

EXCERPTS FROM

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THE LINK

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

AFTER THIS MANNER...PRAY YE

(A Study of, the Lord's Prayer)

Part 5A.

Part 4 of this study dealt with the first petition in the Godward section of this prayer: "HALLOWED BE THY NAME." We are now to commence examining the second: "THY KINGDOM COME." This is a tremendous subject: "THY KINGDOM."

At the outset we need to be reminded of the framework in which this prayer is set, namely, Christ's great discourse on the mountain side. Many wondrous and weighty statements had been made by Him in His sermon, for example: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:3). "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." (the same thought). (Matt.5:8). "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:10). "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:20).

Our Lord's whole discourse pertains to "THE KINGDOM," and now as He gives instruction as to our manner of praying, He brings His hearers face on with the subject: you are to pray for the coming of THAT KINGDOM of which I have been speaking, says Christ.

Reason alone now demands to know exactly what is involved, for no one can intelligently utter such a petition as this unless they know what is meant by it.

Although this prayer is so brief, yet is it not in any way disjointed: each terse statement blends harmoniously into the other. Particularly is this so with the Godward aspect. "Our Father which art in heaven." In this we see His person and His dwelling place. Then, "hallowed be Thy name" - His supremacy; One who has a name above every name. Having established His eternal power and Godhead, the prayer then leads on to HIS KINGDOM. In this there is sequence, there is Divine order in the lay-out.

The kingdom for which we are to pray, is the regime of the One who sits upon the throne of eternal majesty, whose name is holy. He is "a great King above all gods." (Psalm 95:3). "The Lord sitteth King forever." (Psalm 29:10). So, when we pray 'THY KINGDOM COME' we are praying for the kingdom of the "KING ETERNAL."

What then is OUR understanding of this? What kingdom are we praying for? Dispensationalists who make this whole section of Scripture to be Jewish, calling it "Kingdom Truth" (by which they mean a future earthly kingdom to be set up in Israel: this they term "The Millennium") say, that this is a prayer which Jews will pray immediately prior to the setting up of this supposed kingdom.

Let the question be asked: Where in the fifty-six verses of our Lord's discourse, which precede this prayer, has there been even a hint of one thousand years earthly kingdom? Is not the whole context of those verses deeply SPIRITUAL?

The Apostles (in the main Jews themselves) had some kind of a notion of an earthly kingdom; and one day they let it slip; they asked: "Lord wilt Thou at this last time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). If they had rightly understood the Old Testament, particularly the Minor Prophets (who were God's last messengers to the nation of Israel) they would not have asked such a question. Did not our Lord have to rebuke two of His disciples upon this very issue as to their ignorance of the prophetic writings? "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." (Luke 24:25). Alas, such ignorance of the prophets still exists today.

Christ publicly declared that His kingdom was NOT of this world, (cf. John 18:36). The kingdom of Matthew chapter 6 verse 10, is not a political or earthly kingdom. The very thought is completely out of keeping with all that has gone before. The context of this petition forbids such an interpretation.

When Christ taught His disciples (and us) to pray "THY KINGDOM COME" He was not inferring that there was to be an earthly kingdom in which He would rule in Palestine, wielding

supreme political power in great pomp and splendour, which according to the Dispensational theory will only last for one thousand years in any case. Are we to believe that this is the kind of kingdom that we are bidden to pray for? the answer is, no! for the "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" is of a far different order to an earthly political kingdom, with a distinct national (Jewish) emphasis.

Neither is it God's Providential Kingdom which is in view in this prayer, for the God of Heaven is in control of ALL things in ALL places at ALL times; He ordereth all. "His kingdom ruleth over all." (Psalm 103:19). "God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another." (Psalm 75:7). "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes." (1 Sam.2:8). "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done." (Acts 4 : 27 - 28). "Thou visiteth the earth ... Thou enrichest it ... Thou preparest them corn ... Thou watereth the ridges ... Thou settlest the furrows ... Thou blesseth the springing ... Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness." (Ps . 65:9-11). All this is the kingdom of God's Providence, EVER is it with us. GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS.

