through Christ's blood.

Anyhow, the children of believers are not ipso facto believers, for they have not heard God's Word. They are on the same level as unbelievers. But they are not lost.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Moody, p. 225

## Arminius' View

Arminius (1560-1609) was a "celebrated Dutch Reformed theologian." As a system of faith, his doctrines were a theological reaction against the deterministic logic of Calvinism.<sup>1</sup> Arminianists' doctrines, according to Webster's dictionary, can be summarized as follows:<sup>2</sup>

(1) conditional election and reprobation, in opposition to absolute predestination; (2) universal redemption, or that the atonement was made by Christ for all mankind, though none but believers can be partakers of the benefit; (3) that man, in order to exercise true faith, must be regenerated and renewed by the operation of the Holy Spirit, which is the gift of God, but that this grace is not irresistible, and may be lost, so that men may lapse from a state of grace and die in their sins.

This position affirms free will to accept Christ and general atonement for sin, denies original guilt, and usually stands for falling from grace.<sup>3</sup> In his discussion of sin, Arminius affirmed original sin. Because of Adam's sin, all have inherited sinful natures. But this does not condemn one. Only a man's unwillingness to accept God's grace prevents his becoming a Christian. One is condemned only for actual sins committed as a responsible person.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Arminianism," The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup>"Arminianism," Webster's Dictionary of the English Language: Unabridged, Encyclopedic ed., 1979, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup>See the "Five Articles of the Remonstrant," in Henry Bettenson, ed., Documents of the Christian Church (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 375-377.

<sup>4</sup>Ratliff, pp. 214-216.

Arminius argues that "original sin will condemn no man"; and "in every nation, all infants who die without actual sins are saved."<sup>1</sup> Thus while holding to original sin, he predicated guilt only to actual sins. He affirms that sin is the result of personal activity. Because infants have no personal existence or choice, God does not impute Adam's guilt to them.<sup>2</sup> There is no denial that the tendencies of the infant is to be sinful; rather Arminius' point is that the child must be capable of sin for himself before he could be held accountable for it. This view, which affirms original sin but denies original guilt, was followed by the General Baptists.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Baptist Church and Its Practices

The practice of believers' baptism belongs to the very beginning of both the Anabaptists in the Continent and Baptists in England, and this is vitally related to the concept of the gathered church. Moreover, the English Baptists are divided into the Particular and General Baptists. The former are Calvinistic in their interpretation of original sin and original guilt, while the other Baptists followed the Arminians.

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<sup>1</sup>The Writings of James Arminius, trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956), 1:317.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>See Ratliff, p. 215.

The General Baptists:

An essay on the origins of General Baptists "has sought to show that the essential theological tradition as well as the distinctive features of early General Baptists are accounted for by their English Puritan Separatist background."<sup>1</sup> A study of the sources that influenced the beginnings of Particular Baptists came to the conclusion that "the peculiar Baptist bent is the result of a fresh breeze from Holland."<sup>2</sup>

According to Baptist Confessions of Faith,<sup>3</sup> the "reputed founder,"<sup>4</sup> John Smyth (c.1554-1612), asserted that God created man with freedom of the will and that there is no original sin in the Calvinistic sense.<sup>5</sup>

That there is no original sin (lit., no sin of origin or descent), but all sin is actual and voluntary, viz., a word, a deed, or a design against the law of God; and therefore, infants are without sin.

The confession made by Smyth's group after his death stated: "Infants are conceived and born in innocency

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<sup>1</sup>Lonnie D. Kliever, "General Baptist Origins: The Question of Anabaptist Influence," The Mennonite Quarterly Review 36 (October 1962):321.

<sup>2</sup>Glen H. Stassen, "Anabaptist Influence in the Origin of Particular Baptists," The Mennonite Quarterly Review 36 (October 1962):348.

<sup>3</sup>W. L. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>"Smith, or Smith, John," The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 1284.

<sup>5</sup>Lumpkin, p. 100.

without sin, and that so dying are undoubtedly saved."<sup>1</sup> The same position was reflected in the Standard Confession of 1660. Original sin does not include original guilt.

That all children dying in Infancy, having not actually transgressed against the Law of God first death, which comes upon them by the sin of the first Adam from whence they shall be all raised by the second Adam; and not that any one of them (dying in that estate) shall suffer for Adam's sin, eternal punishment in Hell, (which is the second death) for of such belongs the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Another creed by the Baptists in 1678 also follows the same tradition and affirms the salvation of those dying in infancy. Original sin was affirmed to the extent that all of Adam's seed is corrupt, sinful, and dwells under the wrath of God; but this fact does not damn infants. The Creed says:<sup>3</sup>

We do believe, that all little children, dying in their infancy, viz, before they are capable to choose either good or evil, whether born of believing parents, or unbelieving parents, shall be saved by the grace of God, and merit of Christ their redeemer, and work of the holy ghost, and so being made members of the invisible church, shall enjoy life everlasting; for our Lord Jesus saith, of such belongs the kingdom of heaven.

Thus, in their view, all children are innocent and "safe" in the eyes of God until they rejects the grace of God of their own volition. But a second group of Baptists,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 330-331.

the Particular Baptists, grew out of a Puritan congregational church in Southwark in 1633.<sup>1</sup>

Views of the Particular Baptists' Views:

It is generally believed that Particular Baptists have had the most influence on the historic views of Baptists on baptism, namely, in that<sup>2</sup> the subjects are only "persons professing faith"; the mode is by "dipping or plunging the whole body under the water"; and the administrator is to be a "preaching Disciple."<sup>3</sup>

This denomination, however, affirms original sin and salvation by election. The Second London Confession of 1677 says, because of the sin of Adam and Eve,

the guilt of the Sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in Sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of Sin, the subjects of death and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.<sup>4</sup>

Only those elected by God in Jesus Christ will be saved:

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory some men and Angels are predestinated, or fore-ordained to Eternal Life, through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Moody, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 241.

<sup>3</sup>Lumpkin, p. 167.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 265.



The adherents insist on the believer's baptism, reject infant baptism, and even admit original sin and guilt of infant. Children are outside of the church until they can believe and be baptized. Their salvation is left to the hands of God's mercy, His election. Some therefore exclaim with heart breaking concern:

Is there, then, no place for the child in the Church of Jesus Christ? It would be absurd and even monstrous to suggest such a thing.<sup>1</sup>

A. H. Dakin, a theological educator, concludes:<sup>2</sup>

We repudiate both baptismal regeneration and salvation by contact. There is no faith by proxy, not even in the circle of the Christian family. Faith is each person's conscious response to Divine grace. When a man so responds he does well to be baptized.

Moody points out as "the border of the absurd and even monstrous suggestion" the following saying by the General Superintendent of the Baptist Churches of the Metropolitan Area of London in England:

The crux of the question is really Church-membership. Can infants become in any true sense of the term members of the Church? Can they, in other words, exercise a personal faith in Christ and so enter into living communion with Him? The answer must surely be No.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A. H. Dakin, "Baptism of Believers Only," in Concerning Believers' Baptism, ed. F. C. Bryan (London: Kingsgate Press, 1943), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Cook, What Baptists Stand For (London: Kingsgate Press, 1947), p. 125. However, this statement is omitted in the appendix to the third (1958) and fourth (1961) editions, pp. 217-243.

The principal of Spurgeon's College finds infant baptism and church membership impossible for infants who are unable to receive the complex of baptismal ideas--faith, repentance, regeneration, the gift of the Spirit, entrance into the church, and union with Christ.<sup>1</sup>

But Beasley-Murray makes an interesting comment which says the unbaptized children "are not members 'in the fullest sense,' yet they are 'under the wing of divine grace' in 'the sphere of the Church.'"<sup>2</sup> He is careful to point out that their position is peculiarly comparable to that of the catechumen, but he neglects to say that catechumens were regarded as insiders.<sup>3</sup>

We see among this group of Baptists a fatal lack of the theology of the Christian child. This at times was fully admitted,<sup>4</sup> but the task, Moody says in his book, is postponed for future consideration.<sup>5</sup>

#### Seventh-day Adventist Church's View

It is strikingly clear that there is a lack of a theology of children within the Seventh-day Adventist

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Percy W. Evans, Infant Baptism Today (Birmingham: Berean Press, 1948), pp. 26-36

<sup>2</sup>G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament (London: Macmillan & Company, 1962), pp. 372f; see Moody, p. 256.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>See *ibid.*, p. 257, n. 166.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

church.<sup>1</sup> Though the ten-year growth ratio, 1970-1980, of the church membership and Sabbath School (Sunday School) enrollment in North America was extremely high when compared with other denominations, this does not necessarily show that its theology is sound and well established.<sup>2</sup> We cannot find any theological comment concerning the status of children in this church. Besides, this church has traditionally refused to have any church creed even though it has twenty-seven fundamental beliefs, fundamental doctrines of the church. None of these beliefs deal with the theology of children.<sup>3</sup>

However, it should be admitted that the role of E. G. White, as a so-called messenger to the church, has had a

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<sup>1</sup>For example, we can hardly see in any Adventist articles and books, which are listed in bibliography and have been carefully noted, the matter of the status of children in the church or of their salvation. Even in the long list of indexes of the books related to children, cannot we find the words of salvation or membership of children. See, for instance, Richard Rice, The Reign of God (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985) which, according to him, attempts to provide, in one volume, an introduction to the major Christian doctrines that includes the distinctive concerns of Seventh-day Adventists, and which is intended, as in a degree of comprehensiveness, to be used at the college level classroom: but in which we cannot find the word "child" in its index at all. Nor can we hardly see any comment in it as a whole for the status of children in relation to their atonement or salvation.

<sup>2</sup>See Lawrence O. Richards, A Theology of Children's Ministry (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), pp. 291-294.

<sup>3</sup>Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), pp. 31-46.

very prominent role in making work for children powerful.<sup>1</sup> Her various admonitions on the importance of children has been taken seriously by every writer and worker of the church in the past.<sup>2</sup>

For example, Arthur W. Spalding, one of the giants in the past history of Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the area of education for children and parents and a life-long dedicated administrator and a writer,<sup>3</sup> is convinced that he received the "Great Commission" through E. G. White in 1913.<sup>4</sup> Statistics show that those Adventist leaders' efforts have been well rewarded. White's admonition is still strong. For a long time Adventists have taken it for granted that they have a well-understood theology of children. But the issue exists and needs to be clarified today: a sound theology of children in relation to the

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<sup>1</sup>E. G. White left many written works concerning children such as Education (1903) and Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students (1913); and the following books which are a compilation from her letters, articles, and other writings: Fundamentals of Christian Education (1923); Adventist Home (1952); Child Guidance (1954); Counsels on Education (1968), etc.

<sup>2</sup>Seventh-day Adventist writers and administrative workers have taken into serious account E. G. White's admonitions in the past, for Adventists believe she was God's messenger to the church. Because of that, in a sense, there has always been unity in the writings or admonitions as far as fundamental philosophy and spirituality is concerned.

<sup>3</sup>See a list of his writings in appendix D.

<sup>4</sup>See A. W. Spalding, Origin and History of the SDA (1961/1962), 3:202.

status of children in this church today must be developed. Is it right to say that children are outside the church until they are baptized? Adventists think that only a believing baptism initiates one into the membership of the church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual says:

A minister should not present any candidate for baptism and church membership until he can satisfy the church by a public examination that the candidate has been well instructed and is ready to take such a step.<sup>1</sup>

Only those giving evidence of having experienced the new birth, and who are enjoying a spiritual experience in the Lord Jesus, are prepared for acceptance into church membership.<sup>2</sup>

Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God's spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, "The Lord our Righteousness" (Jer 23:6).<sup>3</sup>

This church strongly advocates believer's baptism. Then, are the believers' children lost because they are not baptized yet? Do they not belong to church as members or have they not yet passed the threshold into "God's spiritual kingdom"? What will happen to the children if they die before they have grown enough to "enjoy a spiritual experience" or confess their faith? Marlin Jeschke points out in his book that "One of the weaknesses of the believers baptism tradition has been its neglect of a theology of

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<sup>1</sup>Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-42.

the status of children,"<sup>1</sup> there is scarcely found any papers and writings to answer these questions in this church except in E. G. White writings.

Ellen G. White's View

Except for one comment, there is no explicit mention about infant baptism in White's writings. In The Great Controversy, she seems to endorse the rejection of infant baptism by Menno Simons. She wrote:

He (Menno Simons) could find no evidence for it in the Scriptures, but saw that repentance and faith are everywhere required as the condition of receiving baptism.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, she repeatedly advocated believer's baptism even in the baptizing of children:

Parents whose children desire to be baptized have a work to do, both in self-examination and in giving faithful instruction to their children. Baptism is a most sacred and important ordinance, and, there should be a thorough understanding as to its meaning. It means repentance for sin, and the entrance upon a new life in Christ Jesus. There should be no undue haste to receive the ordinance.<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

However, it should be noted that she never thought of children as being outside of the church. Parents should

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<sup>1</sup>Marlin Jeschke, Believers Baptism for Children of the Church (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>E. G. White, The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan, 1950 ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1888). pp. 238-239.

<sup>3</sup>Testimonies for the Church, 6:95; cf. 6:91-99; 4:317; or MS 56, 1900, etc.

consider that their own dear children are "younger members of the Lord's family."<sup>1</sup> She further states:

Never allow your children to suppose that they are not children of God until they are old enough to be baptized.<sup>2</sup>

White's attitude toward unbaptized children is more clearly understood when we see encouragement concerning the salvation or the status of children in her special letter on the death of her niece.<sup>3</sup> It is worthy to note that the parents of the niece never became "Sabbath-keeping Adventists," though she labored with her sister, the mother of the niece, and felt a "great disappointment," especially as her sister did not see the importance of the truth. But she encouraged the mother that her unbaptized child would be resurrected when the time would come. She also indicates in this communication that there will be children saved whose parents will not be saved. Note a paragraph from her letter:

As the little infants come forth immortal from their dusty beds, they immediately wing their way to their mother's arms. They meet again nevermore to part. But many of the little ones have no mother there. We listen in vain for the rapturous song of triumph from the mother. The Angels receive the motherless infants

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>White, MS 5, 1896; see also Child Guidance (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), p. 499.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Selected Messages (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 2:259-260.

and conduct them to the tree of life.<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

White gives an important statement in 1899 through which she comforts a mother on the death of her child:

You inquire in regard to your little one being saved. Christ's words are your answer: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Lk 18:16).... The promise is yours. You may be comforted and trust in the Lord. The Lord has often instructed me that many little ones are to be laid away before the time of trouble. We shall see our children again. We shall meet them and know them in the heavenly courts. Put your trust in the Lord, and be not afraid.<sup>2</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

Thus, as for her, she takes almost the same position as Arminius and the Anabaptists as far as the status of children's salvation is concern.

But one must carefully note the following statement. She seems not to take a position of indiscriminate salvation of every child. A faith-related community, namely, the church or any Christian believer's relationship functions an indispensable role for securing children's salvation. About fourteen years before the letter noted above was written, she gave a notable comment concerning children's salvation:

I know that some questioned whether the little children of even believing parents would be saved, because they have had no test of character and all must be tested and their character determined by trial. The question is asked, "How can little children have this test and trial?" I answer that the faith of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 259. Cf. idem, Child Guidance, p. 566.



believing parents covers the children, as when God sent his Judgments upon the first-born of the Egyptians.

I said to Brother Matterson, whether all the children of unbelieving parents will be saved we cannot tell, because God has not made known His purpose in regard to this matter, and we had better leave it where God has left it and dwell upon subjects made plain in His word. This is a most delicate subject.<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

According to this comment, it is clear that as far as the believer's children are concerned, they, though unbaptized, are surely under the covenant of God through which He promised to be their God and for them to be His people, by giving a new heart to know Him and to cleanse all their uncleanness.<sup>2</sup> Through the parents' or sponsor's faith, children can have access to Heaven. They can have a sure shelter with God.

Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth.<sup>3</sup>

However, they are not saved by any merit of their parents or guardians, nor by baptism, not even believers' baptism, itself,<sup>4</sup> but by His love. In fact, White repeatedly advocates that "children are God's property, bought with price";<sup>5</sup> "children are to be instructed that they are

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<sup>1</sup>White, MS 26, 1885.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jer 33:33, 34; Ezek 36:25-27; and also, John 17:3.

<sup>3</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, p. 496.

<sup>4</sup>Idem, MS 5, 1896, "Baptism does not make children Christians; neither does it convert them."

<sup>5</sup>Idem, Child Guidance, p. 23.

the Lord's property, bought with His own precious blood."<sup>1</sup>  
In other words, God Himself loves them at His cost. But, on the other hand, God wants His people to maintain a love relationship which He revealed especially through the life of Jesus.

Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books, not to preach the truth. But it is a living union with Jesus Christ to be renewed in heart, doing the works of Christ in faith and labor of love, in patience, meekness, and hope. Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him.<sup>2</sup>

As long as this union exists in any way they have a sure ground for their salvation especially in the case of the children of believer though they are not baptized yet.

#### An Additional View

In addition to the various views above, I would like to comment briefly on another point of view concerning the status of children.

When God blessed Adam and Eve at the creation, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:28)," it would be silly to think that the children who were born in their house could not belong to God's family until they grew up and were able to be aware of or confess God by themselves.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 42; also pp. 27, 76, 477.

<sup>2</sup>Idem, Evangelism (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), p. 319.

At the time the Lord, God Almighty, blessed Abraham with the same expression, He clearly indicated that the newborn baby was to bear the covenant sign from his earliest time. Actually the baby, even before his birth, was God's precious property through the merit of Jesus Christ. In fact, he is often expressed as being filled with the Holy Spirit "even from his mother's womb."<sup>1</sup>

Who can say, therefore, that in our home the children are not members of our family until they grow up to be a man or woman? Are they not family members immediately upon their birth, though official recognition may possibly be delayed for few days or weeks on some occasions? It is when they grow up that they can separate themselves, but they surely remain with their family as members as long as they are children or young enough to depend on somebody's care.

If we then argue that the church is new Israel or the seed of Abraham in the NT time as we later discuss it briefly, then every child who is born within the believer's family or community must surely be a member of the family by birth.

There is even a custom of "adopting" the children in this world. Through a legal process they are officially recognized as the member of one's family. If the children of the church are placed outside of the family of God, it

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 1:15.

is as though we treat them as utter strangers or bastards. This must not happen in the church.

From some other points of view, we can see another confirmation of status of children as we have reached in chapter 1. It certainly does not seem right to say that Jesus Christ did not belong to God's family until He was baptized when He was at about thirty years of age. Was He outside God's church or of God's family until He received baptism? This question is nonsense. He surely belonged to God's family from the beginning.

Or should we say that His case was different from ours because He was the Son of God? Surely He was different from us, in a sense, but did not He live a life like ours in every way except sin? Heb 2:17 says: "He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people."

Jesus argued that He was in the "Father's house" when He was in the Temple at His twelve years old.<sup>1</sup> The Talmud speaks of thirteen years as the borderline for the fulfillment of the law. However, Joachim Jeremias explains the incident of Jesus' being brought by His parents when He was twelve years old on a journey at festival time:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 2:42.

<sup>2</sup>Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, p. 76.

It was the custom among people from a distance to bring their children when they reached twelve years of age. Luke 2:42 is not in contradiction with this rule (the rule in Talmud as thirteen years as the borderline for the fulfillment of the law);<sup>1</sup> the twelve-year-olds were brought on the pilgrimage in order to get them used to the event which would become a duty next year.

If Jeremias' explanation is right, Jesus was brought to the temple before the age of "the borderline" in order to prepare Him for becoming bar miswāh (son of the law).

When we observe that Jesus already called God His Father before the age of maturity, and participated in the rituals, surely eating the Passover meal and attending to every ritual though it was not yet His responsibility to perform the law because of His age, He was convinced that He already belonged to God's family even before the borderline. He recognized His sonship in the view of God's family, the vertical relationship between human beings and God the creator. This was not only long before He received baptism but also even before the so-called bar miswah, confirmation.

The point here is again the question of whether the child of believers should be put outside of God's family or belong to God's family in the church today. This biblical evidence concerning Jesus' childhood gives us another evidence that should convince us that the believers' child must be a part of God's family, that is, the church.

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<sup>1</sup>See Zvi Kaplan, "Bar Mitzvah; Bat Mitzvah," Encyclopedia Judaica, corrected ed. (1973), 4:243.

### Conclusion

According to our survey above, it appears that there are several issues concerning the status of children which should be further dealt with on the basis of the biblical evidences:

1. The status of children in objective or collective and subjective holiness must be taken into account, especially in view of the OT rite of "circumcision" based on God's sovereignty, the work of Atonement by Jesus Christ on the Cross, and the nature of the covenant in regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

2. Baptism in the NT should be studied in view of its meaning, function, and practice in relation to the status of children: believer's baptism or infant baptism?

3. We should investigate theological and practical problem of establishing the status of children in our church in view of the wholeness of the Christian life of children. We survey whether child dedication and child blessing service can be justified for incorporating children in the church; and also we examine, as an example, how we should make or can help our children participate in the Communion service based on the status of children.

In chapter 3 we discuss these matters based on the biblical and practical evidences which were given in the previous chapters, focusing on children's status and the outward sign.

## CHAPTER III

### CHILDREN'S STATUS AND OUTWARD SIGN

#### Circumcision and Children's Status

As we have noted in chapter I, the literary structure of Gen 17 shows that the command of circumcision rests on the promise in which the Lord Almighty says to Abraham, when he is ninety-nine years old and has no hope to raise his legitimate son, "I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."<sup>1</sup>

Then, the command for circumcision was given as a sign and seal of trust in the promise and of entrance into the covenant between God the Almighty and His people. At the same time, it was a sign and seal of God's grace, for by it He promised that He becomes their God, and through it that He enables them to become God's people.<sup>2</sup>

We know that the "command of circumcision" (vs. 10)

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<sup>1</sup>Gen 17:6, 7 (NIV).

<sup>2</sup>Gen 17:9-14.

has to be officiated to those who have received the promise given by God, and to those also who are related to these persons in faith;<sup>1</sup> it was given to every male household member<sup>2</sup> through the one who had received the promise. This rite was required of Abraham and his descendants in all generations by the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

Then, the Lord, as He promised, revealed His almighty power by enabling Sarah to bear the son Isaac when she was about ninety years old.<sup>4</sup> Abraham, of course, circumcised Isaac when he was eight days old.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the practice of circumcision, on the part of people, is a responsive act to God's promise in His covenant. The circle cut in the flesh, is a token that God had cut out them and separated them from all nations as His

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<sup>1</sup>Rom 4:11-12; "...he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.... And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised."

<sup>2</sup>Gen 17:12-13. Under the Old Testament covenant, as every thing pointed forward to Christ the Son of Man, so every rite was properly enough confined to the males. The females were regarded as acting in them, and represented by them as it is said, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,... There is neither...male nor female,.. for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26-29, NIV).

<sup>3</sup>See p. 14, and p. 14, n. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Notice that circumcision was given to males, but their joy was realized by means of a suffering and joy of a female household member, i.e., Sarah at the baby's birth; cf. Luke 2:22-24, 34, 35.

