

DISCIPLESHIP, CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, AND THE PLACE OF  
CHILDREN AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS: AN INVESTI-  
GATION OF THE PLACE OF CHILDREN IN A BAPTIST  
CHURCH IN VIEW OF CHRIST'S TEACHINGS ON  
DISCIPLESHIP AND THE BAPTIST  
DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of  
the Southern Baptist  
Theological Seminary

in

Partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Degree of  
Doctor of Theology

Lewis Craig Ratliff

February, 1963

SOUTHERN BAPTIST  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY.  
2025 LEXINGTON ROAD      LOUISVILLE, KY

13

142  
THESES  
Th.D.  
R131bd  
ORIGINAL



To Nancy

APPROVAL SHEET

---

*Hayne E. Hard*

---

*Fredley Blyden*

---

*Carl Rust*

---

---

*Feb. 11 1963*  
                      
Date

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

### OF THE WRITER

Lewis Craig Ratliff was born January 16, 1931, in Amarillo, Texas. His parents, Ben and Nita Jane Ratliff, had moved to Amarillo from Jackson County, Oklahoma, in 1925. Lewis Craig Ratliff finished Amarillo High School in 1949, received the B.A. degree from Baylor University in 1953, and received the B.D. from Southern Seminary in 1956.

Lewis Craig Ratliff married the former Nancy Lou Liberman in 1955. The Ratliffs have served churches in Kentucky, Indiana, and are presently serving Union Hill Baptist Church, Goodlettsville, Tennessee. The Ratliffs have four sons.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to those who have been so helpful during the course of this study: Miss Helen Conger and Mrs. Pat Telford of the Dargan-Carver Library of the Sunday School Board, Doctors Davis Wooley and Lynn May of the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Mr. Rueben Herring of the Sunday School Board.

Mrs. Lucille Hood, who accepted the typing of this thesis with an almost impossible deadline, will always have the gratitude of the writer. Her performance has certainly been "above and beyond the call of duty."

The members of the writer's Graduate Committee, as well as Dr. Ray Summers, the Director of Graduate Studies, have been more than accommodating; their willingness to give special consideration in time of need has been invaluable.

A special acknowledgment must be given to the writer's wife, Nancy, and his sons--now four in number--who have, because of this task, almost been without husband and father for many long months. The writer can only hope that this work, the fruit of their sacrifice, will be found worthy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL SHEET . . . . .	iv
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE WRITER. . . . .	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. . . . .	vi
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1

SECTION I: DISCIPLESHIP ACCORDING TO JESUS

Chapter

I. JESUS AND THE WILL OF GOD. . . . .	10
---------------------------------------	----

God is the Lord  
 Definition of Terms  
 Justification of Term "Disciple"  
 Lordship in the Old Testament  
 Jesus and the Kingdom of God  
 Discipleship and the Kingdom  
 Jesus the Obedient Son

II. FOLLOWING JESUS THE LORD . . . . .	28
--	----

Discipleship and Apprenticeship  
 The Call to Discipleship  
 Jesus the Lord  
 Lordship and Salvation  
 Conclusion

SECTION II: BAPTISTS AND LORDSHIP ECCLESIOLOGY	45
---	----

III. DEFINING LORDSHIP ECCLESIOLOGY	46
-------------------------------------	----

Lordship Ecclesiology Stated  
 Lordship and the Scriptures  
 Lordship and Believers' Baptism  
 Lordship, Soul Competency, and  
 Religious Freedom  
 Lordship and Baptist Polity  
 Lordship and Discipline  
 Lordship and Mission  
 Methodology

Chapter	Page
IV. ENGLISH BAPTISTS AND LORDSHIP ECCLESIOLOGY	63
General Baptists	
John Smyth's Ecclesiology	
Thomas Helwys' Ecclesiology	
Particular Baptists	
Ecclesiology of the First London	
Confession	
Ecclesiology of the Second London	
Confession	
Conclusion	
V. SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND LORDSHIP	
ECCLESIOLOGY . . . . .	84
Methodology	
The Philadelphia Tradition	
The Philadelphia Association	
The Charlestown Association	
Conclusion	
The Separate Tradition	
The Landmark Tradition	
Statement of Faith of the Southern	
Baptist Convention	
Conclusion	
SECTION III. THE PLACE OF CHILDREN	
AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS	
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	114
VI. DEFINING THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY . . . . .	115
The Concept of Accountability	
Accountability and the Claims of Christ	
Personal Accountability	
Arguments for the Writer's View	
The Nature of Salvation	
The Nature of Sin	
The Nature of God	
The Analogy of Law	
Understanding and Accountability	
Criteria For Disciple-Ability	
Mental Ability and Disciple-Ability	
Independence and Disciple-Ability	
Social Maturity and Disciple-Ability	
Other Concepts of Accountability	



Chapter	Page
VII. DETERMINING THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY. .	148
General Views of Religious Development	
The Religious Development of the Child	
The Beginner Child	
The Primary Child	
The Junior Child	
Twelve and Mental Ability	
Twelve and Parental Independence	
Twelve and Social Maturity	
The Adolescent	
Adolescence and Mental Ability	
Adolescence and Independence	
Adolescence and Social Maturity	
Conclusion	
VIII. ARGUMENTS FOR AND OBJECTIONS TO THE WRITER'S VIEW OF ACCOUNTABILITY. . . .	183
Other Evidence for the Writer's View	
Puberty and Religious Awakening	
The Old Testament View of Accountability	
Accountability and Confirmation	
The Conclusion of Gideon Yoder	
Arguments Against the Writer's View	
Definition of Discipleship	
Preadolescent Conversions	
Standing in the Way	
Prospectus	
IX. THE NATURE AND STATUS OF THE CHILD BEFORE THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY. . . . .	204
The Nature and Status of the Child in the New Testament	
Baptist Antecedents	
The Roman Catholic View	
John Calvin's View	
James Arminius' View	
English Baptists' Views	
The General Baptists' View	
The Particular Baptists' View	

Chapter	Page
Baptist Thought in America	
J. L. Dagg's View	
Franklin Wilson's View	
A. H. Strong's View	
E. Y. Mullins' View	
W. T. Conner's View	
Southern Baptist Consensus	
Conclusion	
X. THE RELIGION OF CHILDHOOD. . . . .	235
The Religion of Childhood and Discipleship	
The Churches and the Religion of Childhood	
Cultivation of the Religion of Childhood	
Nurture and the Religion of Childhood	
Personal Commitment and the Religion of Childhood	
The Religion of Childhood and Baptism	
Summary of Conclusions	
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	254

## INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis is, as the reader probably will have noticed, quite clumsy. An examination of the title, if properly exegeted, would give the reader an adequate idea of the purpose, method, and scope of this work. But rather than launching directly into such an exegesis, the writer will sketch the process that led to such a title. The title, to be quite frank, did "grow like Topsy."

When the writer first began to search for a thesis subject, he wanted, if possible, to work in the area of practical theology. That is, the writer felt that there should be a relation between what is said and what is done. In the process of looking in that direction, the writer came to be quite concerned about the present state of affairs among Southern Baptists in regard to the doctrine of the church. It seemed evident to the writer that Southern Baptists were failing to build churches composed of disciplined, baptized believers.

While reading about the problems of denominations that have tried to maintain a disciplined church, the writer was struck by the difficulty they had encountered with the second generation. For example, the Puritans

of New England were forced to adopt a measure known as the "Half-way Covenant" because the second generation failed to have the type of religious experience the founding fathers thought necessary. The Puritans of England had the same difficulty.

It was evident to the writer that Southern Baptists were experiencing the same kind of problem. While multitudes of children were being baptized, multitudes of young people were becoming inactive in Baptist churches. Thus it seemed to the writer that it would be profitable to investigate the relation of Baptists to the child.

Having made the decision to investigate the relation of Baptists to their children, the writer began to look for writings that dealt with "the age of accountability." This was the place to begin because of the popular belief that children are to be evangelized when they reach that age. But, to the dismay of the writer, not a single work could be found by a Baptist author that dealt extensively with the age of accountability! Only Gideon Yoder, a Mennonite, had attempted to deal with the problem from the viewpoint of believer's baptism.

Not only had Baptists failed to deal with accountability; they had also failed to define their understanding of the nature and status of the child prior to

accountability. Most contemporary Southern Baptists would agree that the child is a "sinner" by birth, yet is not "guilty" of that sin until he reaches the "age of accountability." On the other hand, the program-builders and writers of religious materials for children have not been certain just what their task is, because they have not been certain about the nature of those with whom they were dealing. To wit: if the child is a "sinner" and alienated from God, should he be taught to pray? Can the child have a positive relation to God before he is "saved"? Is the child totally depraved so that religious education before conversion is impossible? Or can the child by religious education be converted?

Generally, it has been assumed that it is proper to teach the Beginner and Primary to pray to God who is love. But later, as a Junior, the same child is taught that he is a sinner and needs forgiveness to be accepted by the God who is holy. This may be an overstatement, but it points out that there is definitely a problem. A systematic statement has not been made and agreed upon by those who desperately need a theological basis for their work. During this period of study, the writer had the opportunity to participate in a childlife conference at the Sunday School Board in Nashville. Many of the problems already mentioned were discussed. During the

conference the writer was encouraged by many of those at the Board to attempt the proposed investigation. As a result of the interest displayed and the need for such an investigation, the writer agreed to attempt this study.

Then came the problem of methodology. How would the study be approached? As the study was in the context of Baptists, it seemed reasonable to use those sources acceptable to Baptists; namely, the Bible and Baptist tradition. As the study revolved around the relation of children to the Baptist churches, it seemed well to determine what Baptists understand about themselves.

Before a child can become a member of a Baptist church, he must be saved and then baptized. At this point, Baptists have made a practical identification of accountability and the granting of baptism. That is, when baptism is granted, it is assumed that the child has 1) reached the age of accountability and 2) been saved. Thus the concept of accountability has been linked with salvation and baptism.

Therefore, to talk about who is to be baptized, one must first define what it means to be saved. This was the line of reasoning that led the writer to his approach to the problem. The first section of this work must deal with what it means to be a Christian. A study of New Testament discipleship will set the standards for

baptism in Baptist churches. This is the explanation of that part of the title, "An Examination of the Place of Children in a Baptist Church in View of Christ's Teaching on Discipleship." It will be the contention of the writer that only those capable of being disciples of Jesus are capable of being members of a Baptist church.

The second section is a study in Baptist ecclesiology. This section will demonstrate that historically Baptists have maintained the New Testament standard for church membership and baptism. Baptist history will show that Baptists have accepted as members only those capable of being New Testament Christians. This evidence will provide the guides for investigating the relation of children to Baptists.

Children, it will be concluded, who are incapable of becoming disciples of Jesus, are not to be granted baptism. They are not capable of being disciples, so they are not capable of becoming members of Baptist churches. So the argument will be that accountability is linked to disciple-ability. One has reached the age of accountability when he is able to become a disciple of Jesus.

Then the nature and status of the child prior to accountability must be determined. This, obviously, is definitive for the church's relation to the child in

religious instruction and education.

Thus, "discipleship" refers to Jesus' teaching on what it means to be a Christian; "church membership" refers to the method of determining who is to be granted baptism by a Baptist church; "the place of children" refers to the method of determining the time at which a child reaches the age of accountability and the manner in which the church is to deal with the child before he is able to become a disciple.

The first section of this thesis will define Jesus' teaching on discipleship; the second section will show that Jesus' teachings on discipleship have been the norm for Baptist ecclesiology; and the third section, based on the previous Biblical and historical studies, will try to define theologically the age of accountability and determine the nature and status of the child prior to accountability.

One more word needs to be written concerning the meaning of "the place of children." By "the place of children" the writer does not presume to outline a program of religious education. Rather, he hopes to help define the theology that must guide in such formulations. Therefore, the thesis will be limited to determining what the age of accountability is; what the nature of the child is prior to accountability; and finally, the



basic approach to the child during the years of the "religion of childhood."

The author is well aware of the deficiencies of this work; it would be useless to try to exhaust the meaning of discipleship in twenty times the space allotted. As for the section on Baptist ecclesiology, it is sheer madness for anyone to claim "this is what Baptists believe." Yet, both of these tasks are inescapable. Baptists are both "people of the Book" and "people with a history." One of the pleasures of this work has been the opportunity to attempt to help Southern Baptists formulate a methodology that will help in a consideration of their knotty problems.

Baptists have a rich heritage. This work hopes to use that heritage in solving a problem in practical theology. It is anticipated that the conclusions expressed here will meet with considerable opposition. However, the writer assumes that those who disagree will carefully examine the material and arguments and reflect upon them.

Certainly the relation of Southern Baptists to their children is an important problem. The writer can only hope this will contribute to the discussion of the

problem.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Because this work is primarily by a Southern Baptist and for Southern Baptists, the writer has, as far as possible, relied upon the works of Baptist authors. Therefore, Conner, Strong, and Mullins, for example, will be quoted in preference to Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann. It is assumed that Baptists will listen more attentively to their own.

**SECTION I**

**DISCIPLESHIP ACCORDING TO JESUS**

## CHAPTER I

### JESUS AND THE WILL OF GOD

The Gospels use the terms "be saved" or "become a Christian" very sparingly. Rather, the Gospels speak of becoming a disciple of Jesus. A disciple is one who follows Jesus. A disciple follows Jesus, who is following the will of God. A disciple is to have the same relation to God that Jesus had; this means the disciple is to be an obedient son of God. This concept of "God as Lord" and "man as servant" is fundamental to understanding the Biblical concept of discipleship.

#### God is the Lord

God is a jealous God; beside him there is no other. God is the ruler of the world; those who commit themselves to him as Lord and master are his true believers. This "rule of God" is the organic link between the Testaments.

The two testaments are organically linked to each other. The relationship between them is neither one of upward development nor of contrast; it is one of beginning and completion, of hope and fulfillment. And the bond that binds them together is the dynamic concept of the rule

of God.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to show that Jesus, the leader of his disciples, is the perfect example of what it means to be submissive to God. This practice of submission to God as the Lord is central to the Bible. God as Lord is central to the Old Testament; God as Lord is the meaning of the kingdom of God. God is revealed as Lord through Jesus and he is served by his disciples. A disciple, a Christian, is one who has accepted the rule of God in Christ Jesus.

#### Definition of Terms

There are several terms used in such close relation that they must be defined together. First there is Lord, Kurios. This means God who is sovereign. God is the creator and ruler, both of the world and his people. Lordship has reference to God's people's acceptance of the will of God; this means that God becomes the master of his servants. Thus, from the believer's point of view, Lordship refers to the objective side of the relation, while discipleship refers to the subjective side of the same relation. These meanings will be presented in considerable detail later. Some discussion of the

---

<sup>1</sup>John Bright, The Kingdom of God (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), pp. 196-97.

choice of the term "disciple" will now be given.

#### Justification of Term "Disciple"

The term "disciple" or "discipleship" will be the focal point of the investigation. The English word comes from the Latin discere, learn; hence it means one who learns, a scholar, or a pupil. The same is true of the Hebrew talmid from lamad, and the Greek mathates, from mathano.<sup>1</sup> How Jesus used the term will be spelled out very clearly in the next chapter.

There are several reasons why the term disciple will be used instead of "Christian" or "saved."

1) The writer feels that Baptists, as well as other Protestant groups, have a threadbare vocabulary. "Saved," which is the usual designation for a believer, can mean anything from church membership to an emotional upheaval. "Salvation," the substantive, has come to mean a status rather than a function or way of life. Nowhere in the New Testament is "saved" used as a noun. It always refers to the activity of God in the redemption of man. To be saved is an activity of God, not a status of the believer. The believer is one who functions as an

---

<sup>1</sup>J. Y. Cambell, "Disciple," A Theological Word Book of the Bible, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959), p. 69.

obedient servant of Jesus the Lord. The writer feels that "disciple" will carry this meaning; it will be easier to define disciple correctly than reform the usage of "saved."

2) "Disciple" is a good Biblical term. It was used almost exclusively by Jesus. While "saved" points to the activity of God, "disciple" points to the activity of those who are "being saved." The line between "faith" and "activity" is thinly drawn in the Scriptures. Genuine faith, which includes the commitment of life, will, by its nature, bring forth its fruit for God. It is no accident that etymologically "disciple" and "discipline" are one. A disciple is one who is disciplined for Christ. New Testament faith is following Jesus, taking a cross, and serving God.

3) "Disciple" carries with it the connotation of "mission." Disciples are called to do something. They are called to carry on the mission begun by Jesus. This emphasis is needed today. The use of disciple will help remind Southern Baptists of the content of the Christian life.

#### Lordship in the Old Testament

Jesus' first recorded sermon consisted of one sentence: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God

is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."<sup>1</sup> This sentence summarizes Biblical history. The Bible is the story of God and his dealings with his people. Thus, there are two foci: God who is subject and man who is the object of God's grace and will. A Biblical theology must portray man in his subordinate relation to God. God is the King, and man must be obedient to God's rule.

The vocabulary that expresses the relation of God and man shows that God is God and man is man. It was no accident that the Old Testament categories were drawn from the vernacular of the oriental monarchies. God is the King; he is the Lord; he is the absolute Sovereign.<sup>2</sup> It will be seen that the New Testament concept of discipleship is cognizant of God's role as ruler of the universe and master of his servants.

From the beginning of God's dealings with Israel, he was the Master who had a will and purpose for his people. In the call of Abram, God's will was explicit:

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse;

---

<sup>1</sup>Mark 1:15. All scriptures quoted will be from the Revised Standard Version.

<sup>2</sup>Yahweh as King of Israel preceded the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. See I Samuel 12:12.



and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves.<sup>1</sup>

In the call, 1) God came and spoke to Abram; it was in the context of grace that God spoke. 2) God's revelation gave a command to be obeyed. 3) Abram's blessing was contingent upon his obedience to God's will. 4) By his response, Abram would be a source of blessing for all mankind. The theme of blessing and obedience can be found in the Old Testament:

There nevertheless runs through it a unifying theme. . . . It is a theme of redemption, of salvation; and it is caught up particularly in those concepts which revolve about the idea of a people of God, called to live under his rule, and the concomitant hope of the coming Kingdom of God. This is a note which is present in Israel's faith from the earliest times onward, and which is to be found, in one way or another in virtually every part of the Old Testament. It also unbreakably links the Old Testament to the New. For both have to do with the Kingdom of God, and the same God speaks in both.<sup>2</sup>

Ludwig Kohler insists that this concept is the motif of the Old Testament as a whole:

God is the ruling Lord; that is the one fundamental statement in the theology of the Old Testament. . . . Everything else derives from it. Everything else leans upon it. Everything else can be understood with reference to it and only to it. Everything else subordinates itself to it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Genesis 12:1-2.

<sup>2</sup>Bright, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup>Old Testament Theology, trans. A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), p. 30.

The covenant is an expression of the Lordship of Yahweh. The covenant consists of God's commands and a willing people. In Abram the pattern was set that was followed by the rest of the Old Testament.

The recognition of God's sovereignty is an integral part of the call. From the beginning, Abraham seemed to recognize that God was in control; and there was something he, Abraham, had to do because God was sovereign. Abraham realized that God had revealed himself; and with this revelation, there was a corresponding demand--the demand that he do something about the revelation which he had received. This continues to be a basic principle of religion--that revelation involves demand, privilege involves responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

This interpretation of the covenant was given by Jeremiah; he summed up his understanding of the covenant by quoting God as saying: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God and ye shall be my people."<sup>2</sup>

It was from the conviction that God is the Lord, that he rules the earth, that Old Testament eschatology received its impetus. Because she believed that God was sovereign, Israel conceived of redemption in the Day of Yahweh and the Messiah.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ralph Elliott, The Message of Genesis (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), p. 89. (This book is now out of print.)

<sup>2</sup>Jeremiah 7:23. George A. F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), pp. 219 ff. has an excellent discussion of this point.

<sup>3</sup>E. C. Rust, Unpublished Notes in Old Testament Theology, p. 77.

## Jesus and the Kingdom of God

In the context of these Old Testament ideas, Jesus made his entrance. Jesus was an interpreter of the Old Testament; he was a Jew nurtured and fed upon the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Jesus' teachings about the kingdom were a refinement of the Old Testament message. Jesus spoke more of the kingdom than of himself; it was later in the New Testament development that the person of Christ became the central message. This is not to say that Jesus rejected the role of Messiah, but rather that he saw the dawn of the kingdom in his person.<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus began to preach, His message was linked with these simple fundamental ideas of the message of the Prophets, which had been intensified and made more urgent through the preaching of John the Baptist. The content of His discourses with all their variety of subjects and ideas, is this one conviction: The coming of the Kingdom of God, the new age, in its contrast to the present age. This the reason why, in many of His parables, the subject is a King, or the Master of a household. This is the goal of all history, that at last the will of God shall be done, that at last the King will have an obedient people. "Ye are my people; I am

---

<sup>1</sup>Harvie Branscomb, The Teachings of Jesus (Nashville: Abingdon, no date), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus ("Studies in Biblical Theology," No. 12; Chicago: Alec. R. Allenson, Inc., 1956), pp. 50-55, successfully refutes Bultmann's thesis concerning Jesus' relation to the kingdom. Fuller shows that the events around Caesarea Philippi are necessarily historical if there is to be any understanding of Jesus' death. These events are substantiated by reference and implication in the kerugma.

your God." This is the personalistic fundamental feature of the Biblical view of God. Certainly, as in every religion, "salvation" is important, but this "salvation" consists in unity of will with, and personal communion between, God and man. Everything else is secondary, or is merely a conclusion drawn from this truth.<sup>1</sup>

The primary emphasis of the kingdom is that "God reigns" or "God is now ruling." The present concern is with the relation of the claims of God as revealed in Jesus' teachings on the kingdom and the Christian experience of discipleship. Therefore, the writer will deal with the subjective aspect of the kingdom, that is, the rule of God as it applies to the individual heart.<sup>2</sup>

Entrance into the kingdom depends upon a response

<sup>1</sup>Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), p. 298.

<sup>2</sup>Though it is not relevant to this thesis, some note must be made of the contemporary debate on the "presence" or "absence" of the kingdom. Some maintain the kingdom is all future, others entirely present, and others that it is both present and future. Fuller, *op. cit.*, and W. G. Kummel, Promise and Fulfillment ("Studies in Biblical Theology," No. 23; London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 105, are in substantial agreement that though the kingdom is not "present," the eschaton is present in the person of Jesus.

Alan Richardson, Theological Wordbook, p. 121, expresses the writer's view: Since Jesus came, God has begun to rule in a new way. Yet, in another sense, the full reign of God is yet to dawn. Most writers would agree that (1) in Jesus' work, there has been an invasion of this age by the power of the new age; (2) in response to Jesus and his claims, the believer comes to experience the powers of the new age; (3) there will be a consummation in which the kingdom will be revealed in objective power.

of obedience.<sup>1</sup> To enter the kingdom, one must have a childlike spirit.<sup>2</sup> Being "poor in spirit" is Matthew's version of the same quality. This quality expresses itself by a willingness to sacrifice all else for the kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Material goods, physical well-being, even family ties are second to the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> Absolute obedience to God's will is necessary for entrance into the kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

In the person of Jesus, the claims of the kingdom were fulfilled. "Thy will be done" was the essence of Jesus' life as well as the theme of his teachings. At each moment Jesus gave perfect response to the will of God for his life. The response to the temptations set the pattern for Jesus' life: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Those that insist that the kingdom is entirely future would probably say it this way: "Future entrance into the kingdom depends upon a response of obedience in this day and age." This in no way affects the point being made: whether present or future, entrance depends upon an obedient response from the believer.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 10:15.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 6:19-21.

<sup>4</sup>Mark 10:23; 9:47; Luke 9:61.

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 6:24.

<sup>6</sup>It is the thesis of T. W. Manson, The Teachings of Jesus (London: Cambridge Press, 1959), that in the doing of God's will Jesus ushered in the kingdom. The confession of Peter, a recognition of the reign of God in Jesus, was the moment the kingdom de jure became the kingdom de facto. See p. 208.

But Jesus did not merely proclaim this coming Kingdom of God, at the same time He inaugurated this new age and represented it in His own Person. He Himself, in His own person, is therefore already the dawn of this Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus could call for disciples to follow him because his way was the way of complete obedience to the kingdom. Jesus himself had done all that he asks of others: he was saving his life by losing it; he had left mother and father; he had become servant of all; and he was willing to take a cross.

The fact with which we have to reckon at all times is that in the teaching of Jesus his conception of God determines everything, including the conceptions of the Kingdom and the Messiah. The Kingdom is where God's will is done on earth as it is in Heaven. But what is God's will but the expression of God's nature. The Messiah is the person who realises the Kingdom by utter obedience to God's will, by voluntary identification of his will with God's.<sup>2</sup>

#### Discipleship and the Kingdom

Because following Jesus was following the one who exemplified the claims of the kingdom, it was natural that Jesus spoke of being a disciple and a member of the kingdom in the same context. In the discourse in Mark 10:17-34, Jesus identified loyalty to himself with loyalty to the kingdom. The rich young man left in

---

<sup>1</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p. 299.