What exactly then, is in focus when Christ said: "After this manner pray ye ... Thy kingdom come." The kingdom which is in view is SPIRITUAL. It is the kingdom of God; the kingdom of HEAVEN (not earth). Of this kingdom, although it be ONE, yet, has it two aspects which can aptly be described as GRACE and GLORY.

In Luke chapter 17 verse 21, Christ said: "The kingdom of God is within you, that is, all those who know the grace of God in their heart. Then 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 12. we are told that "God hath called you unto His kingdom and glory."

When we pray, "THY KINGDOM COME," it is that the kingdom of grace be established in our hearts through faith, and that it may increase, coming in even greater measure - GRACE UPON GRACE. However, this is but the beginning; for saith the

Scriptures: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." (1 Pet.5:10). The kingdom of grace within is but the BEGINNING of our ETERNAL inheritance in GLORY.

These two aspects differ not in nature, for they are one and the same; but they do differ in degree. The kingdom of grace in the heart can well be likened to "the seed" which will result in "the flower," which will be nothing less than the "full bloom" of eternal glory.

Our forefathers used to speak much of "The Church Militant" and "The Church Triumphant." These were very meaningful terms. By "The Church Militant" they meant the people of God on earth; those who knew the grace of God in their hearts and who had been called to His kingdom. They were His soldiers; His ambassadors; representing Him in an alien scene holding aloft the banner of truth amidst evil, sin, and deception.

"The Church Triumphant" is the saints already in heaven. These through grace have fought the good fight of faith and laid hold of eternal life. They have finished their course on earth and entered into the final triumph and victory. John had a glimpse of them in Revelation chapter 7 verses 9-17. Isaac Watts put it into verse as he penned the words

"Now with triumphal palms they stand
Before the throne on high
And serve the God they love, amidst
The glories of the sky."

In ancient Athens there was once a large temple. Although one building, it had two entirely separate compartments. One was named "The Temple of Virtue," the other "The Temple of Honour." But, there was only one entrance door; and that was into the compartment known as "The Temple of Virtue," and it was by first entering this temple and passing through it that one could gain entrance into "The Temple of Honour." This precisely illustrates "The Kingdom of God" in the dual aspect in which it is seen in Holy Scripture.

When through grace we are called to the kingdom, we pass

through the door which is Christ, (cf. John 10:9) immediately are we justified and clothed in His spotless righteousness (or virtue). His grace is shed abroad in our hearts, we are members of His Church on earth (militant), but we are only passing through; we are heading for the second temple; that house which is eternal in the heavens: "The Church Triumphant." The GLORY which shall be.

Some who are reading this may well be thinking that all that pertains to this spiritual kingdom, is according to the Eternal Purpose in Christ. What God has decreed shall stand; His kingdom cannot fail, so why are we to pray after this manner?

There is implied in this petition, the fact that there is ANOTHER KINGDOM. Of this, the Bible has much to say; it is the kingdom of darkness where sin reigns. "The power of darkness." (Col. 1:13). "The works of darkness." (Rom.13:12). This kingdom too, leads into another compartment - the chains of everlasting darkness, (cf. Jude v.6).

The Head of this other kingdom is Satan. The natural man dwelleth where Satan's seat is; he is a captive; man is UNDER Satan.

When we pray, THY kingdom come, we are positively praying for the accomplishing of God's eternal purpose, and the definite overthrow of Satan's designs. We are praying that sinners may be snatched from the "burning" and that grace may come into their hearts.

"The kingdom of God ... is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17), whereas the kingdom of Satan is sin, and unrest "in the gall of bitterness." If the kingdom of grace be not set up in a man's heart, he is said to be under the power of Satan, (cf. Acts 26:18). A captive of the Devil, (cf. 2 Tim.2:26). The Prince of the power of the air is he which worketh in the children of disobedience, (cf. Eph.2:2).