<sup>5</sup>Gen 21:4.



peculiar treasure, while the same practice, on the part of God, witnesses to His grace for them in His concrete activity.

One must especially note here in relation to the status of children that circumcision was to be extended to all the male household members in the house of Abraham, to both adults and children, and not only to his flesh and blood descendants but also to every foreign slave in his house, even to Ishmael who was not his legitimate heir in the house of Abraham.<sup>1</sup> In other words, "the whole household is a cultic unity," as Westermann says.<sup>2</sup>

So, in the Old Testament time, children, and even infants on the eighth day from their birth,<sup>3</sup> who were merely passive recipients of the sign of the covenant and were unconscious of its meaning and whose parents or adults were acting voluntarily, were placed as members within the covenant community by God's clear command. Every female, though they did not receive the sign of circumcision,<sup>4</sup> belonged to the God's family, for every faith-related household member, adult and infant, slave and free, male and female, belonged to God's family under the covenant corporatively and collectively.

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<sup>1</sup>Gen 17:23-27.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Gen 17:12.

<sup>4</sup>See p. 123, nn. 2 and 4.

To neglect circumcision, as was pointed out in chapter I,<sup>1</sup> was more than a mere neglect of a rite; it was a rejection of God's sign and a breach of the covenant with God. The practitioner was subject to divine punishment, being "cut off from the people," i.e., from the covenant; the uncircumcised was to be exterminated from His people.<sup>2</sup>

Further, when the Lord commanded the rite of circumcision to Abraham, He was not instituting an entirely peculiar practice. Circumcision was practiced by many other people, mainly as a rite at the age of puberty or immediately preceding marriage. But, by applying this rite to His people, God the Almighty stresses that its meaning is transformed until it becomes the sign of the covenant. The fact is that the covenant relationship is something received and is not totally dependent upon personal choice and decision--though this covenant relationship is established through someone's faith-related response. In other words, its faith-related meaning is far more essential in its practice than its external mode itself--the cutting of the foreskin. Here we see a very objective nature of the covenant; it was not so much dependent on subjective matter. It was a divine ordination.

Thus, in the case of infants or children, the rite of circumcision testifies especially to this objective

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., and see also Gen 17:14.

nature of the covenant. Those who have not reached the age of accountability receive the rite through their guardians' will. These infants have no way to exercise their own will. Thus the visible community of God's covenant people is not a mere voluntary association since it includes infants; thus, it is a corporative and collective holiness that is quite visible in the community.

As noted above, we, on the other hand, must not lose sight of the sure element of the involvement of faith-related personal decision: the individual faith value of belonging to the community. For adults, this relation in faith is essential. If the rite of circumcision for their infants is not backed up by their intimate and special relationship to God, it is nothing. Their practice of mere circumcision is of no avail. It is "faith working through love"<sup>1</sup> that makes the rite worthwhile.

Even in the time of the Old Testament, the rite of circumcision had been suspended from the time of the rebellion at Kadesh to the time of Joshua.<sup>2</sup> Since the people had proved unfaithful to God's covenant, they were not to receive the sign of the covenant, the rite of circumcision.

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<sup>1</sup>Gal 5:6. At the time of Paul the practice of the rite became meaningless for the Gentile Christians. For them receiving baptism of water and the Spirit was sufficient for convincing God's grace toward them and to express their faith. So long as the rite, especially among Jews, became a mere outward sign, a perverted sign of self-complacent God's people, the rite was of no purpose.

<sup>2</sup>Josh 5:2-7; cf. Num 13 and 14.

Their desire to return to the land of slavery<sup>1</sup> had shown them to be unworthy of freedom, so the ordinance of the Passover, instituted to commemorate the deliverance from bondage, was also not to be observed.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, circumcision represents a highly spiritual matter: (1) the expression of "circumcising the foreskin of your heart" means "no longer stubborn,"<sup>3</sup> that is, so "you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul";<sup>4</sup> (2) the expression, on the other hand, "uncircumcised lips" or "ears" means, on the one hand, not to be eloquent or persuasive for the Lord and, on the other hand, to close one's ears to the Lord's message;<sup>5</sup> and (3) the circumcision rite also represents "the removal of impurity, and thus was an act of purification."<sup>6</sup> Both John the Baptist and Paul the Apostle--and even Jesus Christ--

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<sup>1</sup>Num 14:3, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Deut 1:19-40; Num 13 and 14: see Ellen G. White, The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 406.

<sup>3</sup>Deut 10:16.

<sup>4</sup>Deut 30:6.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Exod 6:12, 13; Jer 6:10.

<sup>6</sup>Isa 52:1; see IDB, 1:630, which points out that "one of the words used by Arabs for circumcision is tuhr, 'cleansing.'" Josh 5:9 also suggests an interesting aspect for circumcision, for when all the people that were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt received circumcision by Joshua, the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you" (Josh 5:9).

were subjected to the rite of circumcision on the eighth day after birth.<sup>1</sup>

Given all this, why is no circumcision practiced today in Christianity? Is there any change in the status of children in God's family now from the time when God's people stood on the threshold from Jewish to Christian church dispensation? According to the survey in chapter I, we are convinced that children have the same status in God's family now as in the Old Testament time. They are still and have to be visible among God's people as those beings who are well accepted in God's sight--especially when we see the attitude of Jesus Christ toward them.<sup>2</sup> It would be very hard to oppose this conclusion.

The covenant which the Lord Himself established was not only between Him and Abraham; it was also between Him and Abraham's seed in all generations for an everlasting covenant: "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."<sup>3</sup> Paul declares, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ, when taking a little child in His arms, said to His disciples:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 1:59; 2:21; and Phil 3:5.

<sup>2</sup>See especially its "conclusion," pp. 81-84.

<sup>3</sup>Gen 17:7.

<sup>4</sup>Gal 3:29 (NIV).

<sup>5</sup>Mark 9:36, 37.

Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.

Thus, Jesus emphasized that we should regard children as belonging to God the Father and to Himself and, eventually, to His church.

These children who are brought to Jesus are logically "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."<sup>1</sup> They belong to God's family, not only under the old but also the new covenant, of which Jesus is "the messenger"<sup>2</sup> and "the guarantee" or "mediator."<sup>3</sup> In fact, the old Covenant "was put in charge to lead us to Christ."<sup>4</sup> In this sense, Abraham and those faithful to the Covenant of old were circumcised on the basis of His coming in future. Thus, we belong to God's family on the basis of the retrospective coming and future coming of Jesus Christ at the eschatological end time. Christ Jesus who is the incarnated God,<sup>5</sup> has fulfilled the Old Testament promises. Moreover, He promises, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven."<sup>6</sup> What kind of sincere Christian parents do not want to bind their children on the earth for the

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<sup>1</sup>Gal 3:29.

<sup>2</sup>Mal 3:1.

<sup>3</sup>Heb 7:22, and 8:6 or 9:15.

<sup>4</sup>Gal 3:24 (NIV).

<sup>5</sup>John 1:14; cf. Col 1:19; John 1:18; Matt 1:23; etc.

<sup>6</sup>Matt 18:18 (NIV).

reason that they are not yet baptized? The answer is clear, "Never." Jesus continues to say:<sup>1</sup>

Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

Jesus through the Holy Spirit responds to and abides with people in a community of believers who come together in His name. Children in this community are the precious properties of the Lord; they were bought by the blood of Jesus on the Cross.<sup>2</sup>

If the status of children in the New Testament as in the Old Testament time has been thus well established as their being in favor of God's sight, how can this status of children be recognized in the church today in the post-New Testament era? Why is not circumcision or some other new institution practiced?

Historically, when some Judaizing teachers asserted with great assurance at the time of the apostles that, in order to be saved, one must be circumcised and must keep the entire ceremonial law, the apostle Paul, who was himself circumcised, took a firm and unyielding position which brought to the churches freedom from Jewish rites and ceremonies. And the Jerusalem convocation<sup>3</sup> decided that

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<sup>1</sup>Matt 18:19 (NIV).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 6:20. He was "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

<sup>3</sup>Acts 15:1-35.

circumcision should not be urged upon the Gentiles or even recommended to them. The apostles observed Christianity as being beyond Jewish economy, beyond Jewish peculiarities. After being shown a vision in relation to the conversion of Cornelius, Peter had to recognize that the Jewish distinction would finally disappear from among those who received the gospel message.<sup>1</sup>

Some argue that baptism is a substitute for circumcision and, especially, that infant baptism serves today as circumcision of children did in Old Testament times. In the next sections, we discuss the meaning and function of baptism and, from that, attempt to draw a conclusion whether infant baptism is relevant or not for establishing the status of children in the church today.

#### Meaning and Function of Baptism

A recent report from the World Council of Churches summarizes the meaning of Christian baptism as the sign of new life through Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Various images express the riches of Christ and the gifts of His salvation. Baptism is:

- (1) participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12)
- (2) a washing away of sin (1 Cor 6:11)
- (3) a new birth (John 3:5)

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Acts 10 and 15:6-11.

<sup>2</sup>Baptism Eucharist & Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, Special U. S. Lutheran reprint ed. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), pp. 7-8.



- (4) an enlightenment by Christ (Eph 5:14)
- (5) a reclothing in Christ (Gal 3:27)
- (6) a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5)
- (7) the experience of salvation from the flood (1 Pet 3:20-21)
- (8) an exodus from bondage (1 Cor 10:1-2)
- (9) a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal 3:27-28; 1 Cor 12:13).

The images are many but the reality is one;<sup>1</sup> the "sign of new life through Jesus."

Administered in obedience to our Lord, baptism functions as a sign and seal of our common discipleship. Baptism is a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come.

John Calvin's comment also is noteworthy. According to him, Christian baptism has two meanings: (1) as a sign or a token of the "cleansing of our sins"--forgiveness and the "mortification of our flesh"; and (2) as participation in Christ's death and resurrection, in which we experience "rebirth into newness of life and into the fellowship of Christ"--our union with Christ.<sup>2</sup> The first dimension means

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Calvin, Institute, 2:1303, 1325, 1326: "Scripture declares that baptism first points to the cleansing of our sins, which we obtain from Christ's blood; then to the mortification of our flesh, which rests upon participation in his death and through which believers are reborn into newness of life and into the fellowship of Christ. All that is taught in the Scriptures concerning baptism can be referred to this summary, except that baptism is also a symbol for bearing witness to our religion before men."

cleansing of our sins by the grace of God the Father.<sup>1</sup> Baptism is not a removal of filth from the flesh but evidence of a good conscience before God which is from faith.<sup>2</sup> We are not to think that baptism was conferred upon us for past time only; we must realize that whenever we are baptized, we are once for all washed and purged for our whole life.<sup>3</sup> Christ's purity has been offered us in the rite of baptism; his purity ever flourishes; it is defiled by no spots, but buries and cleanses away all our defilements.<sup>4</sup>

The second dimension of its meaning is our mortification in Christ and new life in Him: "We have been baptized into His death, buried with Him into death, . . . that we may walk in newness of life."<sup>5</sup> We were circumcised in Christ and put off the old man after we were buried in Christ through baptism.<sup>6</sup> If we are Christians, we ought to be dead to sin and alive to righteousness.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the free pardon of sins by the grace of God and the imputation of righteousness by the mortification in Christ are first

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<sup>1</sup>Eph 1:7.

<sup>2</sup>Calvin, Institute, 2:1305; see 1 Pet 3:21; cf. Heb 9:9-14.

<sup>3</sup>Eph 1:7; cf. Calvin, Institute, 2:1305.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Rom 6:3-4. See Calvin, Institute, 2:1307.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.; Col 2:12-12.

<sup>7</sup>Rom 6:11.

promised us; then the grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit reforms us to newness of life.

We are not only engrafted into the death and life of Christ, but are so united to Christ himself that we become sharers in all His blessings.<sup>1</sup> Jesus dedicated and sanctified baptism in His own body (Matt 3:13) in order that He might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of the union and fellowship which he has designed to form with us.<sup>2</sup> Yet this cannot take place unless the one who is baptized in Christ invokes also the names of the Father and the Spirit. We are cleansed by His blood because our merciful Father has set the Mediator among us to gain favor for us in His sight. We obtain regeneration by Christ's death and resurrection only if we are sanctified by the Spirit and imbued with a new and spiritual nature. For this reason we obtain and, so to speak, clearly discern in the Father, the cause; in the Son, the matter; and in the Spirit, the effect.<sup>3</sup>

As for the function of the NT baptism, there are, according to Calvin, two main elements: (1) it testifies divine grace to us as receivers; and (2) it makes confession of faith before all men. First, baptism has to be received with trust in the promise of which it is a sign of

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<sup>1</sup>Calvin, Institute, 2:1307.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.; 2:1308.

divine act and need not to be repeated. Baptism indeed promises to us the drowning of our Pharaoh<sup>1</sup> and the mortification of our sin, not that it no longer exists or gives us trouble, but only that it may not overcome us if we faithfully hold fast to the promise given us by God in baptism, that old sins shall not dominate or rule.<sup>2</sup>

Second, baptism serves as token of confession before men. Indeed, it is the mark by which we publicly profess that we wish to be reckoned God's people; by which we testify that we agree in worshipping the same God, in one religion with all Christians; by which finally we openly affirm our faith.<sup>3</sup> Those explanations which are given by Calvin well represent the biblical meaning and function of the NT baptism.

E. G. White also endorses the same notion. One term she uses repeatedly in her writings mentions the NT baptism as "baptism of suffering" by Jesus Christ, that is, mortification, as well as refreshing new life in His love by the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> "They must drink of the cup;<sup>5</sup> they must be baptized with "the baptism";<sup>6</sup> ye must be

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<sup>1</sup>Exod 14:28.

<sup>2</sup>Calvin, Institute, 2:1312.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2:1314 and cf. 1 Cor 1:13.

<sup>4</sup>White, Testimonies, 9:40.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1:183.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

partakers of Christ's suffering here if ye would be partakers with Him of His glory hereafter.<sup>1</sup> Heaven will be cheap enough, if we obtain it through suffering.<sup>2</sup> Thus those who receive the ordinance of baptism thereby make a public declaration that they have accepted the invitation,<sup>3</sup> have renounced the world, and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.<sup>4</sup> Christ made baptism a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The whole work is the Lord's from the beginning to the end. It is God that circumcises the heart.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the NT baptism symbolizes "new life through Jesus Christ." In His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and intercession, we receive the bond with Christ, forgiveness of our sins, cleansing of our sins, imputation of His righteousness, and sanctification and blessing. Its functions, on the one hand, are to testify threefold divine grace to us, that is, the election by God, the reconciliation by Christ, and the regeneration by the Holy Spirit; and on the other hand, it is to make confession of the

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<sup>1</sup>Idem, Early Writings, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>2 Cor 6:16-18.

<sup>4</sup>2 Cor 7:1; Col 3:1.

<sup>5</sup>White, Selected Messages, 1:392.

faith before men through belonging into the Body of Christ and so living as He lived. The rite involves both faith and action on the part of the subjects. So, the practice of baptism seems not to be appropriate for infants at all.

Believer's Baptism versus Infant Baptism

Some, especially those of the Roman Catholic church --as we noted in chapter II<sup>1</sup>--argue that the rite of baptism was divinely instituted as a means of entry both into the church and also into salvation. With the Holy Spirit, water serves as an agent of regeneration and of the infusion of charity. It has almost a magical quality; it is an instrument of internal cleansing, justification, and renewal. Boettner rightly criticizes the theology of baptism by the Church of Rome:

Rome has perverted the meaning of baptism so that instead of accepting it as a symbolical and an outward sign through which Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented and conveyed to the believer and received by faith, it is represented as working in a magical way to produce baptismal regeneration and securing automatically the forgiveness of all past sins, and as absolutely necessary to salvation. Rome teaches that it is not possible even for newly born infants to be saved so as to enjoy the delights of heaven unless they are baptized.<sup>2</sup>

Thus for the Roman Catholic Church the child is born in sin and as a sinner stands under the wrath of God

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 85-86.

<sup>2</sup>Lorraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism (Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), p. 190.

unless the sacrament of baptism washes away the original sin and guilt. The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual. So, "anathema upon anyone who says that baptism is not necessary for salvation."<sup>1</sup>

On this argument by the Roman Catholic Church, Bromiley gives a noteworthy comment to it by way of impartial attitude. He says:

Christ undoubtedly instituted baptism, and with the word and the Lord's Supper it may rightly be described as a means of grace. At least, many evangelical Christians accept this definition. Nevertheless, its interpretation as an almost automatic instrument for the infusing of grace finds little or no support either in the teaching and practice of the New Testament, or the anticipatory signs and types of the Old.<sup>2</sup>

Bromiley continues to point out<sup>3</sup> in detail that the only possible verse which can be adduced for this understanding is John 3:5, and even if water is meant literally here, the saying does not tell us anything about its mechanical functioning. In Acts, baptism is said to be for the remission of sins, but again nothing is said about its serving as an automatic instrument. The Apostles also do not say a great deal about baptism. That seems very strange if it was intended and operated as an indispensable agent of salvation. Paul dismisses it in almost cavalier fashion

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<sup>1</sup>The Catholic Encyclopedia, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup>Bromiley, Children of Promise, pp. 28-29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

in Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> although his main point is that no importance ought to be attached to the human minister, as some misguided people apparently thought at Corinth. The epistle to Titus again links baptism with regeneration,<sup>2</sup> but the particular mode of this relationship is not specified. 1 Peter, in contrast, seems to make it very plainly the effect of the internal work.<sup>3</sup> So, "it needs a good deal of speculative inference then, and a certain blindness to the general trend of biblical teaching, to derive this extreme understanding from the scriptures."<sup>4</sup>

A contrary view of baptism is the one by the Anabaptists or Arminius, as we have shown in the previous chapter.<sup>5</sup> Anabaptists advocate believer's baptism--people must be baptized as believers whether or not they had been baptized previously.<sup>6</sup> The subjects must be those who are repentant and leave the ways of the world; they are

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<sup>1</sup>1 Cor 1:13-17.

<sup>2</sup>Titus 3:5.

<sup>3</sup>1 Pet 3:21.

<sup>4</sup>Bromiley, Children of Promise, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup>See pp. 97-101.

<sup>6</sup>That is, the view conceives that though they have received infant baptism in the past, it is nothing, for they exercised no faith in the rite. They themselves need to express their repentance from sin and profess their faith in Jesus Christ at the public act, and need to signify the turning away from the old life of sin and the entry into new life in Christ in whom they believe; cf. Bromiley, Children of Promise, p. 30.



baptized on their confession of faith. Accordingly, there is no room for infant baptism.

Robertson argues that "It is significant that even the Didache with its exaggerated notion of the importance of baptism does not allow baptism of infants."<sup>1</sup> Then, he indicates several points.<sup>2</sup> The didache, the "teaching" says: "Having first taught all these things." Instruction precedes baptism. The uniform practice in the NT is that baptism follows confession. The people "confessing their sins" were baptized by John the baptist.<sup>3</sup> He insisted on seeing evidences of reformation before baptizing a convert.<sup>4</sup> After immersion he exhorted them, telling them "to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."<sup>5</sup> The passages quoted from the NT in support of the notion of infant baptism are "wholly irrelevant," Acts 2:38, 39, for the three thousand on the day of Pentecost were told to "repent, and be baptized," thus there is no such clear evidence as baptism of infants. Moreover, it is "begging the question" to assume the presence of infants in the various household baptisms in Acts. In the case of the

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<sup>1</sup>A. T. Robertson, "Baptism: Baptist View," ISBE (1979), 1:417. As for "the Didache," he says: it may "belong to the first half century" (1:416).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Matt 3:6.

<sup>4</sup>Luke 3:8.

<sup>5</sup>Acts 19:4 (NIV).

family of Cornelius, they all spoke with tongues and magnified God.<sup>1</sup> The jailer's household "rejoiced greatly."<sup>2</sup> We do not even know that Lydia was married. Her household "may have been merely her employees in her business." Thus, no room is found in the NT for infant baptism; the NT presents no exceptions.

In fact, infants are mentioned many times in the NT. Baptism is also mentioned repeatedly. But the two are never spoken of together.<sup>3</sup> Besides, historical and biblical evidences point to the fact that in the first centuries of the Church, baptism was given to none but adults after they had been well instructed in the mysteries of the faith.<sup>4</sup> Infant baptism originated later in North Africa<sup>5</sup> through the influence of Augustine and soon permeated Christendom in the early fifth century.<sup>6</sup>

Further, Robertson introduces equivocal comments by various parties in the following:

It is frankly admitted by Pedobaptist scholars that the NT gives no warrant for infant baptism. Thus Jacobus (Congregationalist) in the Standard Bibles Dictionary says: "The NT contains no explicit reference to the baptism of infants or young children." Plummer

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<sup>1</sup>Acts 10:46.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 16:34.

<sup>3</sup>H. F. Brown, Baptism Through the Centuries, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>5</sup>See *ibid.*, pp. 24-27.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

(Church of England), HDB, says: "The recipients of Christian baptism were required to repent and believe." Marcus Dods (Presbyterian), DCG, calls baptism "a rite wherein by immersion in water the participant symbolizes and signalizes his transition from an impure to a pure life, his death to a past he abandons, and his new birth to a future he desires."

Thus, as for the NT evidences concerning baptism at least, it will be very hard to resist believer's baptism and there is no single and clear-cut mention about infant baptism.

Of course, we may be tempted to see some legitimacy for the rite of infant baptism, especially in biblical inferences such as circumcision, household formula, collective holiness, and in external evidences, such as proselyte baptism in contemporary Jewish practice or in the practice at some early Christian churches after the second century.

Other interesting arguments for infant baptism are the evidence of today's practice of women participating to the Lord's Supper--in the NT we cannot see clear mention of their participation to the ordinance;<sup>1</sup> this evidence indicates that NT silence is not necessarily to be considered as the foundation of rejection. The objective nature of the Covenant of God must be used as a stronger

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<sup>1</sup>See Bromiley, Children of Promise, p. 3: when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper He did not command any women to "do this"; there are incontestable cases where the silences of the NT may be filled in by way of legitimate inference. While from the church's very beginning women have been admitted to the Lord's table on equal terms with men, there is no express reference to women having been present and participating.

support for the rite: "Conversion has confused the covenant theology when theologians have insisted on evangelical conversion for all and before baptism."<sup>1</sup> Those arguments are on the surface very supportive for infant baptism. But these arguments for infant baptism do not constitute concrete biblical evidence.

Hodge, a strong pro-infant baptist, suggests two points concerning the difficulty of accepting infant baptism which are worthy of notice.<sup>2</sup> First, one difficulty arises from the nature of baptism itself which involves a profession of faith; Christ is to be confessed before men. Infants are incapable of making such confession; therefore they are not proper subjects for baptism.

Second, another difficulty is really a form of the problem stated above; the sacraments belong to the members of the Church, which is the company of believers; infants cannot exercise faith, therefore they ought not to be baptized and, consequently, are not members of the Church, even though they must be the part of the covenant people, the church.

Then, (1) is it true that baptism has to involve a profession of faith of its subjects and (2), as Hodge

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<sup>1</sup>See p, 104 above.

<sup>2</sup>Hodge, 3:546-547.

points out,<sup>1</sup> Is it a right proposition/hypothesis to say that the church is only the "company of believers"?