<sup>2</sup>Manson, op. cit., p. 211.

sorrow because he would not do what Jesus commanded:  
 "Go, sell what you have, give to the poor, and you will  
 have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." When  
 he would come to have the treasure in heaven is beside  
 the point; the point is that his response to Jesus de-  
 termined his relation to the kingdom: he must follow  
 Jesus.

With this episode in the background, Jesus gave  
 his lecture on riches and the Kingdom. Peter responded,  
 "Lo, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus  
 replied:

Truly, I say to you, there is no one who  
 has left house or brothers or sisters or mother  
 or father or children or lands, for my sake and  
 the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold  
 now in this time, houses and brothers and  
 sisters and mothers and children and lands,  
 with persecutions, and in the age to come  
 eternal life. But many that are first will be  
 last, and the last first.<sup>1</sup>

Those who had responded favorably to Jesus were to have  
 what the young rich man lacked: riches in heaven. The  
 point is well made: following Jesus is tantamount to  
 acceptance into the kingdom.

Even clearer is the synoptic comparison of. . .  
 Mark x:29, . . . Matt. xix:29, . . . and Luke  
 xviii:29; the name and message of Jesus Christ,  
 and Jesus Christ Himself are equated with the

---

<sup>1</sup>Mark 10:29-31.

## Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus made the same claims of his followers that the kingdom demanded of its members; while there is a theological distinction in discipleship and being a member of the kingdom, existentially the demands are the same.<sup>2</sup> To enter the kingdom, one must have a readiness to sacrifice material goods (Mark 10:23; Luke 12:29 ff.); physical well-being (Mark 9:47); and family ties (Luke 9:61 ff.); and be absolutely obedient to God's will (Matthew 7:21). To follow Jesus, one must be willing to sacrifice self (Mark 8:34); family ties (Matthew 10:37); and even one's life (Mark 8:34, Matthew 10:39, Luke 17:33); and have "persevering loyalty to Jesus in all circumstances (Mark 8:38, Matthew 10:32 f., Luke 12:8 f.)."<sup>3</sup>

The conclusion is that Jesus demanded of his followers the same radical obedience as the kingdom. The essence of the kingdom is the rule of God. The essence of being a disciple is being obedient to the claims of Christ. Concluding his study of the parables, Jeremias

---

<sup>1</sup>K. L. Schmidt, "The Kingdom of God," Bible Key Words, ed. G. Kittel, trans. J. R. Coates (New York: Harper's and Co., 1951), p. 205. A. M. Hunter, The Message of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944), p. 20, equates the Kingdom, the Gospel, and the Word of Life; and he also equates being in the Kingdom, being in Christ, and having eternal life.

<sup>2</sup>Manson, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



said:

One thing above all becomes evident; it is that all the parables of Jesus compel his hearers to come to a decision about his person and mission. For they are all full of "the secret of the Kingdom of God" (Mk. iv, 11); that is to say, the recognition of "an eschatology that is in the process of realization." The hour of fulfillment is come; that is the urgent note that sounds through them all.<sup>1</sup>

Discipleship is the personal rule of God through Jesus in the heart of the believer. It is the personal acceptance of the sovereignty of God as expressed in the covenant and the kingdom. Thus the movement that began with Abram, was spoken of by the prophets, and was central in the kingdom, is integral to discipleship.

#### Jesus the Obedient Son

Jesus called for men to follow him. According to Mark, after the baptism, the temptation, and the first preaching, Jesus drew a group of followers about himself.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, trans. S. H. Hooke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 159.

<sup>2</sup>Campbell, op. cit., p. 69, discusses the fact that "disciple" usually referred to the small group of Jesus' followers. This is true. But this fact cannot be used to deduce a double standard. The concept of the priesthood of the believer defies two levels of Christian living. If Jesus' teachings on discipleship are not applicable to every Christian, then "common" Christians have no guidance for daily living. The demands of Jesus for discipleship apply to everyone who would be a Christian.

"Follow thou me" was the call. To ascertain what following Jesus meant, it must be understood where Jesus was going; Jesus was going to do the will of God.

There are various interpretations of the life of Jesus in the New Testament. For some, Jesus was the revelation of God; for others, the Messiah of the Old Testament; and for others, the obedient Son of God.<sup>1</sup> These are not exclusive choices; there is no need to accept one and to deny all the others. The interpretation the writer wishes to present pictures Jesus as the Son who is obedient to the Father.<sup>2</sup>

Hebrews maintains that Jesus became the great High Priest because of his obedience to God. "Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God" was the vocation of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."<sup>4</sup> The kenosis hymn of Philipians says that Jesus:

who was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born

<sup>1</sup>Eric Rust, Nature and Man in Biblical Thought (London: Lutterworth, 1953), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>It is interesting to note that Karl Barth builds his Christology on "Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant." See his Dogmatics, 4/1 and 4/2.

<sup>3</sup>Hebrew 10:7.

<sup>4</sup>Hebrews 5:9.

in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.<sup>1</sup>

Because of Jesus' obedience he gained his role of Saviour and Lord.

The Gospels demonstrate this interpretation of Jesus' life. Most would agree that the baptism was the announcement of God's choice of Jesus as the Messiah; the temptation was Jesus' trial preparatory to the Messianic task.<sup>2</sup>

The Baptism and the Temptation are thus intimately related. If the one may be regarded as the announcement of God's choice and the appointment of Jesus as Messiah, the other may be regarded as our Lord's deliberate choice of God as the sole object of his loyalty, trust and obedience, that is, as his King. . . . Everything that he does is to be in the most complete sense the Servant of the Lord, the perfect subject of a perfect King.<sup>3</sup>

The Fourth Gospel portrayed Jesus as consciously striving to be perfect in the will of God. Jesus turned a commonplace invitation to eat a meal into a dialogue about his obedience to God: "My food is to do the will

<sup>1</sup>Philippians 2:6-9.

<sup>2</sup>T. H. Robinson, The Gospel of Matthew ("Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; New York: Harper's, no date), pp. 17 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Manson, op. cit., p. 197.

of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work."<sup>1</sup> In the shadow of the cross, Jesus affirmed the desire of his life; "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus was the perfect example of obedience to the Father; thus he could ask his followers to become what he was; the lowest and last.<sup>3</sup> These various elements were combined in the ransom saying of Mark 10:42-45; Jesus had come to do the will of God; this will was the way of obedience; and Jesus' disciples were to follow in his footsteps.

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus, it is clear, came to do the will of God. The cup which Jesus accepted from the Father in Gethsemane was obedience to the death on the cross. The cross was for Jesus the doing of God's will. To follow

---

<sup>1</sup>John 4:34.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 26:39.

<sup>3</sup>Mark 9:35.

Jesus, to take a cross, was to do the will of God.<sup>1</sup>

The first task involved in defining what it means to be a disciple is completed. Jesus, who was followed by the disciples, was completely obsessed with the passion to do God's will. Now the following of Jesus must be spelled out more clearly. The next chapter must define what it means to follow Jesus the Lord.

---

<sup>1</sup>H. D. Major, T. W. Manson, and C. J. Wright, The Mission and Message of Jesus (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1953), p. 112.

## CHAPTER II

### FOLLOWING JESUS THE LORD

#### Discipleship and Apprenticeship

In the time of Jesus, "follow" had two meanings. First, it might mean the concrete following in the literal sense. Thus the follower is the servant who belongs to his Lord. In the rabbinical literature, "follow" refers to a disciple who walks behind his master at a respectful distance. The second usage comes by way of Greek influence and means an imitation of the virtues of God, hence an imitation of God. The New Testament uses the first meaning: servitude to a master who is followed respectfully.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' use of disciple confirms this opinion. In the New Testament as a whole, there are four uses of "disciple": the term can mean simply a believer, as in Acts 11:26; a learner in the school of Jesus; one who is committed to a sacrificial life for Jesus, as in Luke 14:26 ff.; or one who proceeds to make disciples of

---

<sup>1</sup>Eduard Schweizer, Lordship and Discipleship ("Studies in Biblical Theology," No. 28; Naperville, Illinois, 1960), p. 12. Schweizer has been most influential; it should be noted the writer seldom departs from him.

others, as in Matthew 28:19.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' use of the term is more specific. There are five recorded incidents in the synoptics where Jesus used "disciple."<sup>2</sup> Of these, the two Q sayings teach that one must follow Jesus and be like him to be a disciple.

T. W. Manson concluded upon an investigation of the Aramaic that Jesus used כ'הן rather than כ'תלמידין to designate his followers. The כ'תלמידין or talmid of the Rabbinical schools were concerned with scholastics and discussions. But the disciples of Jesus, the כ'הן, were not concerned only with the theoretical studies; they were to practice as well as learn. Jesus was not only their teacher but also the master craftsman they were to imitate. "Discipleship was not matriculation in a Rabbinical College but apprenticeship to the work of the Kingdom."<sup>3</sup> A disciple is one who follows Jesus respectfully, being at work as an apprentice to the master craftsman. Thus following the directions of the instructor is cardinal to the task. Obedience is the key to the relation of the teacher and the disciple.

<sup>1</sup>E. F. Harrison, "Disciple," Baker's Dictionary Of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 160.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 14:14, Luke 6:40, and Matthew 10:24 ff. from Q; Luke 14:26 ff. and Matthew 10:37 ff. from Q; Luke 14:33; and Matthew 10:42.

<sup>3</sup>Manson, op. cit., p. 240.

### The Call to Discipleship

"And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men,' and immediately they left their nets and followed him."<sup>1</sup> There are three points to be noted about this call to discipleship:

1) It is Jesus who calls; hence, the call has the character of grace.

2) It is a call to do the will of God.

3) To obey this call means the breaking of old ties.<sup>2</sup>

The subsequent call of James and John in Mark 6:20 shows that family ties must be sacrificed as well as vocational choice, if they would interfere with obedience.

With the call of Levi, the character of grace was more firmly revealed. Jesus called as before to the Galileans, but this time he called a publican.<sup>3</sup> The publican, known to be a disobedient sinner, was summoned to forsake tax-collecting and to become a disciple. Jesus called "a hardened sinner." From this time on Jesus was branded the friend of publicans and sinners.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus also called the religious to follow him.

<sup>1</sup>Mark 1:17-18.

<sup>2</sup>Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Mark 2:14 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Luke 15:1; Luke 19:1 ff.



The rich young man was a keeper of the laws of Israel; but he was told: "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."<sup>1</sup> The challenge was to put everything aside that might interfere with his following Jesus. One does not become a disciple by becoming poor, but one must not let anything bar the way to absolute dedication to Jesus.<sup>2</sup> "This was an invitation to become Jesus' personal follower."<sup>3</sup>

These passages have pointed the way to understanding discipleship; but now the locus classicus must be examined: Jesus' demands to his disciples after Peter's confession: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."<sup>4</sup> Schweizer maintains that the Q saying in Matthew 10:38 is the shorter and thus the original: "And he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."<sup>5</sup> Thus Mark was the first to identify "taking up a cross" with "denying self." Luke's addition of "daily"

<sup>1</sup>Mark 10:21.

<sup>2</sup>Schweizer, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>F. C. Grant, The Interpreter's Bible, ed. George Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, 804.

<sup>4</sup>Mark 2:34. Parallel passages are Matthew 16:24-28 and Luke 9:23-27.

<sup>5</sup>op. cit., p. 17.

domesticates the cross.<sup>1</sup> Though the original saying referred to martyrdom,<sup>2</sup> the application to daily living added rigor: to die once is easier than denying oneself each day. Because of the day-to-day experience of "cross-bearing," Conner identifies the experience of repentance with taking a cross. Repentance is the continual submission to God's will above one's own will.<sup>3</sup>

Accepting the cross means participation in Jesus' suffering. The cross was, in the life of Jesus, obedience to the will of God.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the cross for the disciple is obedience to the will of God as revealed in the life of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Mark's interpretation whereby the cross is "self-denial" and Luke's interpretation by the addition of "daily" confirms the meaning of the cross as obedience to the will of God. The cross is the cost of obedience to the will of God.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, and only thus, by self-abnegation which carries him right to the point of the cross, can a man really find himself, be his true self, and play his man's part on the stage of this world.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Major, Manson, and Wright, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>2</sup>Grant, op. cit., p. 772.

<sup>3</sup>W. T. Conner, The Gospel of Redemption (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1945), p. 199.

<sup>4</sup>Major, Manson, and Wright, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Dieterich Bonhöffer, The Cost of Discipleship (rev. ed., New York: MacMillan Co., 1960), pp. 76 ff.

<sup>7</sup>Robinson, op. cit., p. 144.

Only by the way of the cross can one have true life: "For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."<sup>1</sup> This saying is present in all the Gospel sources. Cross-bearing means a willingness to be free of all other ties, even to the point of death. This applies today, as well as then, for "Jesus himself has probably formulated in a universally applicable way what he was doing by every call to discipleship."<sup>2</sup>

In summary, these elements are involved in Jesus' call to discipleship:

- 1) Jesus has called for followers; his call means that the question of obedience is decisive.
- 2) This call is in the context of grace; one can respond only when Jesus calls.
- 3) One must be willing to enter his service to become one of his disciples.
- 4) One must be willing to forsake old ties, even father and mother, and be willing to face death for Jesus.
- 5) The course of discipleship, following Jesus, leads to humiliation and then exaltation.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Mark 8:35.

<sup>2</sup>Schweizer, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>This is one of Schweizer's main points. The present writer agrees with him. However, the writer is not going to pursue this facet of discipleship. The present task is to define the relation of discipleship and the Lordship of Jesus.

### Jesus the Lord

By what right did Jesus demand that kind of obedience from his disciples? He could ask for this kind of obedience because he was their Lord. Jesus taught as one having authority, not as the scribes or Pharisees.<sup>1</sup> His call could only be accepted or rejected: there was no way to avoid decision.<sup>2</sup> This constituted the supreme claim for Jesus: he, like God himself, could not be avoided; he was either accepted or rejected.<sup>3</sup> Only those who accepted Jesus' rule in their hearts and responded in obedience were accepted as disciples.<sup>4</sup> Time and time again the call, "Follow me," was the decisive challenge. Only a "Lord" could demand such obedience. The demand to forsake old ties could only be interpreted as a demand to make Jesus the supreme authority in the disciple's life. This was a cardinal demand: only those who made this shift of obedience could be his disciples.

The conclusion is inescapable; Jesus' call was a call to the acceptance of his Lordship over life. For Jesus to be Saviour, he had to be accepted as Lord. By

<sup>1</sup>Mark 1:22.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 6:24.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 10:22. The rich young man's going away sorrowfully was the result of rejecting the claims of Christ.

<sup>4</sup>Mark 3:35.

definition, then, those who accept Jesus as the Lord of their life are disciples. Those who do not accept the Lordship of Christ are not disciples.

There is put forward . . . plainly and unequivocally another claim, that of Jesus Christ, as a claim to absolute Lordship; another demand is presented here--the demand made by Jesus Christ for complete surrender on our part. . . . To this claim of Christ's there can be only one final response, namely, free, glad, wholehearted submission.<sup>1</sup>

A brief review of the work thus far will show this conclusion is the logical one: in the Old Testament, the rule of God was central. Because Jehovah God was the Lord, his people had to obey him. Jesus came to proclaim this rule of God through the kingdom of God. Jesus, as the obedient Son of God, has revealed the dawn of the kingdom in this age. Jesus exemplified this rule of God by his obedience unto the cross. The cross was the will of God for Jesus. Jesus demanded that his disciples follow the will of God also. As the cross was for Jesus obedience unto the will of God, so the cross was obedience unto the will of God as revealed in Jesus for the disciples. In the examples just studied, Jesus called for his disciples to be obedient unto him as he was obedient unto God. Jesus called for obedience unto

---

<sup>1</sup>J. T. Davies, Lord of All (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), p. 12.

himself; Jesus must be obeyed as the ruling Lord.

Kurios was a common term during the first century. It was used to designate "a ruler, one having authority."<sup>1</sup> The primary meaning is that of one who owns certain possessions.<sup>2</sup> Kurios was used as a term of courtesy, equal to today's "Sir."<sup>3</sup> Kurios was also a term used to identify the gods of the mystery religions.<sup>4</sup> But the New Testament use of the term came from the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup>

Lord, Kurios, was the LXX designation for YHWH.<sup>6</sup> When Jesus was called Kurios he was equated with YHWH. Thus the New Testament writers understood that Jesus was due the same obedience as the sovereign YHWH of the Old Testament. Because of this understanding, the early church could cry out in prayer, "Maranatha": Lord, come quickly.<sup>7</sup>

If by the word kurios an authority is attributed to Jesus which belonged to Yahveh in the Old Testament, then after all that has been

<sup>1</sup>J. Y. Campbell, "Lord," A Theological Word Book of the Bible, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>Quelle, "Lord," Bible Key Words, II, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>Alan Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1958), p. 153.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1959), pp. 195 ff. The present writer believes this is the correct interpretation.

<sup>6</sup>Richardson, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>7</sup>I Corinthians 16:22.

said this can only mean that God has conferred on Jesus the ruling authority which is proper to Himself, so that all men owe Him absolute obedience.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of any technical arguments that might be raised by some Hellenistic scholars, there is no doubt that the New Testament writers associated Jesus with Kurios and he was respected as the YHWH of the Old Testament.

Moreover, the Gospels record that Jesus taught his disciples that there existed a kurios-doulos relationship between himself and them . . . so that during the days of his ministry they had come to look upon him as their Lord. Nevertheless the true meaning of the Lordship of Christ could not have fully come home to them until after the resurrection, for it was by this event that they came to know assuredly that God had made him both Kurios and Xristos. Even so, this does not mean ~~that their faith in Christ's Lordship was not grounded upon their actual dealings with him in the days of his flesh, as he exercised his Lordship over their lives. . . .~~ The earliest baptismal creed may have been the simple formula "Jesus is Lord". . . . Even if Maran and Kurios are a purely postresurrection usage, they are based upon the experienced Lordship of Jesus of history.<sup>2</sup>

Karl Heim, the father of Lordship Christology, grasped the intensive meaning of Lordship when he said, "It belongs to the essence or Lordship or authority that guidance can always come from only one authority and not

<sup>1</sup>Carl Heim, Jesus the Lord, trans. D. H. van Daalen (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>Richardson, Introduction to Theology of the New Testament, p. 154.

from two or more at the same time."<sup>1</sup> In other words, one can only serve God or mammon.

Heim quoted Luther's Shorter Catechism to explain his meaning: "'Jesus Christ is my Lord. . . .' What Luther means by that is clarified by a statement in another context: 'Christ is my immediate bishop, abbot, prior, Lord and Master; I know no other.'"<sup>2</sup> In a given situation, every person relies on one authority or another, either subjective or objective; one will be led by one authority or another. For Jesus to be Lord means he is that authority.

Another facet of Lordship is that the Leader must be contemporaneous with his followers. This was the situation of the New Testament disciples; Christ, their Lord, was present by his Spirit. This saved them from self-righteousness, for their source of authority was always near. "The Leader must be a present contemporary with those who are being led."<sup>3</sup>

#### Lordship and Salvation

Discipleship and Lordship are not matters of choice for the Christian. If Jesus is to be Saviour, he must be Lord. Faith and repentance are inseparable from

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 53.



discipleship. To repent and have faith are descriptions of the act of becoming a disciple. Thus the New Testament definition of repentance includes a complete reorientation of the personality toward Christ.<sup>1</sup> Repentance is not the only word the New Testament uses to denote this attitude; "To take up a cross is to die; to die to the old self and give oneself to a new Master."<sup>2</sup>

To lose oneself means that one ceases to be self-centered; this means to turn to God and to let him be the ruler. If this is the proper interpretation--and it is--it then follows that Lordship is the positive aspect of repentance; it is a turn from sin to Christ as Lord.

Saving faith, however, includes also . . . a voluntary element (fiducia, Credere in Deum), --trust in Christ as Lord and Savior; or in other words--to distinguish its two aspects: (a) surrender of the soul, as guilty and defiled, to Christ's governance . . . (b) reception and appropriation of Christ as the source and pardon of spiritual life.<sup>3</sup>

If faith is to be moral, there must be a guarantee that life will not continue rooted in sin. Saving faith is the "obverse side of true repentance, the very nature of faith as submission to Christ, the embodied law of

<sup>1</sup>Richardson, Theological Word Book of the Bible, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Conner, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>3</sup>A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1953), pp. 838-39.

God and source of spiritual life, makes a life of obedience and virtue to be its natural and necessary result."<sup>1</sup>

In very simple language the New Testament teaching is that when a man becomes a Christian he belongs to Christ. As a part of faith, there is a commitment of life to Christ; from this commitment a life of service will flow. If the life of service does not follow the experience of "faith," it is not saving faith. Christ accepts only those who submit to his Lordship. The man who puts his hand back to the plow is not worthy of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Those who do not do the works of mercy shall be cast into the fire.<sup>3</sup> The vine that bears no fruit will be cast into the fire.<sup>4</sup> One must become humble, like a child, take the yoke of Jesus and learn of him to be a disciple.<sup>5</sup> All of these passages demand the breaking of old ties to follow Jesus. They are conditions of being accepted as a disciple by Jesus.

Jesus' use of Kurios confirms this definition of Jesus as Lord. Not everyone who professes Jesus as Lord will be accepted as his; only those who do his will are

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 10:62.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 25:41 ff.

<sup>4</sup>John 15:6.

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 11:28-29.

his disciples: "Not every one who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus referred to himself as "Lord of the sabbath."<sup>2</sup> This fact gave him the right to regulate the sabbath as he chose. When Jesus used "Lord," he meant one who had the power to manage or change the object he controlled. This use is clear in the parable of the talents. The Master (Kurios) was wroth with the servant who failed to be a good steward. Because the worthless servant failed in his stewardship, he was cast "into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth."<sup>3</sup> Failure to be a good disciple is tantamount to rejection and damnation by the Master.

The parable of the unforgiving servant shows Jesus' use of "Lord." The Lord forgave his servant the debt, but the servant would not forgive a fellow servant. Because of his actions, the Lord delivered him to his torturers.<sup>4</sup>

The Lord will punish the wicked servant when he comes and finds him abusing his fellows. Because he has

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 7:21.  
<sup>2</sup>Matthew 12:8.  
<sup>3</sup>Matthew 25:30.  
<sup>4</sup>Matthew 18:23 ff.

failed in his stewardship he will be cast into hell. Jesus said, "Put him with the hypocrites; there men will weep and gnash their teeth."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the acceptance of Jesus as Lord is not an "extra" added to the lives of the devout; it is the real meaning of faith. It is not a question of rewards; for only those who take Jesus as Lord are saved. Thus the judgment scene of Matthew 25:31-46 shows that the difference between the "saved" and the "lost" is service to God through service to one's fellow men. Those who lived lives of service to God and man are those who will participate in eternal life. Eternal punishment is the end of those who fail to be filled with good works.

Jesus' closing words in the Sermon on the Mount summarize the relation of discipleship and salvation:

Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus would not have disciples who would not meet

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 24:45-51.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 7:24-27.

his demands; hence, he put road-blocks in the way of those who would follow him. He sifted his applicants; he caused them to count the cost of discipleship. Before a tower is started, there must be an inventory; before a war is provoked, logistics must be considered; and before pledging oneself to Jesus, that one must count the cost. "So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."<sup>1</sup>

#### Conclusion

The relation of Lordship and discipleship has been pictured. Lordship was seen to be the link of the Testaments; the rule of God is the cardinal concept in the teachings of Jesus. He was obedient as a Son to his Lord. Jesus called his disciples to be servants of the living God. This surrender to God is the way of being a disciple.

It was also seen that the New Testament teaches that to be saved one must be a disciple. Thus, discipleship, the acceptance of Lordship, is the standard of those who would be Christians. For Jesus to be Saviour, he must be Lord.

Now this conclusion must be related to the problem

---

<sup>1</sup>Luke 14:25-33.

of this thesis. One of the questions to be answered by this investigation is when should children become eligible for baptism in Baptist churches? The answer is, of course, when they have become Christians; a Baptist church is to consist of baptized believers. Thus, as the New Testament teaches that to be a Christian one must be a disciple, a child must become a disciple of Jesus to be a member of a Baptist church.

Now the question must be asked, Is this view of what it means to be a member of a Baptist church correct? Have Baptist churches of the past held up this high standard? Can it be shown from Baptist sources that Lordship is integral to Baptists' understanding of their doctrine of the church?

Thus the next section must demonstrate that Baptists have, as a group, historically accepted the New Testament standard for discipleship. A Baptist church is a group committed to the Lordship of Christ. Thus, only those capable of being disciples are eligible to be candidates for baptism. The next section must deal with Baptists and Lordship ecclesiology.