One of the Puritans wrote: "Just as a ship goes 'full sail' when the wind blows, so men go on in sin, as the Devil who is the prince of the air continually blows into their sails." Is not Judas Iscariot an example? Luke states in chapter 22 verse 3:

"Then Satan entered into Judas." But that was not all, he continued to blow; he sent him to the High Priest, from there to the garden, and the Devil never ceased to blow into that man's sails until he had betrayed the Christ, then he blew the harder, till he reached "the field of blood" where Judas hanged himself. So did the power of Satan carry him into the kingdom of ETERNAL DARKNESS.

When we pray: "THY KINGDOM COME," we pray AGAINST the Devil. Through grace we are identifying with Christ. We act as those who are of His kingdom (or on His side), fully entering into Christ's interests. This is the believer's role on earth. We are of: "The Church Militant, and on our way to the ultimate - "The Kingdom of Glory." But, in our passage through, we are to be IN HARMONY with our King and "The Church Triumphant."

However, there is still more which is involved in this petition. We who know the kingdom of grace established within us, still need earnestly to pray: "THY KINGDOM COME" in order that the kingdom might flourish in our souls, and that grace may increase. It is that for which the Apostle Paul prayed when he said: "Grace be multiplied." This was a petition for the enlargement of the kingdom within the heart, and that the laws of the kingdom might ever be having greater authority and power in the life. There can be no doubt that until we enter into the kingdom of glory, which is the ultimate, we all need to pray fervently, "after this manner," for the best of us oftentimes are but as smoking flax. We need oil in our lamps to rekindle us and cause us to burn more brightly.

If the seed of faith in us is to become a great tree, which will withstand all the storms and gales of this present life, then its roots must go deep into the waters of God's love and power. If our branches are to be strong, and bear fruit, then we must know continued supplies of grace, and the fertilising power of the Holy Spirit, because there is nothing in us for the seed of faith to feed upon. We are entirely shut up to the GRACE OF GOD, not only for salvation initially, but also for living, right up to the moment of glorification: therefore, "after this manner pray ye" - THY KINGDOM COME IN ME O LORD, Let it be seen that Thou art SOVEREIGN in my life, that THY LAWS

are the governing factor, and when the storms of life assail, though I rock in the storm, yet, let my roots so go down into the truth of Thy Word, that nothing shall uproot me. In the darkest hours, through which I am called to pass, save me from being but a smouldering flax. May the oil of Thy Holy Spirit so fill me that my light shall burn brightly to the end. Oh! how much is involved in this second petition of this amazing prayer.

The question may well be asked: will this all come about by simply saying these three words, "THY KINGDOM COME?" This prayer is but A PATTERN. When dissected and carefully analysed there are volumes of truth contained in verses 9-13 of Matthew chapter 6, and the more we come to understand the underlying truth the more shall we pray: "After this manner." So, to really pray these petitions intelligently, we must get to know all that is implied, and there is only one way to become informed in spiritual matters, and that is by the Holy Scriptures. Just as faith comes to us through the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, so faith is nurtured and grows through an ONGOING KNOWLEDGE of that same Word.

The Apostle Paul fully appreciated this, and in consequence prayed "after this manner" set by Christ. Let a few examples be given: "We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Col.1:9). "I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." (Phil. 1:9). "I make mention of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." (Eph.1:16-18). Peter too, prays in precisely the same way: "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet.3:18)

The Apostles knew that the more a believer grew in grace and in knowledge, the more would the kingdom be enlarged in their heart; but that knowledge can only come from the Scriptures, hence the importance of reading them, and of attendance upon faithful exposition. It is through the Word that we are sanctified, (cf. John 17:17).

The Word of God has a wonderful cleansing effect. "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:25-27). In this Scripture the ULTIMATE GLORY is in view - "A GLORIOUS CHURCH." But on earth, within the heart of the believer, there is to be the continuous washing of the Word; thereby does the Christian "go on to perfection." "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." (Job 17:9).

The Christian who is ever increasing in grace and knowledge WILL HOLD - he is deeply rooted, his hands will be clean, he will do that which is right, he will get stronger and stronger, he will not be a spiritual weakling, but will STAND in the evil day.