For the first question we may say "Yes," from the NT biblical function and meaning as we have discussed it above. This conclusion must be relevant, but at the same time it is also true that we have to establish in some way the status of children in the church.

This is confirmed from the evidence that the NT baptism was given to the circumcised as well as to the uncircumcised, the Gentiles. The NT baptism thus surpasses the OT rite of circumcision: "And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."<sup>2</sup> They--most of whom must have been Jews and so circumcised ones--received baptism after confessing their sins at the river Jordan. Even Jesus, in fact, who was circumcised at the eighth day of His birth received baptism at the river Jordan at thirty years of age.

Besides, His baptism initiated Him into His ministry which led Him to the Cross and resurrection: the mortification of flesh or the baptism of suffering. It was not merely showing cleansing or separating into the community of believers, but a call to the life of a servant. Though He was separated before His birth through

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 547.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 1:4, 5.

the Holy Spirit,<sup>1</sup> and even received the circumcision rite, He still received baptism by His own will. Though, not by baptism but through the work of the Holy Spirit, He would become called "the Son of God"<sup>2</sup> from the beginning and though He was well conscious of His belonging to God's family long before His baptism--at least since He was twelve years old<sup>3</sup>--He still received baptism, praying to God and receiving the special power: the descendance of the Holy Spirit and the voice from heaven.<sup>4</sup> Although He already belonged to God's family from or before the beginning, He was still baptized later.

Justification for the legitimacy of infant baptism is often attempted by its affinity with the OT rite of circumcision in which the object was to make a visual sign for the children's belonging to the community. But we, first, cannot regard infant baptism as the NT norm for baptism, and therefore, we basically have to reject infant baptism. Second, even the circumcised had to be baptized at the NT era. The NT baptism was differentiated from the rite of circumcision at the river Jordan. If circumcision had to be the same as infant baptism, we would have to allow "rebaptism" on a regular basis, and such has not been the

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 1:35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Luke 2:42, 49.

<sup>4</sup>Luke 3:21-22.

case. The NT baptism serves a meaning far beyond that of circumcision.

Besides, as Paul declares, the spiritual meaning of circumcision in the OT rite is realized in the NT by receiving the NT baptism and the Holy Spirit "which those believed in Him [Jesus Christ] were to receive."<sup>1</sup> This is called the "circumcision done by Christ."<sup>2</sup> In this sense the spiritual meaning of circumcision is continued in the NT. The OT circumcision acted as the seal of the covenant; the NT circumcision--the receiving of the baptism and the abiding of the Holy Spirit--is a seal of the new covenant.<sup>3</sup> It is continued in the spiritual life of believers' as in the same meaning of the OT "circumcision of heart."<sup>4</sup> Physical circumcision has fallen into disuse because of misuse by the Jews, but inward and spiritual circumcision has remained in the NT believers' baptism and not in the form of the OT rite of circumcision or in infant baptism. Thus, the NT baptism serves a meaning far beyond that of circumcision.

In the Jewish proselyte baptism, children who were born after their parents had been converted did not have to

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. John 7:38, 39.

<sup>2</sup>Col 2:11.

<sup>3</sup>Rom 2:28, 29; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13: the circumcision or the seal of God is the Spirit of God in the heart of believer.

<sup>4</sup>Deut 10:16; cf. 30:6 and Jer 4:4.

receive any baptism.<sup>1</sup> In short, they were considered part of the believing community by birth.

Cullmann even points out that in the NT we do not find any evidence of baptism for the adults who are the children of Christian believers.<sup>2</sup> In other words, as 1 Cor 7:14 or the household formula indicates, believer's "family members" were thought to belong to God's family due to the powerful influence of the Christian over the other family members through the belief in God and His covenant, and through the love of God, the effect of Jesus' Atonement, and the work of regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

We may also have to remember "godly offspring" in Mal 2:15. As we have already observed,<sup>3</sup> both the Lord and God's people are seeking "godly offspring." The Hebrew word of offspring, zera', has both singular and collective meaning in its singular form. This offspring, therefore, points both to Christ in ultimate sense and to all of God's people, namely, today's church, who are represented by Jesus. Of course, in this people, every faith-related member, including any children, must be included as the part of the household of God's people in the Old Testament time; children received circumcision, the sign of His covenant, on their eighth day according to the context of

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 74 in this paper and p. 74, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Cullmann, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>See pp. 43-47.



Genesis account. Surely even now the believer's children are part of the seed mentioned to Abraham: "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.... So shall your seed be."<sup>1</sup>

If the NT is the fulfillment of the OT through the Mediator of the covenant, Jesus Christ, it is all the more impossible that children could be excluded from the family of God in the NT time by His coming. How can the status of children in the family of God be more firmly established in the NT era? To exclude the believer's children from church membership is sort of criminal behavior. I would like to quote again the Words of Jesus:

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.<sup>2</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven.<sup>3</sup>

So, we have been convinced on the one hand that children of Christian believers' belong to the believing community by birth, and on the other hand, that both the OT rite of circumcision and infant baptism are not appropriate

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<sup>1</sup>Gen 15:5.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 9:13-16 (NIV).

<sup>3</sup>Matt 18:10 (NIV).

for establishing the status of children today. However, we have to admit that even unbaptized children--those who are not receiving infant baptism--must be recognized as the members of the believing community. To be recognized as members does not necessarily mean to be baptized, as in the case of children of Christian believers.

Then, the hypothesis of the church as "believing community" as posed by Hodge in the second question is in a sense right, if the believing community means that which consists of faith-related people. It must not be considered as "baptized believers only. It must not exclude believer's children simply because they are not baptized. Children must not be placed in a limbo situation because they have not yet received baptism. They are younger members of God's family.

Though as Bromiley points out in a negative way, believer's baptism seems to be much more convincing<sup>1</sup> because of the inferences and arguments which are taken for its support than those taken by the advocates of infant baptism--which are nothing but assumptions, we still must solemnly admit that there exists a serious weak point on the part of the advocators of believer's baptism; they fail to establish the status of children as members of God's people.

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<sup>1</sup>Bromiley, p. 29; he gives several evidences for that from the OT and NT.

The advocates of "believer's baptism" give too much emphasis to believer's baptism. They cannot accept their children as the members of God's family--though the status of children in the church must be biblically clear. They need to note the notion derived from the rite of circumcision, the theology of zera`, and the covenant of God; they need to consider the issue in relation to infant holiness,<sup>1</sup> the household formula, Christian children in the early church,<sup>2</sup> and Jesus' blessing of the children.<sup>3</sup> In their views, the subjective element is emphasized too much and its objective factor is lost sight of or weakened drastically. By this emphasis they exclude children from their church membership.

Whatever the children's covenant status is, they think, those little ones cannot make a conscious personal decision or a personal confession of faith. So since they are not the subjects of baptism, these children are outside the church until they receive baptism, though some of the churches that hold the views think that those unbaptized children of believers are sinful but innocent because of the Atonement by Jesus on the Cross.<sup>4</sup> They believe that baptism serves, not as the instrument of something that is

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<sup>1</sup>1 Cor 7:14.

<sup>2</sup>Col 3:20; Eph 6:1.

<sup>3</sup>Mark 10:13, 14; Matt 21:15, 16.

<sup>4</sup>See pp. 108, 109 above.

done for us, on us, or in us, but as a sign of something that the subjects themselves do.

If we cling to the believer's baptism as a legitimate ordination, we need to take heed not to exclude children by this emphasis. In our church it would be well to give a substitute rite as an outward sign for the "circumcising" of children, instead of infant baptism, by which children or infants within the community of believers are objectively recognized as the members under the covenant--especially in places where it is necessary to establish the status of children. The past history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church indicates that we do not always need to give an outward sign for recognizing the status of children. However, I personally believe that we need to give some sign by which both children and believers can be convinced that they are equally under the new covenant of God's grace.

The church actually consists of the company of believers. This company should involve all faith-related people especially believers' children, because Jesus promised, "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

Child-dedication or -blessing service may function in this situation as a substitution for infant baptism.

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<sup>1</sup>Matt 18:18 (NIV).

These theological and practical matters are dealt with in the following sections and in Part II of this paper.

Child Dedication versus Infant Baptism in Practice

We seek now to suggest a way that the status of children can be established among God's people: one that takes the place of ancient circumcision or today's infant baptism, but in some way functions among God's people. Our conclusion from the above discussion leads us not only to reject infant baptism and to maintain believer's baptism but also to accept the same status of believer's children or infants as that which is established by the rite of infant baptism in several churches. First, we summarize the meaning or function of circumcision and infant baptism.

According to Rom 4:11, the circumcision which was to be officiated to Abraham and his household sealed the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had--even though, as yet, he was uncircumcised. The rite was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham, and God's acceptance of him and his faith-related family including every child of any age as a peculiar treasure. Though the rite was given only to the men, every household member could cross the Red Sea and be freed. On man's part,<sup>1</sup> Abraham had to pledge to fulfill the conditions of the covenant by walking before the Lord and

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<sup>1</sup>Gen 17:9-13.

being blameless:<sup>1</sup> that is, to be separate from all nations, not to intermarry with the heathen, and to be perfect;<sup>2</sup> thus he would not lose reverence for God and His Holy Law and would not be tempted to engage in the sinful practices of other nations nor be seduced into idolatry.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the rite was also a sign of devotion to God's service<sup>4</sup> and of separation from idolatry.<sup>5</sup> Children also bore the sign, but its effectiveness with them depended solely on God's action and on man's response to the promise of God in faith.

It is relevant to know how infant baptism, as practiced in most of other churches or especially in Pedobaptist movements among the free churches, is used for establishing the status of children so that we may find how other rites such as child dedication can be substituted.

Infant baptism, according to Micklem, is to be retained as "the Sacrament of the prevenient grace of God, of the historic, finished work of Christ."<sup>6</sup> As Calvin

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<sup>1</sup>Gen 17:1.

<sup>2</sup>See Gen 17:1; also, E. G. White, Story of Redemption (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), p. 147.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>4</sup>Idem, Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 138, 363.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Col 2:11-13; White, Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 138, 363-364; idem, Story of Redemption, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup>Nathaniel Micklem, ed., Christian Worship (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 248.

thinks,<sup>1</sup> these people believe in infant baptism as "the sacrament of regeneration, of the new birth" because "it marks the distinction between the Church and the world, the end of the journey to Christ, the beginning of the life in Christ."<sup>2</sup>

However, these writings also emphasize the importance of involvement of faith. Where there is no faith, there is no efficacy. In this case, it is impossible to offer baptism to every child. However, the faith of the church and believing parents is sufficient for the infants. Thus, the Anabaptist view of the gathered church is accepted, but a Calvinistic, not Zwinglian, view of infant baptism is defended.<sup>3</sup> Micklem's following comments summarize this point:

The suggestion that the faith of the Church is not strictly relevant to the Baptism of the child belongs to the kind of effete individualism which might argue that the prayers of parents are of no significance for their children, since there is no mechanical force in prayer. But Baptism, where it keeps its evangelical meaning, is for the children of the faithful only. It is meaningless unless the child is received into, and to be brought up in, the household of faith. It is to be later fulfilled in confirmation or admission to full membership on declaration of personal faith; and the rite may not be properly administered except within the circle of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Calvin, Institute, 2:1307f; especially 2:1340.

<sup>2</sup>Micklem, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Moody, p. 230.

<sup>4</sup>Micklem, p. 250.

This gives a strong account of the faith of believers or their community, the church. Can not this company include unbaptized infants? Of course, it can and does.

On some occasions, infant baptism was used to correct some weaknesses of local autonomy. John Whale raises an important question, which has already been touched:<sup>1</sup> "Is the Church merely a number of local associations of believers, or is it something more; an undying institution which is supra-personal and supra-temporal?"<sup>2</sup> What emphasizes that infant baptism is a sign and seal of the prevenient grace of God?<sup>3</sup> A threefold significance is seen:

(1) it guards against the menace of mere subjectivism; (2) it guards against the irrelevant fancy known as "dedicatory baptism"; and (3) it is the great historical guarantee of the Church as something more than loose local associations of believers.<sup>4</sup>

He continues to say:

The great and world-wide denomination of Baptists is so named because its members rightly insist that to be a Christian a man or woman must be a believer. They argue that to baptize a helpless infant only a few weeks old, who is obviously incapable of the responsive faith of the believer, is meaningless and worse. To this the universal tradition of Christendom replies, not of course by belittling personal faith in an adult who seeks baptism, but by insisting on our redemption as an objective fact just at that point in human life

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 138.

<sup>2</sup>John S. Whale, Christian Doctrine (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 164.

<sup>3</sup>See *ibid.*, pp. 163-166.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 165.



where no subjective response to it is possible on the part of the baptized individual.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the sign and seal of the new covenant should not be withheld from infants which are especially brought by Christians: believing guardians, or parents of whom one is at least the member of the church. On the basis of the redemption as an objective fact, there may even be non-church members who are attending the services of the church, or perhaps receiving Bible studies, who may wish a child thus dedicated. However, it would be necessary to discriminate this later case in which the guardians of infants are not believers with the former one in which at least one of the guardians of the infant is believer.

Furthermore, because of the strong emphasis on the relationship between baptism and faith, this emphasis accordingly raises questions about the change from believer's baptism to infant baptism as the norm. Robert S. Paul, a Congregationalist, gives the following remarks concerning this problem:

It is the declaration in action that God receives the child into the eternal covenant that has been prepared for it. Independent of whether that child ultimately ratifies the covenant of faith or not, independent of whether in the course of time he grows up to be a saint or an infidel, a believer, or a heretic, the Church declares in this act that the Son of God came into the world in great humility, lived, suffered, died, and rose again, and that he did all

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

this in order that this little scrap of humanity might have the promise of eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

Paul further suggests that all Christians should submit to baptism by immersion at the time of confirmation and first communion: for those baptized in infancy this would mean confirmation, but for those not baptized in infancy it would be baptism.<sup>2</sup> This would bring the church, as Moody points out,<sup>3</sup> to "sacramental fullness" and remove a barrier that has long separated Baptists and Pedobaptists; but a concept of "baptismal confirmation" or "confirmation of believers by immersion" is difficult to distinguish from rebaptism if infant baptism is considered valid.

From those considerations, we may conclude that the following Anglican proposal must be theologically more congruous<sup>4</sup> and historically more encouraging:<sup>5</sup> "Infant

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<sup>1</sup>R. S. Paul, The Atonement and the Sacraments (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 346.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 356f.

<sup>3</sup>Moody, p. 233.

<sup>4</sup>As we have already seen, pp. 77-81 and 146f above, there is no clear evidence in any single Biblical illustration of baptism for infants in the NT. All the arguments for infant baptism are just an assumption and inference from theological consideration though we see a strong reason in it. A Reformed Church theologian, T. M. Lindsay, says: "The NT Scriptures do not in so many words either forbid or command the baptism of children. The question is in this respect equivalent to the change of the holy day from the seventh to the first day of the week" (see "Baptism: Reformed View," ISBE [1979], 1:420).

<sup>5</sup>We have no evidence for the practice of infant baptism in the first century Christian church. See pp. 74-81 above, especially p. 81.

baptism has to be replaced with a service of blessing the infants on enrollment in the catechumenate."<sup>1</sup> Though all the receivers of the service are not necessarily to be enrolled as the catechumens, this idea of substitution of infant baptism is valid.

Every child must be blessed indiscriminately when they are brought before the Lord. We have no reason to refuse this blessing. However, there is a difference between the child of a non-believer and a believer. The former merely witnesses to God's care, but the latter witnesses not only to God's care but also to the believer's acknowledgement of God's grace; thus his is dedication to the nurturing and caring of his entrusted infants so that the infant may grow and become a mature Christian in future. Thus, in the later case, the infant is received as becoming a mature Christian member. And the infant is recognized as a full member, "but the younger member," of the church because he is surely put under the new covenant of God's grace as long as his guardians belong to the church and nurture and care for him.

The infants of non-believers are entrusted totally to God's hand while the church endeavors to help his guardians toward baptism. The church also is to give the infant the same care and nurturing that he may become

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 96, n. 4, and also, Moody, pp. 207-215.

a catechumen or a baptized Christian. These further practical dimensions are discussed in Part 2.

### Child Dedication or Child Blessing

We seek now to learn whether the rite of child dedication is appropriate. If the believers in the church reject the practice of infant baptism, is there any pertinent rite which can substitute for it? Can we justify the rite of child dedication as suitable for establishing the status of children? Several Scriptural passages which are closely related to this rite must be surveyed.<sup>1</sup>

An example can be seen in Hannah's case of dedication.<sup>2</sup> Hannah vowed to God to give her son to the Lord all the days of his life if she could conceive and give birth to a male child. The Jerusalem Bible explains vs. 20 as follows:

A derivation from the root šā'al (to ask) would give šā'ûl, 'Saul.' Biblical etymology is often, as here, content with a certain similarity of sound. The actual derivation of 'Samuel' is from Shem-el, 'the name of God.'<sup>3</sup>

As Braker points out,<sup>4</sup> The New Oxford Annotated Bible with

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. James Adams Braker, "A Baptist Interpretation of the Rite of Dedication: A Resource for Ministry" (D.Min. thesis, Colgate Rochester Divinity School/Bexley Hall Crozer Theological Seminary, 1982), especially chaps. 4 and 5.

<sup>2</sup>1 Sam 1:10ff.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. JB, 1 Sam 1:20, p. 345, n. i.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 57, 58.

the Apocrypha also gives further comment for this passage:

The Hebrew word for asked in verse 20 seems to be a play on the meaning of the name "Saul" rather than Samuel, which probably means "name of God," suggesting the boy's close affinity with God. There may be some confusion between Saul and Samuel here; but the word asked in Hebrew also means "borrowed," so perhaps this word should be connected with the word lent in verse 28; Hannah had begged or borrowed (same word in Hebrew) her son from God, so she lent him back to God, by whose grace he had been granted (emphasis supplied).<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Hannah lent her son through her earnest prayer, and in turn, expressed her deepest gratitude to the Lord by means of her dedicating her son, Samuel. When Hannah gave her son over to the Lord, he was a weaned child; he was not an infant, but a child.<sup>2</sup> Also, he must have already been circumcised on his eighth day after birth. So her act of dedication was not for the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, it was an expression of her deep gratitude toward God for what He had already done for her. It was a fulfillment of her vow to give her son to the Lord. In this sense, this case must have been an exceptional one:<sup>3</sup> but this account illumines a beautiful dedication of both child and parents, especially of mother.

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<sup>1</sup>The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha (New York: Oxford Press, 1977), p. 331.

<sup>2</sup>See E. G. White, "Training Children for God," Review and Herald, September 8, 1904, p. 7; he must have been at least three years old, probably already four years old, when he was brought to the temple.

<sup>3</sup>See Donald Bridge and David Phypers, The Water That Divides: The Baptism Debate (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), pp. 175-177.

The second example which is found in the Scripture is the account of Jesus' presentation in the Temple.<sup>1</sup> Luke's account is actually a three-part ceremony: circumcision, purification, and the consecration of the first-born. First, circumcision, as we have seen, was performed on every male infant at his eighth day.<sup>2</sup> It represented admission to the privileges and responsibilities of the covenant relationship and incorporation into the covenant community which was thus ritualized.<sup>3</sup> The name of Jesus was given to Him and His name was enrolled in the Temple.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the infant was separated from idolatry and devoted to God. It was a seal of the righteousness which was Abraham's by faith.<sup>5</sup> It was also the sign of God's acceptance. Baby Jesus underwent the rite and thus came under the terms of the covenant represented by it. Jesus was separated into the spiritual as well as physical descendants of Abraham. Being circumcised, given His name,

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 2:22-40.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 2:21. Cf. Gen 17:9-14.

<sup>3</sup>As for the practice of the rite in Jewish community, see Trepp, pp. 320-322; Encyclopedia Judaica (1973), 5:567-576; and also, Plaut, pp. 118, 119. Plaut says, "Few, if any, Jewish practices are more significant than berit milah, the covenant of circumcision. While it does not make a child born to Jewish parents into a Jew, it confirms his special relationship to the God and the traditions of Israel" (p. 118).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Plaut, p. 119; Trepp, p. 320; and Gen 17:5.

<sup>5</sup>Rom 4:11.

and being enrolled into the Temple record, He bore a seal of the covenant of God and the righteousness of Abraham through the faith of Mary and Joseph.

However, it is very important again to remember, Gal 3:29: that through His obedience to the ritual, whoever --Jew or Greek, slave or free, and male or female--belongs to Christ in faith accordingly is the descendant of Abraham, that is, under God's covenant; and so, it is not necessary for a child to be circumcised anymore.<sup>1</sup>

The second ceremony was that of purification.<sup>2</sup> As a Jewish mother, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was considered ceremonially "unclean" for the seven days following the birth of a male child. She was expected to remain in ceremonial isolation for an additional thirty-three days, a total of forty days of confinement, according to the Jewish law.<sup>3</sup> This ceremonial law stipulated that at the end of this purification period she was to bring a lamb as a burnt offering and an additional pigeon as a sin offering.

Further, it should be noticed that the original text of Luke 2:22 reads, "their purification." The word "their" could refer to Jesus and Mary or to Joseph and Mary. It seems natural, however, to have the pronouns "their" and "they" refer to the same persons. That is, the

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<sup>1</sup>Gal 5:6.

<sup>2</sup>Levi 12:2-4, and 6-8.

<sup>3</sup>Lev 12:2-8.

later sense.<sup>1</sup> It thus includes Joseph, and it is probably in the sense that, as head of the household, he was responsible for Mary's fulfillment of the ritual requirements involved. They both needed to be dedicated in order to fulfill the appointed task to care their child.

Besides, it was the mother, not the child, who stood in need of "purifying." Both parents, especially the mother, and the child were to appear at the Temple for the "purification" of the one and the "presentation" of the other. "His dedication in the Temple was closely associated with her purification."<sup>2</sup> With this twofold purpose, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus went to Jerusalem upon this occasion, from Bethlehem.<sup>3</sup> In a child-dedication service, the mother's purification, with the cooperation of the father, is essential in order to be effective. White gives an important emphasis on the mother's role in cooperation with the father:

The sphere of the mother may be humble; but her influence, united with the father's, is as abiding as eternity. Next to God, the mother's power for good is the strongest known on earth.<sup>4</sup>

Let strength and fear of God take up her life

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>SDABC, 5:701.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Adventist Home, p. 240.



mission. Let her educate her children for usefulness in this world and for a home in the better world.<sup>1</sup>

The king upon his throne has no higher work than has the mother. She has in her power the molding of her children's characters, that they may be fitted for the higher, immortal life. An angel could not ask for a higher mission; for doing this work she is doing service for God.<sup>2</sup>

Let woman realize the sacredness of her work and, in the strength and fear of God, take up her life mission. Let her educate her children for usefulness in this world and for a fitness for the better world.<sup>3</sup>

The third ceremony is the redemption of the first-born. As we have already discussed in chapter 1,<sup>4</sup> every first-born male child was to be consecrated to the Lord. This was done in acknowledgment of God's promise from the very early history of human beings to give His First-born to redeem human beings<sup>5</sup> and especially in remembrance of and gratitude for the deliverance of the first born at the time of the Exodus. Without the Atonement on the Calvary, the intercessory work through the Holy Spirit, and the consummation through the second coming and the raising of dead by Jesus Christ whom God the Father appointed as the guarantee or messenger of the covenant, any ritual is in vain.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>4</sup>See pp. 27-28.