**SECTION II**

**BAPTISTS AND LORDSHIP ECCLESIOLOGY**

## CHAPTER III

### DEFINING LORDSHIP ECCLESIOLOGY

#### Lordship Ecclesiology Stated

A Christian is one who accepts Christ as Lord. As Lordship is the key to the individual's relation to God, so also Lordship is the key to the relation of the church to her head. Integral to the Baptist doctrine of the church is the group's acceptance of the Lordship of Christ. A local Baptist church is a church which, to the best of her ability, is obedient to Christ at every point. No one would claim to have reached this goal in any given situation, but this is the norm toward which Baptist churches have pointed.

In attempting to stress a point, there is a danger that one will distort the picture. The writer does not mean to imply that "Lordship ecclesiology," as it will be defined, is the only legitimate interpretation of Baptist church life. Rather, he hopes to show that this view is legitimate and is perhaps a more adequate view than some others.

Obviously the phrases "Lordship" or "Jesus is Lord" will not be found in every Baptist statement of the



church. The present contention is, however, that in the concept of Lordship, with its variations, there is a unity that best explains why Baptists are what they are. Lordship as defined in the biblical study--unequalified commitment to Christ in all of life--is broad enough to cover the various emphases given to the Baptist concept of the church. An attempt will be made to present Lordship as a hypothesis that explains the data of Baptist doctrine.

In the words of W. T. Whitley:

Baptists therefore are recognized by careful enquirers as a body with clear doctrines, which are earnestly propagated. Their distinctive feature is the doctrine of the Church: that it must consist wholly of people who have pledged themselves to Christ Jesus, to live the life he desires, to win and train more disciples for his service.<sup>1</sup>

This definition of the Baptist doctrine of the church is precisely what the writer means by "group acceptance of Lordship." The same marks that define discipleship define a Baptist church member: dedication to Christ in all of life and the acceptance of his mission in the world. At each point the individual Christian and the church as a whole must dedicate themselves to Christ as Lord.

---

<sup>1</sup>A History of British Baptists (London: Chas. Griffin and Co., 1923), p. 4.

Norman Cox recently expressed the same thought in different words:

One sentence can express what is most distinctive in the Baptist concept of the Christian faith and life. It is redeemed personality ministering under the lordship of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. . . .

Baptists have consistently recognized the immediate, direct authority of Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, Saviour, Lord, and Teacher. Because of these relationships Baptists have felt themselves to be called by Christ to obedience in life, faith, witness, and service. From him, through the Scriptures and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, they have found what they are convinced that Jesus wants them to believe regarding baptism, the gospel, the priesthood of believers, soul competency, God in Christ, and other elements of a genuinely biblical Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1950 Holland Lectures at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas, Arnold T. Ohrn stated his belief that Lordship is the cardinal concept in Baptist thought and life.<sup>2</sup> Following Ohrn, it must now be shown how this view of Baptist ecclesiology relates to other Baptist emphases.

#### Lordship and the Scriptures

Lordship explains the Baptist position on the authority of the Scriptures. Why did John Smyth and

<sup>1</sup>We Southern Baptists (Nashville: Convention Press, 1961), pp. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup>The writer is grateful to Dr. Ray Summers for the use of his copy of the Holland Lectures. These Lectures are unpublished but are in the library of Southwestern.

other pioneer Baptists come to reject the authority of the established church? Why did they turn to the Scriptures? They turned to the Scriptures because they were a revelation of the will of Christ. Smyth was committed to the will of Christ; therefore, he was committed to the authority of the Scriptures. There is always a circular argument involved in the question of authority. One is committed to Christ, but only in the Scriptures can one learn about Christ; therefore, a commitment to Christ involves a commitment to the Scriptures.

Ohrn stated that "our belief in the authority of the New Testament springs, in fact, from our belief in the authority and our submission to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ himself as Lord."<sup>1</sup> Because a commitment has been made to Christ, the Scriptures must be searched to find his will.

Through the Holy Scriptures Christ speaks to his church. All Christians confess Christ to be Lord. But the distinctive Baptist position is in the "personal, direct and undelegated sovereignty of Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> Christ speaks to his people in such a way as to lead them in his paths. Thus, Smyth turned to the New Testament

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

to find a pattern for church doctrine and polity. He progressed to believers' baptism because he found the Lord leading him in that direction. In the New Testament the will of Christ is to be found. Thus the New Testament is authoritative for those committed to Christ as Lord.<sup>1</sup>

John Smyth was so insistent upon the Lordship of Christ present by his Spirit that he would not permit the reading of a translation of the Scriptures in the church services. A prepared translation would stifle the Spirit; thus, translation was to be free so that Christ could lead by his Spirit.<sup>2</sup> A close reading of The Differences of the Churches of the Separation<sup>3</sup> bears out Ohrn's contention that the authority for Smyth was Christ and not the Scriptures per se.

#### Lordship and Believers' Baptism

Baptists grant baptism only to believers because baptism is a seal of faith. The theology of believers'

<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Cody, "Vital Principals of our Faith," Fourth Baptist World Congress, ed. W. T. Whitley (Toronto: Stewart Printing Co., 1928), p. 109, has an excellent discussion of the New Testament as the revelation of the will of Christ.

<sup>2</sup>John Smyth, Works, ed. W. T. Whitley (2 vols.; Cambridge: At the University Press, 1915), I, 283. Also see J. H. Shakespeare, Baptist and Congregational Pioneers (London: Kingsgate Press, 1906), p. 139.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

baptism was well stated in the British Baptists' reply to the Lambeth Appeal:

Because we hold the Church to be a community of Christian believers, the ordinance of baptism is administered among us to those only who make a personal confession of repentance and faith. . . . In our judgment the baptism of infants incapable of offering a personal confession of faith subverts the conception of the Church as the fellowship of believers.<sup>1</sup>

Only those committed to Christ are to be members of his church. A decision to become a Christian is prerequisite to being a Baptist. One must take a stand for Christ to be a member of a Baptist church. Only those who make responsible confessions of faith are to be granted membership in Baptist churches.

Because of the nature of the church, one must first surrender to the Lord of the church to be a member of the church. A correct reading of Jesus' claims to Lordship will result in a correct understanding of the New Testament doctrines of baptism and church membership.<sup>2</sup> Thus, believers' baptism is fundamental to the Baptist understanding of the church:

The Baptist stands or falls by his conception of what the Church is; his plea for believers' baptism becomes a mere archaeological idiosyn-

<sup>1</sup>E. A. Payne, The Fellowship of Believers (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1952), p. 144.

<sup>2</sup>See Henry Cook, What Baptists Stand For (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1947), pp. 23, 110-111.

crazy, if it be not the expression of the fundamental constitution of the Church. We become members of the living Body of Christ by being consciously and voluntarily baptized in the Spirit of Christ--a baptism to which witness is borne by the evidence of moral purpose and character as the fruit of the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Or, as the same writer said in another place:

"The Church is a spiritual society composed of converted men who acknowledge the supreme Lordship of Christ!"<sup>2</sup>

Believers' baptism is an expression of the doctrine that the church is composed only of those who confess Christ Jesus as their Lord.

#### Lordship, Soul Competency, and Religious Freedom

The concepts of soul competency and religious freedom are based on the same principle: the individual is personally responsible to God; and no one, neither priest nor magistrate, has the right to interfere with the discharge of that responsibility.

The competency of the individual should not be interpreted as individual license, but rather as individual responsibility. Thus the church cannot take over supervision of a man's relation to God:

<sup>1</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson, The Life and Faith of Baptists (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1946), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson, Baptist Principles (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1955), p. 24.

The church has sometimes declared itself to be authorized to interpret the will of Christ in an authoritative way. That is what the Pope claims to do. And so, Popes and bishops and priests and church councils and great historic creeds, confessions of faith, all of them have tended to become the real lords of conscience.<sup>1</sup>

But the individual is not responsible to these intermediate agencies; he is responsible directly to God. "Soul competency" is not freedom to do as one wants; rather, it means one is bound to answer to Christ as Lord for all that he is or does.

Likewise, because Christ is King, there is to be no interference from the state: each man must respond to Christ as he is led by the Spirit:

When the standard was first hoisted on behalf of soul freedom, the main perspective was this: God is King, Christ Lord, and any attempt by the civil magistrate, any attempt by the hierarchy to interpose any word of authority between the Lord and the individual conscience was a crime against the majesty of God and against the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. . . . And when our Baptist forbears in the ensuing generation or two so continually wrote about and proclaimed the necessity of leaving each conscience free to decide for itself under God, they formulated that beautiful term that they were protecting the "crown rights of the Redeemer."<sup>2</sup>

Thus freedom to perform one's religious promptings, either from bishop or magistrate, is a "question of having Jesus Christ as the Master and Lord of our conscience."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ohrn, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

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

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

The reply to the Lambeth Appeal stated that "we reverence and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, as the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice," and therefore: "it is plain to us that the headship and sole authority of our Lord in His Church excludes any such relations with the State as may impair its liberty."<sup>1</sup> The doctrines of soul competency and religious freedom are based on the belief that only Christ is King; there is to be no intermediary, for each person must obey Christ his King.

#### Lordship and Baptist Polity

Baptist polity, correctly interpreted, is not a type of New England town meeting, but rather a collective theocracy. Each individual seeks the will of the Lord in each matter; thus, by consensus of the congregation, the leading of the Lord is found. It is not a case of the "majority rules," but rather a case of the congregation finding the will of the Lord by discussion, meditation, and prayer.<sup>2</sup>

The third characteristic of the Baptist community is that it is composed of responsible members. This naturally follows from our doctrine

---

<sup>1</sup>Payne, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>2</sup>F. H. LITTELL, *The Free Church* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1957), pp. 43 ff., has an excellent discussion of this understanding of congregational polity.



of Believers' Baptism, and is expressed in the idea of the gathered church and the church meeting. The church is not primarily "democracy in action." . . . The real significance of the church meeting--and we have largely forgotten it--lies deeper. It is the occasion when God speaks to the church as a church. The members gather together and wait--wait upon God.<sup>1</sup>

In his article "Polity," L. R. Elliott defined the Baptist understanding of polity:

--in short, the complete freedom of every man uncoerced by any human being or institution, to respond to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in all matters about which his conscience speaks.<sup>2</sup>

Polity is linked with obedience to Christ as Lord and King. Congregational polity is not primarily concerned with the rights of the members, but with the rights of the Head to lead his people in their decisions.

#### Lordship and Discipline

The relation of Lordship ecclesiology and discipline is obvious: the members of the church are expected to live for their Lord; thus discipline is the church's way of assuring obedience unto her Lord. The attempt to have a "pure" or "gathered" congregation is a result of having the Lordship of Christ as the norm for

<sup>1</sup>R. C. Walton, The Gathered Church (London: Carey Press, 1946), p. 128.

<sup>2</sup>Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, ed. Norman Cox (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), II, 1094.

every Christian. As it was noted in the previous section, being a disciple refers to the complete pattern of living. If one accepts Christ as Lord, then that one will live a life of obedience to him. Discipline is the church's way of seeing that the members fulfill their obligations to their Lord.

The Church is a brotherhood, bound together by peculiarly close ties; friendship, forbearance, mutual support, fidelity in rebuke, intercession, effort to reclaim, are various aspects of the all-embracing love of the brethren which is the distinctive command of Christ. The obverse of this is that when a member has despised his privilege as son of God, and has fallen into sin, and will not be convinced so as to repent and confess, then he is to be expelled from the brotherhood by direct divine authority; a healthy body must purge itself of disease.<sup>1</sup>

Often discipline is considered a rigid kind of legalism. If discipline is an attempt to enforce rules for their own sake, then this is true; however, if discipline is the result of the presence of the regnant Christ, it is the function of his Spirit among his people:

Christian discipline, like Christian morality generally, can never properly consist in the mechanical application of a set of rules. The church herself stands under the judgment and grace of Christ, her living Head. She stands on the Word of God, as the living intention of God's voice in revelation and redemption by his own Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Whitley, *History of British Baptists*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>T. D. Price, "Discipline," *What is the Church*, ed. Duke K. McCall (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), p. 184.

Discipline is a pivotal issue in the life of a church. When the church abandons discipline, she has permitted a theological divorce; it is assumed that discipleship, i.e., continual following of Jesus, is not integral to the Christian life. Sanctification is not necessarily related to justification. Where there is a genuine attempt at discipline, it is rooted in the Lordship of Christ; where there is no attempt at discipline, the Lordship of Christ is obscured.

#### Lordship and Mission

It was no accident that the modern mission movement began among English Baptists. Under the leading of their Lord, the English Baptists, inspired by William Carey, sought to unite the Lordship of Christ with practice. They became convinced that they must follow the Lord in all of his commands, especially his command to disciple all nations.

Once again there arose within Christendom a band of brethren who united practice with theory. It devoted itself to propaganda, it pledged its adherents, it impressed on them the duty of winning disciples for Christ. . . . This brotherhood became known as Anabaptist, or as Baptist. But the contribution it offers to the Christian world is not so much the practice [of believers' baptism], or a theory about a rite; it is the recognition that there are two other notes of the Church: It must be Voluntary and

Missionary.<sup>1</sup>

The missionary impetus of English Baptists was the result of their dedication to the doing of all the commands of their Lord. A recognition of the Lordship of Christ is integral to the mission task; when one accepts the mission of Christ, he becomes Christ's disciple. A refusal of the mission of Christ is a refusal to follow the Lord of the church.

British Baptists have adopted a statement that summarizes the writer's position: personal forgiveness is the beginning of walking in the way of the Lord; a church is a group walking together in the commandments of the Lord.

It will be seen that in this statement of the doctrine of the Church the emphasis falls time and again upon the central fact of evangelical experiences, that when God offers His forgiveness, love, and power, the gift must be personally accepted in faith by each individual. From this follows the believer's endeavour to walk in the way of the Lord and to be obedient to His commandments. From this follows our traditional defence of civil and religious liberty. It governs our conception of the Church and our teaching on Believers' Baptism.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Whitley, A History of British Baptists, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>The Baptist Doctrine of the Church, A Statement approved by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, March, 1948 (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1948), pp. 7-8.

## Methodology

Lordship ecclesiology has been defined and related to the other distinctives for which Baptists have been known. It remains to be demonstrated that this is a defensible interpretation of Baptist life and thought. Because of the noncreedal nature of Baptist thought, it is a difficult task to prove what "Baptists believe." Sometime, somewhere, some Baptists have accepted almost every kind of doctrine. From their beginnings, Baptists have held divergent views and doctrines; Calvinism and Arminianism have both been represented in Baptist life and thought. Thus to say "the Baptist position is . . ." is quite a task. Who can say what the Baptist position is?

Yet, some method, though admittedly subjective, must be adopted to try to find what seems to be representative of Baptist thought. Payne discussed five categories of material for discerning Baptist thought:

- 1) Pronouncements by denominational groups.
- 2) Works by Baptist authors.
- 3) Circular letters from associations.
- 4) Church minutes.
- 5) Confessions of faith.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., pp. 12-13.

If one attempted to give a comprehensive view of Baptist thought, all of these areas would have to be covered. However, as the present task is similar to a history of dogma, the consideration will focus on "official" pronouncements by some Baptist groups. By "official" the writer means statements or confessions issued in the name of some groups of Baptists.

Other materials must also be examined: those statements hallowed by wide usage and acceptance by several churches are also considered legitimate sources for Baptist thought. The only way it can be demonstrated what a certain group believed is to examine the works they considered orthodox. The work of an individual can, in this sense, be called "official" if it was hallowed by long acceptance and usage. Thus the work of Andrew Fuller will not be considered; he gave no distinctive voice in the forming of a Baptist doctrine of the church. J. R. Graves, on the other hand, must be considered because he became the standard of orthodoxy for a group of Baptists.

When a statement, such as Graves', has been accepted by a group of Baptists, it can safely be said that his statement represents the view of that group of Baptists. Certain value judgments will be made in any

such scheme as this, for not all would agree with the choices made by the writer.<sup>1</sup>

The term "Baptist heritage" will be used quite often. In this context, "Baptist heritage" will refer to those ideas and thoughts that have gone into the making of Southern Baptists' understanding of the church. The study will begin with the rise of the Baptist movement in seventeenth century England. It will be seen that Lordship ecclesiology was explicit in the fountain-heads of both General and Particular Baptist life. The early confessions that express these two views will then be examined.<sup>2</sup> This will give a balanced sample of English Baptist views in the seventeenth century.

Turning to Baptist thought in America, those elements central in the formation of the Southern tradition will be brought into focus. There are three basic

<sup>1</sup>W. S. Hudson (ed.), Baptist Concepts of the Church (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), pp. 11-29, is very helpful at this point. This book gives the best survey of various Baptist views of the church. However, as Hudson was considering Baptists as a whole, his treatment was much wider than the present writer's. The present writer is concerned only with those views that have been influential in the South.

<sup>2</sup>Little attention will be given General Baptist Confessions after Helwys. According to W. L. Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations in the South (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), pp. 63-66, General Baptists were not influential in the South. See also his Baptist Confessions of Faith (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), pp. 347-48.

streams intermingled in Southern Baptist life: the old Particular Baptist stream from England, the Evangelical stream from the Great Awakening, and the individualism of the Massachusetts Separates.<sup>1</sup> The first stream came to the South from Philadelphia by way of Charlestown; the second was the modified Calvinism of the Separate Baptists of Sandy Creek; the third came to the South from New Hampshire by way of the Landmark movement.

These studies will demonstrate that Lordship ecclesiology is a dominant notion in the Southern Baptist heritage.

---

<sup>1</sup>Hudson, op. cit., pp. 21-27.



## CHAPTER IV

### ENGLISH BAPTISTS AND LORDSHIP ECCLESIOLOGY

#### General Baptists

It is generally accepted that Baptists arose from the English Separatist tradition.<sup>1</sup> The first English congregation to practice believers' baptism was led by John Smyth. The pilgrimage of John Smyth is well known: a graduate of Cambridge, he was elected lecturer for life in the city of Lincoln; but his views led to his dismissal. In 1606 Smyth joined (or formed) a Separatist congregation in Gainsborough. This congregation is famous for the Gainsborough Covenant. The relation between this group and the congregation at Scrooby under John Robinson is not clear. They were either one congregation or two congregations that were closely related.<sup>2</sup> In 1608 both groups migrated to Holland. In 1609 the

---

<sup>1</sup>A discussion of this point is found in the standard Baptists histories. See Torbet, Underwood, Whitley, etc.

<sup>2</sup>Whitley, in his biography of Smyth in vol. 1 of Smyth's Works, p. lxvii, insists that Robinson was an assistant to Smyth in 1608. Whitley also said that there was one congregation in England, but that they became two congregations in Holland.

group led by Smyth, after a study of the Scriptures, disbanded and formed the first English Baptist church by the act of believers' baptism.

In 1610 he led a portion of his congregation to seek union with the Waterlanders in Amsterdam. Thomas Helwys and others of the congregation would not accept Smyth's leadership in this matter. They split off from Smyth's group, returned to England, and in 1612, at Spitalsfield, outside the walls of London, established the first Baptist church on English soil.

#### John Smyth's Ecclesiology

The Gainsborough Covenant may be accepted as the first extant expression of John Smyth's views. The Gainsborough group moved to their position because

they shooke of this yoake of antichristian bondage, an as ye Lords free people, joyned them selves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye gospell, to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.<sup>1</sup>

Whitley says that the essential point of the covenant was the declaration to walk in all of God's ways. But even more than that, the declaration was the pledge to

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, lxii. (Sic will be omitted from the quotations of early Baptist sources.)

follow the Lord wherever he might lead. This progressive polity was the hallmark of John Smyth; he went freely from position to position, always open to new light.

In 1606, after becoming a Separatist, but before advancing to the Baptist position, Smyth wrote a letter defending his congregation's actions to a certain "Mr. A. S." His line of defense declared that the congregation had moved as it did because of the Lord's leading:

I pray you be perswaded that that which we do, we doe it not rashlie, nor vpon discontentment, nor in pride, or vpon any sinister respect; no; we cal God to record to our soules that they evidence of the truth workinge vpon our consciences through the Lords vnspeakeable mercie, even contrarie to our rebellious nature, hath mightelye convinced & violentlie caried vs to this truth we professe and practise.<sup>1</sup>

Smyth went on to show that only those who submit to the Lordship of Christ are true believers: "They which beleve not Christ to be their King, or if they know him to be ther King, do not submit to his Kingdom, have not the true faith."<sup>2</sup> In 1607 Smyth published his "Principles and Inferences Concerning the Visible Church." He taught very clearly that a visible church must consist only of those committed to Christ as Lord.

To a true visible Church are requisite three things. 1. True matter. 2. True forme. 3. True

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 547.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 553.

properties.

The true matter of a true visible Church are Saints. . . . Saints are men separated from all knowne syn, practising the whol will of God knowne vnto the, . . . growing in grace and knowledg, . . . continuing to the end.

. . . The true form of a true visible Church is partly inward, partly outward. . . . The inward part of the forme consisteth in 3. things

. . . . The Spirit is the soule animating the whol body. . . . Faith vniteth the members of the body to the head Christ. . . . Love vniteth the members of the body each to the other.<sup>1</sup>

Only those "practising the whol will of God knowne," and those filled with the Spirit which is "animating the whol body" are members of the body of which Christ is head. Because Christ is present with his people, they can follow his leading. Thus Payne comments:

Smyth sent his friends and associates upon a quest and a pilgrimage. Theirs was, by its very nature, a progressive covenant. With the New Testament in their hands, they were to promise to conform to what should be made known to them by the Spirit. Loyalty to this led in Smyth's own case to his becoming convinced that admission into the true Church should be by baptism in the scriptural manner.<sup>2</sup>

In 1610 Smyth's "Short Confession of Faith" accompanied his application to the Waterlanders for church fellowship. Article seventeen declared that Christ is the regnant Lord of his church:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 18.

The holy office of this glorified Priest, Lord and Christ, in the heavenly glorious being is to help, govern, and preserve, by his Holy Spirit, his holy Church and people in the world.<sup>1</sup>

The next article continued: "and according to his kingly office, in his heavenly being he governeth the hearts of the faithful by His holy Spirit and Word."<sup>2</sup> The article on polity firmly stated that Christ is the ruling Lord of his disciples.

The vocation or election of the said officers is performed by the church, with fasting, and prayer to God; for God knoweth the heart; he is amongst the faithful who are gathered together in his name; and by his Holy Spirit doth so govern the minds and hearts of his people, that he by them bringeth to light and propoundeth whom he knoweth to be profitable to his church.<sup>3</sup>

It is evident from these quotations that John Smyth conceived of the visible church as a congregation ruled by Jesus Christ as Lord. Only those submissive to Christ as Lord were to be members. John Smyth taught what the present writer has called Lordship ecclesiology.

#### Thomas Helwys' Ecclesiology

Thomas Helwys' view of Christ and his church was very much like that of Smyth. In 1610 Helwys and a small group separated from Smyth because of his desire to join

---

<sup>1</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confession of Faith, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

the Waterlanders. They felt this desire assumed a successionist ecclesiology. In 1611, with the aid of his congregation of about ten members, Helwys wrote his "Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland." This was a remarkable document for a layman; it is even more amazing that it was the work of the whole group.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the Declaration was to state the truth as understood by Helwys' group and to confute the views which Smyth had accepted from the Waterlanders. Lumpkin states that this is rightly judged the first English Baptist confession of faith.<sup>2</sup>

This document contains elements of Lordship ecclesiology. Article nine, dealing with Christology, sets forth the claims of Christ.

That IESVS CHRIST is Mediator off the New Testament betweene GOD and Man, I Tim. 2.5, haveing all power in Heaven and in Earth given vnto him. Mat. 28.18. Being the onely KING, Luke 1.33. PRIEST, Heb. 7.24, and PROPHEET, Act. 3.22. Off his church, he also being the onely Law-giver, hath in his Testament set downe an absolute, and perfect rule off direction, for all persons, at all times, to bee observed; Which no Prince, nor anie whosoever, may add to, or diminish from.<sup>3</sup>

The New Testament was accepted as authoritative because in it may be found the will of Christ, the Lord of the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

Church.

That the scriptures off the Old and New Testament are written for our instruction, 2 Tim. 3.16 & that wee ought to search them for they testifie off CHRIST, Io. 5.39. And therefore to bee vsed withall reverence, as conteyning the Holie Word off GOD, which onelie is our direction and all thinges whatsoever.<sup>1</sup>

The two passages just quoted reveal the heart of Helwys' position: Christ is the Lord of his church; the Scriptures reveal the will of Christ; the church must be free to follow the leading of the Lord.

Upon his return to England in 1612, Helwys wrote his Mistry of Iniquity. Written as an appeal to James I, it asserted that only Christ is Lord.

Heare o King, and dispise not ye counsell of ye poore, and let their complaints come before thee.