Said one of the early persecuted saints to the great emperor Valentinian, who had just sentenced him to death: "Sir, you may take away my life but you cannot take away my love of the truth." It is only the man who has real conviction who can speak like this in such a situation. From whence cometh such conviction, and what is the secret? It is KNOWLEDGE and GRACE. Oh! how we need to pray: "THY KINGDOM COME." So come into my life Lord that Thy will be SUPREME!

In all that we are seeing, no one must form the opinion that the believer is to become "other worldly," completely disinterested in matters of this world or other people. Such an attitude is far removed from the teaching of God's Word. We are to be very interested in other people; what is more we are to be diligent in our calling. In this way is the kingdom of God enhanced. Where grace and knowledge are developing in the heart so will there be seen a healthy balance of the material and spiritual.

When Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, after he had exhorted them to increase in grace and so on, he added: "And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase

more and more, and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." (1 Thess.4:10-12). Maintain a lively interest in all around you in Macedonia, don't cut yourself off so as to be unapproachable, neither turn to others to look after you and to supply your needs - it is not honest; work with your own hands, go quietly about your business, make it your study to be diligent, so that you do not lack these material things.

On this subject Thomas Watson says: "It shows the increase of grace when a Christian keeps a due decorum. He joins piety with industry when zeal runs in his religion, and diligence is seen in his calling."

Of one thing let us all be aware, and that is, Christianity is a very practical matter; it touches us at every point of life. It is in our daily work and our association with others that the principles which govern us, and the laws of THE KINGDOM which are written within our hearts, are seen to be outworked. God has not set up the kingdom of grace in our hearts that we should isolate ourselves in a monastic situation; we are to get out into the world, work with our own hands alongside others, and let it be seen that we are different. Had not Christ dealt with this aspect earlier in His sermon? "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt.5:16). It must be pointed out again that there is a perfect unity in our Lord's discourse; it is deeply spiritual from the beginning to the end, and never must this unity be marred by taking parts out from their context. The Christian has the light of the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN lit in his heart, and he is to get out before men and let it shine. "Ye are witnesses unto me," said Christ. "Go ye therefore," illuminate others, diffuse the glorious light of the gospel, shed light upon His law in society, and tell men of His righteous requirements explaining it to them. Labour that the kingdom of grace be established in others.

The kingdom for which we are bidden to pray is SPIRITUAL; it pertains to God, and to heaven. It is first established through

grace in the heart, and this the writer has sought to point out in this article, and it will find its ultimate fulfilment in glory: this will be considered in the next issue, D.V.

W. H. Molland

TERSE SAYINGS BY MEN OF FAITH

The reason why so many professing Christians are not troubled over any spiritual decline is because they never had any spiritual health.

Trifling with temptations without, are certain evidences of the decay of personal holiness.

The empty professor is far more dangerous as a close acquaintance than one who makes no profession.

Corrupt Christianity is more offensive to Christ than is open infidelity.

A. W. Pink

It is an ill sign to be contented with a little grace.

A Christian cannot hold communion with men of the world, but he shall be the worse for it.

Thomas Manton

If a man be not interested in Christ, he may perish with "OUR FATHER" in his mouth.

Heart and tongue must go together; word and work, lip and life, prayer and practice must echo to one another, or else thy prayers and thy soul will be lost together.

Thomas Brooks

PAEDO-BAPTISM - IS IT VALID?

(Continued)

In the last edition of this magazine a number of historical facts were set out. Statements drawn from early days A.D. to more recent times, made by men who in the main were themselves Paedo-Baptists, yet, with an almost united voice did they admit that baptism must be by immersion; that infant baptism (by any mode), although a tradition, is not taught in the Scriptures. In the face of such evidence, why are such practices perpetuated, and indeed claimed by so many today to BE Biblical? What is more, those who do NOT baptize infants are said by Paedo-Baptists to live in disobedience to the Lord.