<sup>5</sup>Rev 13:8; cf. Gen 3:21, 4:4, so and so.

Rituals are means and outward sign for witnesses to God's saving act and Men's faith-response to His grace.

Thus, these ceremonies in presentation of a child before a priest in the Temple of God served for confirming the covenant relation of believer's child with God, the purification and dedication of guardians, and the glad acceptance of God's threefold divine activity, especially in the acknowledgment of God's promise to give the Redeemer, Christ. Those practices can well be regarded as the norm for our child dedication service in the NT.

However, some may argue that both circumcision and the first-born child dedication are male oriented ceremonies, and not for the female at all. Further, the first-born child ceremony is even for the first-born among males. How can those ceremonies be a norm for child-dedication service which involves every male as well as female?

We have to notice, however, that both ceremonies, in fact, involve every household in the fellowship of believers in a spiritual sense: of course, female, too. It is quite right when Thomas H. Leale says:

Under the old covenant, as everything pointed forward to Christ the God-man--Son of Man--so every offering was properly enough confined to the males. The females were regarded as acting in them. Under the NT this distinction is not appropriate. It is not 'male and female' (Gal 28; Col 3:11).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas H. Leale, The Book of Genesis, A Homiletic Commentary (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., n.d.), 1:359.

Besides, in Exod 4:22, Israelite people, as a whole, are called "My first-born son" by the Yahweh. Woman is included in this "first-born son." So, women, who did not receive those ceremonies, of Israelite people could also experience the Passover and cross the Red Sea: they were surely involved in this Exodus experience which represents God's saving act in the OT time and of which the Lord commanded His people to remember through those rituals as the most fitting event for the divine activity.

Jesus is the absolutely circumcised One and the perfect fulfillment of the first-born son. So, E. G. White, a notable Christian woman, is right to say:

The word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Eph 1:6 (emphasis supplied).<sup>1</sup>

Notice that she includes herself in her comment.

Though the rites of circumcision and the first-born dedication for Jesus at the Temple was practiced only by males in Israel, those rites should be thus justified as the basis not merely for male but also for female child-dedication because in a spiritual sense females were always involved in those male-oriented rituals.

A third example, the blessing of the children by Jesus, suited especially well for the child-blessing

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<sup>1</sup>Desire of Ages, p. 113.

service as well as for child dedication.<sup>1</sup> The word paidos refers both to infant and little child. There is no mention about the age of the children whom Jesus blessed. The attitude and teaching by Jesus in this gospel account indicates that Jesus and the Father loved children ultimately. Any one who makes it difficult for children to find their Master are sure to encounter His utmost displeasure and to earn His severest rebuke. There is room for any little children who are brought to Jesus in the kingdom of divine grace.<sup>2</sup>

From a brief survey, in a strict sense, we cannot find any exact rite for establishing the status of children today; the combination of the child-dedication and child-blessing ceremonies are the most relevant. But there must be room for some innovation for the rite of establishing the status of children in church. Gilmore notes: "Where there is no ceremony to be found, it is necessary to invent one."<sup>3</sup> The dynamic of faith and felt need must find expression in the forms of ritual for taking our children into the Body of Christ, the church, soon after birth, and for nurturing and maintaining the community of faith.

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<sup>1</sup>Mark 10:13-16, Matt 19:13-15, and Luke 18:15-17.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. SDABC, 5:456.

<sup>3</sup>A. Gilmore, Baptism and Christian Unity (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1966), pp. 91-92.

Otherwise, what then is the children's precise relationship with Christ and His Church?

Among the churches which advocate believer's baptism, there has historically been a felt need for some rite in behalf of the children: a need to mark, with some kind of rite, the birth of a child.<sup>1</sup>

Braker, from a theological stand point, suggests three elements which must exist for a rite: thanksgiving, promises, and blessing.<sup>2</sup> He continues to say:

The inclusion of all three contributes to a more complete and appropriate expression of both parental and church responsibilities as well as God's gracious initiative.<sup>3</sup>

From a religious perspective, the child has been entrusted to the care of parents and belongs ultimately to God. As Hannah presented her son to the Lord in the temple in Shiloh, so Mary and Joseph presented their newborn son, Jesus, to the Lord in humble and grateful acknowledgement of God's claim upon that child. The religious act implies that the child is already dedicated to and by God.<sup>4</sup>

The promises which are given by parents and the congregation serve to mark the responsibility of both for

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<sup>1</sup>See Braker, pp. 47-49, 62; Gilmore, pp. 90f.

<sup>2</sup>Braker, p. 64f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jer 1:5; Ps 139:15-16. Those references indicate God's involvement from the earliest in the creation of the child and in a deep interest and abiding claim upon that life.

the nurture of the child. There is a partnership of parent with God in the task of nurture and cultivation within the child. The partnership extends, of course, to include the church. Both parents and congregation commit themselves, through purification and consecration, to work collaboratively with God in light of His creative and redemptive work which is already in process.<sup>1</sup>

The blessing expresses symbolically the fact that the life strength essential for being stems from God.<sup>2</sup> To the parents witnessing this acts and to the child who is subsequently reminded of the act there may be awakened a growing realization of what already had been bestowed. The blessing, then, becomes the ritual enactment of the dedication God has already begun in creation. It is the declaration by sign and symbol of the grace that is granted by God whose saving love encompasses all through the atoning act of Jesus Christ for all the world.<sup>3</sup> Aaron's ancient blessing<sup>4</sup> contains a threefold blessing which symbolizes the Trinity: a blessing of the Father, the Son,

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<sup>1</sup>See Braker, pp.65, 66.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>See Num 6:22-27.

and Holy Spirit. Baker introduces David Tennant's comment concerning this blessing:<sup>1</sup>

It is the Father of whom one says, "The Lord bless you and keep you...." It is of the Son who incarnates the Lord that one says, "The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you...." It is of the Holy Spirit one might say: The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

This prayer and blessing bear meaning applicable to the past, present, and future. Such, as Braker says, appropriately, brings to a fitting completion the rich and holy impact contained within this rite of dedication and blessing.<sup>2</sup>

Further we need to provide a fundamental but systematic program for a catechumen or an adequate system of Christian education in home, school, and church.<sup>3</sup> It must be a "prolonged catechumenate" as fitting for the child whose association with the church stems from infancy or even before the birth.<sup>4</sup> Especially, however, it is parents primarily who need guidance in these matters.<sup>5</sup>

These considerations are mainly for the children of believers or at least for the children of those who can

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<sup>1</sup>David Tennant, Children in the Church: A Baptist View (London: Baptist Union, 1978), p. 10; see Braker, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Church and Child in the New Testament," Baptist Quarterly 21 (1966):217.

<sup>4</sup>G. W. Rusling, "The Status of Children," Baptist Quarterly 18 (1966):247.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Gilmore, p. 102.

come to Jesus bringing their children to be blessed. The faith of believing parents and their church is one essential element to make the rite meaningful.

In the case of unbeliever's children, we can just offer the rite of blessing the child based on His grace and not incorporate them into the church as a full member because those unbeliever-parents cannot acknowledge the meaning of the rite and consecrate themselves appropriately. However, this service will be a great means for unbeliever's children as well as their parents to receive heavenly blessing, especially if church members concern a spiritual adoption of those children and also parents on this occasion.

Children of both believers and unbelievers have to be growing toward becoming mature Christians: they are expected to be "become a mature Christian."

#### Conclusion

At the time of the early church, baptism was offered to the circumcised persons as well as to the Gentiles. Even Jesus who was circumcised on His eighth day after His birth<sup>1</sup> received baptism from John the Baptist at the River Jordan when He was about thirty years of age.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 2:21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3:21-23.



The NT baptism has a special function and meaning which surpasses the rite of the OT circumcision. From Biblical and theological consideration, we are convinced that the NT baptism must be a believer's baptism, it neither includes infant baptism and which norm nor is infant baptism as the Lutheran Church conceives it. Infant baptism is not appropriate as a substitution for circumcision as well as a representation of NT baptism.

On the one hand, by emphasizing the believer's baptism, we must not lose sight of the sure status of children of believers as the members of God's family. They are God's precious property whom God has bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. They are sinners, but not guilty: they are innocent and pardoned sinners. As long as they are not rebellious toward their responsibility, they are bound to the God's believing community and placed under the covenant of God's grace through their faith-related parents, guardians, and believing community, the church.<sup>1</sup> They are not outside of the church. They belong as younger members of God's family. Thus, instead of merely belittling infant baptism, it "has to be replaced with a service of child dedication and blessing infants on enrollment in the catechumenate."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Matt 18:18.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 96, n. 4 and also, Moody, pp. 207-215.

Even children of unbelievers must be encouraged to receive the rite of child-blessing, though they are not recognized as full members until they themselves or one of their parents receive baptism. Children of both believers and non-believers must be encouraged to become mature Christian through receiving baptism.

It is important, then, some way to give them status. Child-dedication and child-blessing services are probably one of the best rites for this purpose. So, first, I recommend that a child-dedication service be conducted and the believer's child be listed among the members mainly based on the three rituals for Jesus as an infant in order to establish the sure status of the believer's child in the NT church. They are Christians by birth and are incorporated into the membership of the church. Their existence is a witness to the gospel and Christ. Through them, as well as the baptized members, the grace of God can flow to the sin-darkened world. They too are a channel of heavenly blessing to the world to save the world. However, they are younger members of God's family; they have to grow into mature Christians, true disciples, and confess their faith and so become baptized.

And I also recommend that a child-blessing service be conducted for every child who is brought to Jesus without recording the name, mainly based on the biblical evidences of the blessing by Jesus. If they are not

dedicated, they are not regarded as church members. This is not for discriminating between dedicated and blessed child; but it only concerns their function: on the one hand, bearing the church mission as members, on the other hand, having no responsibility. But both, though their function is different, are God's precious property. We, the members of the church, need to expand our net to include every precious soul with a mighty endeavor. Certainly, it is not to discriminate between them, but to be effective in making the grace of God to flow out to others. What has to be consecrated has to be consecrated.

Some may say that those rituals by which Jesus was dedicated in the Temple at His infancy belonged to the OT and not the NT. Thus it is not relevant to use these rituals as a norm for the child-dedication service.

In chapter 4, we briefly deal with the matter of the continuity of the OT and the NT.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHURCH AND ITS MEMBERSHIP IN THE VIEW OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND OLD TESTAMENT CONTINUITY

We have mentioned in the assumptions in this paper that the "Church must be equal to 'God's family' and Abraham's descendants."<sup>1</sup> This is a hypothesis which has not been well discussed in this paper. Because this hypothesis is such a serious matter for establishing the status of children, we cannot pass by without adding a brief comment for the issue of continuity of the OT and NT here.

The Greek word for "church" is ekklēsia. This Greek term consists of two parts: "out of" and "to be called." In ancient Greek this term was used for the legal assembly of citizens who were "called" for this task. But the Christian meaning of this word joins both aspects, that is, the church is made up of those who are called out of this world for His special task.<sup>2</sup> So, they are called a "chosen people," "holy nation," "royal priesthood," or "people of

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, Understanding the Living Word of God, Adventist Library of Christian Thought, vol. 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1980), pp. 111-112.

God," that they may declare the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His wonderful light.<sup>1</sup>

One question is whether the following equation can be justified: "Church" = "Abraham's Seed" = "God's People." Another question is, "Who are members of these entities? A further question can be, How could it be or how does one become eligible for the membership?

These are not easy to answer. In fact, we can get involved in a discussion as follows: some argue that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, and eventually the church comes out.<sup>2</sup> This argument seems to infer that there is a difference between the kingdom of God and the church; His kingdom is greater than His Church.<sup>3</sup>

Cullmann discriminates between the church as a narrower Body of Christ with a church, a universal Regnum Christi.<sup>4</sup> Barth also thinks of both a narrow and

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<sup>1</sup>See 1 Pet 2:9, 10.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. David Watson, I Believe in the Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Watson says: "It would be wrong to identify the kingdom of God with the church, or even to talk of the church as "the present form of the kingdom of God." The full power and glory of God's kingdom are yet to come, and the church must continually press towards this ideal."

<sup>4</sup>Cullmann, p. 34.

wider kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The Reformed church advocates both visible and invisible churches.<sup>2</sup>

Children of believers, on the other hand, belong to a narrow inner circle of church for Cullmann; "every one who is born of Christian parents is born into the Christian Church"; while for Barth they belong to a wider kingdom until they are baptized; to him the church has to be the "gathered church," "pre-Constantinian church," gathered upon the responsible profession of one's faith.<sup>3</sup> Each argument has its strong point. Thus, some tend to expand the definition of the church to include believer's children and others to narrow the circle of the church down to "churches of elite." Then what shall we do?

We need first to come back to as clear a biblical paradigm as possible and second to redefine our theological terminologies, which arise from our daily needs, in a dialogue with each other and with other brothers.

We have to see the problem from the different angles, from clear biblical paradigm for the status of children among God's people.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Barth, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Hodge, 3:545, 547, and 548.

<sup>3</sup>Barth, pp.52-54; cf. Moody, p. 63. However, we have to note here that the issue for Barth is baptism not church: whether baptism can be officiated without willingness and readiness of the baptized.

As we have surveyed in the previous chapters, especially summarized in conclusion of chapter I, children of believers must be full members of the church, God's people, and the true seed of Abraham. For every faith-related child clearly belonged to God's covenant people according to the OT passages. They got the outward sign of the covenant, circumcision, even at the eighth day from their birth.<sup>1</sup> They also clearly participated in the Passover meal and other festivals, and were also brought out from the bondage of Egypt, though some of them surely were not conscious at all as to the mighty event of the Exodus.<sup>2</sup> They were part of the seed which the Lord and God's people in Spirit had sought.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, in the NT, the child also assumed importance unique with the evaluation which Jesus displayed by word and act as we have seen in Matt 18:1-14, 19:13-15, or other related passages.<sup>4</sup> "Whoever receives one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 14-17 above, especially p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>See pp. 24-26, 35, and 36 above. The blood of a slain animal that was a symbol of the blood of Christ protected every family member especially the first-born including an infant of the family.

<sup>3</sup>See pp. 41-47 above; especially in pp. 44-47, the writer argues "the zera' theology," and this will be one of the strongest arguments for the inclusion of children in the NT church as the concrete members.

<sup>4</sup>See pp. 52-55, and 57-65 above.

Christ found the child not only a fit metaphoric representative of His kingdom,<sup>1</sup> but He also demonstrated a warm and accepting manner toward the child.<sup>2</sup> In the passage, Matt 21:14-17, which is peculiar to Matthew, we find that Jesus reintroduces children into the worshipping community, making them fit for it, and so, into His house of prayer.<sup>3</sup> The household formula also indicates inclusion of children in the grace of God. When this term is compared with the usage in the OT, it convinces us of the unchangeable status of children in the NT and also in the church today.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Paul argues that the Corinthian church members took for granted the holiness of their children.<sup>5</sup>

Further, Paul the Apostle declares: "You are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."<sup>6</sup> To belong to Christ is identified with belonging to Abraham's

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 52 above; the character of children is the norm for His kingdom.

<sup>2</sup>See pp. 53-55 above.

<sup>3</sup>See pp. 57-65 above.

<sup>4</sup>See p. 68, nn. 2 and 3 above; DNTT, 2:248; TDNT, 5:120, 121, 130. "It is explicitly emphasized that the conversion of a man leads his whole family to the faith; this would include wife, children, servants and relatives living in the house" (5:130). I don't see any fact for infant baptism as we have pointed out several times, but I see the inclusion of whole household members as a co-related covenant people of God in those passages of oikos, "household," in the NT.

<sup>5</sup>See pp. 72-74 above.

<sup>6</sup>Gal 3:29.



seed in the NT, that is, to belong to the Christian church means to be the members of believing community of true Israel of God.<sup>1</sup> "You," the members of Galatian Church, held the commonwealth of Israel. The church under the new dispensation was identical with that under the old.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, from these biblical points of view, it is difficult to conceive of any other conclusion than that children especially who maintain a faith relation with believers are sure members of the church. Does He who is called the "guarantee of the covenant"<sup>3</sup> destroy the status of children which was firmly secured by God's decree in the OT time among the believing community? We should regard children as His and incorporate them into our church as members.

Furthermore, several other references which have not been fully discussed and are not quoted in this paper attest the above conviction. First of all, Rom 4:16, 17 says: "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 7 above.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. also "the zera` theology" by the writer in pp. 43-46.

<sup>3</sup>Heb 7:22.

us all."<sup>1</sup> The apostle Peter also declares to the NT church members: "You are a chosen race, ... God's own people."<sup>2</sup>

The second important reference is given in the relation to oikos formula by TDNT. It points out: "According to Heb 3:3 the glory of Moses the servant stands in the same relation to that of Christ the Son as does the glory of the building to that of the builder. Christ in His dignity as the Son (uios) and Lord (kurios) is thus the builder of the OT community of God (oikos tou theou, [Heb] 3:3)."<sup>3</sup>

Watson's conviction is also a testimony for our conclusion above. He says: "The church, by faith in Jesus the Messiah, became the true Israel, the true people of God. The church is seen in unbroken continuity with the old covenant; with the promises, prophecies and sacrifices being supremely fulfilled in Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup>

Richard Rice, a contemporary Seventh-day Adventist scholar, says: "The features of the church's call are identical to those of Israel";<sup>5</sup> and "As the people of God,

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<sup>1</sup>NIV translation (emphasis supplied).

<sup>2</sup>1 Pet 2:9.

<sup>3</sup>See, 5:125 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>4</sup>Watson, p. 78 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>5</sup>Richard Rice, The Reign of God, p. 187.

the Christian church is the recipient of the promises and the responsibilities earlier given to Israel."<sup>1</sup>

Raoul Dederen, professor of systematic theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University, is also convincing:

This [ekklēsia, "church"] was no new term, to be sure. Used for the popular assemblies in the government of the Greek city-states, it had taken on a religious meaning in the LXX as the "congregation" of Israel, the Jewish theocratic people. It considered itself to be "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16), the true continuation of God's elect. Those who lived wholly by faith in God, although not descending biologically from Abraham as "children of the flesh," had become Abraham's spiritual descendants, "the children of the promise" (Rom 4:12, 9:8; cf. Phil 3:3, 1 Pet 2:8).<sup>2</sup>

The days of expectation were over. The day of the Lord had come. For all that, however, the new covenant inaugurated by the Lord Jesus and sealed by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was but the covenant of old, restored, fulfilled, resumed, and renewed. The Christian church identified itself clearly with God's true Israel of which it was the remnant.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, this equation, the NT church as continuity of the OT, is concluded as right. Then, we cannot escape from the conclusion above, that is, the children of believers are the members of the NT church. If we still cling to the idea that the NT church looks like an adult elite club and consists of so-called believer's baptized members only, then, our conclusion above is almost entirely wrong.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 188, 189; cf. pp. 186-189.

<sup>2</sup>"Nature of the Church," Ministry, February 1978, Supplement, p. 24B.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 24C.

Accordingly we would have to do more thorough theology to find the answer to the question; in fact, there exists a fatal lack of ecclesiology here as well as in other areas in the church.

I am firmly convinced that the hypothesis of the equation above is biblically and theologically authentic.

Then, the next question will eventually be: How is this status of children in the Adventist church to be implemented today? I believe that the mark for children has to be clearly given especially in the churches where the status of children is obscured, while I agree that the sign itself for children is almost in vain unless it is apprehended and engaged in a life of responsibility by faith of parents and the church as well as of children themselves in proportion to their age. In our environment of collapsed family ties, the sign must be indispensable.

Then, we try to apply this unchangeable status of children as younger members of God's family in our church in Part 2. Also in that section, we discuss the participation of children in the Communion service.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATUS OF CHILDREN IN THE CHURCH

It is most unfortunate that many churches today which advocate believer's baptism put their children in almost the same category as the children of unbelievers and pagans. They fail to identify their own children as members of God's family. On the other hand, many other churches which advocate infant baptism fail to lead their children to confirmation or to an experience of the covenant grace of God in dynamic faith "expressing itself through love."<sup>1</sup> Because this experience of faith, "the expression through love," seems to be well signified in the experience of so-called believer's baptism and not by infant baptism, when they practice infant baptism, and not believer's baptism, they accumulate a vast majority of nominal members and Christians: "a wound in the Body of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

In chapter 1 we sought to understand the status of children theologically through an exegetical survey of selected OT and NT passages. The OT reveals that children

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<sup>1</sup>Gal 5:6 (NIV).

<sup>2</sup>Barth, p. 40.

of believers had a sense of belonging from their beginning. It was not through achievement and attainment but through birth that their children entered into the community. Inclusion within the religious and social community came as a gift of ancestry rather than the reward of effort.

Circumcision, "the sign of the covenant,"<sup>1</sup> was also employed as a sign of entrance into the community. It was to be administered on the eighth day of a male infant's life.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to know that this rite was to be given to "every male" throughout Abraham's generations, whether born in his house, or bought with his money from any foreigner who was not of his offspring,<sup>3</sup>--"So, shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant."<sup>4</sup>

In Exod 12, on the other hand, we observed the same status of children in the Passover event at the Exodus. Children and women, as well as circumcised male adults, had to be highly involved as members of a believing household though infants must have been only the followers. They all had to be confined in their house at that night in order to be safe and to leave the land of Egypt.

The Passover meal gives support to the participation of children, even to the NT communion. It was a

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<sup>1</sup>Gen 17:11.

<sup>2</sup>Gen 17:12.

<sup>3</sup>Gen 17:12, 13.

<sup>4</sup>Gen 17:13.

private and domestic celebration. It was a meal by household;<sup>1</sup> each lamb was to be partaken of only by members of one family, or of two families living side by side, thus including any children in the household. Children were highly involved. Exod 12:26, 27 says:

And when your children say to you, "What do you mean by this service?" you shall say, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he slew the Egyptians but spared our houses."

This supports the view that children were not only present but actively participating in the meal or the service in proportion to their ability to understand. It is clear that the NT communion service had its roots in the Passover event as we see in the passages: Matt 26:17-19 and 26-29; Mark 14:12-16 and 17-21; Luke 22:14-20; and 1 Cor 5:7, 8. The Supper as instituted by Jesus with the Twelve did not include children or even any women. But from the biblical record of household "meals" that followed after the resurrection experience, of the baptizing of households, and of the worshipping in the home, it is clear that historically children and women shared in the celebration some way.<sup>2</sup> We have to remember that it was a household celebration as well as the Temple's.

Since the time of Christ, the Passover feast has been celebrated among Christians as the Lord's Supper and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. TDNT, 5:1016, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup>1 Cor 11:20-22; Acts 2:46.