The King is a mortall man, and not God, therefore hath no power over ye immortall souls of his subjects, to make lawes and ordinances for them, and to set spiritual Lords over them.

If the King have authority to make spiritual Lords and lawes, then he is an immortall God and not a mortall man.

O King, be not seduced by deceivers to sin so against God, whome thou oughtest to obey, not against thy poore subjects who ought and will obey thee in all things with body life and goods, or else let their lives be taken from ye earth.<sup>2</sup>

Helwys' argument was crystal clear: the church must govern itself, that is, be governed by Christ; for only

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>Sydnor L. Stealey (ed.), A Baptist Treasury (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1958), pp. 12-13.

"immortall God" and not "mortall man" is to rule the congregation. Any interference from the crown or the state, or "spirituall Lords" (bishops), assumes the prerogative of God. Only Christ is to rule his people; there is only one throne in the church and Christ must reign alone.

Needless to say, the crown did not take kindly to such sentiments, and Helwys was interned in Newgate prison. Thus was rewarded the first man to publish in the English language a plea for religious freedom.<sup>1</sup>

It may be concluded that Smyth and Helwys, the fountainheads of English General Baptists, were both dedicated to the Lordship of Christ. Only those who have accepted Christ as Lord are to be members of the church. The church is to be ruled by the regnant Christ through the Scriptures and the Spirit. They accepted Jesus' standard for discipleship as the standard for church membership. They believed in Lordship ecclesiology.

#### Particular Baptists

Particular English Baptists arose from the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Separatist congregation of London. Little

---

<sup>1</sup>Whitely, History of British Baptists, p. 33, says that Smyth had written his 84th proposition, but it was not printed until after 1612.



can be known about the theology of that congregation because there are few extant sources dating from the early years of the church. While there are several extant works of the founding fathers of the General Baptists, only the Kiffin Manuscript and the Jessey Records have survived to provide early information about the Particular Baptists. W. T. Whitley performed a valuable service in editing these materials for publication.<sup>1</sup>

Henry Jacob was the founder of the church that eventually became the first Particular Baptist church. Jacob, after spending some time with John Robinson and other Separatists in the Low Countries, decided that Separatism should be pursued in England as well as in Holland:

Mr. Jacob & Some others sought ye Lord about them in fasting & Prayer together: at last it was concluded by ye Most of them, that it ware a very warrantable & commendable way to set upon that Course here as well as in Holland or elsewhere, whatsoever Troubles shall ensue. Jacob was willing to adventure himselfe for this Kingdom of Christs sake: ye rest encouraged him.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>W. T. Whitley (ed.), Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society (London: Baptist Union Publication Department, 1908), I. Champlin Burrage, The Early Eng-Disserters (Cambridge; University Press, 1912), I, 313, calls these documents the Gould Manuscript. Burrage has a textual and critical study of documents on pp. 336 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Transactions, p. 208.

Returning to London in 1616, Jacob led in the formation of a Separatist congregation. The essence of the new congregation's covenant was the principle of progressive polity: "Then they Covenanted together to walk in all Gods Ways as he had revealed or should make known to them."<sup>1</sup> Whitley commented that this willingness to follow the Lord was the link between all the Separatist groups.<sup>2</sup>

The account of the emergence of a Particular Baptist congregation from this group is confusing, as there are many ambiguities in the record. Different historians read the records differently. Underwood gives this account: Lathrop succeeded Jacob as pastor, but he soon left London for the New World; the church was without a pastor until 1637 when Henry Jessey became minister. In 1630 a Mr. Dupper seceded from the congregation, declaring that baptism received from the Church of England was invalid.

In 1633 Samuel Eaton and others came to the same conclusion. In 1638 there was a further division: six members raised the question of the qualifications of the candidate for baptism; they separated from the mother

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., note 5.

church, declaring that only adults should be baptized. This group joined itself to a congregation headed by Mr. Spilsbury, apparently the successor to Sam Eaton.

Then, the mode of baptism became a subject of discussion. Richard Blunt, an original follower of Eaton, being fluent in Dutch, went to Holland and received baptism from the Collegiants. Blunt returned to England, baptized Mr. Blacklock, and together they immersed the rest of the congregation. This happened in 1642. The mother church, including Henry Jessey, was won to this position, and they also became Baptists.<sup>1</sup>

#### Ecclesiology of the First London Confession

The first real glimpse of the ecclesiology of the Particular Baptists is found in the Confession of 1644. By 1644, there were seven Particular Baptist congregations in the London area. In the 1640's all the dissenters were under strong persecution. The Baptists in London, in order to defend themselves against scurrilous charges, overcame their natural aversion to creedal statements and

---

<sup>1</sup>A. C. Underwood, A History of English Baptists (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1956), pp. 57-58. There is not universal agreement that this is the proper reading of the records. Some insist Baptists be dated from 1633 with Mr. Eaton. Others say that Blunt was not baptized in Holland, but that he baptized Blacklock and then Blacklock baptized him. See Burrage, op. cit., I, 313 ff., for other views.

published the First London Confession of 1644. While this document reflects the prevalent Calvinism of the day, it is extremely important for insight into the original thinking of Particular Baptists. John Spilsbery, credited with being the pastor of the first Particular Baptist church, was the principal author of the Confession; he was assisted by William Kiffin and Samuel Richardson. Kiffin and Richardson were also members of the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey congregation.<sup>1</sup> It is logical to assume that the work of these three members of the congregation would represent the consensus of the congregation.<sup>2</sup>

There were many charges the Baptists hoped to refute by their confession: They were accused of Arianism, hence the lengthy articles on Christology; they were also accused of being Arminian--a theological position as welcome as the Plague in seventeenth century England; and they were accused of practicing baptism in the nude.<sup>3</sup> Upon publication of the Confession of 1644, many of the Baptists' critics were dismayed at the sanity

---

<sup>1</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Underwood, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

<sup>3</sup>Underwood, op. cit., p. 73. Beside article xl, Lumpkin, op. cit., p. 167, notice the note: there are to be "garments both upon the administrator and the subject, with all modestie."

of their position.

Still, there were those of the Establishment who were very critical of the Confession. Responding to Dr. Daniel Featley's criticism, the London congregations revised the Confession several times. As a result of this clarification of their doctrine, Baptists were granted legal toleration on March 4, 1647, by Parliament.

Lumpkin remarks:

Perhaps no Confession of Faith has had so formative an influence on Baptist life as this one. Vedder calls it one of the chief landmarks of Baptist history. . . . Its immediate value to Baptist life can hardly be overstated. Though issued in the name of London Baptists, it served Baptists all over the country at a time when the Particular Baptist stream was becoming the major stream of Baptist life.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction to the Confession clearly stated that the positions promulgated were reached as a result of the Lord's leading of his people:

Yet are all one in Communion, holding Jesus Christ to be our head and Lord; under whose government wee desire alone to walke, in following the Lambe wheresoever he goeth; and wee beleve the Lord will daily cause truth more to appeare in the hearts of his Saints, and make them ashamed of their folly in the Land of their Nativitie, that so they may with one shoulder, more studie to lift up the name of the Lord Jesus, and stand for his appointments and Lawes.<sup>2</sup>

They were convinced that the Lord was among his people;

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

he would give them more light as they followed his leading. Christ was the present, regnant leader of his obedient people.

The Confession states that the Scriptures are to be studied and obeyed because they contain the Word of God: "The rule of this Knowledge, Faith, and Obedience concerning the worship and service of God . . . is . . . onely the word of God contained in the Canonickall Scriptures."<sup>1</sup> The Scriptures are no end in themselves; they point to Christ, for he is the content of the Scriptures:

In this written Word God hath plainly revealed whatsoever he hath thought needfull for us to know, beleve, and acknowledge, touching the Nature and Office of Christ, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen to the praise of God.<sup>2</sup>

After dealing with Christ as Prophet and Priest, the Confession speaks of the Kingship of Christ: "He doth spiritually govern his Church, excercising his power over Angels and Men."<sup>3</sup> Christ is not an absentee ruler; but he continues to rule over his subjects, for he is "continually dwelling in, governing and keeping their hearts in faith and filiall feare by his Spirit, which

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

having given it, he never takes away from them."<sup>1</sup>

Article XIX defines a true believer as one who has been changed by the "love of God, manifested in the soul." The believer is thus separated from "all sinne and dead workes." The life of the believer is spent in "obedience to all the Commands, which Christ as head and King in this new Covenant has prescribed to him."<sup>2</sup> The true believer is a disciple who follows the leading of his Lord.

Dealing directly with ecclesiology, Article XXXIII says "that Christ hath here on earth a spirituall Kingdome, which is the Church." The members of the visible church are "Saints, called & separated from the world." They are separated from the world by the Word and the Spirit of God. Those that have made a "visible profession of the faith of the Gospel," having been baptized and thus joined to the Lord and their brethren, are allowed to participate "in the practical injoyment of the Ordinances, commanded by Christ their head and King."<sup>3</sup>

Because the church is the product of God's activity and the recipient of his love,

thither ought all men to come, of all estates,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

that acknowledge him to be their Prophet, Priest, and King, to be inrolled amongst his household servants, to be under his heavenly conducted and government, to lead their lives in his walled sheepfold, and watered garden, to have communion here with the Saints, that they may be made to be partakers of their inheritance in the Kingdome of God.<sup>1</sup>

One becomes a member of a visible church so that he may be known as one of the Lord's "household servants." The church is, as a whole, "under his heavenly conduct and government."

Article XLVII deals with the universal church. There is a unity between the several congregations of Christians, even though each body is "a compact and knit Citie in it selfe." This unity is centered in Christ: all congregations are "members of one body in the common faith under Christ their onely head."<sup>2</sup> One body of all Christians results because there is only one head.

In dealing with the relation of church and state, Article XLVIII describes the state as an ordinance of God to punish evil. The following Article pledges loyalty to the state in all civil matter. Then comes the plea for religious toleration. If the authorities will not grant toleration, the churches must do God's will even if it means persecution. Because God is the Lord, he must be

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 169.



obeyed:

But if God with-hold the Magistrates allowance and furtherance herein; yet we must notwithstanding proceed together in Christian communion, not daring to place to suspend our practice, but to walk in obedience to Christ in the profession and holding forth this faith before mentioned, even in the midst of all trialls and afflictions, not accounting our goods, lands, wives, children, fathers, mothers, brethren, sisters, yea, and our own lives dear unto us, so we mag finish our course with joy: remembering alwayes we ought to obey God rather than men, and grounding upon the commandement, comission and promise of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

There could not be a clearer statement of Lordship ecclesiology than this. A Baptist church is a church that follows the leading of her Lord regardless of cost.

To sum up: at each point of the examination, the First London Confession sustains the thesis that Lordship is integral to the Baptist concept of the church. The Confession accepts Jesus' demands for discipleship as the norm for church membership. To be a member of a Baptist church, according to the First London Confession, one must be a disciple of Jesus.

#### Ecclesiology of the Second London Confession

The Second London Confession of 1677 was an ecumenical confession. The purpose was to show the unity

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

of Baptists with Puritans and Congregationalists. Charles II had favored a policy of toleration and had issued the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. Parliament, which was firmly under the control of the Establishment, forced the withdrawal of the Indulgence, fearing a renaissance of Roman Catholicism. The Clarendon Code was reinstated, and all dissenters, including Baptists, were persecuted anew.

This led the dissenters to form a united front. Because nearly all of the dissenters were Calvinists, the Westminster Confession served as the basis for doctrinal unity. The Congregationalists adopted their version of the Westminster Confession at the Savoy Conference of 1658. "The Particular Baptists of London and vicinity determined therefore to show their agreement with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists by making the Westminster Confession the basis of a new Confession of their own."<sup>1</sup> Responding to a circular letter, the London Baptists met and approved a revision of the Westminster Confession by Elder William Collins of the Petty France Church in London.

There are several changes of emphasis in this Confession from the Confession of 1644;<sup>2</sup> however, in the

---

<sup>1</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

sections dealing with ecclesiology, the emphasis on Lordship is present. Chapter 26 deals with the Church. The universal church "consists of the whole number of the Elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."<sup>1</sup> The individual Christian, who is a member of the local congregation, is one "professing the faith of the Gospel and obedience unto God by Christ."<sup>2</sup> Simple profession of faith is not sufficient; one must be obedient unto the Lord of the universal church, Christ Jesus:

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, in whom by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order, or Government of the Church, is invested in a supremam & soveraigne manner.<sup>3</sup>

This same Lord calls his own to be his people; it is the grace of Christ that elects:

The Lord Jesus calleth out of the World unto himself, through the Ministry of his word, by his Spirit, those that are given unto him by his Father; that they may walk before him in all the ways of obedience, which he prescribeth to them in his Word.<sup>4</sup>

The call of Christ is a call to the acceptance of Christ as Lord; his own are obedient in all of life. This

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

obedience is manifest in the life of the church and her members.

The Members of these Churches are Saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ; and do willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ, giving up themselves, to the Lord & one another by the will of God, in professed subjection to the Ordinances of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

At each point the church is to be obedient to Christ her Lord. It is the vocation of the church to walk before her Master in "all the ways of obedience" which are revealed in the Scriptures. The influence of the Puritans is felt in the Confession; but there is preserved the fundamental conviction that Christ as Lord must always lead his people.

Time and time again the phrase "according to the mind of Christ" appears in the Confession. For the Second London Confession, the heart of the Christian life, individual and corporate, consists in faith and obedience to Christ the Lord.

#### Conclusion

Even though the investigation has been little more than an outline, it has been seen that Lordship ecclesiology was integral to seventeenth century Baptists in England. The belief that the Lord is always present

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

among his people, leading them, teaching them, and ruling them was a common link between the two groups. Lordship ecclesiology was definitely integral to the English Baptists' understanding of themselves. Now the consideration must shift to the New World. The development of Baptist thought in America that formed the matrix for Southern Baptists must be investigated; and, if possible, it must be shown that Lordship ecclesiology is integral to Baptist life in America.

## CHAPTER V

### SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND LORDSHIP ECCLESIOLOGY

#### Methodology

The problems attendant upon any attempt to describe "what Baptists believe" have been mentioned before.<sup>1</sup> For Southern Baptists this is particularly true, for not until 1925 did Southern Baptists adopt a statement of faith. Even in 1925 the Convention was hesitant about the adoption of a confession; the committee that prepared the statement stressed its transient nature.<sup>2</sup> It is fair to say that the Convention adopted the statement to show its rejection of naturalism rather than to affirm a positive theological position.<sup>3</sup>

The Statement of 1925 reveals the sources of Southern Baptist life. The New Hampshire Confession of 1833 was the basis of the 1925 Statement. The New

---

<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 60-63.

<sup>2</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions, pp. 391-92. W. W. Barnes, The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), pp. 117-19, discusses Southern Baptists and statements of faith.

<sup>3</sup>The careful student will probably notice that most people can generate more emotion against something than for something.

Hampshire Confession was a modified statement of the Particular Baptist theology; the New Hampshire brethren had been influenced by Freewill Baptists and had left their rigid Calvinism behind. Thus the face of the Second London Confession is seen in the background of the 1925 Statement.

Again, the influence of Landmarkism is noticed in the 1925 Statement. J. R. Graves' influence is noticed more by what was left unsaid than what was said; there is no mention of the universal church. The third stream that flowed into the Statement was the evangelistic fervor that came through the Separates of Sandy Creek, North Carolina.

These three streams must now be investigated: The Particular Baptist influence in the South, the Separates of Sandy Creek, and the Old Landmarkers.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>This organization of the material into the three groups is obviously a value judgment. However, some form must be given the material for any systematic study. Hudson's essay, "By Way of Perspective" suggested this division (op. cit., pp. 11-29). The writer was aware of the influence of the Philadelphia tradition through Charlestown, and the Landmark influence in the Southwest; however, it was W. L. Lumpkin's study of the Separates (Baptist Foundations in the South) that focused his attention upon that group.

However, there are definite weaknesses in this scheme. For instance, in 1845 the Sandy Creek Association adopted the New Hampshire Confession of Faith long before it was published in Brown's Manual. See Elder George W. Purefoy, A History of Sandy Creek Baptist Asso-

## The Philadelphia Tradition<sup>1</sup>

### The Philadelphia Association

The first Particular Baptist churches in America were established in New England. Roger Williams formed a church in Providence in 1639; John Clark led a strong Particular Baptist community in Newport between 1641 and 1648; and William Scriven led in some Baptist work in Maine. But the future did not belong to Particular Baptists of New England. The important center of Particular Baptist work was to be the Middle Colonies.<sup>2</sup>

In 1707 five churches in the Philadelphia area formed the Philadelphia Association. By 1760 this Association included churches located in Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, and West Virginia. The Ketchikan Association in Virginia, the Warren Association in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and the Charlestown Association of South Carolina were

---

ciation, 1758-1858 (New York: Sheldon and Co., p. 1859), p. 74. There is no claim that these three streams were always clear and distinct. Yet, they do represent the three broad streams that fused together in Southern Baptist life.

<sup>1</sup>"The Philadelphia Tradition" will be the term used to designate the Particular Baptist influence in America. The reasons for this usage will be obvious in the course of the discussion. This term was suggested by Robert Handy in "The Philadelphia Tradition," in Hudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



extensions of this group.<sup>1</sup> The Philadelphia Association fixed the trend of Baptist life in America. "Thus, any attempt to understand the Baptists of the United States must begin with this group."<sup>2</sup>

The Philadelphia Association was marked by certain well-defined principles. The Bible was the only rule for faith and order; confessions were only guides in interpretations. The church universal was the whole number of the elect in all times and places; the universal church was manifest in the local body; the local church was a result of the Lord's command. Because the local church was composed of the elect, it was expected that a holy life would flow from the members. Discipline was strict. Excommunication for sinful living was not just a doctrine; it was practiced.<sup>3</sup>

In development of the associational principle, the Philadelphia Association broke new ground. While the Association did not have judicial power over its parts, it did deal with the various problems of the churches. In the Associational meetings, problems were submitted to God in prayer; the Association attempted to make known the mind of Christ in difficult matters.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 45 ff.

Ordination rested not in the local church but with the Association as a whole.<sup>1</sup> The Association disciplined and examined ministers to see if they should be allowed to function in the Association churches.<sup>2</sup>

The Philadelphia Association bequeathed two documents to the Charlestown Association: the Confession of 1742, and the Discipline of 1743 that served as the basis for the Charlestown Discipline.

#### The Charlestown Association

How was it that the Philadelphia tradition came to be important in the South? William Scriven of Maine sojourned in Charlestown, South Carolina, long enough to establish a church in 1684. This church, plus the Welsh Neck Church, composed of Welshmen who came from Wales by way of Delaware in 1735, gave leadership in Carolina to the Particular Baptist work. Under the leadership of Oliver Hart, pastor of the Charlestown Church, the Charlestown Association was formed in 1751.

At that time there were a few General Baptist

---

<sup>1</sup>The practice of calling an ordaining council of the ordained persons in the association for ordaining a pastor or deacon today is the residue of this early practice. Others than members of the local church are asked to participate in the service, though few know the origin of the practice.

<sup>2</sup>Robert G. Torbet, A History of Baptists (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1950), p. 231.

churches in the Carolinas. Thus the presence of Arminianism was felt early in the South, but its influence was soon to come to an end. The Calvinistic churches absorbed their Arminian brothers, and in 1794 the last General Baptist church became Calvinistic.<sup>1</sup>

From its inception, this Association was identifiable as a Particular Baptist association. In 1767 the Association adopted the Philadelphia Confession of 1742. The only change was a deletion of the Keach Articles on hymn singing and laying on of hands.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Lordship ecclesiology of the Second London Confession came to Charlestown by way of Philadelphia.<sup>3</sup>

The same process came with the formation of the Charlestown Discipline of 1767; it was a result of English Particular Baptist thought mediated by way of Philadelphia. In 1697 Ben and Elias Keach, Particular Baptist ministers of London, published with the Second London Confession a treatise on church discipline. This document was used by Benjamin Griffith in 1743 when he, in co-operation with several others, wrote the discipline adopted by the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 249. See Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 352. It is interesting to note that the Fourth edition of the Confession includes the Keach Articles.

<sup>3</sup>The Philadelphia Confession was, of course, the American reduplication of the Second London Confession.

Philadelphia Association the same year.

This discipline by Griffith, A Short Treatise, was the basis of the Charlestown Discipline adopted in 1767. The Preface to the Discipline explains the indebtedness of the writers to the Short Treatise and Dr. John Gill.<sup>1</sup> John Hart was the primary worker in the revision of the Discipline.<sup>2</sup> Here again the close tie with Philadelphia must be noted; Hart had led the Association into requesting the Philadelphia Association to send a missionary to work in the Carolinas. John Gano came to the South from Philadelphia as a result of Hart's request.<sup>3</sup>

The full title of the Charlestown Discipline was "A Summary of Church-Discipline; showing the Qualifications and Duties of the Officers and Members of a Gospel Church." From this title it is apparent that the Charlestown brethren considered membership in a church a serious matter. Chapter one was a summary of church history. The local church, which is a manifestation of

---

<sup>1</sup>James Leo Garrett, Jr. (ed.), Baptist Church Discipline ("A Broadman Historical Monograph"; Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962), pp. 27-28. Dr. Garrett has written an introduction to Baptist discipline and edited the Charlestown Discipline for publication in this monograph.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>3</sup>Hugh Wamble, Through Trial to Triumph (Nashville: Convention Press, 1958), p. 10.

the universal church, is called together by Christ so "that they may walk together, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."<sup>1</sup> This local body meets together for "the enjoyment of fellowship with each other and with Christ their head."<sup>2</sup> This body is composed of "sincere followers" of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The church is formed by a covenant made with God and one another:

Being thus satisfied with each other's graces and qualifications and united in the bond of love, they should give up themselves to the Lord and to one another by the will of God (2 Cor. 8:5) by subscribing a written covenant consistent with the Word of God (Isa. 44:5), thereby binding and obliging themselves to be the Lord's, to walk in all his commands and ordinances. . . .

Being thus united in one body under Christ their Head, they become and are to be deemed a church essential, founded on the gospel plan.<sup>4</sup>

The Lordship of Christ is further declared, for upon its organization, "A church thus constituted, has the keys, or power of government, within itself, having Christ for its head, and his law for its rule."<sup>5</sup> A church must be sure that only true believers are admitted into the fellowship, for "a strict inquiry should be made

<sup>1</sup>Garrett, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

into their experience of a work of grace in their hearts."<sup>1</sup> Later, it is said

Let those look to it who make the church of Christ a harlot by opening the door of admission so wide as to permit unbelievers, unconverted, and graceless persons to crowd into it without control.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter four deals with the duties of church members, and chapter five deals with church censures. In these discussions it is clear that the example of Christ is the norm for the church member. He is expected to follow his Lord; if he does not, the church must discipline the one who fails in his discipleship.

### Conclusion

Lordship ecclesiology has been traced to the Charlestown Association from London by way of Philadelphia; thus the Charlestown Association, and its ecclesiastical children, were heirs of the ecclesiology of the Particular Baptists. Secondly, it has been shown that Lordship ecclesiology was the basic principle in the Charlestown Discipline: a local church, a manifestation of the church universal, is a group of people covenanted together to walk in the Lord's ways and follow his leading.

Thus it may be concluded that Lordship ecclesiology

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

is basic to the Charlestown understanding of the church: only those committed to Christ as Lord are suitable to be given baptism in a Baptist church.

### The Separate Tradition

The second major stream flowing into Southern Baptist life was the Separate Baptist influence of Sandy Creek, North Carolina. The Separate Baptists of Sandy Creek were products of the Whitfield revivals of the 1740's. Shubal Stearns was the leader of the Separates; he became a Baptist as a result of the Great Awakening in Connecticut.<sup>1</sup>

After leaving Connecticut, Stearns and Daniel Marshall, his brother-in-law, moved to Virginia to do mission work on the frontier. For a short period they labored there, but with little success. They soon felt the hand of the Lord leading them on. In 1755 they settled at Sandy Creek, North Carolina, at the junction of several frontier trails. They were not looking for an inn in the wilderness but a place to witness and preach the Word.

The church at Sandy Creek was formed with sixteen members. Stearns was pastor, and Marshall and Joseph

---

<sup>1</sup>J. Allen Easley, "Shubal Stearns," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 1298.

Breed were assistants. They built a meeting house and services were soon being held.<sup>1</sup> From this humble beginning with sixteen members, a movement was launched that was to be a dominant influence in Southern Baptist life: the purpose of the church is to win souls to Christ.<sup>2</sup>

As products of the Awakening, the Separates stressed individual conversion and confession. Preaching was not a theological discourse; it was an impassioned plea to give oneself to Christ. Emotion ran high; conversion was a matter of life or death.