Because of the inaccuracy of infant baptism, in any of its varied forms, testimony to the truth must be raised. It is a thing of the utmost gravity when religious observances are imposed which invalidate ordinances clearly appointed by the Lord. "The teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" — "Making void God's commandment by men's traditions."

Whilst this article may appear drastic to some of God's true (yet mistaken) people, perhaps even offensive, yet it is not written in that spirit. Where the TRUTH of God is concerned we must "lift up our voice as a trumpet."

That there are quite a number of forms of Paedo-Baptism was made clear in the previous article. This being the case it necessarily follows that there must be a variety of theories upon which the practices are based. Because of this our subject is wide ranging, and to deal with it in a thorough manner would fill a volume of considerable size. It is therefore the writer's intention, within the confines of this magazine, to high-light just a few of the main lines of thought and practice, making reference to various "Confessions" and writings of men from whence these practices arise, and to bring them to the "touch-stone" of Holy Writ.

THE BOOK OF COMMOM PRAYER

This is the book which sets out the Sacraments and other

Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England. According to their formula for the "Publick Baptism of infants," unless the child is sick "it should be "dipped" in the water discreetly and warily." (How often is THIS done?) Following this dipping, which is done in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, the priest shall say: "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the Devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. Amen. Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto Him that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning. The priest shall continue: We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption and to incorporate him into thy holy Church, and humbly we beseech thee to grant that he being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in His death may crucify the old man and utterly abolish the whole body of sin; and that as he is made partaker of the death of thy Son, he may also be partaker of His resurrection; so that finally with the residue of thy holy Church, he may be an inheritor of thine everlasting kingdom through Christ our Lord. Amen."

These statements are so blatantly contradictory to Holy Scripture that they need little, if any, commenting upon. However cleverly men such as Bishop Ryle and many other so-called evangelicals in Anglican circles may try and explain away the raw edges of this teaching, the fact remains that baptismal regeneration could not be more clearly expressed. By this act of so-called baptism "THIS CHILD IS REGENERATE AND GRAFTED INTO CHRIST'S CHURCH ... WE YIELD HEARTY THANKS MOST MERCIFUL FATHER THAT IT HATH PLEASD THEE TO REGENERATE THIS INFANT WITH THY HOLY SPIRIT, TO RECEIVE HIM FOR THINE OWN CHILD BY ADOPTION AND TO INCORPORATE HIM INTO THY HOLY CHURCH."

There is not a word in Scripture which will substantiate this dogma; it is a cunningly devised fable by which countless thousands have been deceived. Pinning everything to their infant baptism they vainly imagine that all is well for eternity. This is a "damnable heresy" which too many tolerate, and too few speak out against.

At the Reformation, and since by vocal Protestants, great issue is made of the teaching of "Transubstantiation," and the grave perversion of the Lord's Supper to the Romish Mass. This same book of Common Prayer rightly describes this in ARTICLE 31 as "a blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit." But let the question be asked: is the perversion of the Lord's Supper any more dangerous and blasphemous than the deceptive heretical teaching of regeneration by infant baptism? Would not those in Protestant Societies today who still major upon Transubstantiation and the Mass, yet continue in circles where the theory of Infant Baptism is taught and practised, do well to be consistent and come clean from ALL Romish distortions and blasphemous fables?

Many Paedo-Baptists who may be reading this will concur with what has been said, for the basis of their practice is not the Book of Common Prayer, and any thought of Baptismal Regeneration would be repugnant to them. They believe and teach, "Covenant Theology."

When one enters the realm of "Covenant Theology" one is confronted with a welter of thought and opinion. There are so many slants and emphasis that only sketchy outlines can be given in such a short space.

In the main there are two handbooks: "The Westminster Confession of Faith" as followed by the "Presbyterians" and "The Heidelberg Catechism" and "Belgic Confession" followed by the "Dutch Reformed Church" and kindred bodies.

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION.

Ch. 28 (1). "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party into the visible Church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into

Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world."

(3) "Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon a person."

(4) "Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized."