Easter. Jesus Christ, dying on the Passover, was the Lamb "who takes away the sin of the world."<sup>1</sup> Even though children in the house of God's people were deeply involved, and were included in the Passover feast in the OT time, some churches today exclude those who are not yet baptized, especially from the Lord's Supper. If there is to be to some extent continuity between these two--the old and new festivals, why should children be excluded from participation in the powerful Christian festival today?

Most commentators agree that the history of the Passover rites goes back to a time before Exodus, whether among the Hebrews or among other groups. The origin of the Passover sacrifice, for example, may have its root in the garden of Eden where God provided a skin garment for Adam and Eve immediately after their sinning. These old rites were reactivated by the Exodus event. They were kept in honor of Yahweh. All commemorate the events which are represented by the Exodus event or revelation; that is, Yahweh as the deliverer. All the rites, activated as the Passover festival by the Exodus, attest that every member of a godly household belongs to Yahweh because of His redemptive action through the salvation history. And, in every rite, children are deeply involved in the house of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup>John 1:29.



Malachi 2:15 also testifies the sure status of children as belonging to God's covenant community, Israel or Abraham's descendants. In the text, we see that both the Lord and God's people are seeking "godly offspring." The Hebrew word for offspring, zera`, has both singular and collective meaning in its singular form.

This offspring, therefore, points both to Christ in the ultimate sense<sup>1</sup> and to all of God's people,<sup>2</sup> namely today's church, who are represented by Jesus. If this zera`, God's people, in the OT time consisted of every faith-related member, including any children; the NT zera` must all the more include any faith-related children as the sure part of the household of God's NT people, the church.

In NT history, the child also assumed unique importance with the evaluation which Jesus displayed by word and act, as seen in Matt 18:1-14, 19:13-15, and related passages.<sup>3</sup> He found the child not only a fitting metaphoric representative of His kingdom, but He also demonstrated a warm and accepting manner toward the child, a manner which ran counter to the prevailing mood and practice of His culture.<sup>4</sup> The Lord has concern for

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<sup>1</sup>Gal 3:16.

<sup>2</sup>Gal 3:29.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Mark 9:36-37; 10:13-16; and Luke 18:15-17.

<sup>4</sup>When people brought children to Jesus in order for the children to be blessed by putting His hand on their heads and praying, His disciples resisted this interrup-

children, not merely as living parables, but as children are in themselves. The focus, then, of Jesus' words to and about children reflects not only the importance and worth of children, but the incredible love of God and the redemptive power of His divine grace. "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me";<sup>1</sup> "Whosoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea";<sup>2</sup> "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."<sup>3</sup> Seeing the child as more than the "Israel to be," He thus indicated that one can find the elements of Kingdom membership not so much on the basis of what it provides and produces, as on the basis of what it does not and cannot proffer. Its very emptiness and openness to the provisions of an accepting, loving Father God make it a

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tion. Possibly they were reflecting the prevailing view which held that children were only a troublesome nuisance, especially at the time when Jesus was on the way to the Cross: Matt 19:13-15. But Jesus rebuked His disciples. Incidentally, this tells us how deeply He cares children.

<sup>1</sup>Matt 18:5; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48 (KJV).

<sup>2</sup>Mark 9:42 (RSV). Cf. Matt 18:6.

<sup>3</sup>Matt 10:42; cf. Mark 9:41. As we have pointed out, these sayings by Jesus in their original form did refer to actual not figurative children.

particularly fit representative of a kingdom comprised less of so-called "good" people than of forgiven people.

The so-called "household formula" found in the book of Acts, especially when we think the term in relation to the usage of the Old Testament, indicates also the unchangeable status of children in the church today. While there is no proof that there were children in these households in Acts 16:15, 16:33, or 1 Cor 1:16, they would be most unusual households if none of their members had young children.

It is in accordance with biblical usage to speak of households as including children as we have already seen in Gen 17:12ff, or Exod 12:16-27. Moreover, we can see children in the Christian households in Paul's epistles: cf. Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1. Here Paul advocated Christian duties to members of households. It is interesting to note here that children take a place alongside parents, husbands, wives, masters, and slaves, as a group with characteristic Christian duties.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Paul argues that the Corinthian church members take for granted the holiness of their children.<sup>2</sup> In this case, it is thought by many churches practicing infant baptism that either these children were baptized or would be thought of as born after their parents' admission,

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 85, n. 1, above.

<sup>2</sup>1 Cor 7:14.

who might not require the proselyte baptism, as Jewish proselyting was the custom. As discussed in chapter 3, it is mere inference to think that the practice of infant baptism sprang from this text. We need to consider it from another point of view. One thing is certain, however, this argument by Paul convinces us of a sure status of children among early church members.

This same status of children in both the OT and NT is even more convincing if we notice the relation between ancient Israel, so-called Abraham's seed, and the church. The apostle Paul comments in Gal 3:16 that Abraham's seed, the community of believers, pointed to Jesus Christ whose body is the church. Paul even identifies the church with the expression of "the Israel of God."<sup>1</sup> He further says: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."<sup>2</sup> To belong to Christ, that is, to be church members in a practical sense, is identified with belonging to Abraham's seed, that is, members of the believing community of God's Israel.

Some say that with Christ's coming everything becomes new and changed. It is true in a sense. However, it is not merely new but is fully accomplished in Christ in this new age. Christ is "the guarantee of a better

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<sup>1</sup>Gal 6:16.

<sup>2</sup>Gal 3:29 (NIV).

covenant,"<sup>1</sup> and the "plērōma," full appearance, of the OT Yahweh; "God was pleased to have fullness dwell in Him."<sup>2</sup> He fulfilled the Old Testament promises.

External sources indicate that the practice of infant baptism might have started in North Africa at about the second century when contemporary Jews practiced proselyte baptism in which children also received baptism when they were the children of the newly converted and proselytized. The children who were born after their parents were proselyted, however, were not subject to baptism. Those children were thought to be holy. Moreover, according to Oscar Cullmann, even children of Christians did not receive any baptism; no evidence can be found of their baptism, for they were regarded as holy by birth, so that they already belonged automatically to the Body of Christ purely by reason of birth.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the status of children, who always belonged to the Israel of God, needed no sign of the covenant, for their status never changed with the new age. The coming of our Lord, who was incarnated as a baby and had to live His life from the manger in Bethlehem to the Cross, never despised the children and nor drove them away toward the outside of His church. They, as Jesus Himself belonged to

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<sup>1</sup>Heb 7:22.

<sup>2</sup>Col 1:19 (NIV).

<sup>3</sup>See pp. 98-100 above.

God's family, surely belong to His body, the church, from their birth. If we see His unchangeable concern for children, it confirms us in this evidence.

However, in the OT male children received circumcision, the sign of His covenant, when eight days old. In the NT, the children, especially those of Gentile believers, did not receive circumcision; still they were taken for granted as holy.<sup>1</sup> Children of Jewish believers were still subjected to circumcision--at least for a while--as we see in the case of Timothy.<sup>2</sup> Later on, infant baptism intruded into Christianity as a substitution for circumcision in order to give children an outward sign like circumcision to indicate their belonging to the church.

This NT practice raised another problem. The NT baptism was offered to the believers and had no relation to whether they were circumcised or not. Accordingly, the NT baptism was originally not given to irresponsible children but to accountable believers only. The NT baptism clearly surpassed but was different from the circumcision given to the Jews in the wilderness. In the NT, the evidence of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit could be experienced even by the uncircumcised, like Cornelius. Thus, the NT baptism could not be equated any more with the old outward sign of

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<sup>1</sup>1 Cor 7:14.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 16:3. Cf. Gal 2:3.

circumcision. The sign of baptism was to represent far more than circumcision.

But, when we stop the rite of circumcision, we must somehow establish the NT status of children in the church. Children (males, at least) were recognized as part of the circle by circumcision in the OT time. What substitute can be found from the NT to show the children's status in the church today? This has been a long-standing debate among churches.

A survey of the NT biblical evidences and some outside resources present various views of the status of children. Some effort has gone into finding justification for the rites of child-dedication and child-blessing in order for children to find their sure status in the churches today, especially among those which advocate so-called believer's baptism.

As for the children of believers, baptism serves for accountable members among them, so to speak, as a coming-of-age ceremony for those children who grow up and reach accountable manhood/womanhood. On the other hand, child-dedication and child-blessing can serve any children before they reach accountability, especially after their birth as celebrating their birth. We thus register their name as members of the family. Besides, we should commemorate this evidence in some way every year. By these

celebrations we remark that they are important members of the family.

From this survey of various views, we find that the issues concerning the status of children evolve mainly around four questions: (1) How should the children's collective and objective status in the NT era be expressed in view of the relation between circumcision and infant baptism or between original sin and its eradication?

(2) What is the meaning and function of the NT baptism, in relation to faith value as subjective or cognitive element, and to divine initiative value as objective element--believer's baptism or infant baptism or both? (3) How can one be a church member and how does membership especially relate to one's salvation? and (4) How can children be christened in the church?

Finally we must come to some conclusions concerning the status of children in the church and how that status can be implemented:

1. Children must be the members of the church--they cannot be excluded until they are baptized

2. Regardless of outward signs, children, before they have accountability, are sinners, but innocent, not guilty, because of the "threefold blessing" by the



Trinity,<sup>1</sup> the love of God,<sup>2</sup> the grace of Jesus Christ,<sup>3</sup> and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup>

3. Infant baptism is not relevant either subjectively or objectively as a rite to be used for the outward sign of the status of children, for the NT baptism clearly indicates a faith involvement of the subject--not merely of godparents--and a once-for-all baptism--no rebaptism; the communion service, however, is repeated

4. The NT church, the seed of Abraham or NT Israel, consists of every faith-related member, that is, not merely of believers but of believers and their children

5. As the uncircumcised were excluded from the community of Israel in the OT, unbelievers' children in the church cannot be established as members until they receive believer's baptism by their faith and confession. Some god-

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<sup>1</sup>Braker, p. 69, introduces an "intriguing interpretation of the significance of Aaron's ancient blessing for the Christian community by David Tennant. It says: "It is the Father of whom one says, 'The Lord bless you and keep you.' It is of the Son who incarnates the Lord that one says, 'The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.' It is of the Holy Spirit one might say: 'The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.'"

<sup>2</sup>Mark 9:37b. God accepts children as His precious property.

<sup>3</sup>Mark 9:37a and John 3:16, 1:29. His atonement on the Cross is avail to every body especially to the faith-related people as it is indicated in His promise; "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matt 18:18b).

<sup>4</sup>Luke 1:15, 44; cf. Matt 21:15.

parents may adopt them in some way to officially nurture and take care of them toward christianizing them, but until their parents, or at least one parent, receive believer's baptism, their salvation has to be left in the hands of God

6. Children of non-believers can be accepted as members of catechumen, so in this category there are two groups, children of church members and children of non-members who are seekers of truth

7. We can offer a service of blessing for children even to unbelievers as they are brought to church (this is in no case a dedication service)

8. We could conduct a solemn child dedication and blessing service for the children of believers and enroll them as younger--but full--members of the family of God, and register their names on the records of the church based on infant dedication and the enrollment of their names as with Jesus

9. Since these members are not yet mature Christians, they have to be encouraged and nurtured by parents at home, by church members at church, and by teachers at school until they become mature Christians and are ready to receive believer's baptism

10. Churches which advocate infant baptism are faced with the problem of rebaptism or are forced to substitute infant baptism with some other rite such as a

child-dedication plus believer's baptism in order to confirm their children as mature Christians

11. Those churches that advocate believer's baptism tend to belittle the status of children, and in so doing, they ironically tend to lower the age of baptism in order to provide the children with church status as soon as possible. In so doing, they often lower the age to such a point that the claim of believer's baptism no longer holds true. Others even advocate that children's baptism be postponed until they reach adolescence.<sup>1</sup> If children are thus withheld from baptism until adolescence, there is a period when children feel exclusion and loss at the very beginning of their age of accountability. All of a sudden the evidence of non-membership on some occasion is recognized by them when they come near to the age of accountability. They may thus feel as outsiders and as on the same plane as unbelievers. This should not be!

We, then, recommend the rite of child-dedication service and child-blessing service, which are based on infant dedication in the Temple as with Jesus and on child blessing by Jesus, for applying this status of children as it is concluded from previous chapters.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ratliff, p. 240. He says, "The child prior to adolescence is not capable of becoming a disciple of Jesus."

<sup>2</sup>See especially pp. 158-179.

In Part 2, we try to find a paradigm for establishing this status of children,<sup>1</sup> the biblical and theological understanding of their status, within the practical church life of today, by using child-dedication or a child-blessing service. At the same time, we seek a way to allow children to participate in the Lord's Supper as a sample of church rites that will show them their needs for theology in other areas such as worship, confirmation, baptism, and so on.

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<sup>1</sup>Mark 9:36, 37; 10:13, 14.

**PART TWO: APPLICATION**

## CHAPTER VI

### ESTABLISHING A MEMBERSHIP OF UNBAPTIZED CHILDREN AS YOUNGER MEMBERS OF GOD'S FAMILY, THE CHURCH

As has been discussed and maintained in Part 1, the church consists of those who are baptized into the Body of Christ<sup>1</sup> and those who together with the believers from a faith relation to Christ.<sup>2</sup> These are they whom Christ loved and for whom gave Himself to make them holy, cleansing them by washing with water through the word to present them to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it is no wonder one may say: "To belong to the church of God is a unique and soul-satisfying privilege."<sup>4</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists do not baptize infants because they believe in "believer's baptism" as the NT

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 12:12, 13.

<sup>2</sup>Gal 3:29; faith-related infants belonged to the seed of Abraham receiving circumcision, and so faith-related infants in the NT belong to "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." See the discussion, pp. 11-17; p. 7, esp. nn. 2, 3; and also, chapter 4.

<sup>3</sup>1 Cor 12:27, Eph 1:23, 4:12, 5:30; Eph 5:26, 27.

<sup>4</sup>Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (1986), p. 19.

norm. They have always, however, regarded infants as precious ones who are bought by the blood of Jesus and thus are His. But because Adventists think that baptism is the only way one can be incorporated into church membership, they have actually excluded children, even those of faithful believers, who are not old enough to be baptized from their membership. How can they then answer the challenge?: "If the child is not taken into the Body of Christ soon after birth, what then is his precise relationship with Christ and His Church?"<sup>1</sup>

Based on the discussion in Part 1, I firmly believe that any church, if its claims are genuine, must express that its children are His [Jesus'] own apart from the children's faith. Thus it is indispensable on the part of the church, the Body of Christ, to make this claim because of the threefold divine act and of the faith of guardians and other members who are related to the child.

In the following, I attempt to show how we, as Seventh-day Adventists, can implement this status of children in our church.

#### A Proposal for Administrative Program

Child Dedication Service for the Believer's Child  
and the Recording of the Child's Name

C. Raymond Holmes, a notable scholar concerned with  
the worship service in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,

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<sup>1</sup>A. Gilmore, Baptism and Christian Unity, p. 90.

advocates in his book, Sing a New Song: "In dedication the child is acknowledged to be a part of the family of God, the church."<sup>1</sup> He continues by saying that in child-dedication services we have another opportunity to proclaim and illustrate what we believe theologically by our liturgical action.<sup>2</sup> We need to take into account what we believe about the church, the pastoral role, the role of the father as household priest, the role of the mother, and the priesthood of all believers in any discussion of the liturgical symbolism of a child-dedication service.<sup>3</sup>

The minister's role in the church, emphasizes Holmes, is to be an enabler, for this function in the child-dedication service belongs not to the minister but to the father as the household priest. The parents and not the minister actually dedicate their child. They, and they alone, can exercise that stewardship by offering their child to the care and service of the Lord and the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>C. R. Holmes, Sing a New Song!: Worship Renewal for Adventists Today (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1984), p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 111. Fundamentally I agree with Holmes's argument of the minister's role as enabler, but at the same time, he also mentions the minister's act, in a sense, as a symbolic act of the heavenly Father when the minister receives the child with his arms from the guardians. Thus the minister as the presider of the service has not only the role of enabler but also in a sense a channel or an instrument through which the Father can act in bestowing his blessing on the child and parents and on the guardians. I



Then, Holmes indicates a liturgical illustration.<sup>1</sup> First, he says, the service of dedication should be made the central feature in the worship hour. It should not be an addendum. Child-dedication is a significant event in the life of any congregation. It must be utilized by the minister to proclaim and illustrate the church's faith.

Second, in harmony with the belief that the minister's role is not to dedicate but to facilitate, the parents are called forward at the appropriate moment in the worship service. The father places the child in the minister's arms, liturgically symbolizing the act of the parents in offering their child to the Lord in thanksgiving. The father, then, as priest of the family, rightfully offers the dedicatory prayer. He should take the hand of his wife, the child's mother, thus symbolizing family solidarity and responsibility.

Further, Holmes comments about liturgical symbols in the child-dedication service, giving two references to the act of the service from E. G. White's writings. "Let ministers of the Gospel take the little children in their

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agree that all are priests, but at some time, we need to be helped by somebody's intercessory work. So, while it is right to have a prayer of dedication by the guardians, there is nothing wrong for the minister to be as a channel between men and the Father. In the local church setting, I doubt whether that kind of dedication prayer can be always appropriately offered by the guardians before the congregation.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

arms and bless them in the name of Jesus";<sup>1</sup> and "Let mothers now lead their children to Christ."<sup>2</sup> The child in the pastor's arms is symbolic of its having been received by the heavenly Father and blessed thereby. Then, symbolically, the Lord returns the child to its parents so they can exercise their parental stewardship and care in His stead. At this point in the service the congregation should be admonished as to its corporate responsibility for the nurturing of that child in the faith. Appropriate Scripture readings and sermon must be read and delivered to elaborate on the theme of the day.<sup>3</sup>

Holmes' comments are full of suggestions. However, at least five points need to be elaborated and some additional important points of view must be added. First, we have to be very careful not to fix a liturgy, for we cannot express every dynamic relation in one liturgy no matter how well it is thought out. Worship service often involves a spontaneous element both from God and men. There always exists a dynamic reciprocity between man and the Godhead in every step of the worship service. We cannot, for example, confine our thankfulness in the expressions of "bringing" or a singing act of liturgy. There may be expressions of

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<sup>1</sup>White, Evangelism, p. 349; cf. idem, Adventist Home, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup>Adventist Home, p. 274.

<sup>3</sup>Holmes, pp. 112-113.

kneeling, shouting, dancing, or even weeping with joy. So, as Holmes suggests, first, we need to leave "ample room for creativity and innovation" in liturgy.<sup>1</sup> I do agree and do not deny that some order must be established in every service, thus reminding us of the basic elements in order to express well such elements as thanksgiving or blessing.

Second, the service need not be so concerned with the children and us and what we do for them, as it should be concerned with the children as the children of God and what God has done for them.<sup>2</sup> What is relevant is a ceremony based on the covenant of grace by the Godhead, especially as seen in the rites for infant Jesus at the Temple and the blessing of the infants by Jesus Himself in the gospel story. The three rites at the Temple--circumcision, the first-born child dedication, and sin and burnt offerings by mother with her husband--and also Jesus' blessing were not encumbered with human vows, human acts, and human promises so much as with recognition and declaration of an act of God, by which the child has been especially related to the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 112. Cf. Braker, pp. 71-103. Rich resources concerning the matter of liturgical creativity and variety will be found from his research. See also, Gilmore, pp. 91-93.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gilmore, p. 96. In fact children are God's precious property, as we have seen and pointed out especially in E. G. White's view in chapter 2 above; see also White, Child Guidance, pp. 46, 76, etc., "These little ones [unbaptized children of believers'] are bought with a price and are the purchased possession of the Lord Jesus" (p. 76).

redeemed community.<sup>1</sup> We must be concerned with what God has done, is doing, and will do for the child, and what God expects through the parents and His church: namely, that the child grows unto a mature Christian. In the service we must recognize this objective divine act<sup>2</sup> and respond to it.

Third, in the child dedication, we are to be concerned both with the child and his relationship to God and with the believer guardians and their parental/nurturing responsibility. This is the time for guardians/parents to dedicate themselves as well as their children to God by declaring their acceptance of the responsibility of caring and nurturing their child so the child will grow up and become a mature Christian, receiving baptism in which the guardians/parents are well rewarded and blessed by God. Without this dedication and their faith response, the child dedication service will be almost meaningless. At times, it might even be pertinent to refuse dedication of the children of parents who quite clearly have no intention of fulfilling the vows they are taking. This, however, would be such a delicate matter that it usually would be deemed

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 167-171 above and Gilmore, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup>Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1965), p. 299, says: "There is much support for objective as opposed to subjective views of the Atonement. None of the concepts we have considered fits naturally into a subjective view. Something happened on Calvary quite objective to man, and it is because of this that we can have the completest assurance of our salvation."

better to accept the dedication in the hope of winning the parents. In the case of unbeliever parents, we give some consideration below.

Fourth, accordingly, (1) we must distinguish between believer and unbeliever guardians in the service. Believer guardians exist in the sphere of the body of Christ, to whom they have a responsibility to witness; but the unbelieving guardians do not belong to Christ's body, thus such guardians, in the strictest sense, have no power to dedicate with responsibility. However, the children of both believers and non-believers are the same in that all children belong to God by creation and by the Atonement: God's love encompasses everyone, and they will be saved if they do not resist the work of the Holy Spirit. Both, however, are expected to be baptized by their own will, but their responsibility is different. The former is seen as belonging to Christ, that is, his existence serves for the ministry of the church, but the latter is not. (2) We must distinguish between believers and their children. The word of God has been addressed to the believers and a response has been solicited, while their children, by birth, are especially related to the Body of Christ. This relation stems from the covenant of God's grace to the faith-related people and is manifested in the influence of grace which constantly surrounds such children as they grow amid the ceaseless commerce of the church with the home and the home

with the church, later involving the commerce of the church school. (3) We must distinguish between mere blessing and dedication. Blessing is for everybody, but dedication can be only by those who have faith in God.

Lastly, the sign and seal of the new covenant should not be withheld from infants who are brought by Christian parents. Though Holmes gives a sound comment concerning the status of children--and one of the important functions of child-dedication service is the acknowledgment that the "child [is] to be a part of the family of God, the church"--unfortunately there is no suggestion of "how." The main concern of Holmes' book is not the theology of children but of worship. So we cannot blame him for that. In fact, we have to admit that such a clear comment or understanding about the status of our children in the church is not found anywhere else among Seventh-day Adventist publications except in E. G. White.

Thus, through the child-dedication service, we accept our children, that is, believer's children, into the community, the church, as younger members of God's family, and their name are recorded as such in the church.

In the liturgical procession there has to be some response from the congregation concerning the matter of accepting the child as a member. It may be appropriate for the minister to ask the congregation just after the father of the child offers the dedicatory prayer (if we use the

liturgy suggested by Holmes). And in the response, the congregation should also express its dedication to bear its responsibility with the parents/guardians.

Declaration and benediction should follow. After the worship service, the church could issue a certificate to the younger member of the church and hold a celebration of the new birth in our corporate home.