The tears, tremblings, and shouts of the members quickly affected the visitors, and from the little meetinghouse a tumult of grief at sin and joy at salvation ascended to heaven. Men who came to the meetings to mock returned home praising and glorifying God. The church began to grow.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the work of Stearns and his associates, including Samuel Harris, a converted nobelman from Virginia, spiritual brush fires soon extended in all directions. From the humble beginning in 1755, the Separate movement had, in seventeen years, expanded into forty-two churches. In less than a score of years, an unprecedentedly popular religious movement had developed,

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations in the South, p. 32.



"and within thirty years their people established themselves as the leading denomination in the South."<sup>1</sup>

Norman Cox stated that the Separate Baptist heritage is the cause of Southern Baptist numerical growth:

From their Separate Baptist heritage, Southern Baptists have received their sustaining evangelistic dynamic. For a century and a half, since that union, they have been outstanding in their evangelistic fervor.<sup>2</sup>

In other areas of the United States, Baptists without the benefit of the Separatists' fervor have remained a minority group.

Because of the Separates' participation in the struggle for independence and their emphasis upon experiential religion, "the 'Radical Reformation' thus triumphed in America as nowhere else in the entire world. Its concept of the Church as a voluntary fellowship of deliberate followers of Christ came to prevail in the Southern region."<sup>3</sup>

The emphasis upon heart-felt religion led the Separatists to have an aversion to creedal statements. Thus they were hesitant to adopt any confession of faith. They were not exclusive, for they were quick to have

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations in the South, p. 149.

fellowship with all Baptists. Stearns sought help from the Particular Baptists churches in ordination services; John Gano of Philadelphia attended the first meeting of the Sandy Creek Association; and the Separates felt free to preach and baptize in the General Baptist churches.<sup>1</sup>

The tendency toward fellowship finally overcame the reticence to adopt a confession of faith. In 1816, in response to the plea of Luther Rice for missionary unity, the Separates consented to unite with the Regulars. These articles reflect the outlook of the Sandy Creek Association early in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Articles six and seven show the Separates' belief in Lordship ecclesiology:

VI. That the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful persons, who have obtained fellowship with each other, and have given themselves up to the Lord and one another; having agreed to keep a godly discipline, according to the rules of the Gospel.

VII. That Jesus Christ is the great head of the church, and that the government thereof is with the body.<sup>3</sup>

This Confession is the only extant work of the Sandy Creek Association, for in 1816 all of the minutes of the Association burned in the house of Brother William Lightfoot.<sup>4</sup> Because of this fire, much that one would

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-68.

<sup>2</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, p. 357.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 358.

<sup>4</sup>Purefoy, op. cit., p. 74.

like to know is lost forever. However, the Church Covenant of Grassy Creek Church of North Carolina is thought to be the work of Stearns.<sup>1</sup>

The Grassy Creek Covenant affirms that those who joined themselves together do "acknowledge ourselves to be under the most solemn covenant with the Lord to live for him and no other."<sup>2</sup> The covenanters pledged that they would be totally dedicated to God:

We call heaven and earth to witness that we without the least reserve, give up ourselves, through the help and aiding grace of God's Spirit, our souls and bodies and all that we have to this one God, to be entirely at his disposal, both ourselves, our names and estates, as God shall see best for his own glory; and that we will faithfully do, by the help of God's Spirit, whatsoever our consciences, influenced by the word and Spirit of God, shall direct to be our duty, both to God and man.<sup>3</sup>

The emphasis is clearly upon the presence of Christ by his Holy Spirit. The Lord is not absent from his church, but is an everpresent Head that guides by his Spirit.

In the same vein, the theme continues:

submitting ourselves unto the disciplining of the church, as part of Christ's mystical body, according as we shall be guided by the word and Spirit of God, and by the help of Divine grace, still looking for more light from God, as

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert Devin, A History of the Grassy Creek Baptist Church to 1880 (Raleigh: Edwards, Broughton & Co., 1880), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

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

contained in the Holy Scriptures, believing that there are greater mysteries to be unfolded and shine in the church, beyond what she has ever enjoyed.<sup>1</sup>

Here one can see progressive polity at its best. The church is composed of a group of people seeking leadership from the Lord. The Bible is looked upon as the vessel through which the Lord may reveal his will. Certainly in this Covenant the emphasis falls upon a living Lord, present and guiding his congregation.

It may be concluded from the meager evidence available that the Separates of Sandy Creek were a group of Baptists dedicated to the following of the Lord. Only those capable of being disciples were capable of being members of such a congregation. The Sandy Creek Separates were believers in what has been defined as Lordship ecclesiology.

#### The Landmark Tradition

The third recognizable stream that has gone into the making of Southern Baptists is the Landmark movement. The source of this tradition was Massachusetts Separatism.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>This group is to be distinguished from the Sandy Creek movement discussed before. The Sandy Creek tradition began with Shubal Stearns and is limited to his followers. "Separatism" as it is used of the Massachusetts brethren referred to those who became Baptists by "separating" from other groups and forming their own congregations in Massachusetts.

When the Massachusetts Baptists separated from Congregationalism, they carried with them their strong emphasis "upon the complete autonomy of the local church."<sup>1</sup> Thus they were extremely jealous of the rights of the local congregation. This feeling for the autonomy of the local congregation was heightened because of the struggles they had in gaining the right to have their own churches. Associational ties were avoided by them; they were afraid the association would infringe on their rights. This emphasis led to the formation of the society method of co-operation in the Southeast.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this pride in local autonomy, the Warren Association was not formed until 1767. Even then some of the Massachusetts Separates would not join. Finally, under the threat of persecution, the need for unity overcame their fears, and Isaac Backus, the leader of the Separates, led his church to join the Association in 1770.<sup>3</sup>

J. R. Graves, the founder of Landmarkism in the South, came from New England. While it is a long way from Massachusetts to Cotton Grove, Tennessee, the things

---

<sup>1</sup>Hudson, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

<sup>2</sup>Wamble, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Edwin Scott Gaustad, "The Backus-Leland Tradition," in Hudson, op. cit., p. 106.

that were to be said in Tennessee had their roots in the Separatism of the Massachusetts brethren.<sup>1</sup> It must also be remembered that Graves used the New Hampshire Confession of faith, a New England document. It was no coincidence that the New Hampshire Confession was the first significant Baptist confession of faith that had no reference to the universal church. This deletion was the result of the (local church) autonomy-consciousness of the New England Separates.<sup>2</sup>

The Landmark movement was launched by J. R. Graves, a precocious young man of thirty-one years, at the Cotton Grove, Tennessee, meeting on June 24, 1851. The major concern of Graves was the relation of Baptists to other Christian bodies, mainly Campbellism, Methodism, and Presbyterianism.<sup>3</sup> Thus Landmarkism was basically an attempt to ascertain the Baptist identity.

At the Cotton Grove meeting, Graves proposed five questions for study:

- 1) Can Baptists . . . recognize those societies not organized according to the pattern of the Jerusalem Church . . . as churches of Christ?

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert G. Torbet, "Landmarkism," Hudson, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>The writer has not been able to find any proof for this contention. However, there must be some explanation for the omission. This seems a reasonable conjecture to the writer.

<sup>3</sup>Torbet, "Landmarkism," p. 174.

- 2) Ought they to be called gospel churches, or churches in a religious sense?
- 3) Can we . . . recognize ministers of such . . . bodies as gospel ministers?
- 4) Is it not virtually recognizing them as official ministers to invite them into our pulpits, or by any other act that would or could be construed into such recognition?
- 5) Can we consistently address as brethren those professing Christianity, who have not the doctrine of Christ and walk not according to his commandments, but are arrayed in direct and bitter opposition to them?<sup>1</sup>

The negative answers to these questions provided the basis for the Landmark movement. The name "Landmarker" came from the title of the book by Graves and J. M. Pendleton, An Old Landmark Re-Set, published in 1854. Graves republished Orchard's Baptist history to substantiate his claim that Baptist churches were founded by Jesus, and that their history can be traced by church succession to the present day.

This was a strange turn of events. Baptists had made their claim to being Christ's church upon their obedience to him in all of life. Now Graves was accepting the high-church theories of the Episcopalians, but the evidence substantiated the Baptist claim to antiquity!

---

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Graves, Old Landmarkism: What Is It? (Texarkana, Texas: Baptist Sunday School Committee, 1928), pp. xi-xii.

The concept of historic succession was the main tenet of Graves' theology. Jesus had built one church; he had promised that the "gates of hell would not prevail against it"; therefore the church that Jesus built could be traced through history to the present day. Jesus had established the first Baptist churches, and only those churches that stand in the line of historic succession are his churches.

The ordination of ministers was subject to historic succession; only those ordained by those who had been properly ordained were ministers. The conclusions of this theory were that only Baptist churches are churches; only Baptist ministers are ministers; and only Baptists can observe the Lord's supper.<sup>1</sup>

Graves was aware that his positions were new, but he insisted that he was just spelling out the inherent genius of the Baptist tradition:

I think it is no act of presumption in me to assume to know what I meant by the Old Landmarks, since I was the first man in Tennessee, and the first editor on this continent, who publicly advocated the policy of strictly and consistently carrying out in our practice those principles which all true Baptists, in all ages, have professed to believe.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>John E. Steely, in "The Landmark Movement in the Southern Baptist Convention," McCall, op. cit., pp. 134-47. He has an excellent brief statement of Landmarkism.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. xiv.



The popular dissemination of Landmarkism was accomplished mainly by the use of J. M. Pendleton's Church Manual and the Star Book Series of Hiscox. There were two inclusions in these little books that became the principle standards of Landmarkism: the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, and the church covenant written by J. Newton Brown. Because of the wide usage and acceptance of these two documents by a large group of Baptist churches in the South, they must be considered as "official" statements of those churches.

As mentioned before, Graves had his roots in New England Separatism; his position was a doctrinal extension of the local church emphasis of the New Englanders. It was natural that he accepted the New Hampshire Confession which was a product of the New England bias.

The New Hampshire Confession was mainly the work of J. Newton Brown. It was first presented to the New Hampshire Convention in 1832; several revisions later, primarily by Brown, it was adopted in 1833. It would have been soon forgotten had not Brown published it in 1853 in his Baptist Church Manual.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions, p. 361. This may not be exactly correct, for in 1845, the Sandy Creek Association had adopted the Confession; see Purefoy, op. cit., pp. 197 ff.

The New Hampshire Confession modified the Calvinism of the Philadelphia Confession to be acceptable to the Arminian tendencies of the New Englanders.

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the . . . sinner . . . except his own . . . voluntary refusal to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Salvation is dependent upon "obedient faith." Faithlessness is a failure "to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ." Faith is, therefore, acceptance of Jesus as Christ and Lord.

Regeneration is defined as the act of the Holy Spirit "so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; and that its proper evidence is found in the holy fruit which we bring forth to the glory of God."<sup>2</sup>

Regeneration is accomplished by repentance and faith; these are inseparable works of grace in the life of the believer. By repentance and faith, which is the work of the Spirit, the individual is "at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King."<sup>3</sup> That which distinguishes the true believer is his "persevering attachment to Christ."<sup>4</sup> For the New

---

<sup>1</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions, p. 363.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 364.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Hampshire Confession, a Christian is one who has accepted Christ as his Lord, one who is willing to submit his life to the Kingship of Jesus.

The local church is to be composed of those who have made this decision, for it is "a congregation of baptized believers, associated by a covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws."<sup>1</sup> The local church is then, not autonomous in the usual sense, but governed by her Lord.

Regarding the relation of church and state, the Confession says that the state is to be obeyed except "in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth."<sup>2</sup> This brings to mind the statement of Thomas Helwys in his introduction to his Mystery of Iniquity: Lord Jesus is King of the church and civil rulers must not presume on his authority.

The Covenant which Brown included in his Church Manual was circulated in the Pendleton and Hiscox manuals. The Covenant must be assumed to be the work of Brown.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>3</sup>Because the Covenant was circulated with the New Hampshire Confession, many have assumed that it was officially recommended by the New Hampshire Convention. There is no evidence that the Covenant was ever seen by the New Hampshire Convention; it first appeared in Brown's Manual.

The Covenant begins "having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, . . . we do now . . . most solemnly . . . enter into this covenant with one another as one body in Christ."<sup>1</sup> This is evidence of Lordship ecclesiology; the congregation was being led by the presence of the Spirit of God.

It may be concluded that there are some evidences of Lordship ecclesiology in the Landmark tradition. However, the over-all high-church emphasis of the Landmark movement was contrary to the ecclesiological positions of the first English Baptists. Early Baptists made their claim to being genuine churches by their willingness to follow the will of the Lord by his Spirit and his Word; the Landmarkers based their claims upon historical succession.

Statement of Faith of the Southern  
Baptist Convention, 1925

The Statement of Faith adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925 came as a result of the Convention's wish to condemn "every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith."<sup>2</sup> The

---

<sup>1</sup>J. Newton Brown, The Baptist Church Manual (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publications Society, 1853), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions, p. 392.

Statement was a reworking of the New Hampshire Confession of 1833. The articles on regeneration, repentance and faith, perseverance, and a gospel church were reproduced from the New Hampshire Confession. These have already been discussed.<sup>1</sup>

The article on religious liberty states that "God alone is Lord of the conscience."<sup>2</sup> The article concludes:

A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.<sup>3</sup>

Though the statement has been made that God is the Lord of conscience, this statement would seem to be based on a concept of the rights of man rather than the "crown rights of the Redeemer." As shown before, the founding fathers of the Baptist movement in England were not concerned with the rights of man; they emphasized the obligation of the individual to be obedient to Christ as the Lord of conscience.

In the article on social service, which was added by the committee appointed to draft the 1925 Statement,

---

<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 106-107.

<sup>2</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions, p. 396.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

it is stated that "every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ regnant in his own life and in human society."<sup>1</sup> The Christian is to "seek to bring industry, government and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth and brotherly love."<sup>2</sup> Thus there are some true elements of Lordship ecclesiology in the Statement adopted by the Southern Convention in 1925.

#### Conclusion

The writer believes that it has been demonstrated that Lordship ecclesiology has been a major theme in the heritage of Southern Baptists. Only those who are disciples of Jesus are to be members of Baptist churches; Baptist churches are groups of people united together for the purpose of following Christ and giving him their obedience in all of their conversation. This conclusion will consist of statements from Baptist scholars and leaders who have expressed the same belief the present writer has been maintaining.

An examination of the messages given at the various meetings of the Baptist World Alliance shows that many of the speakers believed that Lordship is the basic

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 397.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

principle of Baptist church life. Long before the ecumenical movement began its drive under the banner, "Jesus Christ is Lord," speakers at the Baptist World Alliance were proclaiming that the sovereignty of Christ is cardinal in the Baptist movement.

In 1905, at the first meeting of the Alliance, then called the First Baptist Congress, J. D. Freeman delivered an address entitled, "The Place of Baptists in the Christian Church." He related the various Baptist emphases to the Lordship of Christ: Individualism is the result of personal responsibility for accepting Christ; the Scriptures are authoritative because they reveal the will of Christ to his people; only Christ is King, therefore the church must be free of the state; the church must be disciplined because Christ is the Lord of his church; and baptism is for believers only, for Christ must rule all who have professed him.<sup>1</sup>

Freeman stated his understanding of the essential principle of Baptists in this way:

The essential Baptist principle, as I apprehend it, is this: An acute and vivid consciousness of the sovereignty of Christ, accompanied by a steadfast determination to secure the complete and consistent recognition of His personal, direct, and undelegated authority

---

<sup>1</sup>First Baptist Congress (London: Baptist Union Publications Department, 1905), pp. 22-29.

over the souls of men.<sup>1</sup>

The Lordship of Christ is the source of all Baptist doctrine, for:

as the oak springs from the acorn, so our many-branched Baptist life is developed from this seed of thought. Baptist Christianity lives and moves and has its being in the realm of the sovereignty of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

In 1911, Dr. John Clifford reiterated the same view of Baptist life:

In short, the deepest impulse of Baptist life has been the upholding of the sole and exclusive authority of Christ Jesus against all possible encroachment from churches, from sections of churches, from the whole church at any special moment of its life and action, as in a council, from the traditions of the elders, from the exegesis of the scholars, and from the interesting but needless theories of philosophers. It is the momentum of that one cardinal idea which has swept us along to our present position.<sup>3</sup>

At the meeting of the Alliance in Toronto, 1928, several of the addresses dealt with the Lordship of Christ. Charles Brown of Ferme Park, London, delivered the first address, "The Universal Sovereignty of Jesus Christ."

We must continue to insist upon His Sole sovereignty in the Church. He is the head of the body: not Pope or King. The state has no jurisdiction or competency in the spiritual realm, for

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Baptist World Alliance, Second Congress (Philadelphia: Harper and Brothers Company, 1911), p. 57.



the state is not a spiritual body. . . . When, therefore, for the sake of secular protection or special honour, or political prestige or state subsidies, the Church accepts the patronage and control of the state it is guilty of a species of disloyalty to Christ and is selling its birthright for a mess of pottage. . . . We are not free in matters of religious belief and practice to follow either our own prejudices or the behest of any political ruler. We are sworn to obey Him. Our Baptism rightly understood is the symbol of our complete immersion into His authority, the surrender of our whole personality to His sceptre and sway. He must control all our relations. The Church should furnish the world with the example, and object lesson, of a community completely governed by the teaching and spirit of Christ Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

At the same meeting, Z. T. Cody declared that "the reason why we turn from Episcopacy is because it cannot be made to go with the sole Lordship of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

M. E. Aubrey, then Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, preached the next to last sermon at Toronto. "The Kingship of Christ" was his title. In the opening statement he declared:

Those of us who have had the privilege of following the programme of this congress have seen how everything that has been said or done has been related to Jesus Christ. With Him we began. At His feet we end. We have met tonight to acknowledge His Kingship, His Majesty and authority in our hearts and lives.

His Sovereignty is an article of our faith. Baptists have always insisted on the priesthood of all believers. We are a Kingdom of priests,

---

<sup>1</sup>Fourth Baptist World Congress (Toronto: Stewart Printing Service, 1928), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

and He is the King.

Our fathers stood for "the crown rights of King Jesus." Against the pretensions of priest-hoods and the arrogance of States their first allegiance was due to Him.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion is that the concept of Lordship, with its various deductions, best explains why Baptists are what they are. A Baptist church is a group of disciples, gathered into a congregation, seeking as the body of Christ to do the will of Christ. Only those who are disciples can be members of this body.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

SECTION III

THE PLACE OF CHILDREN AMONG  
SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

## INTRODUCTION

The problem of this thesis has been outlined in the general introduction.<sup>1</sup> The problem of the relation of children to Southern Baptists has been broken down into three inquiries: (1) What is the age of accountability? (2) What is the nature and status of the child prior to accountability? and (3) How is the church to be related to the child prior to his accountability?

Because the age of accountability is linked to the ability to become a Christian, the first section was concerned with showing what the New Testament means by being a Christian. It was shown that being a Christian means accepting Jesus as Lord. Then it was shown that the New Testament standard for discipleship has been the Baptist norm for church membership and baptism.

These two investigations are to be the basis for this section of the thesis. Thus, using the Baptist understanding of the New Testament as the norm, the three questions first raised must now be considered: the age of accountability, the nature and status of the child prior to accountability, and the relation of the church to the child prior to the age of accountability.

---

<sup>1</sup>Pp. 1-8.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEFINING THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The age of accountability, as it will be used here, refers to the time in the life of an individual when his response to God's grace will determine his eternal destiny. The argument of this chapter is that one becomes accountable for his eternal destiny when, as a responsible person, he is able to face, in a responsible manner, the claims of Christ as Lord. Therefore, to ascertain the age of accountability, the concepts of responsibility and accountability must be examined.

#### The Concept of Accountability

Christian thought assumes that mature man is accountable to God. In the Genesis account of creation, God gave Adam dominion over the earth but placed a limitation upon him: he was not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Adam and Eve broke this command, they were "accountable" to God. According to Webster, accountability means the "state or condition of being accountable or answerable; responsibility."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Third Edition, Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1927), p. 8.

Responsibility, the synonym, is defined in one usage as being liable to someone or some authority:

One is responsible, answerable, or accountable for something, often to some person or authority.  
 . . . One is liable (in the sense of responsible) for something, or (in the sense of subject) to something.<sup>1</sup>

In the theological sense of the word man was created by God to live a certain way and is responsible to the God who created him. When man fails to fulfill God's will, he stands under divine judgment. The Bible assumes that God is supreme and that he stands in judgment over man. Thus three elements are present in the theological understanding of accountability:

- 1) God is the one to whom man is answerable.
- 2) God has made his standards known to man.
- 3) Man is judged by his response to God's standards.

In the Old Testament, Amos clearly stated the responsibility of Judah:

Thus says the Lord:

"For three transgressions of Judah  
 and for four, I will not revoke punishment;  
 because they have rejected the Law of the Lord;  
 and have not kept his status,  
 but their lies have led them astray after which  
 their fathers walked.

So I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 825.

<sup>2</sup>Amos 2:4-5.

The three elements mentioned above were present: God is the Lord and judge of Judah; God's criterion was known to Judah; and because of transgression, Judah is condemned. In the New Testament, Paul dealt with the heathen world in a similar manner. God will judge the heathen who are ignorant of the written law because:

what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. . . .

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.<sup>1</sup>

The heathen were accountable because they knew the truth but rejected it. They exchanged the truth that God had given for lies; and because of this, condemnation was their lot. The three elements mentioned in the preliminary definition are evident in Paul's use of the concept: God, the standard known, and man.

#### Accountability and the Claims of Christ

The second element in the definition must be

---

<sup>1</sup>Romans 1:19-25.

viewed closely now. Under the old covenant Israel was accountable to the law. But with the coming of Christ a new dimension has been added to man's accountability. One is now judged primarily by his response to the claims of Christ. Where once an impersonal law was the standard by which one was judged, in the new dispensation, "God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

When Peter preached the first Christian sermon, after sketching the life of Jesus, he proclaimed the Lordship of Christ:

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

The directions given did not concern the Jews' relation to the law but their relation to Christ. In the new age that has dawned, the hope of salvation is in Christ. Repentance, the turning from sin to God, is related to the attitude toward Christ.

First of all they are told to repent; to change their personal attitude toward Jesus Christ. . . . They must show their change of attitude and their

<sup>1</sup>Romans 2:16.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 2:36-38.



full acceptance of Jesus as the Christ and Saviour by being baptized in his name--the name of Jesus Christ, thus in faith acknowledging Jesus as Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Peter was even more explicit in his sermon before the High Priest.

This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.<sup>2</sup>

Paul maintained in his Mars' Hill sermon that all will be judged by the righteousness of Christ:

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.<sup>3</sup>

Now that Christ has come and completed his work, all the world will be judged by him. Christ is now the standard of accountability. Under the new dispensation the second element in accountability is faith in Christ. All men have "sins," but the "sin" which determines their final condition is unbelief in Christ. As those under law were accountable to the law, those under grace are accountable to Christ. As Conner has said, "When this

<sup>1</sup>William Owen Carver, The Acts of the Apostles (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1916), pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 4:11-12.

<sup>3</sup>Acts 17:30-31.

rejection becomes definite and wilful, it becomes the sin unto death."<sup>1</sup>

### Personal Accountability

The concept of accountability and the claims of Christ have been considered. Now consideration must center on the individual and his accountability. When does the individual become accountable for his sin? Or, in view of what has been said above, when does the individual come under the judgment of Christ? All sins are justly condemned by a holy God. But, as it has been shown, by definition one is responsible only for that which is known. Therefore, the argument is that one becomes accountable when, as a responsible person, he is presented with the claims of Christ as Lord and Saviour.

An illustration will help to illumine the point. If a child grows up in a community without schools and has no opportunity to learn, he is not condemned because of his illiteracy. If later the child has the opportunity to learn but by his own choice refuses to become literate, then he is accountable for his ignorance. Now his ignorance is not just of circumstance; it is of choice.

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 16.

So it is with the individual. However it may be expressed, all men grow up in sin. Each sin that lodges in the heart of the individual may bring its punishment; but in the full moral sense, the individual cannot be called to account for his condition until he has the opportunity to determine his own condition, that is, accept Christ as Saviour. Paul said that where there was no standard of law, there was no condemnation for sin.

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned--sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.<sup>1</sup>

It was necessary to know God's demands before God would consider the breaking of those demands to be sin. As the old covenant demanded obedience to the law, the new covenant demands acceptance of Christ as Lord. Applied to the Christian dispensation, Paul's principle that "knowledge is necessary for accountability" means that one is accountable when faced with the claims of Christ as Lord.