As already stated, it would be very wrong to suggest that the practice of infant baptism inevitably means that those persons believe in baptismal regeneration, for the belief of the "Presbyterians" is as set out in the Westminster Confession. This in the main is a most worthy handbook of Christian doctrine, but as with all human works we must only follow men as far as they follow the Holy Scriptures.

In section 3 of the Confession where it is stated that "Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling," we say NO! This is based upon supposition. Baptism is not rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling. That which baptism is to set forth is BURIAL and RESURRECTION, and immersion only is the mode; other means are not adequate; they destroy the significance of the ordinance.

When in section 4 they add, "infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized," we again say an emphatic NO! Because nowhere in the Word of God is such teaching as infant baptism found. As Prof. Fr. Schleiermacher so rightly stated: "all traces of infant baptism which one has asserted are found in the New Testament must first be inserted there."

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Sec. 27. Question 74.

"Are infants to be baptized?"

Answer: Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and Church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author

of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian Church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant, or testament, by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant."

This we also refute, and the reasons will become obvious as we proceed.

In broad terms the arguments for Covenant Theology are that the covenant of grace embraces, not only believers, but also their children, and that the covenant sign of this in the Old Testament was circumcision, and in the New Testament it is baptism; baptism having replaced circumcision.

There is no New Testament proof for the contention that baptism and circumcision are one and the same, and whilst the writer of this article would readily admit that children born of Christian parents are, in the providence of God, born into a favoured environment, yet, they are OF ADAM equally as much as a child born in darkest heathendom. All Adam's posterity are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, (cf. Psalm 51:5). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3:6). "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom.5:12). "In Adam all die." (1 Cor.15:22). All are by nature the children of wrath, (cf. Eph.2:3).

There are NO exceptions in this, and to infer otherwise is a denial of original sin and man's federal headship in Adam.

The pedlars of Covenant Theology apply the blessings of the old earthly covenant to the Church in an absolute manner. By doing this they establish their circumcision-baptism identity, and create what they term an ORGANIC aspect to the covenant of grace. One Paedo-Baptist writes: "Those who deny infant baptism are blind to that fundamental truth of God's covenant, that God never deals with us as mere individuals, but that He gathers His Church organically, that is, in line of the generations of believers and their spiritual seed. According to this basic doctrine, children are also regenerated in the line of the covenant. It is in that conviction that we

present our children for- baptism, since children are also included in the covenant of God." C.HANKO.

"Godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to dall out of this life in their infancy." THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION ARTICLE 17.

"Both the Old and New Testaments teach that children of believers also are incorporated into the Church of God and into His covenant of grace. They also must receive the sign and seal of the covenant. To fail to do this is to live in disobedience to the Scriptures." H.HANKO.

This ORGANIC conception of the Covenant Of Grace, one totally rejects. The Word of God makes it clear at the very commencement of the New Testament that salvation is "NOT OF BLOOD" (John 1:13) and to a man who was within the old covenant, and who doubtless would have received the sign of circumcision, the Lord said: "YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN." (John 3:7).

This "Covenant Theology" as set out with slight variations in "The Westminster Confession" and "The Heidelberg Catechism" is said to be "THE REFORMED DOCTRINE." This may well be, indeed it is so; but what of it? We are to contend for BIBLICAL DOCTRINE. Unashamedly does one say that the "Reformed" basis of infant baptism, although differing from the "Anglican" position, yet, it is equally contrary to the Word of God.

In no way is one undermining the wondrous work of "The Reformation," for under God, it was the great turning point in the Church's history in Europe, but it would be a gross exaggeration to suggest that all truth was grasped, and that from the "Reformation" onward "all the counsel of God" was adhered to, for the continued presence of National Churches, Vestments, Ministerial Titles, as well as Infant Sprinkling, all give evidence to the contrary. Neither did the "Puritans" come clean on a number of these very important issues. Was not the unlearned Bedfordshire tinker, John Bunyan more enlightened than them all? It is in the line of Bunyan that we

see "Non-Conformity" and true Biblical independency coming into focus in the Church again, coupled with baptism in a true manner. But we should not follow men, neither man made Confessions, only as far as they follow the Divine mandate. Yet, is this not the case with many? How often has one heard: "I take the Westminster position", "The Heidelberg Catechism states...", "The Reformed Teaching is..."