This child would then be considered a catechumen. At the same time, however, he is the child of believers and a member of the church, so he bears a mission for the church. Though his responsibility is light when it is compared with baptized members, the impact of his existence as the believer's child is very powerful within and outside the believing community. He, though an infant, is an agency of the salvation of men together with other baptized and dedicated members, and is to share in carrying the gospel to the world. By living in the community of believers, he has not only the privilege of receiving the blessing from above but also by his existence itself is expected to be an enlightenment to the life of others who are in the darkness of this world. He is one of the channels through which the heavenly blessings flow abundantly and Jesus' marvelous character and glory can be represented to the world. Let the children be mighty instruments as part of God's family, and let them become christianized.

As a summary, the following elements should be included in the child-dedication and -blessing service for believer's children:

1. There should be taken into account what we believe about the church, the pastoral role, the role of the father as household priest, the role of the mother, and the priesthood of all believers. What we believe should be illustrated in the service.

2. There should be ample room for creativity and innovation in the liturgy of the service though some order must be established.

3. There should be an effort to make the service of dedication the central feature in the worship service.

4. There should be a declaration, from the Word, of what God has already done, is doing, and will do for the child before the child and the parents could do anything for God. Children belong to God by His purchase through the blood of Jesus the Son, and they are under the influence of the Holy Spirit through the believing community, for the Spirit is promised to be imparted to the believers.<sup>1</sup>

5. There should be an act of celebration and thanksgiving for the child born to Christian parents, and therefore, born into this special relationship with the Body of Christ through the fact of Christian relation in faith with Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>John 7:38:39.



6. There should be a prayer of invocation that God will enable the child to realize to the fullest the special benefits and blessings with which he has been endowed.

7. There should be a special occasion to acknowledge the particular relationship which this child is to have with the church because he is born to Christian guardians.

8. There should be a record of the name of the child who is dedicated by the believers as a younger member of the church, God's family. Thus he is incorporated into the church and bears responsibility along with other members.

9. There should be a clear understanding that the child is expected to be baptized and to be christianized. He is one of the catechumens in the church.

10. There should be a corporative response on the part of the parents/guardians and the church for caring and nurturing the child until he becomes a mature Christian.

11. There should be a serious consideration of faith value in the service; this dedication service serves for believers and their children.

We must restore the status of our children in our church as sure members and count them in our numbers as church members. We must accept them with warm hearts and celebrate this service everywhere in the world church.

Disfellowshipping or Dropping Names  
of Younger Members

In order to keep church records effective, and not make a long list of nominal members, it would be necessary to maintain some regulation for this membership. As a preliminary suggestion, at least five kinds of occasions would seem appropriate for dropping names from the records of the church.

First, when the member receives baptism and becomes a mature Christian, his name would automatically be transferred from younger member to baptized member. Second, if a child's behavior or attitude does not fit the confession of the church which is confessed by his guardians at their baptism, and shows no intention of taking baptismal vows, the church would recommend to the church the dropping of the membership. Only the vote of the church at church business meeting can drop the name from the membership. Third, if a child dies, of course, his/her name must be dropped from the record. Fourth, when a child moves with his guardians to other place where they can find a church, the name of the child would be transferred to the church where his guardians attend through the same steps now taken when a baptized member transfers from one church to another. Fifth, in the case that the child reaches the age

of thirty years and still does not receive baptism, then his/her name is dropped from the record automatically.<sup>1</sup>

To disfellowship a member is painstaking process. We have to be very careful not to make a mistake when dealing with erring members. We have to follow the instruction given by Jesus Christ in Matt 18:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.<sup>2</sup>

Disfellowshipment is the ultimate in the discipline that the church can administer; it is the "extreme measure" that can be meted out by the church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual recommends with strong words: "Only after all possible efforts have been made to win an erring member from the evils of his ways and restore him to right paths, should this kind of discipline be used."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the following admonition by E. G. White must also be remembered:

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<sup>1</sup>Jesus Christ was baptized at about thirty years of age (cf. Luke 3:23); but if we take into account of the passages in Num 4:3 or 1 Chr 23:3, then we may set this limit of age at fifty?!

<sup>2</sup>Matt 18:15-17.

<sup>3</sup>See Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (1986), p. 161.

The Saviour regards with infinite tenderness the souls whom He has purchased with His own blood. They are the claim of His love. He looks upon them with unutterable longing. His heart is drawn out, not only to the best-behaved children, but to those who have by inheritance objectionable traits of character.<sup>1</sup>

Child Blessing Service for  
Children of Unbelievers

As we have pointed out, dedication services for the children of unbelievers are not theologically appropriate. Dedication involves proper knowledge, attitude, and behavior. Without faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ, one has almost no power to execute what he intended and was asked in the service. For him and the church the service will be nothing more than a tradition.

However, I firmly believe that Jesus never discriminated in blessing whoever may ask--regardless of race, religion, social status, and so on. He blessed the Samaritan woman,<sup>2</sup> a Canaanite woman,<sup>3</sup> ten lepers,<sup>4</sup> and even the thief on the Cross.<sup>5</sup> Jesus set no limits or conditions upon those who brought the small ones to him to bless.

In a mission field or in non-Christian countries, there may be numerous occasions to bless those who have no

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<sup>1</sup>White, Desire of Ages, p. 517.

<sup>2</sup>John 4:1-26. She is not only non-Jewish member but may also be an outcast in Samaritan society.

<sup>3</sup>Matt 15:21-28. She was a Gentile and heathen woman.

<sup>4</sup>Luke 17:11-19.

<sup>5</sup>Luke 23:39-43.

background of Christianity as well as those who are not affiliated with any Christian church. In that situation, we can show sympathy and never reject them from coming to ask for a blessing. We can administer the child-blessing service for the children of unbelievers.

They would not be accepted, however, as full members, only as catechumens under the church's care. Both believer's and unbeliever's children are regarded as catechumens, but the former belong to church as full members and at the same time are categorized as catechumens through the child-dedication service. The latter are categorized as catechumens, if they want. I believe that even though they do not desire to belong to catechumens, they can come and receive blessing, and we may administer for them the service of child blessing.

Braker points out concerning the blessing service for unbeliever's child--especially when it is a rite of the celebration of birth: "While it ought not to be considered a dedication in the way active Christian parents would construe the service, it nevertheless could be an occasion for thanksgiving and reassurance of God's undergirding strength and hopefulness for both the child and parents.<sup>1</sup>

Such might well be, he continues to say, the first step toward a growing relationship with the church and with our Lord. Furthermore, if we are persuaded that the love of

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<sup>1</sup>Braker, p. 109.

God extends unto all created life and that such life contains the potential for expressing the power and grace of God, it does not lie with the minister or the church to be arbitrary in excluding all who are unaffiliated with the church. The event of a child's birth universally stirs a sense of awe and wonder, a fitting prelude to a growing relationship with God.<sup>1</sup>

Besides, this service can be performed everywhere; it is not necessary that it be held at the church, but at private homes, or at small group meeting such as cottage meetings possibly.

Sample Services for Child-dedication<sup>2</sup>  
and Child-blessing

Child-dedication service

(During the singing of a suitable hymn in worship service, the children shall be brought by their guardians to the front seat in the church or they sit the front row from the beginning of the worship service)

Scripture Reading:

Luke 2:21-24; Mark 9:37; and Mark 1:9-11.

Statement about child-dedication:

(Minister especially addresses to the parents)

Beloved in the Lord, the Gospel tells us that our

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Several other samples for child-dedication service are found in appendix A.

Lord Jesus Christ, when He was incarnated and became a baby, was Himself dedicated at the Temple.

Child-dedication service symbolized three elements. First, as circumcision was performed at the eighth day of the birth of Jesus, every child of the faithful should be separated from the secular world and incorporated into the community of God's family. From the manger to the cross, the life of Jesus was a call to self-surrender and to fellowship in suffering.

Second, the purification of the mother at the fortieth day together with father indicated the necessity of consecration of parents, especially the mother, in order to accomplish God's appointed task of raising children and forming the characters of the children after the divine Pattern. They must fall who would rise again. They must fall upon the Rock and be broken before they can be uplifted in Christ.

Third, the command to dedicate every first-born child denoted the gift of the First-born of heaven, Jesus Christ, to save us. Please notice that without Him our intention to separate our children from the evil world or our consecration to the solemn task to raise children would be fatally failed. Through this service, we specially acknowledge this gift of Jesus Christ and accept Him as our personal Savior. By belonging to Christ, one realizes every blessing which was promised to Abraham's seed as in the old

and new covenant. He will be our God and we will be His people.

When children grow up, they should be the followers of Jesus Christ by receiving baptism as He dedicated Himself later to the appointed task to save human beings and to vindicate God's righteousness to the universe by receiving baptism.

Today God solemnly invites you and your children to His fellowship as Jesus declared: "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." Let us celebrate together.

Acts of dedication:<sup>1</sup>

(At this point the parents stand, holding the baby. Other children may stand around in token of welcome and may also hold lighted candles to signify the links between the child and the light of the world)

(Minister): Do you acknowledge this child as His precious property which is bought by His life and entrusted to you?

(Guardians/Parents): Yes, we do.

(Ministers): Do you believe the promise, "If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my father in heaven" (Matt 18:19)?

(Guardians/Parents): Yes, we do.

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<sup>1</sup>Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright, eds., Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration, World Council of Churches (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), pp. 70, 74.



(Minister): Do you consecrate yourself by the help of God to educate your child \_\_\_\_\_ for usefulness in this world and for a home in the better world, and to guide him/her toward baptism?

(Guardians/Parents): Yes, we do.

(Minister): Do you present \_\_\_\_\_ to be dedicated desiring that he/she may be grafted into Christ as a member of His body the church?

(Guardians/Parents): Yes, we do.

(The following questions are then addressed to the congregation)

(Minister): Does this church and congregation accept its share of the responsibility of bringing up this child to know Jesus Christ and to this end do the people here gathered undertake to pray for this home and to serve this child, in every way possible, for the sake of Jesus?

(Congregation): Yes, we do.

(Minister): Do you the church members accept this child \_\_\_\_\_ as your church member?

(Congregation): Yes, we do.

The Dedication/Blessing:

(The minister takes the child in his arms, and holds it up and dedicates it on the behalf of parents or maybe parents offer a dedication-prayer before the Lord)

\_\_\_\_\_, the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto

you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

(The minister hands the child back to his/her guardians. Children then sing a suitable hymn one or two stanzas and standing up together, all congregation sings the rest.)

Prayers of thanksgiving and hope:

Our heavenly Father, we thank you that you have received this child to be your own within your family the church. May he/she grow in the faith in which he/she will be baptized and come to witness that faith in Christ Jesus. Bless the home of this child and give wisdom and affection to his/her parents \_\_\_\_\_ that they in the way of perfect love may lead him/her to live Christian life. Strengthen your church in the Holy Spirit that, through our worship and ministry to the world, this child may learn to follow Christ. Amen (or the minister prays in his own words).<sup>1</sup>

Recording the Child's Name and Issuing Its Certificate:

A sample for certification is in Appendix-C. It should be neat enough to indicate the gravity of the matter and has to be durable. As in the Temple dedication at the time of Jesus, through child-dedication service the names of believers' children should be registered in church record book as younger members.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, p. 63.

## Child-blessing Service

A sample for the child-blessing can be as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Scripture Reading: Ps 8, Mark 13:16 or others.

Statement about child blessing:

(At this point the parents stand, holding the baby. Other children may stand around in token of welcome and may also hold lighted candles to signify the links between the child and the light of the world)

Here in Scripture we see God's love and care for all human life and we read of God's will that all life shall belong to him. In the action of Jesus we see the readiness with which he receives children.

Therefore, following the will of God and the example of Jesus, we rejoice this morning/afternoon to receive \_\_\_\_\_ together with his/her parents into the fellowship of this church. We welcome them as Jesus welcomed the children and their mothers. We join with the parents in an act of thanksgiving for the new life which God has given them, and we bless him/her for a child born and brought into His house with thanksgiving.

We remember what God has already done for this child in Jesus Christ. We acknowledge His love and care for him/her from this day forward. And in faith we know that

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<sup>1</sup>Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright, eds., Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration, pp. 71-72. See also appendix A.

through the fellowship of the Church, He is able to lead him/her to the fullness of life.

Thus, in receiving this child in this way we acknowledge his/her relationship to encourage and sustain this relationship until this child responds to His love in faith and baptism.

Act of dedication:

(Minister): Do you promise to be a good father and a loving mother to your child?

(Parents): Yes, we do.

(Minister): Do you also promise to remain faithful to your child, whatever the future may bring, and to respect him/her, wherever he/she may go, and to remember always that your child is born of God?

(Parents): Yes, we do.

(Minister): By what name do you wish your child to be called now and in eternal life?

(Parents): \_\_\_\_\_ .

(Minister): \_\_\_\_\_ . May this name be written for ever in the book of life, in the palm of God's hand.

(The minister shall ask those present to stand.)

(Minister to the congregation): Do you also acknowledge that this child is born of God and do you promise that you will always stand by him/her in friendship?

(All): Yes, we do.

The blessing:<sup>1</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_, the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

(The children may here lift up their candles and shout hurray)<sup>2</sup>

Prayers of thanksgiving and hope:<sup>3</sup>

Lord God, our Father You have given your Son, Jesus Christ, to us as the good shepherd who knows us all by name. We thank you for your grace and your faithfulness for the new life that you have created for this child who has been among us and whom you have entrusted to us.

You have given him/her ears to hear and eyes to see. Bless also this child's mouth so that he/she may learn how to laugh and to speak the language of men. Bless also his/her hands and feet and may he/she learn from his/her own experience that everything you have made is good.

We ask you to shelter this child and keep him/her safe in this rough world. Keep everything that is bad and inhuman away from him/her, protect him/her from evil influences and never let him/her be perverted.

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<sup>1</sup>At this moment the minister may receive the child with his arms and put his hands on the child and pray.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps singing a hymn would be more appropriate.

<sup>3</sup>The child may either be given back to the parents or the pastor may continue to hold him/her.

May he/she be secure with his/her parents and may we who are mature and responsible never give scandal to this child but lead him/her to the truth. If however, sin should ever have power over him/her be merciful to him/her, Lord God---you make good all human guilt and short comings and are yourself, even before this child is able to sin, the forgiveness of all sins through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

A Recommendation for Amendments to  
Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual

The following amendments to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual are recommended in order to implement the status of children as suggested above:

1. The church membership consists of baptized members and "younger members of God's family."

2. Child-dedication service will serve for incorporating the children of believers into the church as younger members.

3. Every younger member is expected to become a baptized member by the age thirty-one years. Thus, he becomes a mature Christian.

4. Younger members must follow the church discipline.

5. Even though he/she be an unbeliever's child, in a special case a child can become a younger member if a believer guardian adopts the child spiritually, dedicates himself/herself for caring and nurturing the child, and

comes to child dedication service of the church, and then, the church accepts the child by vote as its member.

6. If a younger member receives baptism, then, his membership is automatically transferred from the church record as a younger member to the record as a baptized member.

7. If a younger member dies, his/her name is dropped from the record.

8. Discipline and disfellowshipment must be administrated with tender love to the younger members.

9. When a younger member moves with his/her guardians, the name is transferred by request to the church where it is the most convenient for them to attend.

10. Younger members can participate in the foot-washing and the communion services under the guidance of their guardians and the church.

11. Both believer's and unbeliever's children can be catechumens or Sabbath School members.

12. Child-dedication service, which actually includes the blessing, is usually for believer's children; while child-blessing service is for anybody who wants his/her child to be blessed at the church.

13. The right to speak or to vote at church business meeting should be restricted to the baptized members only. Some offices, but not that of church elder, may be taken by younger members by election.

## CHAPTER VII

### PARTICIPATION OF UNBAPTIZED CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNION: THE FOOTWASHING AND THE LORD'S SUPPER ORDINANCES

#### The Trend of Child Participation in the Ordinances

##### In Other Churches

The matter of participating in the Lord's Supper is closely related to the status of children. If a child is not a church member, some feel the child should not be allowed to participate. However, in some churches where infant baptism is practiced, those baptized infants are church members. There the problem is different, for their main concern exists not in the qualification of children in participating in the Lord's Supper but in its effectiveness. It is noteworthy to see a report by the United Presbyterian Church to the 190th General Assembly of the Church in 1978.<sup>1</sup>

This Special Committee to Study the Theology, Nature, and Practice of the Lord's Supper indicated two

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<sup>1</sup>See Brian Thomas Hislop, "Developing a Program to Help a Session Meet a Constitutional Responsibility (Helping Families Prepare Their Baptized Children to Participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper)," (D.Min. project, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1982), p. 10f.



supporting principles on the basis of which the Lord's supper is open to children members of the church:<sup>1</sup>

First, Reformed theology has consistently held that when a child is baptized that child becomes a member of the church. The Directory of Worship, Chapter V, Section 2(20.02) states, "At the time of baptism the child shall be recorded as a baptized member of the Church, and shall be numbered among those for whom the session has responsibility."

Second, the Lord's Supper is understood to be a means of nurture for the members of the believing community. While the Lord's Supper is offered to all who put their trust in Jesus Christ, it is not to be regarded as a "right conferred upon the worthy" but "a privilege given to the undeserving." Too frequently the Lord's Supper has been perceived by children as a reward for the successful completion of the communicants' class. The Lord's Supper is an inherent and indispensable component of nurture for the Christian community.<sup>2</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

The Passover meal of the Old Testament, the report continues to say, gives support to the participation of children in the communion. It was a meal by a household,<sup>3</sup> and besides, Exod 12:26 says: "And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?'" This supports the view that children were not only present but actively participating in the meal or the service. It is clear that the communion service had its roots in the Passover meal, as we see in such passages as: Matt 26:17-19 and 26-29; Mark 14:12-16 and 17-21; Luke 22:14-20; and 1 Cor 5:7, 8.

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<sup>1</sup>Of course, in their case children are incorporated into the church not by child dedication or other else but by infant baptism.

<sup>2</sup>Hislop, p. 10f.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. TDNT, 5:1016, n, 2.

The Supper as instituted by Jesus with the Twelve did not include children at that moment. But from the biblical record of "meals" that followed after the resurrection experience and the baptizing of households and worship in the home, as we may see in 1 Cor 11:20-22 or Acts 2:46, it is clear that historically children shared in the service.

The United Presbyterian Church report also indicates the same point:<sup>1</sup>

The Passover, to which the Lord's Supper is often likened, was a "remembering," "nurturing" occasion within the Jewish community. It was observed in a family context and children participated. Children were taught to inquire, "What do we mean by this service?" Children's participating, not merely their observing, became the occasion of nurture and growth which led to the time when the child assumed a formal place in the adult community."

Further, the arguments for allowing child participation according to the report, are well summarized by Hislop as follows: (1) from Reformed theology the church recognizes baptized children as members of the church; (2) from the Lord's Supper the church sees its participation as a nurturing experience for church members; (3) from the Passover meal the church thinks of it as a precursor of the Lord's Supper with its family context; (4) from the biblical concept of the "household," the church regards that it includes all members of families; and (5) from Jesus' invitation to the children and the emphasis upon the importance of a "child-like" faith the church believes that

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<sup>1</sup>Hislop, p. 11.

these accounts need not be articulated in adult terms.<sup>1</sup> Except for infant baptism, these notions seem to be quite biblically sound.

The consensus that baptism must precede communion is of long standing and has been supported by several points of view. One common explanation is to call baptism the sacrament of birth, and the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, the sacrament of growth. The figure of speech according to this point of view makes it clear that one has to be born before one can partake of the family meal in the normal way. Another explanation has been to say that the Christian life is a "sacramental economy." This phrase, borrowed from social sciences, suggests that before one can partake of the rights and privileges of the kingdom of God, one must become a part of that realm. Baptism is that rite of citizenship. A similar point of view describes the Lord's Supper as a specific act of the church, appropriate only for those who are clearly members of the church. Baptism is then defined by this school as the means of entry, as the mode whereby a person comes into membership. Thus it is commonly regarded that it would be inappropriate for one who has not become a member to share in its own inner life.

On the other hand, however, there may possibly have been an occasion when children of church families are

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

permitted to come to communion even through they are not yet baptized and members. One argument is that this would have been a natural development in Jewish families, since their experience of the Passover always included the children in this household religious festival.

A larger body of literature on the communion of small children, however, presupposes infant baptism. It is one thing to claim that children who had been baptized in infancy can come to communion. It is quite another to say that unbaptized children ought to be received at the table. Even if there were a time when unbaptized children were received at communion, that period was long ago and largely disappeared from the corporate memory of the church. Clearly in our time the normal practice and the theological norm in various churches today is for baptism always to precede admission to communion.

The first communion has had a checkered existence within the Christian community. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition it is administered immediately following infant baptism. The Roman Catholic tradition separates it from baptism and places it between the baptismal act and confirmation. The Anabaptist wing of the Reformation has kept baptism and first communion together, but held them both until a "believer's confession" could be made. The Presbyterian branch of the reformed tradition, along with many others, has participated in infant baptism and

withheld first communion until confirmation and adult membership, though this practice is pushed up toward an earlier age. With greater emphasis and thought being placed upon the meaning of baptism and membership in recent years, and the growing awareness of the ways in which children develop Christian faith and commitment, there has been a growing trend in the Reformed tradition to open the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to baptized children prior to their confirmation.

In the Seventh-day Adventist church, on the other hand, it has been customary to permit children to participate in the services of the footwashing<sup>1</sup> and the communion service only after they have become baptized members. Frank B. Holbrook, associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church, says in his letter:

It is not healthy to press what is designed for more mature years down into childhood.... It would be more in harmony with the Scriptures if children were taught to prepare themselves and to look forward to the privileges of church membership. When a child is old enough to comprehend the call of Christ--to repent of his sins and to confess Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord intelligently, then he can be baptized and can enter into the privileges of church membership.

Children mature at varying ages, and while our

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<sup>1</sup>For this church, according to its Church Manual (1986), p. 63, the footwashing service (cf. John 13:1-21) is regarded as one of the ordinances, which include the Communion and also baptism. They, especially both the footwashing and the Lord's Supper--the Communion service--are a part of the worship ordained of God to keep alive in the hearts of the worshipers the new covenant experience of which they are a symbol.

general practice has been about 12, some are baptized at 8 or 9. Be that as it may, our general practice (which we believe is appropriate) is to wait until the child has become a baptized member before he becomes a participant in the other rites of the church.<sup>1</sup>

In the same letter, as a postscript, Holbrook adds the following note: "We probably have no rule on this in the Church Manual because it seems self-evident that participation in these special church rites is the privilege of church members." But is it so "self-evident?" Is it right to say that the participation in those church rituals is the "privilege of church members"?

On the basis of the preceding investigations, many churches including the Seventh-day Adventist church today believe that the normal practice has been to close the communion to people until they have been baptized.<sup>2</sup> Then, if the baptism for infants is not practiced in a church, this means there is no occasion for unbaptized children to participate in the ordinances. Further research, however, both in E. G. White books and in her manuscripts, indicates that other practices have also existed, which would change or stimulate our practice in more positive way.