Immediately the question of original sin must be faced. Are not all men guilty because of the sin of Adam? A close reading of Romans 5:18 will not sustain a

---

<sup>1</sup>Romans 5:12-13.

belief in original guilt.<sup>1</sup> "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men." If there is a one to one ratio between Adam and guilt and Christ and salvation, the logical outcome would be universalism. Mullins' comment on the parallel passage in Corinthians is helpful:

"As in Adam all die, so in Christ are all made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). This does not teach universalism, but it suggests that there is a similarity between the racial effects of the act of Adam and that of Christ. Christ "died for all" (2 Cor. 5:15); or as it is elsewhere expressed, he tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Men are not condemned therefore for hereditary or original sin. They are condemned only for their own sins. They are called to repentance and faith by the gospel. It is their own act of rejection which is the basis of their condemnation.<sup>2</sup>

Mullins' last sentence expressed exactly the point being labored here: condemnation comes because of a personal rejection of Christ as Lord. Elsewhere, Paul supports this view. He spoke of "those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."<sup>3</sup>

However, the doctrine of accountability cannot be settled on scriptural grounds alone because the Bible

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter IX on this point.

<sup>2</sup>E. Y. Mullins, The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression (Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1917), p. 302.

<sup>3</sup>II Thess. 2:10.

gives very little information dealing with the precise question being raised here. As in other cases, the rational explication of the doctrine falls more in the province of theology than exegesis. Every concept of accountability, in the final analysis, whether of Augustinian or Calvinistic derivation, is based in a theological interpretation of certain Scriptures.

The author does not claim that explicit proof of his argument can be found in the Scriptures. Rather, he is convinced that certain arguments of a theological nature show the thesis to be in harmony with the biblical witness as a whole. Thus, attention will now be turned to arguments for the thesis already presented: One is accountable for his eternal destiny when, as a responsible person, he encounters the claims of Christ.

#### Arguments For the Writer's View Of Accountability

##### The Nature of Accountability

This argument has been defined above. By definition, accountability involves a knowledge of the standard by which one is to be judged. That for which one is accountable under the new dispensation is discipleship. One cannot be judged accountable until he (1) has the knowledge of the standard of judgment, and (2) can

respond in a responsible manner. The second affirmation will be discussed in detail later.

### The Nature of Salvation

Salvation is redemption from the powers of evil and entrance into the kingdom of God. The only entrance into God's kingdom is through acceptance of Christ as Lord. Therefore, only as one, as a responsible person, has the opportunity to become a disciple can he be saved.

The first section of this thesis outlined Jesus' call to discipleship. The call of Jesus was always in the context of prevenient grace. Only when Jesus came and issued his call was discipleship a possibility. The Fourth Gospel teaches that the Holy Spirit, the presence of Christ in the world today, is the agent of conviction.

This relation of conviction and accountability will be discussed in the next section. At this point, however, it is to be noted that the Bible teaches that Christ is the only door to salvation. Thus if Christ is the only door to salvation, one must be confronted personally with Christ before he has a choice. Every person is a sinner. The only possible choice is: will the sinner accept the salvation in Christ? But unless salvation is offered by confrontation with the claims of Christ, the person has no choice: hence, no ultimate

responsibility for his eternal destiny. Thus accountability for one's eternal destiny is predicated upon one's being faced as a responsible person with the claims of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

### The Nature of Sin

The second element in the definition of accountability was a knowledge of the standard by which one is judged. If the wages of sin is death, what is that sin that brings death? Conner said that the nature of sin, hence the standard of judgment, cannot be fully known except as revealed in the person of Christ. "The awful blackness of sin does not make its full impression on us until we see it in contrast to the radiant grace of God and as rejection of that grace."<sup>2</sup> Conner based this interpretation on the Johannine corpus.

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.<sup>3</sup>

The coming of Christ fully revealed the nature of

---

<sup>1</sup>See Mullins, op. cit., p. 366, where he argues that every person is offered salvation in Christ. He holds that freedom of choice is necessary for the universe to be, in any sense, moral. God offers the choice to every man; each man may do as he will with God's offer.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>John 15:22-24.

sin as unbelief and rebellion against God. This unbelief, this failure to accept Christ, condemns the sinner. "And this is judgment, that the light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."<sup>1</sup>

Judgment was present in the person of Christ during the days of his flesh. Now this judgment continues by the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit is to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment because "they do not believe in me."<sup>2</sup> Sin is identified with the refusal to accept Jesus as Saviour. Further, sin is identified with moral darkness, for it is the liar who denies that Jesus is the Christ.<sup>3</sup> The essence of sin is, therefore, unbelief.

It [sin] is unbelief in one's rejection of moral and spiritual light, particularly as that light is embodied in Jesus Christ. It is the rejection of God's final revelation of himself as made in Jesus Christ. When this rejection becomes definite and wilful, it becomes the sin unto death.<sup>4</sup>

This interpretation of sin as unbelief does not mean that one is sinless before he confronts the claims of Christ. Rather it means that one's reaction to Christ

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

<sup>2</sup>John 16:9.

<sup>3</sup>I John 2:22.

<sup>4</sup>Conner, op. cit., p. 16.



will determine whether one will be forgiven for his sins or be damned because he refuses the grace of God offered in Christ. Mullins concurs in the belief that one's attitude toward Christ is the basis of accountability:

Sin is also summed up as unbelief (John 16:9). This expresses an attitude of resistance to truth and to the Spirit of God. Unbelief is the inclusive sin, the root sin. Because of it men are morally and spiritually blind. The duty of men is to believe. Jesus is the revelation of God to men, and their attitude toward him becomes the basis of judgment.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion: When the Spirit speaks and the claims of Christ are known, then the sinner is liable for his rejection of Christ. Sin, by definition, demands an awareness of the claims of Christ.

### The Nature of God

This argument is the presupposition of all that has been said before. In simple terms, it would be unfair for one to be punished for that over which he has no control. It is not as popular to argue from analogy as it once was. Yet, by analogy one must argue that God is better than the best of human nature and human attributes. Thus if man holds fairness as a standard, would it not be common sense to expect God to be more than fair? The present argument contends that the God revealed in

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 291.

Jesus Christ would not expect one to be accountable for sin until that one has the opportunity for salvation.

Why is it that so few hold to a doctrine of double decrees today? It is because moral sensitivity rejects in horror the picture of God as a capricious tyrant. This sense of "fairness" impels one to accept the proposition that where there is no chance for forgiveness, there is no accountability. The same logic that leads to a rejection of double-edged predestination leads one to accept the belief that men are accountable when they have the opportunity to repent and turn to Christ.

If Christ is the only way to salvation and if the nature of God is holy love, then it follows that God would not allow one to be damned unless he has first been confronted with the claims of Christ.

#### The Analogy of Law

The fourth argument is from the analogy of common law. It is dangerous to expect God to conform to analogies drawn from the experience of man; but in the final analysis, all language used of God is analogical. The assumption is that God's justice will always be final and perfect, where that of man falls short of perfection.

One man has died at the hands of another. There

are several charges that can be brought against the first man: manslaughter, justifiable homicide, or murder in the first degree. There is no doubt that one has died at the hands of the other, but there is a question of responsibility in the action.

If the dead man was killed in self-defense, then the accused will be acquitted. If the dead man was killed because he stepped in front of the accused's moving automobile, then also he will be acquitted. But if the accused committed the killing after careful planning and premeditation, then the accused is guilty of murder and will be liable for his life.

So it is with the sinner. There is no question that the individual has committed sinful acts. It is a question of responsibility for those acts. If the killer is guilty of murder because he wilfully killed a man, then a sinner is worthy of eternal damnation when he wilfully rejects the claims of Christ.

Because of these arguments, the writer believes that the evidence supports the thesis: that for which one is eternally accountable is his relation to Christ. These arguments do not preclude a measure of responsibility before being faced with the claims of Christ, but they affirm that one is accountable for his eternal

destiny when, as a responsible person, one is faced with the claims of Christ.

No one can ever know exactly when some other person reaches the age of accountability. No one can ever know precisely when the voice of God speaks to the heart of another. But it is the thesis of the writer that from the New Testament account of discipleship the minimal requirements for discipleship can be shown. That is, one is accountable for becoming a disciple; therefore, one cannot be accountable until he has matured to the point where he has the ability to become a disciple. This view will be called disciple-ability. Thus the quest for the age of accountability is a quest for disciple-ability. One cannot be accountable to Christ until one has the ability to become a Christian.

#### Understanding and Accountability

In view of the foregoing, the quest is to ascertain what is involved in one's "ability" to become a Christian. One is accountable for his destiny when he is able to become a Christian.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>"Ability" in this sense does not have a theological referent. Rather, "ability" refers to personality development whereby one has the personal maturity required to make life-determining decisions. No Pelagianism is intended.

Some maintain that it is not necessary to have much understanding to become a Christian; it is only necessary "to love Jesus." It is dangerous to speak of understanding, others would warn, because no one ever has full understanding of what it means to be a Christian. There is some validity to the latter statement; however, there must be a criterion of some understanding or there cannot be a distinction between believers and nonbelievers. Thus the question is not "Is understanding required?" but rather, "What understanding is required?"

It must also be recognized that every concept of accountability assumes some understanding. As it will be shown later, to say that one is accountable when he feels "convicted" or "guilty" assumes an understanding of what these things mean. For one to say he "loves Jesus" presupposes that he understands who Jesus is and what love is. It is the contention of the writer that to become a Christian, one must be able to understand what being a Christian means. Or more specifically: an examination of Jesus' call for discipleship will reveal what is necessary for disciple-ability. The New Testament will set the norm for the answer to the question of understanding.

When Jesus called for disciples he was very careful to present in a clear and understandable manner what

he meant. Jesus clearly called attention to his claims and made his followers understand what it meant to follow him.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the conclusions of the first section, biblical discipleship demands certain things: one must understand that the call of Jesus is a call from God; this call of Jesus is a call of grace; the call demands decision, for one can serve either God or mammon; this decision demands the breaking of old ties; and the new relationship between the follower and Jesus is that of a disciple to his Lord. These things were understood by Jesus' followers. The writer suggests that the biblical standard of understanding must be today's also.

#### Criteria For Disciple-Ability

The argument thus far has been that one is accountable for his eternal destiny according to his relation to Christ. The relation between the Christian and his Lord is the Lordship-discipleship relation. There is no doubt that Christ is qualified to be Lord of the Christian. He is qualified by his life, burial, and resurrection. But what qualities must the world-be disciple have to become a disciple of Jesus?

---

<sup>1</sup>See Matthew 16:24-28.

Dr. William Hull has raised the question of the ability of preadolescents to become disciples of Jesus. He has raised the question on three issues:

- (1) Is the preadolescent child capable of conceptualizing a God who is above and beyond the categories of time and space? . . .
- (2) Is the dependence of the child on his parents such as to make impossible a definition of sin which transcends the categories of parental disobedience? Is the child emotionally and intellectually capable of saying, "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned?" . . .
- (3) Is the preadolescent child sufficiently "socialized" to accept or understand the meaning of church fellowship and the responsibilities of church membership?<sup>1</sup>

The three points which Dr. Hull mentioned are mental ability to understand Christian concepts, parental independence compatible with independent religious decisions, and maturity necessary for church responsibilities. These three points will form the basis for discussing the criteria of disciple-ability.

However, it is well to note that any analysis of another's relation to God is tenuous. Yet, while one cannot judge another's experience, Baptist ecclesiology demands that the congregation determine who will be accepted as a believer. There will always be a basis for admission. The question is, will it be a New

---

<sup>1</sup>"The Crisis in Child Evangelism," unpublished paper.

Testament basis? Those that would admit five-year-olds have a basis for their admissions, but is it a proper basis for church membership? The objective criterion, based on the biblical study, will first be presented. Only after this objective, theological criterion has been formed can the examination turn to determining an "age" for accountability.

Mental Ability and  
Disciple-Ability

Faith is the basis of justification. Therefore, one must be able to have faith to become a Christian. Strong includes three elements in his discussion of faith: an intellectual element, an emotional element, and a voluntary element. Strong denies the Catholic contention that faith is primarily intellectual assent, but he affirms that understanding is a part of faith. It is necessary to have some understanding of the meaning of faith and the Christian beliefs to become a Christian. Faith, Strong insists:

includes not only a historical belief in the facts of the Scripture, but an intellectual belief in the doctrine taught therein as to man's sinfulness and dependence upon Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Conner also points out that there is an intellectual factor in faith.

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 837.



Faith is an intelligent act. It is first of all perception and appropriation of the truth. The life in union with Christ is a life of faith, and faith without the element of intelligent apprehension would not be faith.<sup>1</sup>

This is not to say that intellectual apprehension is equal to faith, but rather to insist that faith includes an understanding of the faith and its object.

Jesus' dealings with his would-be disciples shows that he was careful to inform them of the meaning of discipleship. Jesus did not weaken his claims and he did not attempt to remove the intellectual content from those claims. In his interview with Nicodemus, Jesus spoke of the new birth. Nicodemus found this concept difficult to understand. Jesus explained what he meant by the new birth, but it was Nicodemus' place to comprehend that meaning. Jesus also compared his coming death on the cross to the serpent's being raised in the wilderness. This was also a very difficult concept. Both of these concepts demanded a great deal of understanding for comprehension.<sup>2</sup>

Again, in John 6 Jesus gave his discourse on the bread of life. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." This

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>John 3:1 ff.

was a "hard saying" that caused many to cease following Jesus. This was a very sophisticated use of analogy; this required the use of highly abstract ideas. The writer of the Fourth Gospel presented his account in such a way that a handling of abstract ideas was necessary in understanding discipleship.

The same understanding was demanded by the Synoptic Gospels. The content of Jesus' call has been discussed above. Here it is necessary to point out only that understanding Jesus' terms was not as simple as it might be assumed. What did it mean to take up a cross? To understand this demand analogically as a call to obedience in every area of life is quite difficult to grasp. The same is true for "death to self," "hating father and mother," and "losing one's life."

Several of Jesus' terms were used extensively by Paul. These terms have found their way into the "plan of salvation." To be "saved" requires "repentance" and "faith." To repent, one must understand "sin." To understand "sin" one must be aware of the nature of God as "holy." The concept of "holiness" is a very sophisticated concept.

Paul assumed that his readers could understand what he wrote them in his letters:

For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand; I hope you will understand fully, as you have understood in part, that you can be proud of us as we can be of you, on the day of the Lord Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the "simple early Christians" were not as simple as some would believe!

An examination of the earliest Christian confession, "Jesus is Lord," underscores the conclusion: "Because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."<sup>2</sup> Accepting Jesus as Lord means that one will follow the leading of an invisible yet present Master. This will include the application of general principles to the particular situation. Conversely, in following the leading of Jesus the Christian must learn that sin is rebellion incarnate in each rebellious act. As a disciple can fathom the meaning of discipleship by abstract thinking, he can fathom the path he must walk only by the same facility.

This does not mean that one must be a theologian or philosopher to be a Christian. Rather it means that one must be able to understand discipleship to be a disciple. The conclusion is that disciple-ability is

<sup>1</sup>III Corinthians 1:13-14.

<sup>2</sup>Romans 10:9.

dependent upon the ability to understand abstract ideas. Now the consideration will turn to the second point, independence of personal decision.

### Independence and Disciple-Ability

The Baptist insistence upon believer's baptism is based in the belief that one must decide for himself to be a Christian. Discipleship involves personal commitment to Christ as Lord. Infant baptism has been rejected because an infant cannot exercise personal faith in Christ. Faith is a choice of Christ as Lord of all life.

As before, the biblical study must provide the basis for the consideration. Only those who could decide for themselves could become his disciples. Jesus' call was a call for supreme obedience in the market place of life that had many would-be masters. Jesus' call demanded that all other authority figures be second to him.

First, one must be able to see himself as an independent person before he can repent of his sin. One's maturity must have developed to the point where he can stand in judgment over himself. This ability to stand off and transcend oneself is necessary for repentance.

Sin is against God. Repentance is the repudiation of sin against God. Repentance, therefore, is a religious act or attitude of mind. It is not simply the repudiation of sin; it is the repudiation of self as evil and sinful.<sup>1</sup>

To illustrate the point, consider the different reactions to temper tantrums thrown by a baby and an adolescent. There will be latitude in dealing with the baby, but the adolescent should know better; he is expected to be able to judge himself and have reasons for not acting that way. This ability to judge oneself and repudiate one's sinful nature is a prerequisite to repentance.

Secondly, disciple-ability requires independence of the parental image. No one ever completely escapes the influence of his parents; but there does come a time when the normal child stands upon his own volitional feet. The person comes to the place where his decisions are his decisions. Jesus' commands to hate father and mother were, without a doubt, hyperbole. But they show what is involved in discipleship. One must be able to give himself to Christ even in the face of parental condemnation.

For the young child, the parent is the supreme authority figure. But to understand sin, the child must

---

<sup>1</sup>Conner, op. cit., p. 199.

recognize that parental authority is not the ultimate frame of reference:

In his early life a child's ideas of right and wrong are built up almost wholly out of parental judgements. Soon these ideas begin to be directly affected also by judgements of his closest friends and associates. . . .

But as a Christian you cannot be satisfied if his conception of right and wrong has no deeper roots than that. You wish him not merely to reflect the ideas which surrounded him in earliest life. You wish him to grow into the conception that right is right before God, and that wrong is wrong before God.<sup>1</sup>

All these things are dependent upon the person's becoming a self in his own right; mother and father must be seen in their rightful roles. To be able to become a disciple, a person must have independence to see himself as a sinner in the eyes of God. Disciple-ability requires parental independence and selfhood.

#### Social Maturity and Disciple-Ability

When Jesus called his disciples, he called them for a task. They were elected to a mission: they were to become fishers of men. God's call is always an election to service. God had called Israel for a purpose; Israel was to be a light unto all the nations.

The central and fundamental fact to be kept in

---

<sup>1</sup>Lewis J. Sherrill, The Opening Doors of Childhood (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1939), p. 92.

mind concerning election is that it is never an end within itself. It is always for a purpose, and that purpose is service.<sup>1</sup>

In a word, to become a disciple one must enter the mission of Christ through his church. Modern arguments concerning the relation of salvation and church membership and service would have been totally foreign to the New Testament. To be a Christian was to become a functioning, witnessing, minister of the church.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.<sup>2</sup>

If the Scriptures are correct, then discipleship is nothing less than being a living, witnessing member of the church. To be a disciple, one must be able to become a minister of the church.

Is it not reasonable then to conclude that if the essence of God's call is a call to a mission, then no genuine relationship can be consummated unless it is culminated in terms of this call? . . . Therefore, there must be involved in "faith" (the individual's response to God) the giving of oneself to be an instrument of God's redemptive purpose in the world. . . . Not to respond to this mission is to respond to something other than the call of God.<sup>3</sup>

This was the early Baptist understanding of church

<sup>1</sup>Findley B. Edge, A Quest for Vitality in Religion. (quotes taken from mss. now in process of printing by Broadman Press), p. 208. Also see H. H. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election (London: Lutterworth, 1952), pp. 45 ff.

<sup>2</sup>I Peter 2:9.

<sup>3</sup>Edge, op. cit., pp. 210-11.

membership. A church was composed of those who followed the leading of her Lord in his mission in the world.<sup>1</sup> From this it follows that to be a disciple one must have the maturity to participate in the work of the church. An examination of the early church in the New Testament will show what is involved in being a member of the church.

According to Matthew, the commission was given to the eleven disciples.<sup>2</sup> As revealed in the first chapters of Acts, this commission was carried out by the church. In Acts 5 there is the first disciplinary action of the church. The familiar story concerned Ananias and Sapphira. They were members of the church and were presumed to be fully responsible to God and to the church for their actions. Because of what they did, they received the most severe discipline.

This points out that a member of the church was socially mature and was fully responsible for his actions. It was a serious matter to be a member of the church. To be a member was to assume the ultimate in social responsibilities: one was fully accountable to the church and the Lord for his actions.

---

<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 83-84.  
<sup>2</sup>Matthew 28:16-20.



Paul had the same attitude toward members of the churches he founded. Paul's disciplinary dealings embodied the same assumption as did those of the church in Acts.<sup>1</sup> The kind of responsibility carried by the church member in these cases requires much maturity. Can one conceive of a ten-year-old doing anything that would justify a death penalty? This kind of responsibility is required for marriage, army service, and most of the social institutions of society. Church membership requires the same maturity. Church membership is, like marriage, a lifetime union, and like army service, possibly a matter of life and death.

This leads to the conclusion that social maturity is necessary for disciple-ability.

Using these criteria--mental development, self-hood or independence, and social maturity--it will be possible to use studies in psychology to approximate when in personality development one has disciple-ability. However, before turning to a study of the personality development of the child, some consideration must be given views of accountability.

#### Other Concepts Of Accountability

The heading of this section may be misleading.

---

<sup>1</sup>I Corinthians 5; II Thessalonians 3:6.

Those whose views are to be considered may possibly have the same meaning as the present writer. However, sometimes it is difficult to understand the exact usage or meaning of given words. As it will be shown later, the definitions of such terms as "guilt," "knowledge of right and wrong," "sin," and "sinner" are the crux of the matter.

L. R. Scarborough wrote perhaps the most influential book on evangelism among Southern Baptists.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Scarborough devoted one chapter to "How to Deal With Children." He gave the following answer to the question, when does a child become accountable to God for his soul?

There is no certain age--some are younger than others. When the child voluntarily chooses sin and is conscious of his wrong, then he becomes an active transgressor and comes under God's law.<sup>2</sup>

The key phrase in this definition is "voluntarily chooses sin." After this voluntary choice the child becomes conscious of his wrong; these elements cause him to be a transgressor. Sin, which is identified with being under God's law, is then punishable.

Close attention must be given the meaning of

---

<sup>1</sup>With Christ After the Lost (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

"voluntary choice." The crux of the matter for this view is to determine when the child can make a voluntary choice. If the author's definition of what constitutes the ability to make an independent decision is correct, and Scarborough would accept that analysis, then there is no disagreement. But Scarborough would not accept the author's position, for in the paragraph mentioned above, he speaks of the conversion of a seven year-old child.

Scarborough's use of "sin" is also significant. He probably means "various sinful acts" rather than sin as rebellion against a personal appeal from God. The other element--consciousness of sin--will be discussed with Dr. Dobbins' view of accountability. The basic disagreement with Scarborough is in the view of his key terms.

Dr. Gaines S. Dobbins' view starts with Scarborough but goes further in that he emphasizes that sin is against God:

The child needs a saviour when he has consciously become a sinner. He becomes a sinner when his wrongdoing is recognized as against God, not merely disobedience to parents and elders. The child is capable of a saving choice of Christ when enough is known about him to bring a response of sorrow for grieving him, of trust in him for forgiveness, of love that seeks his approval, of obedience where his will is known.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Winning the Children (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1953), p. 26.

Dr. Dobbins links an awareness of being a sinner with the capacity for becoming a Christian. Again, as with Scarborough, the author would agree with the statement provided the proper meaning is given the terms used. What is the sin against God that the child must be conscious of before he is reckoned a sinner? Is this identified with sins or the sin of rejecting Christ?

Dr. Dobbins' statement about the capacity of a "saving choice of Christ" is perhaps a little vague. He qualifies this by using the terms of personal relations; he speaks of grieving, trusting, seeking, and obeying. If by these terms Dr. Dobbins has reference to becoming a disciple--as defined previously--this view is excellent. However, the key word is still "capable." When does a child become capable of becoming a disciple? Sorrow or grief within itself is little criterion. One must be capable of having Christ as Lord to have him as Saviour.

Gideon Yoder has given an excellent description of accountability. He links accountability with being faced with the claims of Christ and infers that this is concomitant with personal guilt:

The arrival at the age of full accountability is the point in the child's mental and moral development when he stands before God with a sense of restlessness and of personal inadequacy

and guilt, with a recognition that he is in need of salvation. At this point God confronts the individual with the fact of his need and the redemptive provision which has been made. The child or adolescent youth must now make a choice. He faces the possibility of positive identification with Christ, or rejection of Him.<sup>1</sup>

Yoder, a Mennonite, makes an excellent case for this view. In his discussion, he speaks of the "age of discretion" and "mental maturity" as preparatory to "full accountability."<sup>2</sup> Yoder's analysis under these two headings is similar to that which the author specified in the discussion of criteria for disciple-ability. Yoder makes it clear that an understanding of the nature of sin requires considerable mental maturity.

Yoder's view stresses those elements the author feels necessary: when the individual is faced with the claims of Christ (grace), then the individual must make his decision (faith); this confrontation demands either an identification with Christ (discipleship), or rejection (unbelief).

With this discussion completed, the second task is at hand; using the criterion of disciple-ability, when does one reach the age of accountability? The next chapter must deal with that question.

---

<sup>1</sup>Gideon Yoder, The Nurture and Evangelism of Children (Scottsdale, Penn.: The Herald Press, 1959), p. 79.  
<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-79.

## CHAPTER VII

### DETERMINING THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The criteria of an age of accountability based on the Lordship of Christ have been stated. The purpose of this chapter is to use these criteria in determining an age for accountability.

The writer will not attempt to give a profile of the whole personality development of the child per se, but he will examine the development of the child in terms of the criteria for disciple-ability.

First, some general views of the religious development of the child will be given; then, a more detailed picture of each age group will be given.