Martin Luther himself once said: "It is an extremely foolish thing when they command that one shall believe the Church, the Fathers, or Councils, although there is no Word of God for it."

Reformed Paedo-Baptists would do well to heed such words, for some of their statements are outrageous when examined in the light of Holy Scripture. Let a few be cited:

"In the line of the covenant the seed of regeneration is implanted in the hearts of the elect children of the covenant in very infancy ... we regard it as a common rule that in the line of the covenant the elect children are reborn from infancy." REFORMED DOGMATICS P.651.

"If a father becomes a citizen of a country he makes his children citizens. In like manner when a man becomes a Christian his children are to be regarded as doing the same thing." CHARLES HODGE.

"Baptized infants are to be received as the children of God and treated accordingly." Prof. MURRAY. CHRISTIAN BAPTISM P.59.

However convincingly these men try to argue their case it can only be regarded as pernicious teaching. All men, without exception are born into this world in UNION WITH ADAM, and in him "ALL DIE." (1 Cor. 15:22). "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom.5:12).

To hold to a belief that because a child is born of Christian parents, then in some way or another that child is organically in the covenant of grace, that from infancy it has been transferred from union with Adam to union with Christ is to deny the plain teaching of Holy Scripture, and is as

blasphemous a fable, and as dangerous a deceit as baptismal regeneration. Every child of man is born of the Adamic race. If there were exceptions, then, Romans Chapter 5 verse 12 is a lie. "Let God be true," not man. We dare not tell our children that they are Christians because in the providence of God they were born unto us who have known His grace and power in salvation; away with such heretical teaching. We tell our children of their lost estate in Adam; we tell them of the work of Christ for sinners in redemption; We urge them to: "repent and believe the Gospel;" THEN, be baptized as those who have "gladly received His word" (for themselves personally), giving evidence to the fact that they have died with Christ and are raised with Him. This is the Scriptural teaching of Baptism. It is for true believers who have CONSCIOUSLY come to faith in Christ, They then witness to the fact by being IMMERSED in water, signifying that the old life is dead and buried, and coming out of the water demonstrate that they rise to walk in "newness of life."

However, those who are steeped in unbiblical "REFORMED TRADITION" will not accept this plain and obvious teaching of the New Testament. Nevertheless, common sense alone causes them to admit that not all the children of Christian parents, though receiving the sign of being in the covenant by their rite of infant sprinkling, give evidence in after life of being truly regenerated. They also will concede, despite their ORGANIC COVENANT theory, that God does save children born of the reprobate who were never sprinkled, and, in consequence, never received the sign and seal. Some of the statements made to cover their covenant theory on THIS POINT must surely stagger those of the most hazy spiritual belief, and to those who understand something of the immutability of God's counsel, and the absolute certainty of the covenant of grace. it is most grievous and hurtful.

One writer states concerning the children sprinkled and said to be regenerated in infancy: "A certain number of them will voluntarily choose unbelief or rebellion despite the work of God in their hearts." Another writes concerning God's covenant: "There are weeds in the field. Of that there is no question. There may even be more weeds than wheat. But it is still God's covenant because God's purpose is to establish His

covenant with the elect believers and their seed. No amount of weeds can ever change that. No one may say, because there is reprobate seed in that covenant as it is historically manifested, it is not really God's covenant at all." WE AND OUR CHILDREN P.88.

"It is a great evil to be alien from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise. Those parents sin grievously against the souls of their children who neglect to consecrate them to God in the ordinance of baptism. Do let the little ones have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, even if they afterwards choose to erase them." CHARLES HODGE.

Reformed men who speak of opting out of the covenant, and voluntarily CHOOSING unbelief; CHOOSING to erase their names from the Lamb's Book of Life, are no better, and perhaps even worse, than the Arminian who pleads with the dead sinner to DECIDE for Christ, and by so doing, he CHOOSES to get his name enrolled in heaven.