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<sup>1</sup>The letter which I received from Holbrook is dated Feb. 26, 1986. See appendix B for details. Cf. Holbrook, "Unbaptized Children and Communion," Ministry, February 1987, p.13. (Emphasis supplied)

<sup>2</sup>However, though this seems to exclude the unbaptized, the Adventist church advocates open communion to all "believing Christians." Cf. Holbrook, "For Members Only?," Ministry, February 1987, pp. 12-14, 30, and p. 12, n. 1 for the references of the official publications by the church.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church as Seen in  
General Conference Session in 1980 Concerning  
Non-baptized Children Participating in  
the Communion Service

At the General Conference Session in Dallas in 1980, though the issue was not settled, there was an official discussion on the matter of non-baptized children participating in communion.

According to Richard Hammill, who was one of members of the Church Manual Committee at that time, a delegate made a speech, and possibly a motion, which was eventually defeated. He continues to say in his letter, dated February 9, 1986, that it is possible that before the motion was defeated it was referred to the small editorial committee, of which he was chairman, for recommendation to the main session; while this was his impression, he did "not recall for sure," so, he added, "At any rate the General Conference in session did not accept the idea of prescribing participation by children. In fact, the statement closes with the words, 'the communion Service is open to all believing Christians.'"

As far as Hammill's words go, it seems he is positive toward children participating in the Communion. He concludes his letter by saying:

Ordinarily small children are not encouraged to take part in communion in our church, but there is no basis for excluding them if they profess belief in Christ, even if they are not baptized.

On the other hand, Lawrence Maxwell, who is the editor at Pacific Press Publishing Association, wrote a letter with more details about the matter. His letters dated March 24, 1986 and July 26, 1987,<sup>1</sup> take strong opposition toward unbaptized children participating in the Communion. According to his these letters, he tried twice, at the General Conference session in Dallas in 1980, "to get some reference to the problem included in the statement of beliefs," but "was unsuccessful." Maxwell points out several reasons why children who have not yet been baptized ought not to participate in the foot washing or the Lord's supper:

(1) Foot washing is a little baptism. In John 13 Jesus specifically said that those who have been washed do not need to be washed again except to have their feet washed. This indicates very strongly that baptism should precede foot washing.

(2) The bread and wine are food. Spiritual food. Dead people cannot eat food. Only those who have come alive spiritually can eat or drink. Rising from the waters of baptism is the symbol that represents the beginning of the spiritual life. Therefore, eating and drinking spiritual food should come after baptism.

(3) There are parents and other influential members of the church who consider these reasons immaterial. So then we need to see whether they are important. a) Nadab and Abihu were slain by the Lord because they violated certain symbols which the Lord had set up. b) Cain's offering was rejected because he did not follow the instructions of the Lord. He mutilated a symbol. c) God requested that the Ark of the Covenant be carried on men's shoulders. Here again was a symbol. When David placed the ark on an oxcart, and when Uzzah touched the ark, God was displeased. From these experiences we must

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<sup>1</sup>The latter one is the revision of the former. See p. 280, n. 1, below.



draw the conclusion that when God gives us symbols, He wants us to observe the symbols as He has given them to us.

(4) What happens when young Adventist children are allowed to participate in the foot washing and the Lord's supper? For one thing, the importance and significance of baptism is obscured.

(5) A good illustration of the importance of ceremonies and symbols is marriage. Certain things are right after marriage which are declared to be sin if done before marriage.

(6) In our home we have explained foot washing and the Lord's supper, and our daughters have frequently watched these ceremonies and they know that when they are baptized they will participate in them.<sup>1</sup>

Of the six reasons for his conviction that foot washing and the Lord's supper should be participated in only by Adventist young people who have been baptized, the first two items are emphasized as his main reasons.

We need to note, however, his further comment which was added as a P.S. to his letter. Maxwell sincerely points out that his secretary objected to his expression of "dead" and gives this further comment.

My secretary objected to the idea that before they are baptized, children are spiritually dead. They love Jesus, and Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." These are good points. But if they mean that we should let children wash feet and eat the Lord's supper, why don't we baptize them at an early age? One reason is that loving Jesus and coming to Jesus and being baptized and participating in communion are progressive experiences. Also, the child must grow in wisdom and maturity in order to understand them. Let each come at its proper time.

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<sup>1</sup>Lawrence Maxwell to Seizou Wagatsuma, March 24, 1986. See his revised letter in appendix B for details.

These are very interesting and, probably, very typical comments or arguments by some leading Adventist leaders today. However, is it so clear theologically as Maxwell is convinced, and so "self-evident" as Holbrook says? We may need to clarify what is the function of the communion service and of the baptism. Are the foot washing and the Lord's Supper ordinances so-called sacraments or a means of remembrance or of instruction? If they are not sacraments in a sense of a "reward" as they are regarded by the Roman Catholic and other churches, then why should participation in the ordinances come after the baptism which is the result of instruction? Is it true that the ordinances of the Communion are designed only for the mature Christians?

Experiences among the people of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the past which have appeared in the writings and been endorsed by E. G. White would argue further against the suggestions made by Maxwell and Holbrook.

From E. G. White's Comments

"Open Communion" has always been advocated to the church by E. G. White in her writings. She writes:

Christ's example forbids exclusiveness at the Lord's Supper. It is true that open sin excludes the guilty. This the Holy Spirit plainly teaches. But beyond this none are to pass judgment. God has not left it with men to say who shall present themselves on these occasions. For who can read the heart?... There may come into the company persons who are not in heart

servants of truth and holiness, but who may wish to take part in the service. They should not be forbidden.<sup>1</sup>

This forbidding of exclusiveness does not merely point to professed Christians of other communions,<sup>2</sup> but, in fact, to anyone who wants to participate or to receive God's free grace of redemption and who does not commit sin openly.

In the following example, White convinces us of forbidding of exclusiveness in a broadened sense. She introduces her experience in a church as follows:

He was invited to unite in the ordinance of feet washing, but said he preferred to witness it. He asked if participation in this ordinance was required before one could partake of communion, and was assured by our brethren that it was not obligatory, and that he would be welcome to the table of the Lord. This Sabbath was a most precious day to his soul; he said that he had never had a happier day in his life.

He afterward desired an interview with me, and we had a pleasant visit. His conversation was very interesting, and we had a precious season of prayer together.... He was baptized before leaving for his home.<sup>3</sup>

Here was an unbaptized adult and what is more, he who did not want to participate in footwashing service but was allowed to take part in the communion!! Then, why not believer's children, if they are well instructed and have

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<sup>1</sup>White, Desire of Ages, p. 656.

<sup>2</sup>Manual for Minister (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1977), pp. 105-106, gives an impression that this is the case for non-Seventh-day Adventist Christians, those of other denominations. Cf. also Holbrook, "For Members Only?," p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>White, MS 4, 1893; cf. idem, Evangelism, pp. 276f.

reached at least the "formal operation state"?<sup>1</sup> And even if a child is under the age of this stage, he or she can be instructed in an appropriate way to the age through the active participation to the rituals as in the case of the ancient Passover meals.

Here we see several theological issues to be further considered and studied more deeply.

#### Children's Participation to the Communion

In an article, Finley MacDonald points out<sup>2</sup> there are at least three important aspects to be considered in the matter of whether unbaptized children of church members can participate in the Communion. The first important aspect to be considered is the priority of the "grace of God"<sup>3</sup> and the function of the sacraments as a means of grace. Repentance, faith, and righteousness are the signs, not the mere conditions, of grace.<sup>4</sup> There exists the

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<sup>1</sup>See Lawrence O. Richards, A Theology of Children's Ministry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), pp. 99-102. Theory of development psychology by Jean Piaget or Lawrence J. Kohlberg are crucial in consideration of functions of rituals as means and of the age when they begin to understand the abstract meaning.

<sup>2</sup>MacDonald, pp. 551-556. The argument of the article is from the perspective of possibility of participation by baptized in infancy but not-confirmed-yet church-member's children.

<sup>3</sup>1 Cor 15:10.

<sup>4</sup>See White, Selected Messages, Bk. 1, p. 390, for the fundamental doctrine concerning grace and condition as for repentance: "While it is true that repentance must precede forgiveness, for it is only the broken and contrite

danger of fencing in the table and viewing the sacraments as the reward and not the means of grace; the food of the righteous rather than of the faithful; and also as milk and honey for those who have arrived in the promised land rather than manna for the pilgrims. Of course, there is always the danger of turning free grace into cheap grace, and so stressing the divine initiative as to under-emphasize human response and human responsibility.

MacDonald says what seems to be relevant here:

We view the sacrament as the sign of the free, unconditioned grace of God, but we see it also as seeking always a response in terms of Christian life and commitment. It is a means whereby we are touched by grace. It would seem to follow from such an understanding of the sacrament that the child being nurtured within the church and being taught the way of life which expresses the Christian response to grace ought to receive the benefit of every means of grace and, in particular, ought therefore to receive the sacrament.<sup>1</sup>  
(Emphasis supplied)

The second important aspect to be considered as to whether or not children in the church can participate in the Lord's Supper arises from the understanding of the church, on the social analogy, as a community of which children are members. Though MacDonald here admits that

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heart that is acceptable to God, yet the sinner cannot bring himself to repentance, or prepare himself to come to Christ. Except the sinner repent, he cannot be forgiven; but the question to be decided is as to whether repentance is the work of the sinner or the gift of Christ. The very first step to Christ is taken through the drawing of the Spirit of God; as man responds to this drawing, he advances toward Christ in order that he may repent."

<sup>1</sup>MacDonald, p. 560.

children are members of "society" and that certain "rights" are withheld from them until they reach years of maturity, he argues against this notion by two reasons.<sup>1</sup> In the first place, the sacrament is not a kind of right which can be received by those who reach a certain standard. To partake in the Communion is "to exercise not a right but a privilege of church membership and this is equally true of every partaker."<sup>2</sup>

In the second place, belonging to the church is more than belonging to a human institution. It means belonging to Christ and being ingrafted into Him as a member of His Body, the church. Christians thus "draw spiritual nourishment not from the church but through the church from Christ, the church's king and head."<sup>3</sup>

MacDonald further points out several important elements to be considered in the social analogy:

I would accept that the social analogy may apply in certain matters of church government. There are good reasons why minimum age requirements should apply in such matters as the election of ministers and office bearers and voting rights generally at church meetings. However, when it comes to the spiritual nourishment of God's people it would seem to me to follow from the sheer understanding of church membership not as belonging to a religious club but as being ingrafted into Christ, that all the members should receive the benefits which are in Him and so be enabled to grow in grace. In particular again this means that all who are declared to be members of the church should be per-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 561.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

mitted to partake of the Lord's Supper.<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

This view must be supported biblically as we have already discussed, especially in the Passover passage in which circumcised children participated in the Meal. Concerning the Jewish bar mišwāh ceremony, MacDonald also gives the same comment as we have pointed out in the relation to Jesus' attending the temple when He was twelve years of age: though the Jewish child at his thirteenth year entered the adult community through the ceremony, the Jewish child "is nurtured towards his bar mišwāh" within the whole religious life of the community.<sup>2</sup> To belong to the Jewish community was and is to belong to the people of the Passover. And so, "to belong to the people who obey the command 'this do in remember of Me,' a command [was] addressed to a community."<sup>3</sup>

The third important key aspect to be considered as to whether children of the church can be admitted to participate in the Communion exists, MacDonald points out, in the understanding of children themselves.<sup>4</sup> As he says, we tend to see the children as the church of the future.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 562.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 563.

But their existence itself forms today's church. We need to see the child as a fully finished product corresponding to the stage he has reached and to minister to him accordingly. The child is to grow not only in biblical knowledge and religious understanding, but also to grow, with the adult members of the community, in grace. E. G. White says, "The little children may be Christians, having an experience in accordance with their years."<sup>1</sup> Who can say, in fact, whether the faith of unbaptized children is inferior to that of baptized members? Children's special features are the norm for us to see, "for the kingdom of God belongs to such as this."<sup>2</sup> "In the children who were brought in contact with Him, Jesus saw the men and women who should be heirs of His grace and subjects of His Kingdom."<sup>3</sup> Of course, the participation of children in the ordinances would not preclude the consideration of age value which is advocated by psychological development and also profession of faith in baptism. That is not the issue, as MacDonald points out.<sup>4</sup> What is at issue is whether such profession of faith in baptism is a prior condition for receiving communion.<sup>5</sup> Then he concludes with the following:

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<sup>1</sup>White, Desire of Ages, p. 515-516.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 10:14.

<sup>3</sup>White, Desire of Ages, p. 515.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 564.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



If the growing child is nurtured as well as taught within the church, including being given the sacrament, then the day could and indeed should come when a transition is made from junior to senior status, faith professed and promises of Christian commitment and responsibility taken. In this way, instead of training children to be the church of tomorrow we would be ministering to them as young but full members of the church of today who receive all the benefits of their membership. Then perhaps we could lead them to a truer and more lasting relationship with him who set the child in the midst.<sup>1</sup>

His arguments seem valid. As we have repeatedly noted, in ancient Israel, through the male child's circumcision eight days after his birth, he received the sign that he was under God's covenant and belonged to God's family (which included the children), children actively participated and could ask what this meant and receive instruction from their parents. It was a high time of education through the symbols of ritual to be reminded of the incident of deliverance. Through the feast, every member of the family who participated in the ritual was instructed to remember His mercy in delivering the ancestors from bondage. Likewise, through participating in the footwashing and the Communion services, under the guidance of their guardians, even unbaptized children could be instructed to see their Lord kneeling before them in order to wash even their little stains away and to know how their Lord has loved them and died to save them.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 564-565.

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament gives strong comments such as the following: "For infant communion there is an unbroken chain of witnesses from Cyprian to the 12th century";<sup>1</sup> and "in Jerusalem the boy who could take his father's hand or ride on his shoulders to the temple hill was under obligation to keep the feasts."<sup>2</sup>

If unbaptized adults could take part, as seen in White's view,<sup>3</sup> why not believer's children? We need to take heed the further admonition here by White:

There may come in among you those who are not in heart united with truth and holiness, but who may wish to take part in these services. Forbid them not.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, as in the Passover feast in Israel, every relative and friend who belongs to the community in physical and spiritual relationship must be expected to participate with the rituals as the time of remembering and of instructing God's covenant of grace for every one who does not refuse it, worshipping together until Jesus Christ our Lord comes.

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<sup>1</sup>TDNT, 5:652.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5:648.

<sup>3</sup>White, Evangelism, p. 277.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as most of the Free churches such as the Mennonites, the Disciples of Christ, or the Baptist Church takes the position that even believer's children should not be regarded as members of the church until they receive believer's baptism.<sup>1</sup> They are placed outside of the church.

But this practice appears to be very paradoxical to the biblical understanding of the doctrine of the NT church when the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual says concerning church: "The church is God's family"; or "in continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world."<sup>2</sup> If the church is God's family and the entity is in continuity with the people of God in OT times, this institution, the church, must include children. Because, as we have seen from our survey in part 1, children of believers were never excluded from and always existed within the members of God's people even receiving circumcision at the eighth day of a male's birth in OT times. Further, we find no single comment of exclusion of

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<sup>1</sup>See Church Manual, pp. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 26.

believer's children from the church in the NT times.

So, the practice of the exclusion of children in the church today does not come from biblical evidence at all; it seems to stem from a wrong theology, that is, from too much emphasis on believer's baptism. Eventually, the church has lost sight of the status of children.

As noted in chapter 3, based on infant dedication and the enrollment of name in the Temple as with Jesus, I have recommend the rite of a child-dedication service in our worship service for establishing the status of believer's children. Their names should be enrolled in the church record as younger members of the church. Of course, in this service the element of blessing is included. However, the term "child-blessing service" is used for unbeliever's children whose parents or guardians cannot dedicate themselves together with children but want to have their children blessed in the church.

In order to implement the status, then, as a summary, the following several tasks are recommended: (1) the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists organizes a task force to implement the status of the children of believers by studying the practical problems and determining a process to set in motion; (2) Amendments must be made to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual;<sup>1</sup> (3) further practical programs should be developed,

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 231, 232, above.

especially from the point of view of the full membership of children: (a) for encouraging guardians/parents by providing ample resources, (b) for nurturing our children in worship service and in the Communion service, (c) for involving children in the church ministry--not merely to minister to them but to minister with them, that they may have a mighty potential for God cause as Spirit-filled church members who often can do a far better job than adult members in some area such as evangelizing or influencing to others, or (d) for encouraging and guiding children from catechumens to baptism in the corporation of three areas: home, school, and church--their developmental psychology must be taken into consideration in the instruction programs;<sup>1</sup> (4) the function of and the relationship between the terms such as "younger members," "mature Christian," "baptized members," "child-dedication service," or "child-blessing service" must be specifically defined and clarified, even to creating new terminologies--those which usage is not yet field tested.

Theology of children must be put into concrete terms to develop thinking/image among the people of God. We need to instruct parents, ministers, elders, deacons, and everybody; it is essential that all our people have a clear

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Iris V. Cully, "A Theology of Children," Review and Expositor 80 (1983):202; James W. Vander Zanden, Human Development, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), pp. 57, 58; Jean-Claude Brief, Beyond Piaget (New York: Teachers College Press, 1983), pp. 184-199; and so on.

theology concerning especially the status of their children in the church, and to have them take part in open communion in a true and meaningful sense until Jesus Christ our Lord comes.

I pray that this project will result in God's glory and contribute in some way to the progress of His cause through the church. Also I hope that someone will take the task of studying further to verify the status of children both of believers and unbelievers in the church to give a surer answer and a more solid foundation to this important matter, and for further practical paradigms to serve effectively for these God-given precious souls, our children.

Thus, we, with all God's family in the old and the new ages together with our younger members could soon be on the "sea of glass" and sing the "song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb."<sup>1</sup>

Never allow your children to suppose that they are not children of God until they are old enough to be baptized. Baptism does not make children Christian; neither does it convert them; it is but an outward sign, showing that they are sensible that they should be children of God by acknowledging that they believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and will henceforth live for Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Rev 15:2-4

<sup>2</sup>White, Child Guidance, p. 499.

<sup>3</sup>Mark 9:37.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLES FOR CHILD-DEDICATION SERVICE

Various forms of services will be found from church to church. We may creatively set our own liturgy as long as we take into account the fundamental elements of the service which we have discussed in "Child Dedication or Child Blessing" in this paper, pp. 158ff.

#### Order of Service for Infant Dedication by Gilmore<sup>1</sup>

(To follow the opening hymn and prayer at morning worship)

Let us hear the words of scripture which are our warrant for holding this service:

Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God...and when you rise. (Deut 6:4-7, RSV).

And they were bringing children to him...Laying his hands upon them. (Mark 10:13-16, RSV).

Here in the word of God we are confronted with the concern and love of God for all human life and with the desire that all life shall belong to Him. In the action of Jesus we see the readiness with which He regards all children as belonging to the kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup>Gilmore, pp. 104-105.



Therefore following the will of God and the example of our Lord we are pleased this morning to receive \_\_\_\_\_, in company with his/her parents. We welcome them as Jesus welcomed the children and their mothers in the days of His flesh. We join the parents in thanksgiving for the new life which God has granted to them, and we bless Him for a child born and brought into His house and dedicated to Him with thanksgiving.

We remember what God has done for this His child in Jesus Christ. We acknowledge His love and care for him/her at this moment. And in faith we know that through the fellowship of His Church He is able to lead him/her to the fullness of faith.

Therefore in receiving this child in this way we acknowledge<sup>1</sup> his/her relationship with God expressed in fellowship with His Church and pledge ourselves to maintain this relationship until this child becomes His by faith and baptism.<sup>2</sup>

At this point the minister shall receive the child into his arms to signify the child's reception into the family of God. The congregation shall stand in token of

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<sup>1</sup>We may add such a phrase as "as a younger member of our church."

<sup>2</sup>At this stage, the minister may ask parents to repeat a pledge of their dedication and also the congregation whether they accept the child as the younger member of the church.

welcome. After saying the child's full name the minister shall repeat the blessing:

The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace, Amen.

The minister shall return the child to his/her father, and prayers of intercession for the child, the Church, and the home follow. There may also be a suitable hymn.

A Baptist Service of Thanksgiving  
on the Birth of a Child

This service normally forms an integral part of morning Family Worship. It is always held when the whole church family is present in the worship.

The parents of the child, together with any other children of the family, sit at the front of the church together with a lay representative of the church membership.

The presiding minister welcomes the family and, as necessary, introduces them.

The minister reminds the congregation that the church is gathered together with the family to give thanks to God for the gift of the child, to take vows of responsibility towards the child, and to ask for God's blessing on the child. Verses of Scripture are read: e.g., Deut 11:18-20 and Mark 10:13-16.

The parents then stand with the mother holding the child and the lay representative of the church stands alongside the family. The presiding minister then asks the following questions:

(In the questions the Christian name of the child is usually inserted, instead of the impersonal terms contained within the following questions.)

Q: Do you, the mother and father of this child, acknowledge with thanksgiving the goodness of God which has brought to you the gift of this son/daughter?

A: We do.

Q: To this end, therefore, do you resolve, that guided by the Holy Spirit you will seek to fulfill this responsibility by so ordering your home, your words, your deeds, that this your child shall at all times be surrounded by holy living and Christlike example?

A: We do.

Q: To assist you in this high endeavour will you seek always and accept gladly the cooperation of this church and congregation both in your home and in the ongoing of the Church?

A: We will.

The following questions are then addressed to the lay representative of the church:

Q: Do you, the representative of this church and congregation, pledge its support for the parents in their ask?

A: I do.

Q: Does this church and congregation accept its share of the responsibility of bringing up this child to know Jesus Christ and to this end do the people here gathered undertake to pray for this home and to serve this child, in every way possible, for the sake of Jesus?

A: We do.

The congregation is then asked to stand while the minister takes the child in his arms and offers a prayer-- usually the blessing from Numbers 6:24-26. The minister returns the child to its parents (usually the father), the congregation is seated and further prayer is offered which is normally extemporaneous, but including always thanksgiving for the gift of the child, intercession for the parents, the home, and any other children in the family, and asking God that the family and the church together may so fulfill the vows taken that the child may come ultimately to confession of faith in Christ in Believer's Baptism. A suitable hymn is then sung. <sup>1</sup>

Child Dedication Service in the Seventh-day  
Adventist Manual for Ministers<sup>2</sup>

The child dedication service has all the authority of Scripture, and can be very meaningful. Great care should

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<sup>1</sup>Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright, pp. 73-74.

<sup>2</sup>From Manual for Ministers (1977), pp. 108-118.

go into its preparation so that it may result in maximum blessing. The date for this service should be announced at least two weeks in advance, thus extending the opportunity to all who might wish to participate. The child's name should be secured as the parents wish it to appear on the child-dedication certificate, along with the birth date and the name of the parents presenting it in dedication. If the child is from a home where one parent is not a member of the church, the nonmember should be especially invited to be present for the occasion. There may be non-Adventist parents who are attending the services of the church, or perhaps receiving Bible studies, who may wish a child thus dedicated.

A child-dedication service can be a special feature during an evangelistic campaign. It often starts people coming to church. If the service is synchronized with the baptism of the parents, it can be very helpful in binding the family to the church.