#### General Views of Religious Development

Dr. Southard's discussion of the religious development of the child begins with age seven. From seven to nine years children obey rules given them by authority or tradition. This is secondhand obedience to the environmental factors. By ten or twelve the child reaches the point of co-operation with those rules and goals he respects; but seldom before twelve does the

child develop the capacity for treating others as he desires to be treated. During the twelfth year, the child begins the development of abstract thinking; at this age he begins to grasp principles and learns by them as well as by concrete examples. Only at this point can the child accept moral principles and apply them for himself. Authoritarian molds are left behind; the child becomes a self.<sup>1</sup>

Gaines S. Dobbins described the development of the child in four stages. First there is self-consciousness. During this stage the baby organizes everything about himself. If the child had words, he would say, "I love me." The child is concerned about nothing other than his own pleasure:

This kind of self-love is not to be construed as sinful selfishness, but undoubtedly it has in it the seeds of sin which will inevitably mature if the child lives long enough. The inescapable problem is that of dealing wisely with this fact of self-love.<sup>2</sup>

The second stage is that of God-consciousness. The child begins to ask the major questions of life: Who made the world? And of course, "If God made all this, who made God?" With the concept of God, many

---

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Southard, Pastoral Evangelism (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962), pp. 87-88.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

questions flood the child:

What is God like? Where does he live? Does he know my name? What did he make me for? How may I please or displease him? How may I know what he wants me to do or not to do? Will he punish me if I do wrong?<sup>1</sup>

The third stage is sin-consciousness. Dobbins distinguishes between immoral and sinful acts. Immoral acts are against other persons, but sin is against God. As the child grows older, he comes to understand that immoral acts are sinful too. During this stage the child becomes aware that sin against God causes unhappiness.

The final stage is choice-consciousness. For a time the child's choices were made for him. But now the time has come when the parents' thoughts are no longer blindly accepted; the child must choose for himself. The child is confronted with the choice of "good or evil, of obedience or disobedience to the Divine will, of the love of God or the love of self."<sup>2</sup>

Gideon Yoder discusses the religious development of the child in two stages. From birth to moral consciousness is the first stage. This is before the child comes to have his own set of values; everything the child

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 105.



has is secondhand. This period runs through the Junior age.<sup>1</sup> The second period, from moral awareness to moral responsibility, extends from the beginning of early adolescence (13-14) to the beginning of later adolescence (18-21).

During this time, the religious experience becomes more than a reflection of the youth's environment as he changes from secondhand to firsthand religious fittings.<sup>2</sup>

Gordon Allport summarized the religious development in three stages: first, there is the period of "raw credulity"; secondly, the period of doubt; and finally, mature belief which is belief tested by doubt. Allport believes that faith is not genuine unless it stands the assaults of doubt. Mature faith is faith that affirms itself during growth and development. Faith, for Allport, is the product of a mature mind that struggles with the conflicting realities of life.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Religious Development of the Child

With these general views in mind, the writer will now use the age groupings of the Sunday school to give a

---

<sup>1</sup>Southern Baptist Sunday school ages will be used for the departmental ages: Nursery, 0-3; Beginner, 4-5; Primary, 6-8; Junior, 9-12; Intermediates, 13-16.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>3</sup>The Individual and His Religion (New York: MacMillan Co., 1950), pp. 122-123.

more detailed view of the religious development of the child.

There is little that one can be called religious experience in the young infant. The earliest responses of the child are of a social nature.<sup>1</sup> The basic desire of the Nursery child is to identify with the in-group. His religious response is external rather than internal; it is mainly an experience of feeling and acting. There is little or no rationalization of concepts. There are feelings that prompt action, but these are not on the rational level. The feelings, which are very close to the surface, are expressed in activity. "The child feels close to God when he is doing something for or with God."<sup>2</sup>

The child's parents are the source of all that is safe and pleasant. He is totally dependent upon them. Until sometime between ages three and seven, the child does not have the ability to make or use concepts.<sup>3</sup>

He knows nothing of power, love, protection, control, or even of right and wrong as generalisations. But he knows all these, and a host of other realities . . . in the concrete, chiefly as they are exhibited in the actions, and above all as they are revealed in the emotional attitudes, of his

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Yoder, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Basil A. Yeaxlee, Religion and the Growing Mind (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1952), p. 36.

parents or parent substitute.<sup>1</sup>

### The Beginner Child

The Beginner child is still very much like the Nursery child; he is extremely concrete-minded:

Symbolic expressions so meaningful to older people have no significance for Beginners because they are concrete minded. "Crosses," "crowns," and "clean hearts" have only literal meanings for them. A "lost lamb" is not a lost soul but a real lost baby sheep and a "light" is a flashlight or a lamp.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the child has little ability to handle concepts, he will begin to ask many detailed and factual questions about God. Parents begin to introduce God to the Beginner in answering his questions about "why" and "how." The Beginner's comments and questions on religious subjects are likely to be extremely "inappropriate."<sup>3</sup> The child is almost completely controlled by the parental image in his concept of religion. Gesell has summed up the religious outlook of the five-year-old:

Has religion of parents; child believes parents to be omniscient, all-powerful, eternal.  
Enjoys prayers and elaborates from the original.  
Enjoys Sunday school and may sit through part of church services--as music.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Hazel N. Strickland and Mattie C. Leatherwood, Beginner Sunday School Work (Nashville: Convention Press, 1955), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Arnold Gesell and Francis Ilg, The Child from Five to Ten (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 450.

Firmly believes in Santa Claus, in every detail.<sup>1</sup>

Yeaxlee calls these years the "age of imaginativeness." The Nursery child is predominately emotional; the Beginner child lives in the land of fantasy. "At three or thereabouts a child enters the enchanted realm, and he is a dweller therein for the space of another three years."<sup>2</sup>

Strickland and Leatherwood see the importance of correct nurture during these early years:

During this period the children need to discover God in the world about them--in nature and in people. They need to learn that everything which makes them happy is a gift from God, and that they can feel secure in his love and care. They need to find in Jesus, the best Friend of little children, one who knows how God feels and how he wants children to feel and act.<sup>3</sup>

During these Beginner years, religious training may be given, and Christian ideals of conduct may be given by precept and example, but these cannot find their fulfillment in personalized religion until adolescence.<sup>4</sup>

### The Primary Child

It is obvious that the Beginner does not have disciple-ability; however, turning to the Primary, there

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Yeaxlee, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Yoder, op. cit., p. 83.

are some who maintain that older Primaries are capable of becoming Christians. Therefore, some detail must be given in the religious profile of the Primary.

The Primary years are times of great change in the life of the child. School days, new interests, increasing vocabulary, and mental stimulation are but a few of the new elements in the life of the Primary. Yet, in the face of the changes, the Primary is still very much a child.

Very definite religious interests are manifest in the Primary; yet the Primary has little mental facility to deal with abstractions:

Primary children have very concrete and definite religious interests. They have no trouble believing in God, Jesus (an entirely distinct person in their thinking), the Bible, heaven, and all the other verities. Their interests and questioning are more specific. Where did God come from? How did God make the world? What is heaven like? Why did Jesus' dying help anything? Will you really get the things you pray for?<sup>1</sup>

Yeaxlee agrees that the Primary, just leaving the time of fantasy (Beginner years), is very restricted in his mental capacity. At this stage the Primary does not possess enough experience to reason clearly or strongly.<sup>2</sup> The child is beginning to think and use

---

<sup>1</sup>Allene Bryan, Primary Sunday School Work (Nashville: Convention Press, 1956), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Yeaxlee, op. cit., p. 71.

logic, but the ability to think logically is yet beyond him.

He is reasonable, and capable of reasoning by an elementary kind of logic which sometimes leaves his elders without reply, but his native powers in this direction are as yet limited in their scope by their lack of material: he is only beginning to accumulate the necessary knowledge of facts and to acquire command of general ideas.<sup>1</sup>

The Primary begins to develop his identity as a person, but he is strongly held in the parental grip. His ideas of right and wrong are constructed entirely out of parental judgments. By "right" and "wrong" the Primary means either approval or disapproval by his parents.<sup>2</sup>

During the early life of the child the knowledge of good and evil is unknown because the will, the agent of sin, is not sufficiently developed to make such knowledge possible.<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious that the Primary does not have the ability to understand abstract ideas or make decisions independent of parental domination. This does not belittle the importance of Primary religious experience; rather it leads one to see that a child's religious experience is the product of his childhood.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Dobbins, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Yoder, op. cit., p. 86.

Gesell and Ilg have summarized the religious development of the young Primary:

Grasps ideal of God as creator of the world, of animals, of beautiful things.  
 Asks to go to Sunday School. Loves story of little Lord Jesus. Emotional interest in this. Interest in Angels.  
 Enjoys a short ritualistic service. May enjoy Sunday School very much.  
 Prayers are important and child expects them to be answered.  
 Feeling of two forces: Heaven and Hell, God and the Devil, good and bad.  
 Profanity involves name of God.  
 Very firm about belief in Santa Claus; insistent and emotional. Fiercely denies any hint that he is not real.<sup>1</sup>

The picture that emerges is that of a growing child who is still living in the world of early childhood. The child has no responsibility because he is not capable of having it. The Primary is beginning to have the rudimentary knowledge of God and the world, but he comprehends very little of its real meaning. Yet, the Primary has religious urges, and it is vital that they be nurtured:

This precious, beautiful faith faculty of the little child is so indispensable in the building of religious life and character that it would be an unpardonable sin to spoil it.<sup>2</sup>

The church must have nurture uppermost in her mind as she deals with the Primary. The child will begin

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 450.

<sup>2</sup>Yoder, op. cit., p. 88.

to form ideas of right and wrong; he will begin to form some outlooks that will stay with him, for better or worse, the rest of his life. He must be taught from a Christian perspective and learn Christian ideals. This time of cultivation and growth must be wisely nurtured.

In summary, it is evident that the Primary has yet to reach an age of accountability. He cannot grasp abstract ideas; hence, he cannot know what it means to have Jesus as Lord. He is not an independent person; he is in the full sway of parental authority; he could not possibly make a life-changing decision contrary to the wishes of his parents. The primary is having the first stirrings of selfhood, but he cannot make judgments independent of the family circle. The Primary does not possess disciple-ability; thus he cannot have reached the age of accountability.

### The Junior Child

Passing to the Junior years, it is evident that new factors are present in the life of the child. The Junior is more emotional than he was earlier; he is unstable and very impatient with shortcomings, particularly his own. Because of his impatience and emotional tenseness, frequently an inferiority complex is developed. The Junior child can experience the pinnacle of idealism



or the depths of despair.<sup>1</sup>

The religious development of the Junior is also tumultuous. At twelve the Junior may show real religious concern; but with this concern there will be considerable skepticism, for he will be grappling with some religious problems.

"I don't know what to think," but he may spend quite a lot of time thinking about God and religion. Often his concepts are very vague, "something you can't explain," "something men think about," or "I just think He's there in your mind."<sup>2</sup>

This new dimension in religious matters is a part of the total development of the twelve-year-old. He is gaining a new insight about himself, others, and his parents. The social awareness is sharpened; he responds suitably to changing situations; he gets along better with the social situations confronting him.<sup>3</sup>

These interpersonal patterns of behavior typify Twelve at his best. He surely is "trying" to grow up. He protests above all that he is not

<sup>1</sup>Yoder, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Arnold Gesel, Francis Ilg, and Louise Bates Ames, Youth, The Years from Ten to Sixteen (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 137. Twelve is the oldest Junior age. The discussion in this section will center on Twelve. There are tremendous differences between the Nine and the Twelve, though both are Juniors. Twelve will be the Junior under discussion because, as it will be seen, the author feels this is the earliest age to begin speaking of the possibility of the age of accountability.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

a baby any longer, or at least that he does not wish to be so regarded. Perhaps his protestations arise in part out of a secret awareness of his remaining immaturities. . . . We like to emphasize his high points of achievement. . . . Reliable records, however, indicate low points, even in the field of social behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Twelve is beginning the task of becoming a self. Blair and Burton believe that the social conflicts of the Junior years are a result of the child's growing awareness of himself. This striving toward selfhood and new awareness of himself as a person are the roots of the strange behavior associated with the Junior years.<sup>2</sup> Burton and Blair list three tasks the preadolescent has to perform in his striving toward selfhood.

The first task is the necessity of "Freeing one's self from primary identification with adults."

As he progresses with the job of freeing himself from blind faith in adults, he discovers that he, a child, actually has a right to discern alternatives and to make choices. He begins to recognize a threat to his freedom and translates it into a treat to himself as a person.<sup>3</sup>

The second task for later childhood, which is seldom completed during the Junior years, is "Learning to give as much love as one receives; forming friendships"

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Witt Blair and William H. Burton, Growth and Development of the Preadolescent (New York: Appleton-Crofts, Inc., 1951), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 190-91.

with peers."<sup>1</sup> The final task, as interpreted by Blair and Burton, is "Learning more rules and developing true morality."

As more and more rules are mastered and as the child continues to mature intellectually, true morality comes into being. Children learn to apply the abstract principle of fairness and unfairness, right and wrong.<sup>2</sup>

It should be observed that these tasks, which Blair and Burton assign the child in his striving toward selfhood, are the tasks that must be mastered to gain disciple-ability. The first task refers to parental independence, the second to social maturity, and the third to the ability to handle abstractions. When the child has developed facility with these factors, then-- and only then--can he become a disciple. Does Twelve have this maturity?

Twelve and mental maturity.--Jersild remarks that "from early childhood through the elementary school years, numerous religious concepts will have relatively little meaning to him in the abstract." However, as a child approaches maturity "he learns to formulate (or to rationalize) standards of conduct in his own terms and to give reasons for them."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur T. Jersild, Child Psychology (4th ed.; New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), pp. 535-36.

Does Twelve have the ability to formulate these ideas abstractly? Gesell relates this problem of abstract thinking to parental independence.

Twelve tries to think out things for himself; he shows less dependence upon adults. But in his characteristic balancing way he makes his decisions by combining what grownups tell him with what he himself thinks: he can argue an ethical issue calmly and with politeness, but he may also have fixed ideas not too open to reason. . . . "I do what mother wants me to, if I'm not mad at mother." All of which goes to show the complexity of ethical attitudes and the slowness of growth which brings them to the full maturity of a moral adult.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the emotional factor in the individual, it is difficult to make a general statement concerning one's ability to think abstractly. Because of the variable factors, there is a difference of opinion among writers in the field of child psychology. Blair and Burton say the Junior child is superior to the Primary in his ability to generalize.<sup>2</sup> Richard Owenby rejects the suggestion that Junior-aged children can abstract and generalize:

The understanding of the average junior is exceedingly limited and his interests are entirely concrete. Abstract doctrines and principles are beyond the range of his comprehension.<sup>3</sup>

In no uncertain terms, Owenby says, "Generalizations are

---

<sup>1</sup>Gesell, Ilg, and Ames, op. cit., p. 467.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Yoder, op. cit., p. 90.

impossible for children of this age."<sup>1</sup> Sherrill, on the other hand, is not so dogmatic. He states that until about twelve years of age abstractions are beyond the child; but at about twelve, the child begins to use abstractions.<sup>2</sup> Jersild agrees that the twelfth year is a dividing line in the development of the child's mental ability. Based upon research done by Shaffer in 1930, he reports that many aged nine to eleven failed to grasp the meaning of chosen symbols, while the older group had a much better score in abstract interpretation of the same symbols.<sup>3</sup>

Yoder believes that the Junior fails to understand abstractions sufficiently to understand the meaning of sin. A Junior may be conscious of wrongdoing, but this is not knowledge of sin as personal rebellion against God.

They have not definitely chosen a life of wrongdoing and rebellion against God, but have simply yielded to wayward impulses. . . . A junior child may be actually penitent for a definite act of sin, but such a sense of being a sinner as is often felt by adolescents as well as by adults is an unusual experience for children of this age.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The Psychology of Adolescence (New York: MacMillan Company, 1957), p. 78.

<sup>4</sup>Yoder, op. cit., quoting Owenbey, p. 90.

Southard, following Piaget and Havighurst, doubts that Twelve is capable of handling abstractions. Again, as with Gesell, Southard links the ability to abstract with emotional stability and parental independence.

About age twelve the child is just beginning to show the power of abstract thinking. His major task is to change from an authoritarian to a rational conscience. That is, he must begin to accept moral principles as his own and interpret their application for himself. It is not enough to continue in unthinking obedience to the rules of parents.<sup>1</sup>

The present writer is no authority on child psychology. Thus when the authorities in the field disagree, this writer can hardly cast the definitive vote. However, it appears that the vast majority of psychologists would agree with Yoder and Southard. In direct answer to the question, does Twelve have the ability to handle abstract concepts? the answer probably is: a few do but most do not. The answer is predicated on the belief that the quoted authorities had evidence for their position. Therefore, it seems reasonable that some children were capable of abstractions while others were not.

Thus, the conclusion is that some Twelves are able to handle abstractions but others are not. With

---

<sup>1</sup>Southard, op. cit., p. 88.

the answer being this indefinite, the other criteria will become more important. So now the question must be asked, is Twelve sufficiently weaned from the family circle to be an independent person, and if need be, to leave mother and father in order to follow Jesus?

Twelve and parental independence.--Yeaxlee points out that the Junior child has loyalties to the group as well as to the parents. When the child must choose between loyalty to the group and loyalty to authority figures, the authority figures generally lose.<sup>1</sup> The example Yeaxlee quotes is the relation between the school child and the teacher. The group loyalty wins. Gesell points out that the peer group plays a dominant role in shaping the attitudes and interests of Twelve. Thus Twelve will join in with the group in such dubious adventures as group coughing.<sup>2</sup>

This group loyalty is not much improvement over absolute parental domination. The child is still being controlled by factors outside himself. The group factors are important, but the Freudians would call attention to the fact that the parental relationship is the basic one. Jersild says the becoming of a self, that is, freedom

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>Gesell, Ilg, and Ames, op. cit., p. 106.

from parental and social domination, is the problem of the adolescent.

For a long time the adolescent has been dependent upon his parents. He has been immersed in his relationship with them. To become a separate self, to become one who has "found himself," he must achieve an independence and an integrity of his own. He must, in a psychological sense, leave the land of his father and go forth and establish himself in his own right.<sup>1</sup>

This is the basic adjustment to be made during the adolescent period. Jersild defines adolescence as the time from the stirring of puberty to the fullness of mental maturity, roughly ages twelve to twenty.<sup>2</sup> Thus Twelve cannot be expected to have mastered this task of parental independence. He is, in fact, just beginning the task of becoming independent.

The present writer did not find a single authority in the field of child psychology who faintly suggested that the twelve-year-old has reached the point of being the master of his fate, or the captain of his soul.<sup>3</sup> Twelve just does not have the maturity to make an independent choice. He stands under the full sway of the parent. He has yet to become an independent person,

---

<sup>1</sup>The Psychology of Adolescence, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>At least the present writer found none who thought Twelve could possibly be independent. This was not even discussed. It was assumed this was a task for adolescence.



capable of standing against the pressures of parents and group loyalties. Thus from the standpoint of parental independence, the criteria demand that Twelve is not the age of disciple-ability. The emergence of parental independence must be sought later in adolescence.

Twelve and Social-Maturity.--Only a cursory statement is necessary here. The two points discussed under this heading are a call to service and a call to a disciplined life. Does Twelve have the maturity to enter the mission of the church and function as a witnessing member of the elect? If, as indicated above, Twelve does not have the mental ability or parental independence to be a disciple, how can Twelve lead others to be disciples?

Is Twelve invested with the ultimate social responsibility, that is, would the church--or any social institution--entrust the child with life or death responsibility as indicated by the seriousness of church discipline? No other social institution in America--the state, the army, or matrimony--believes Twelve is sufficiently mature to have responsibility in its provinces. Do Baptists have evidence to affirm about Twelve what everyone else would deny? Twelve does not have the necessary maturity to be a full-fledged member

of a church, nor is he fully responsible before society; Twelve is still a minor.

The evidence leads to the inevitable conclusion that, as a general rule, Twelve does not have the necessary maturity to become a disciple. He is only beginning to handle abstract ideas, he is not an independent person, and he is not socially responsible. Gesell sums up this estimate that Twelve is still a "self in the making."

The 12-year-old is not an adult in miniature. Nor is he a paragon. But he does embody modes of thinking, of feeling, and of action which prefigure the mature mind. His new outlook and attitudes signify a capacity to mature and they indicate the basic lines of the mental growth which extend into distant time.<sup>1</sup>

Coupled with this view, however, it must also be realized that Twelve may be having some religious questions and feelings. This religious aptitude before the age of accountability will be termed the religion of childhood and will be discussed later. Now, however, the discussion must move on to the adolescent.

### The Adolescent

Jersild's definition of adolescence has been noted above. The central sentence in Jersild's

---

<sup>1</sup>Gesell, Ilg, and Ames, op. cit., p. 109.

definition is that the adolescent must "achieve an independence and an integrity of his own."<sup>1</sup> Yoder adds a second element to the task of the adolescent: he must learn to control the "new forces and passions which are at work in his being."<sup>2</sup>

Because of the conflicts that will rage during these struggles with parents and new passions, it is natural that adolescence is a time of instability and vacillation.<sup>3</sup> After these battles have been fought and the adolescent has determined "who he is" and "where he is going," then he will become a "nice young man" and she will become "a charming young lady." But before these placid lakes are reached, one must go through the rapids of adolescence.

Jersild has outlined the developments or goals of the adolescent; they are progress toward physical maturity, mental maturity, emotional maturity, vocational responsibility, and increasing self-direction.<sup>4</sup> The meaning of the last term needs some amplification. Increasing self-direction means that the person will: "become more and more able to draw upon his own resources,

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>Yeaxlee, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>4</sup>Op. cit., pp. 4-6.

to make decisions on his own, and to think for himself and to feel for himself."<sup>1</sup>

Yoder divides adolescence as follows: early adolescence (12-14), middle adolescence (15-17), and late adolescence (18-21). The early period is mainly concerned with emotional changes, the middle with social problems, and the late with development of rational faculties.<sup>2</sup> These designations will be followed in the discussion.

Adolescence and mental ability.--In the study of the Junior years, it was concluded that Twelve has begun the development of abstract thinking. The process begun by Twelve matures rapidly during adolescence. Hurlock connects this development of the abstract facility with a new religious interest:

When the intellectual development of the individual reaches the stage where abstract concepts are meaningful, when it is possible to detect inconsistencies among beliefs, and when the individual feels a need for security, interest in religion increases and for the first time becomes personal.<sup>3</sup>

Hurlock says that this mental development, necessary before religion can become personal, may be

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth B. Hurlock, Adolescent Development (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1949), p. 338.

identified with the mental age of twelve.

Hollingwood (1933) contends that the awakening of interest in religion is dependent upon mental development. The child whose development has reached a level of 12 years or more M. A. (mental age) shows a new interest in religion. Around this time the child begins to expect logically coherent answers to his questions about religion and to show an interest in religion that is not characteristic of those whose mental age falls below twelve years.<sup>1</sup>

Allport also believes that puberty is the time the adolescent has an awakening of the religious sentiment:

Usually it is not until the stress of puberty that serious reverses occur in the evolution of the religious sentiment. At this period of development the youth is compelled to transform his religious attitudes--indeed all his attitudes--from secondhand fittings the firsthand fittings of his personality. He can no longer let his parents do his thinking for him.<sup>2</sup>

Yeaxlee states that conversion will probably occur during middle adolescence and this will give life a new center. "Intellectual ability has reached its maximum and the special abilities are now definitely discernible."<sup>3</sup> By fifteen or so the adolescent's physical and mental powers "are practically stabilised, though not yet developed to quite the full extent of their potentialities."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Fourteen has a new pattern of thought; he uses many words with comprehension that are abstract in their reference.

Two verbal components of human intelligence, namely verbal comprehension and word fluency, are said to mature four-fifths of the adult level at about the age of fourteen (Thurston). Our data point in the same direction. This zone of maturity yields signs of a marked increase in rationalism and logical thinking.<sup>1</sup>

These authorities agree that at fourteen the adolescent has gained the power of abstract thinking. Now he can understand what it means to take Jesus as his Lord. He can comprehend repentance, faith, sin, and discipleship. By these criteria, Fourteen has reached the age of disciple-ability. However, it must always be emphasized that "Fourteen" is the elusive "average" fourteen-year-old. Some at thirteen may be what has been described as "Fourteen," and by the same token it may take another fifteen years to be a "Fourteen." Part of the problem in dealing with the subject at hand is that people are people and as such are individuals. To say that "Fourteen" has disciple-ability is to state a general rule that is not to be ironclad. There will be many exceptions.

Adolescence and independence.--Not only must one

---

<sup>1</sup>Gesell, Ilg, and Ames, op. cit., p. 179.

be able to think abstractly to become a disciple, but he must also be an independent person. The choice to follow Christ must be the individual's choice.