Covenant Theology is a gigantic spiritual muddle, and Paedo-Baptism in whatever form, a teaching which is "Extra-Biblical"

To all this let a word be addressed to BAPTISTS. In the Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, it is stated: "Infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit." (Chap. 10 Sec.3). The Scripture brought forward to support this is John Chapter 3 verses 3, 5 and 6. How infant salvation can be read into those verses surely requires tremendous imagination. Yet, even C. H. Spurgeon, and many others, have preached this, and do today.

To say that all infants dying are regenerated, is going very far beyond the Word of God. In His mercy it may be so, but if this is the case, they are saved by virtue of the sovereign election of God the Father, and the Redemption of Christ the Son, and the effectual working of the Holy Spirit; and to state, as did Spurgeon, that ALL infants dying go straight to heaven, and indeed infer that the greatest proportion of that innumerable company which one day will surround the Lamb will be those dying in infancy, is as far removed from Scripture as is "Covenant Theology" and "Paedo-Baptism."

Let us be utterly Biblical in our thinking, not sentimental, and not unduly influenced by Creeds and Confessions of men other than as they FULLY ACCORD with the Word of God.

We need to return to BIBLICAL THEOLOGY and not be governed by REFORMED THEOLOGY.

Let those who are so hide-bound in the tradition of Paedo-Baptism and critical of those who practice Biblical Baptism, see clearly that the vital issue is, that it is not believers baptism by immersion which contradicts the principles of the "Reformation," rather is it the rite of infant baptism which cannot be justified by Scripture. THIS SHOULD BE THE GREAT CONCERN. It is high time that the zeal with which certain sections of the Church pursue their customs, human laws and ordinances, abated; and that with humility, unwavering courage and faith, they come to the Word of God afresh. Then would the UNCOMPLETED work of the "Great Reformation" continue, and be brought to a greater degree of perfection. May God grant it for His glory.

W. H. Molland

INFORMATION and ANNOUNCEMENTS

On Thursday 21st April, Mr. and Mrs. F. Ayoub of the Arabic Evangelical Centre, Wolverhampton visited us. This was a very happy and instructive occasion, as our brother told us of the work in which they were engaged. We commend this work to others for their prayer and practical support.

We rejoice with our brother and sister, Mr. and Mrs. D. Wort upon the birth of another son, Matthew Thomas, on 25th April, thanking God for His goodness to them, and taking to heart in prayer, the little ones entrusted to us in the church.

On Thursday 5th May, our esteemed brother in Christ, Mr. W. Bennett passed home to be with the Lord, at the age of 77 years. He had been in failing health for some few years, nevertheless, pressed manfully onward, being present at all the services up to within a couple of weeks of his death. He

visited the sick regularly, making hundreds of calls a year to hospitals and rest homes, as well as private houses, reading and praying with the elderly and those unwell or shut in. A man with a rare gift, and who used it to the full. He will be greatly missed. May it please the Great Head to raise up others to fill such an important role in the church.

The improvements being carried out at the Chapel are complete, and combined with the Annual Bible Convention, will be the opening of the new Rest Room. In this, the goodness of God will be acknowledged. This room is available to visitors on the Lord's Day. It has dining and kitchen facilities. Visitors coming to us please feel free to avail yourselves of this provision.

Saturday 16th July 1988

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION

3 pm	Opening of the Rest Room
3.30 pm	Afternoon Session
5 pm	Tea
6 pm	Evening Session
<u>Speaker:</u>	Mr. K. F. T. Matrunola M.A., B.D. (Portsmouth)

Visiting Preachers

Sunday 17th July	Mr. K. F. T. Matrunola (Portsmouth)
Sunday 28th August	Mr. Scott-Pearson (Amphill)

The "Drive-in" Church

Services commence on 10th July and conclude on 9th September, and are held each Sunday evening at 6.30 in the River Bank Car Park.