The dedication may effectively be conducted toward the early part of the worship service, perhaps after the pastoral prayer or just before the offering is received. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church there are no godfathers or godmothers.<sup>1</sup> Also, the name is not formally given--it is

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<sup>1</sup>If a child can have dedicated godparents, it must be good for any child. So we do not have any reasons to refuse this kind of persons.

not a christening,<sup>1</sup> and should not be made to appear as such.<sup>2</sup> The ages for child dedication may vary from a few weeks old to five or six years.

The service lends itself to variation. The following alternate formats are suggested:

#### The Dedication Service

Mark 10:13-16:

"And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall no enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

This incident is recorded in the Scriptures by three of the evangelists. This is evidence of the great impression that it must have made upon the early Christians and of the importance that they attached to it.

To many persons children are "only children." They are often "in the way." They are "out of place." They are to be sent "out of the way."

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<sup>1</sup>In child dedication, we had better accept the dedicated child as a young Christian, but not as a baptized mature Christian.

<sup>2</sup>This regulation may have been given in order not to be mixed up with the practice of infant baptism. But as I pointed out, I recommend a change in this regulation and that the name of the dedicated child be enrolled in the church record.

But our Lord when on earth had no greater favorites than children. He set them in the midst; He laid His hands on them; He blessed them; He invited them to His presence; He welcomed them to His person; He enfolded them lovingly in His arms. To Him they were and are the "lambs of the flock."

He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not...."

In those days it was customary to bring young children into the synagogue to be blessed by the elders. How eagerly the parents must have brought them to Jesus! And how lovingly Jesus must have received them!

Notice that these little ones at times were infants, just babes. Luke recording the story says, "And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them." Moffatt's translation reads, "He put his arms around them and blessed them."

We have been told:

Let mothers now lead their children to Christ. Let ministers of the gospel take the little children in their arms, and bless them in the name of Jesus. Let words of tenderest love be spoken to the little ones; for Jesus took the lambs of the flock in His arms, and blessed them.<sup>1</sup>

We should bring our little ones to Christ, dedicating them to His tender care and guidance. Christians must not keep them back, nor rebuke those who bring them, as did

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<sup>1</sup>White, Evangelism, pp. 349-350.

the disciples of old. The little ones are very dear to Christ. He cares for them all; the Father cares for them; for it is said, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." [Matt 18:14, RSV; cf. the footnote concerning "your" in the text].

It is important that we bring our children to Christ in their infancy, or childhood, dedicating them to Him, asking Him to embrace them with the arms of His mercy, and put His hands upon them and bless them.

(At this point the parents are invited to come forward with the little ones, sometimes also the grandparents as a token of respect and honor. During this time the congregation may sing an appropriate hymn, such as "Lead Them My God to Thee" or the choir may sing or the organ play. If it can be arranged it is especially fitting to have a children's choir or a children's division of the Sabbath school<sup>1</sup> sing a song such as "With Jesus in the Family, Happy, Happy Home," or "I Will Early Seek the Saviour.")

#### Charge to Parents

With those participating now standing facing the congregation, the minister gives the charge to the parents:

Parents, before setting your child apart in dedication, I invite you to enter into a covenant with God. In bringing this little child for Christian dedication, you are accepting before God the sacred responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood. By this symbolic act you seek to

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<sup>1</sup>"Sabbath school" is the term used for Bible school on their holy day, Sabbath, like Sunday School on Sunday, by the Seventh-day Adventists.



express your faith that this little one is not only your child but God's child. It is your desire to dedicate this precious one to God, looking forward to the day when this act of dedication shall be followed at an appropriate age by baptism, thus entering into full and happy membership in the church. You, therefore, as parents promise to bring this child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, teaching him/her to pray and know the Lord, doing all in your power to foster strong and useful Christian growth. Do you so covenant?

If there are only a few children, the minister might hold each child separately for a brief prayer. If there are several, he might pray for them all, dedicating each as the hands of the pastor are placed on each child. Child dedication certificates may be given at this time. All will then return to their seats.

#### Resource Material

The following supplementary material may also be used preceding the charge to the parents:

When Jesus was just a baby, about forty days old, His parents took Him to the temple at Jerusalem to be dedicated, according to the custom of the times. Of that experience we read from *Desire of Ages*,<sup>1</sup> page 52, "The priest went through the ceremony of his official work. He

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<sup>1</sup>Written by E. G. White: see, bibliography.

took the child in his arms, and held it up before the altar. After handing it back to its mother, he inscribed the name 'Jesus' on the roll of the firstborn. Little did he think, as the babe lay in his arms, that it was the Majesty of heaven, the King of glory....He did not think that this babe was He whose glory Moses had asked to see. But One greater than Moses lay in the priest's arms; and when he enrolled the child's name he was enrolling the name of One who was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy." (Emphasis supplied).

So with us, we cannot read the future. We cannot know what awaits these little ones. But we can know that by dedicating them to the Lord, asking of Him special blessing for them, and by cooperating as parents with the work of the Holy Spirit in their behalf, their possibilities before God are measureless. So let us thus give them to God; and as parents, let us renew our consecration to faithfully fulfill the trust placed upon us in rearing them for Him.

Additional quotations that may be used:

"There is no more important field of effort than that committed to the founders and guardians of the home. No work entrusted to human beings involves greater or more far reaching results than does the work of fathers and mothers."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E. G. White, Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), p. 351.

"Parents, let your children see that you love them, and will do all in your power to make them happy.... Rule your children with tenderness and compassion, remembering that 'their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.' If you desire the angels to do for your children the work given them of God, co-operate with them by doing your part. Brought up under the wise and loving guidance of a true home, children well have no desire to wander away in search of pleasure. Evil will not attract them. The spirit that prevails in the home will mold their characters."<sup>1</sup>

#### Alternate Charge to the Parents

(Minister) Moses, a servant of the Lord, records the following words in Deut 6:4-7:

Hear, O Israel:...thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

It is the commandment of God that we should diligently train our children in "the way [they] should go." Our god has a purpose for each child's life. To find that purpose and to live it out fully will mean blessing; to refuse or ignore it will mean failure. It is your privilege and duty to guide your children in such a way as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 394.

to make the will of god the greatest ambition of their lives.

The Scriptures bear witness to the fact that, of old, godly parents dedicated their children to the Lord and His service;' Hannah brought her child, Samuel, and dedicated him to God and to the service of His house.<sup>1</sup> Mary, the mother of Jesus, brought the Child, according to the law of Moses, up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

To this task you have come to dedicate yourselves today. This ceremony is meaningless unless parents dedicate themselves, as well as their child, to God.

#### The Covenant of Parents

(Minister) If it be your intention to present this child, \_\_\_\_\_, to the Lord, and to pledge yourselves to "bring him/her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," please answer "we do" to the following questions:

Do you here this day recognize this child as the gift of God, and give heartfelt thanks for God's blessing? Answer. We do.

Do you here this day dedicate this child to the Lord who gave him/her? Answer. We do.

Do you here this day pledge as parents that you will bring up this child in harmony with the counsels of the Lord? Answer. We do.

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<sup>1</sup>Sam 1:28.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 2:22.

Do you here this day promise to give this child every possible benefit of home, school, and church? Answer. We do.

Do you here this day ask god's blessings upon his/her life, to guide, guard, and direct him/her through all his/her life? Answer. We do.

(Minister) Let us pray. (He may now take the child in his arms).

#### Alternate Covenant

Do you dedicate yourselves as parents to bring up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Answer. We do.

Do you promise to instruct him/her in the Bible and the practice of prayer; to guide him/her in the development of a Christlike character; and to diligently bring him/her to the services of the church where he/she will be taught the way of life? Answer. We do.

Do you promise to try to the best of your ability to so shape the home life of your child, by family devotions, by your words and your example, that he/she will at the proper age most naturally come to an open confession of Christ, thereby coming into the fellowship and service of the church? Answer. We do.

(Minister) Let us pray.

At the close, just before the parents with their children return to their seats, the minister may wish to invite the congregation to stand in recognition of and response to their share in the responsibility of caring for the lambs of the flock. This would take the place of the charge to the parents.

#### Alternate Charge to Parents and Congregation

The purpose of baby dedication is really to be found in the purpose of the parents. Rightly understood,

this ceremony is one of parental dedication. The parents pledge themselves to obey the command of Paul: "Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

If it be your intention to present this child, \_\_\_\_\_, to the Lord in this way, please answer "We do" to the following questions:

Do you accept the responsibility of living the kind of life which exemplifies the spirit of Jesus Christ so that this child will be nurtured in the faith from his earliest days?

Do you accept the responsibility of maintaining all your relationships with this child with love and forgiveness, for in so doing you prepare him to know and love God?

Do you accept the responsibility of using the resources of your church to help you and your child to grow in your understanding of the faith and its expression in service to the world?

Do you here this day ask God's blessings upon all his/her life to guide, guard, and direct him/her through all his/her years?

The beauty of Christian fellowship is the sharing of mutual joys, sorrows, dreams, and deeds. Today we recognize as a church our share in the joy of these parents. All of us must assume our responsibility of being Christian witnesses so that this church will be a place

where it is easy for \_\_\_\_\_ to learn to know Jesus. Will you therefore answer "We do" to the following statement:

We accept<sup>1</sup> as individual Christians and as members of this church our responsibility to surround this child and his/her parents with love and understanding.  
Congregation: "We do."

#### Prayer of Dedication

The prayer of dedication could include the following:

That the blessing of heaven rest upon the little child; that it may be protected by the angel of the Lord from the evil that is in the world; that it may have unflinching protection and guidance; that the mother and father may be given more than human patience, wisdom, and love in training the little one to love and revere our heavenly Father; and that the parents and the child may be kept faithful unto the end. The prayer may end with the words, "To this end we dedicate this lamb of the flock (full name, unless in a group) to the heavenly Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and it is our prayer that he/she may be led 'in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake,' that 'goodness and mercy' may follow, and he/she may 'dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'"

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<sup>1</sup>We may insert the following phrase: "this child as the younger member of our church. Congregation: 'we do.' We accept".

Alternate Child Dedication Service with  
Congregational Response

It was the custom in Jesus' day to bring the newborn babes after eight days to the Temple to present them to the Lord. We read of this when Jesus was Himself dedicated in the Temple. [Luke 2:21-35].

We think it fitting then that parents today bring their little ones to church and there present them before their Lord for His blessing.

It was the scorn on the part of the disciples that almost marred the beauty of a divine blessing one day for the little children. We read: [Mark 10:13-16].

It was the virtues of childhood that Christ said were necessary to those who would enter heaven. [Matt 18:1-6].

To the Congregation

You who are gathered here today are privileged to witness the bringing by their parents of these little ones to the loving care of Jesus. It is fitting that we recognize the life of a little child as given us as a loan from God to train and mold after the divine image. These parents by coming to the altar are in effect pledging to join Christ in providing the influence of a sweet home where Christ shall be honored and the Word of God will be held in reverence.



### To the Parents

To you parents who come bringing your children to the Lord, we pray that God's richest blessings may attend these little ones on their journey to the kingdom and that He may pour His Spirit upon you as in humility and singleness of heart you seek to train and educate them that they, like the Child Jesus, may grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

### To the Parental Charge

Recognizing the dignity and responsibility of parenthood and of your dependence upon divine help for strength and wisdom to faithfully discharge your duties, do you now present your children in dedication to God seeking divine blessing and guidance? If so, you may respond, "We do."

### Parental Response

"We do."

Having so purposed in your hearts, do you now in the presence of these witnesses and in the presence of God solemnly covenant to strive, by precept and example, and using the many agencies of the church, such as the Sabbath school, to train your children to love God, to accept Jesus as their Saviour, and to keep God's commandments? Your affirmative response will be recorded in heaven. If you wish to so respond, say "We do."

## Parental Response

"We do."

## To the Congregation

In this task of rearing these children we all have a share. These parents will make mistakes, as we all have. Their children, like your own, are living in an imperfect world, but will you join these parents in their sincere dedication today? As many of the church who will support these God-fearing parents in their endeavor to rear these little ones for God, who will pray for them, and for their children, who will uphold them before God and other, will you respond by saying, "Amen."

"Amen."

APPENDIX B

A SAMPLE OF CERTIFICATION OF CHILD-DEDICATION

This sample is used at Pioneer Memorial Church of  
Seventh-day Adventists in Andrews University.

# Certificate of Dedication

This is to Certify That

\_\_\_\_\_

was born on \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ and was

Presented to the Lord

in

Dedication

by \_\_\_\_\_

on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_

in the year of our Lord 19 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Minister

APPENDIX C

CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING PERCEPTION  
OF CHILDREN'S STATUS

The Letter Which I Sent

Jan. 31, 1986

Seizou Wagatsuma  
A-6 Garland  
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

I am now studying as a D.Min. student at Andrews University Theological Seminary and have taken this quarter an independent study course under Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, an Andrews University Professor. And he has recommended for me to write a letter to you concerning the topic of my research. The research theme which has been given by Professor Maxwell is "The Perception of Unbaptized Children as Christians in the History of the SDA Church." I would be greatly obliged if you would kindly send me any information related to the theme above. Especially I would like to have your official opinion concerning the participation in the Foot Washing Service and the Lord's Supper of unbaptized children.

I am also interested in a future project concerning church membership of children belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I believe that they are also part of God's family. If possible would you also include any information, suggestions, or personal opinions concerning these two projects. I would appreciate any information you can give me. Thank you so much in advance.

Yours very sincerely,

Seizou Wagatsuma<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This letter was by the writer sent to several persons in order to gather information.

The Letter from Dr. Richard Hammill

P. O. Box 1205  
Loma Linda, Ca 92354  
Feb. 9, 1986

My dear brother in Christ,

I have received your letter and will give you all the information I have. I was not a member of the Church Manual Committee in recent years, so do not know if they have discussed the matter of non-baptized children participating in Communion.

The only official discussion about this of which I am acquainted took place at the G.C.<sup>1</sup> Session in Dallas in 1980. When the present 27 statements of belief were being considered for adoption, at the time the one on the Lord's Supper was being considered, a delegate made a speech, and possibly a motion, to the effect that the statement should prescribe non-baptized children from participating in Communion. There was some discussion in the floor, mostly against the motion, and it was eventually defeated. It is possible that before the motion was defeated it was referred to the small editorial committee, of which I was chairman. I have this impression but I do not recall for sure. At any rate, the G.C. in Session did not accept the idea of prescribing participation by children. In fact the statement closes with the words, "The communion Service is open to all believing Christians." Ordinarily small children are not encouraged to take part in Communion in our churches, but there is no basis for excluding them if they profess belief in Christ, even if they are not baptized. This is all I know about it.

I do not recall ever hearing any discussion about the second matter you raise, and have no input to make concerning it. The Bible appears to support the concept that baptism is the door to membership in the body of Christ, but as to who are "counted" as members it is not very explicit.

May the Lord bless you in your studies.

Sincerely,

Richard Hammill

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<sup>1</sup>Abbreviation for the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

PS. If you look in the Adventist Review issues that reported the 1980 G.C. Session (i.e., the G.C. Bulletin of April 25-May 8, 1980) you will probably find the discussion I referred to above. RH

The Letter from Elder Frank B. Holbrook

February 26, 1986

Seizou Wagatsuma  
A-6 Garland  
Berrien Springs MI 49103

Dear Brother Wagatsuma:

Your letter to the Youth Department was referred to our office for answering. You say that you would like to have an "official" opinion concerning the participation in Foot Washing Service and the Lord's Supper of unbaptized children.

While the Church Manual does not speak to this matter, and I cannot find any discussion of the subject in our files, let me state that it has been customary among our people to permit children to participate in the services of the footwashing and the communion supper only after they have become baptized members.

As Adventists we hold to the Bible teaching of believer's baptism and reject infant baptism as unscriptural. A natural corollary to this Bible-based position is that only baptized believers should participate in the ordinances of footwashing and supper.

The Jewish people, as we know, did not take their young men into the congregation as full members until they reached the 12th year. Then they became full participants in the worship of the congregation. It would appear that even Jesus wasn't taken to the Passover until His 12th year. (Luke 12:41-42; DA 78:1<sup>1</sup>).

It is not healthy to press what is designed for more mature years down into childhood. As you know, some cultures have had child marriages, for example. So, we too could have Christian child marriages, infant baptism, and child participation in the ordinances. But it would be more in harmony with the Scriptures if children were taught to

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<sup>1</sup>E. G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 78 and the 1st paragraph.

prepare themselves and to look forward to the privileges of church membership.

When a child is old enough to comprehend the call of Christ--to repent of his sins and to confess Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord intelligently, then he can be baptized and can enter into the privileges of church membership. Children mature at varying ages, and while our general practice has been about 12, some are baptized at 8 or 9. Be that as it may, our general practice (which we believe is appropriate) is to wait until the child has become a baptized member before he becomes a participant in the other rites of the church.

I trust that these remarks maybe of help to you.

Sincerely yours,

Frank B. Holbrook  
Associate Director

FBH:g

PS We probably have no rule on this in the Church Manual because it seems self-evident that participation in these special church rites is the privilege of church members.

The Letter from Elder Lawrence Maxwell

March 24, 1986 and July 26, 1987<sup>1</sup>

Seizou Wagatsuma  
A-6 Garland  
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Dear Brother Wagatsuma:

The question whether Seventh-day Adventist children should participate in the communion service is interesting one. At the General Conference session in Dallas in 1980 several of the delegates, myself included, tried from the floor to get some reference to it included in the statement of beliefs. We were unsuccessful, and the subject was left open. (Summaries of our speeches and the chairman's responses may

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<sup>1</sup>This is the revision, by Lawrence Maxwell himself, of the letter which he sent me on March 24, 1986, in order not, according to him, to be badly misunderstood and also to clarify a few other points.

be found in the General Conference Bulletin for that session.)

Here are some reasons why I believe that unbaptized children of Adventist parents ought not to participate in the foot washing or the Lord's supper.

In John 13 Jesus said, "He that is washed" does not need to be washed "except to wash his feet" (v. 10). Washed in this case refers to baptism, so Jesus was washing the feet of adults who had previously been baptized. Minutes later He said that His followers should follow His example (v. 15). His example was to wash feet of baptized persons. He did not here (nor anywhere else that I know of) set an example of washing the feet of unbaptized children.

Moving on to the bread and wine, we immediately recognize that these are symbols of spiritual food. People who are literally dead cannot eat; only those who are alive. It follows that the symbols of spiritual food should not be fed to those who are symbolically spiritually dead. Before baptism, a person is symbolically "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1, 5; cf. Col 2:13). After due instruction, he is to be symbolically "buried" in baptism. Only then can he rise from the water "made alive" with Christ (Col 2:12, 13, RSV). Then it is appropriate for that person to eat the symbols of spiritual food, because only then is he alive enough to eat it.

These basically are my reasons for believing that among Adventist young people, only those who have been baptized should participate in the foot washing and the Lord's supper.

There are some very conscientious parents and some very good leaders in the church who consider these reasons immaterial. I have heard some suggest that forbidding unbaptized children to participate makes them feel left out and deprives them of an experience that might have helped bring them to Christ. Let's look to see whether God's symbols should be observed exactly, and whether modifying them results in gain or loss.

In the wilderness, the Lord outlined certain symbols and rituals. Nadab and Abihu followed them, but, apparently, not precisely. They put fire and incense into their censers and went in to worship, and the Lord slew them (Lev 10:1). Modifying the symbols produced fatal loss.

Cain brought an offering, but he modified God's specifications; his offering was rejected. Modifying the symbol made it teach something different from what God wanted it to



teach; not only was his offering rejected, so was he (Gen 3).

God said the ark of the covenant should be carried on men's shoulders (Num 7:9). With the highest of motives and in a spirit of great respect and reverence, David sought to transport the ark on a new cart--with disastrous results (2 Sam 6:1-11).

Communion is a sacrament. Marriage is another. Some (not in our church) recommend sex before marriage as a good way to determine compatibility. But our church says, "No, for God said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' (Ex 20:14)." Premarital sex is seen, correctly, as corrupting the sanctity of marriage and violating its significance as a symbol of Christ's relation to the church.

Sabbath kept on Saturday brings the seal of God and His eternal blessings. But Sabbath kept on Sunday, even though for the most sincere reasons (to honor Christ's resurrection, etc.) brings the mark of the beast and the unmixed wrath of God (Rev 14:9-11).

From these experiences I feel we must draw the conclusion that when God gives us symbols, He wants us to observe them as He has given them.

One thing that happens when young Adventist children are allowed to participate in the foot-washing and communion symbols before baptism is that both the importance and the meaning of baptism are obscured.

In our home we explained foot washing and the Lord's supper to our daughters, and they frequently watched others participating. They asked questions: "Why do they do this? What does it mean?" We explained. They understood that when they were baptized they would be allowed to participate. And this is exactly what happened. Actually, postponing participation until after baptism had the effect of making them more eager for baptism.

In Your correspondence you raise a question whether young children of Seventh-day Adventist church members are members of the church. I suppose in discussing this question we would need to define what we mean by membership. We generally--and historically--have defined membership in such a way that a person must be baptized to be a member. We might perhaps want to set up some different categories. We might have "baptized members" and "church-family members" or some such as that. I'm sure you must be aware of the controversy among the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony in the seventeenth century which led to the Half-Way Covenant. You could get good material for your

paper out of that experience. It occurs to me that if we call unbaptized children members in the full sense, we will be faced with the need to drop some of them from membership when they do not get baptized. Will this be done when they are twelve years old? Or fourteen? Or sixteen? I see some very real problems. Some churches I have been in list the names of unbaptized children in parentheses under their (baptized) parents' names and beside their baptized brothers and sisters. This I like very much.

I am complimented that you wish to include this letter with your dissertation. May God bless you abundantly in your ministry to His people, especially to His children.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Maxwell  
Formerly editor of Our Little Friend, Primary Treasure,  
Guide, and Signs of the Times<sup>1</sup>

P.S. My secretary objected to the idea that before they are baptized children are spiritually dead. She pointed out that they love Jesus, and that Jesus said, "Let the children come to Me." These are good points. At the least, children are spiritually immature, able to take "milk" but not ready for "strong meat" (Heb 5:12-14). Children can be taught about Jesus. Jesus took them in His arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16). But He didn't wash their feet. If our horror at the suggestion that children are dead in sin justifies our letting children wash feet and eat the Lord's supper, why don't we baptize them at an early age? Adventists correctly say baptism requires understanding (cf. Mark 16:15, 16; Matt 28:19, 20). As I see it, learning about Jesus, responding to His love, being baptized, and participating in communion require progressive spiritual maturity, and it seems appropriate to conclude that each should come in it's proper time.

P.S.S. As I sign this letter it occurs to me that in John 13 Jesus washed the feet of men who had been sinners, who had repented of their sins and been cleansed by baptism. After their baptism, they had backslidden, and it was the sins of their backsliding that Jesus was now washing away. Surely, when foot-washing is understood this way, it is totally inappropriate for children.--L.M. 7/21/87

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<sup>1</sup>He retired early this year in 1987.

APPENDIX D

WRITINGS BY ARTHUR WHITEFIELD SPALDING

This list is an illustration how the Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout her history has seriously concerned children. The life of Spalding (1877-1953) was spent in serving God through the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He "felt that it was in home school that the foundation in all the elements of education, moral, intellectual, social, and physical, were laid."<sup>1</sup> But the Church has never regarded them as full members.

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