Randolph Crump Miller calls the striving toward independence the "war of independence." The junior high years, corresponding to early adolescence, are spent in this battle:

They are in the middle of their "war of independence," which will soon reach the stage known as "temporary insanity." They have deep needs for both security and independence; they find their security in being objective in their study of what happened to someone else, and find their independence in being able to make free judgments about what they are studying. They need guidance while making their decisions, but their decisions must be their own.<sup>1</sup>

During this process, the junior high student is ready to make a decision for a "master sentiment." The adolescent is now ready to accept for himself a rule for life.

They [the junior high students] have either made a commitment or are ready for decision. Their need for a master sentiment is such that if the Church does not provide a live option, they will give themselves to something less.<sup>2</sup>

This capacity for decision is indispensable for becoming a "self." He must make the decisions himself:

<sup>1</sup>Biblical Theology and Christian Education (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

He is trying to see the place of moral obligations in his daily decisions. He is ready to make decisions, including the major decision of selecting a master sentiment. He is willing to be confirmed or to make a profession of faith, although in some cases his decision may be to rebel against such a profession.<sup>1</sup>

For Miller, then, the junior high person is independent enough to choose a master sentiment. The junior high years are about thirteen to fifteen. Miller would probably accept fourteen as an average age for the selection of a master sentiment.

One of the reasons independence was installed as a criterion of disciple-ability is because such independence is necessary for self-criticism. Self-criticism precedes repentance. Fourteen has this ability.

Typically, a 14-year-old is happy and self-reliant. But he is capable of self-criticism, because of his new and fresh powers of reasoning. He indulges in lengthening trains of independent thinking, weighing pros and cons.<sup>2</sup>

Jersild believes the ability to examine oneself is linked to religious doubts: healthy growth will lead him to question many things that, as a younger child, he took for granted.

If he does examine himself and the ideas and beliefs that were taught him, the adolescent is likely to question religious ideas just as he examines ideas pertaining to political and

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>2</sup>Gesell, Ilg, and Ames, op. cit., p. 181.



social and other concerns. Such self-examination is a sign of healthy growth.<sup>1</sup>

Yeaxlee feels that early adolescence is the time for conversion; the child has reached the point of independence where he needs to give himself to something outside himself:

What all this means is that adolescence in each of its stages, but especially in its earliest, is the golden time for the fostering of sentiments and the discovery of a master sentiment. It is the supreme paradox . . . that inner harmony, purposeful integration of the self, is achieved only by devotion to something beyond the self.<sup>2</sup>

The authorities cited agree that early adolescence is a critical time in the life of the young person. He has gained enough independence to make a choice for a master sentiment. Yoder expresses the feeling of many: while the child in early adolescence may not be fully independent, yet his independence has progressed to the point of the advisability of his making some choice. This choice will be consolidated in the later stages of adolescence.<sup>3</sup> With this reservation in mind, the conclusion is that as a general rule, open to exceptions, early adolescence brings the young person to the brink of independence. Therefore, the fourteen-year-old

---

<sup>1</sup>Jersild, op. cit., p. 337.

<sup>2</sup>Yeaxlee, op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit., p. 108.

passes the second criterion of disciple-ability.

Adolescence and social maturity.--Social maturity must precede church membership. Two facets of this criterion were discussed: the church member must be capable of entering the mission of Jesus, and the church member must be responsible for discipline. It was suggested that, as the church is a social group among other social groups, the standards of maturity used by other groups could be helpful in determining when an adolescent can become a disciple. But, first, the term "social maturity" must be more closely defined in reference to the adolescent. Following Weitzman, Jersild lists the characteristics of social maturity as:

taking responsibility for oneself, as in making purchases for oneself, taking responsibility for the spending of money and earning some or all of the money that is spent, providing or planning in one way or another for the future, living away from parents, going alone to near or distant places, having a bank account, taking responsibility for making appointments.<sup>1</sup>

Jersild further states that social maturity includes

an interest in the affairs of the world, an ability to take a responsible role in the affairs of the world, an ability to take a responsible role in home and community activities, . . . contributing to church or other causes, and assuming responsibilities beyond his

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 208.

own immediate needs, such as accepting an office in a club.<sup>1</sup>

Jersild also mentions that other definitions of social maturity usually include a deeper and more lasting selection of interests and activities, increasing concern with family life preparations, and a "growing dependence on self in making decisions."<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that "responsible" is the key word in Jersild's definition. Social maturity can be defined as responsible reflection on the future course of the life in vocation and marriage, and responsible present conduct regarding finances, elective offices in clubs, and choice of friends and interests. Social maturity means that one is capable of contemplating the basic choices that must soon be made and at the same time have competence in determining one's present social life.

Gesell has an appendix added to his Youth, the Years from Ten to Sixteen in which he speaks of "Age Standards and Eligibilities." He gives a summary of the time when the law looks upon the child as socially responsible. Most states will not allow children to be employed under fourteen years of age. The Federal Labor Standards Bill of 1938 prohibits engagement in "hazardous occupations"

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

or interstate commerce before eighteen.<sup>1</sup>

The Dominion Government of Canada has provided that family-allowances be given for the welfare of children up to the child's sixteenth birthday.

Even though there are variances in state laws, Gesell chose the laws of Connecticut to illustrate the usual attitude of the state toward minors. The juvenile court has original and final jurisdiction over all children under sixteen years of age; under no circumstances may a child be sent to jail before sixteen, though he can be sent to juvenile detention quarters. School attendance is compulsory up to age sixteen. Even if the child is allowed to leave school at fourteen--by a "leaving certificate"--public employment is virtually impossible until sixteen. Up until age eighteen, most occupations require the child to secure a "working certificate" from the state. At sixteen, one may receive a temporary driver's license, but it is probationary until eighteen. It is illegal to sell or deliver tobacco to a child before his sixteenth birthday.<sup>2</sup>

Thus for the state of Connecticut, the child is not socially responsible--even partially--until he is

---

<sup>1</sup>Gesell, Ilge, and Ames, op. cit., p. 514.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 515-16.

sixteen. One must be eighteen before he has the full privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. This position is very close to the laws of the state of Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> Thus if legal social responsibility were the only criterion, one would be hard pressed to defend any age prior to sixteen. But, as it will be shown, there are other considerations.

Fourteen was basically a happy, integrated person, but Fifteen becomes quite introverted. He spends a great deal of time alone and "thinking things through." He has entered a stage of contemplation. He is struggling to reconcile "self-awareness, independent responsibilities, and group loyalties."<sup>2</sup>

This struggle is related to his contemplation of the future. His conflict with the family is not a rejection of the family. "His own ideas of marriage and career indicate that he is maturing rather than abandoning ideals of the family as an institution."<sup>3</sup> Fifteen will not have a definite ideal of vocation (usually), but he is thinking very seriously about his choices. Most of the fifteen-year-old girls are contemplating marriage,

---

<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview with Mr. Frank Ingraham, Attorney at Law, Nashville, Tenn., November 20, 1962.

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

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

though few of the boys are.<sup>1</sup>

In respect to contemplation of the future in marriage and vocation, Fifteen is socially mature. The same is true of Fifteen's social conduct: Fifteen is capable of earning money during vacation and having some financial responsibility.<sup>2</sup> During the junior high years Fifteen is introduced to electing and holding class office, being captain or member of athletic teams, and participating in school clubs (Junior Hi-Y, Honor Society, etc.).

According to Jersild's definition of social maturity, it can be concluded that Fifteen is socially mature. It must be remembered, however, that this definition does not mean mature as an adult is supposed to be mature, but rather that Fifteen is forming the attitudes and is beginning to have social responsibilities that allow him to consider ultimate decisions in terms of vocation, marriage, and church membership.

#### Conclusion

The conclusion is that early adolescence is the

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 232-33.

<sup>2</sup>The writer had his first "job" at fourteen. He secured a "Minor's Release" and worked in an industrial interstate commerce plow company (legal according to Texas law).

time when the child has the necessary maturity to become a disciple. At mental age twelve, the child is beginning to understand abstractions; hence, he can begin to perceive what it means for Jesus to be Lord. However, in the judgment of most writers, the child must be about thirteen before he can use abstractions with any facility. Fourteen seems to be the youngest that an adolescent can be considered an independent person. At fourteen the peer group becomes as important as the authority figures in the school and the home. Fourteen begins to make his own decisions as an independent person. The law generally accepts sixteen as the age for some measure of social responsibility. However, the writer feels that Fifteen has reached the brink of social responsibility. The writer believes that the average adolescent will come to disciple-ability between the ages of thirteen and fifteen.

However, a warning must be given concerning this conclusion. While it is possible that some reach disciple-ability earlier than thirteen, it is also possible that others do not reach the same state at fifteen. Persons cannot be made to conform to any given absolute rule.

Again, it must be pointed out that this analysis

does not intend to say that prior to thirteen the child does not have significant religious experience. The author will contend in a later chapter that there is a legitimate religion of childhood, but that it is not to be confused with Christian discipleship.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ARGUMENTS FOR AND OBJECTIONS TO THE WRITER'S VIEW OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Some new evidence for the writer's view of accountability will now be introduced; then consideration must be given to some objections that will be raised against the writer's view.

#### Other Evidence for the Writer's View

##### Puberty and Religious Awakening

The writer has contended that early adolescence, which corresponds to the first stages of puberty, is the time that a child first possesses the ability to make life-changing decisions. If this argument is correct, it would be expected that students of adolescent behavior would have noted that early adolescence is a time of religious awakening. This religious awakening would be expected to be a new phenomenon in the life of the adolescent. This is the case.

Usually it is not until the stress of puberty that serious reverses occur in the evolution of the religious sentiment. At this period of development the youth is compelled to transform his religious attitudes--indeed all his

attitudes--from second-hand fittings to first-hand fittings.<sup>1</sup>

Hurlock contends that religious awakening is closely related to puberty. Until the child has the increased social and personal possibilities that come with puberty, he seldom tries to find a unity for himself. Religious awakening is very closely related to puberty.<sup>2</sup>

Yeaxlee speaks of adolescence as a "veritable new birth."<sup>3</sup> This is the time that all of life needs to be united under a master sentiment. Thus adolescence is the time of conversion, for it "is the golden time for the fostering of sentiments and the discovery of a master sentiment."<sup>4</sup>

James quotes Starbuck with favor when he says that the age for conversion of those brought up in religious homes is generally fourteen to seventeen.<sup>5</sup> Southard states that there is no evidence that responsible religious decisions can be made before early adolescence.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Allport, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>op. cit., p. 340.

<sup>3</sup>op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>5</sup>William James, Varieties of Religious Experiences (The Modern Library, New York: Random House, No Date), p. 195.

<sup>6</sup>op. cit., p. 87. On p. 88, footnote 20, Southard quotes Myron Hopper's statement that early adolescence is the earliest stage at which children have the understanding necessary to become Christians.

Yoder, who has been quoted so often, has done extensive research on the religious growth of the child. After quoting many sources, all of whom say that adolescence is the time of religious awakening, he concludes that "adolescence is the harvest time of conversion."<sup>1</sup>

The evidence is unimpeachable: clinical studies show that religious awakening is closely associated with puberty. Those who would argue that conversion should come earlier than puberty must explain why it is that, psychologically speaking, the preadolescent has neither the tendency nor the capacity to be converted. Early adolescence is the earliest that the vast majority of children experience a firsthand religious awakening.

#### The Old Testament View of Accountability

The Old Testament had an age of accountability. This age had to do with the time the Hebrew male child assumed the responsibilities of the covenant; at a certain age he "owned the covenant" as his own. This "owning the covenant" was not equated with circumcision. Circumcision was performed on the eighth day after birth. The age of accountability was the time the child accepted the responsibilities of citizenship and adherence to the

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 108.

law. Up until the acceptance of the covenant, the child was innocent. Thus children of unbelieving Jews were not held accountable for their parents' failure to pass over into the Promised Land. The unbelieving adults had to go into the wilderness to die, but their children were allowed to enter Canaan with the children of Joshua and Caleb.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of Jesus, the ceremony that commemorated the passing to adulthood, bar mitzvah, was accepted as genuine tradition. Bar mitzvah means "son of commandment" or "son of the law."<sup>2</sup> This ceremony was performed at puberty. Bar mitzvah was the:

Hebrew term applied to a boy on completing his thirteenth year, who has reached the age of religious duty and responsibility. . . . A boy at the age of puberty has the power of making vows. . . . He is held accountable for his own sins.<sup>3</sup>

Up until this time the Jews did not consider the child mature enough to "make vows" or perform as a responsible person in religious duties.

Many writers assume that Jesus' visit to the temple at age twelve was in connection with bar mitzvah.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Deut. 1:34-40.

<sup>2</sup>Yoder, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1909), II, 509.

<sup>4</sup>Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1915), I, 235.

Manson says that the incident in the Temple shows the "ascendancy which at a particular crisis in adolescence the conception of God as Father had attained over his consciousness."<sup>1</sup> S. MacLean Gilmour states that "twelve" does not necessarily have a chronological reference per se, but it refers to the period of adolescence.<sup>2</sup>

The point of this discussion is that early adolescence or puberty was the time the Jews of the Old Testament and Jesus' era considered a child to be religiously responsible. This would suggest to the writer that one should be expected to assume the responsibilities of the Covenant of Grace at the same age.

This argument of course does not prove the writer's contention, but it lends support to the thesis. Unless one rejects the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, the evidence points to early adolescence as the time of accountability.

#### Accountability and Confirmation

Churches that baptize infants generally recognize that infant baptism is less than New Testament baptism. Hence many of these churches look to confirmation

---

<sup>1</sup>William Manson, The Gospel of Luke ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; New York: Harper and Brothers, no date), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Interpreter's Bible, VIII, 67.

as the completion of the meaning of believer's baptism. E. J. Bicknell explains the position of the Church of England: a child is "regenerated" at baptism by the act of God; however, the child needs to be "converted" by surrendering his will to God.

If we use Prayer-Book language we say that regeneration needs to be supplemented by conversion. The actual renewal of the soul requires both the gift of the grace of God in baptism and also the personal surrender of the will to that grace. . . . Conversion is our work in conjunction with God: it calls for effort and self-surrender.<sup>1</sup>

Bicknell further states that this "conversion" is to be completed at confirmation:

One emphasizes the need that persons baptized in infancy should, on arriving at years of discretion, explicitly assume the responsibility for obedience to the vows already made in their name. Through this personal act of faith and acceptance of responsibility the significance of Baptism comes to its fulfillment.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Church of England means by "confirmation" what Baptists and the New Testament mean by "conversion." The churches that practice confirmation expect their confirmation-candidates to have the same maturity that Baptists expect of their candidates for baptism.

---

<sup>1</sup>E. J. Bicknell, A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles, revised by H. J. Carpenter (3rd ed., New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1955), pp. 374-75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 380. Dom Gregory Dix, another Anglican, expresses the same sentiment in The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism (London: Westminster, 1953), pp. 36 ff.

Miller states that the usual age for confirmation is twelve to fourteen.<sup>1</sup> This means that early adolescence is the infant-baptism-tradition's version of the age of accountability. They affirm that early adolescence is the time the child is capable of surrendering his will to Christ and becoming a disciple.

Again, this bit of information does not prove the writer's argument, but it gives its support to his thesis. Early adolescence is considered by many of those churches rich in theological heritage to be the time a child is accountable for his own decisions.

#### The Conclusion of Gideon Yoder

The final supplementary evidence is an appeal to the excellent work of Gideon Yoder, The Nurture and Evangelism of Children.

Yoder's work is the only thorough investigation, from a believer's baptism perspective, into the subject under discussion. In fact, Yoder's work is the only work the writer found that has attempted to deal with the age of accountability.<sup>2</sup> Thus the writer finds it

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>2</sup>Dobbins' Winning the Children is more a practical work than a theological investigation. Dr. Dobbins does not deal as thoroughly with the theological issues as does Yoder. The books are written from two different perspectives.

difficult to disagree with Yoder. His work is concise, selective, and quite convincing.

Yoder maintains that early adolescence is the time of religious awakening; however, he feels that middle adolescence is usually the time that decisions made earlier are either ratified or rejected. The evidence that Yoder presents is overwhelming.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Southard agrees with Yoder. As Dr. Southard is a specialist in psychology, his opinion is worthy of notation:

Believers' baptism should not be recognized before adolescence, in Yoder's judgment, because the child has neither the moral awareness nor mental capacity to renounce his sinful nature. The confidence and trust of early childhood must not be confused with saving faith. Baptism is not a technique for holding youth in church; it is the symbol of death to an old nature and new life in Christ. How can an elementary child renounce himself when his personality is not fully formed and no agency of society (except churches) holds him morally responsible for his actions?<sup>2</sup>

Again, this evidence does not prove the author's thesis; but it is comforting to find authorities such as Yoder and Southard supporting one's conclusions.

With the additional evidence just presented--puberty and religious awakening, the Old Testament view

<sup>1</sup>Yoder summarizes his conclusions on pp. 107-109.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 87.



of accountability, accountability and confirmation, and the opinion of Yoder and Southard--the writer rests his case. Now attention must be given to numerous objections that will surely be raised against the thesis that early adolescence is the time of accountability.

### Arguments Against the Writer's View

#### Definition of Discipleship

One of the first arguments against the writer's view will be that his view of discipleship is extreme. The objection can be paraphrased: "Your definition of discipleship is too extreme; all that a child needs is to be converted and he will later come to accept Jesus as Lord."

First, then, the question needs to be answered: Is "conversion" in the New Testament less than "discipleship?" How should conversion be defined in its New Testament usage? "Conversion" and "convert" are seldom used in the English Bibles. While these terms are used sparingly in the New Testament, the teaching is fundamental to Christian doctrine. The intensive meaning of "conversion" must be gained from its usage with other New Testament terms.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1943), II, 707.

Conversion is most often defined in connection with "faith" or "repentance." Alan Richardson treats repent, repentance, convert, conversion, turn, and return under the same heading:

Thus, though the Gk. word metanoein is often used for 'repent,' in its NT usage it implies much more than a mere 'change of mind'; it involves a whole reorientation of the personality, a 'conversion.'<sup>1</sup>

Mullins used conversion to represent the turning of the sinner from his sins to Christ. This, for Mullins, includes both repentance and faith.<sup>2</sup> Strong, on the other hand, refers to conversion as the human aspect of the turn to God, and he uses regeneration to refer to the divine aspect of the same change.<sup>3</sup>

Conner used the term in the way suggested by Mullins; repentance and faith are the ingredients of conversion:

There are many terms used in the New Testament to describe the experience of becoming a Christian. Perhaps the essential elements can all be summed up in the two terms repentance and faith. It is no accident that the experience of becoming a Christian has two fundamental aspects. . . . One is his relation to sin; the other, his relation to God as a God of grace, revealed in Christ as Saviour. The inward turning from sin is repentance; turning to Christ as Saviour is faith. Each implies the other,

<sup>1</sup>A Theological Word Book of the Bible, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 377.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit., p. 829.

neither is possible without the other. . . .  
They are two aspects of one act or attitude.<sup>1</sup>

Conversion is this experience of becoming a Christian.

It is the turning to Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Calvin, the source of much Baptist thought, included faith and repentance as the basic meaning of conversion.

Indeed, I am aware of the fact that the whole of conversion to God is understood under the term "repentance," and faith is not the least part of conversion. . . . The Hebrew word for "repentance" is derived from conversion or return; the Greek word, from change of mind or of intention. And the thing itself corresponds closely to the etymology of both words. The meaning is that, departing from ourselves, we turn to God, and having taken off our mind, we put on a new.<sup>2</sup>

This is what is meant by discipleship. Discipleship is a turning from self, a turning to God, and obedience to Christ as Lord. To deny that this is the meaning of conversion--radical change for Christ--is to deny that being a Christian makes any difference. To say that one may be "converted" and not become a "disciple" is to fall into the heresy mentioned before: separating Christ as Saviour and Christ as Lord.<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., pp. 195-96.

<sup>2</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (2 vols.; "Library of Christian Classics"; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I, 597. (III:3;5. This designation will be given for the Institutes. It means Book III, chapter 3, section 5).

<sup>3</sup>See above, pp. 39 ff.

heresy implies that Jesus' death does not necessarily make any difference in the life of a Christian. If one can become a Christian without becoming a servant of Christ, objectively, there would be no difference in the conduct of the Christian and the unbeliever.

The conclusion is that to be converted is to become a disciple. Conversion is not less than discipleship; it is tantamount to discipleship. Edge has spelled out the meaning of this for children and their relation to the church.

Having made this statement concerning what it means to be a Christian, someone immediately raises an objection. Say they, "This is all well and good for an adult, but this is simply too advanced a concept for a Primary or Junior to understand." The objection is well taken and I will agree that this is a concept that is too advanced for a Primary or Junior to understand. But we still have to ask, "Is this really what it means to be Christian?"<sup>1</sup>

As conversion is tantamount to discipleship, the objection under discussion falls stillborn. To be converted one must become a disciple. To be less than a disciple is to be less than a Christian. Therefore, the objection that a child can be "saved" or "converted" without having the ability to become a disciple is refuted.

---

<sup>1</sup>Findley B. Edge, "Church Membership," Child Life Conference, Book of Proceedings (Nashville, 1961), p. 31.

Doctrines from the Scriptures must determine Baptist practices. To hold an idea because it is popular or common practice, in spite of its contradiction of biblical evidence, is a contradiction of Baptist heritage.

### Preadolescent Conversions

Another argument that will be advanced must be considered: Children must be able to be saved before early adolescence, because so many are baptized as Juniors. The evidence indicates that belief in preadolescent conversions is a modern phenomenon. Starbuck in 1899 reported sixteen as the average age of conversion. In 1929 Clark said the average age was twelve, and Jenkins in 1959 concluded that almost half of the baptisms in Southern Baptist churches in West Kentucky were administered to children ages six to twelve.<sup>1</sup>

Allport believes the average age for conversion is sixteen; Irene Smith Caldwell says that most conversions take place between the twelfth and thirteenth year.<sup>2</sup> Thus many would conclude that adolescent conversion is the rule rather than the exception. How can the "evidence" for preadolescent conversions be explained?

---

<sup>1</sup>Southard, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Yoder, op. cit., p. 104.

First, no one questions that many Juniors and some Primaries make a "decision" or "come forward." The question is: what does this action on the part of the young ones mean? It is a question of interpreting what the action can and does mean to the child. There are several possible explanations: the child may be doing what is expected of him; some authority figure (parent, teacher, or pastor) has intimated this "decision" is a good thing. Thus, subconsciously the child is responding solely to influence from authority figures.<sup>1</sup>

"Coming forward" may be the result of a desire to identify with the in-group. Norman Deaton found this frequently to be the reason given by those converted later after having been baptized as preadolescents:<sup>2</sup> many made a "decision" because "everybody in our class did."

Expressing a desire to do "right" and "love Jesus" is a legitimate manifestation of a child's religious growth. If religious education is influential at all, this kind of response is expected. But there is a difference in a child's expressing his desire to do

---

<sup>1</sup>Southard, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2, has an example of the result of saying "yes" to authority figures.

<sup>2</sup>"A Study of Post Baptismal Conversion," (unpublished Master's dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1959), p. 90.

right and his becoming a disciple of Jesus. It is probable that many Juniors make decisions in good faith, not even having a capacity to understand what the adult thinks the decision means to the child. The previous examination led to the conclusion that the Junior can hardly conceive of what it means to be a disciple, much less be one.

But secondly, there is another explanation of the fact that many Juniors and some Primaries are baptized. This explanation is simply that though these were baptized, they were not believers when they were baptized. There is a possibility that baptism given to Juniors or Primaries is not really believer's baptism. The vast majority of Protestants baptize their young as infants, then by nurture bring them to personal faith. It is possible that Southern Baptists are doing the same thing but failing to realize it.

Chaplain Fred Bell of Middle Tennessee Baptist Hospital in Nashville reports that many nurses who come to nursing school as mission volunteers have apparently confused a "call" with conversion. Chaplain Bell reconstructs the case history this way: the girl was "saved" and baptized as a child; sometime during adolescence, she experienced a real religious awakening; because she

was already a "Christian," this experience had to be a "call" to special service. Dr. Kenneth Chaffin, of Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, reports the same experience in counseling with ministerial students in his seminary.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that many Juniors are baptized does not prove that they are capable of being disciples. The data can be explained by other hypotheses. In fact, as it will be shown later, those who are baptized and accepted as "saved" during preadolescence generally go through a period of travail and religious awakening during adolescence. It is the writer's opinion that unless those baptized as Juniors have a religious awakening in adolescence, they seldom would be recognized as Christians by their lives.

Many who are baptized as Juniors do become solid churchmen, and hence, it is assumed, disciples. It would be well if someone would investigate the religious experience of the adolescent who was baptized as a preadolescent. Yoder indicates that most of those baptized before adolescence generally have a very significant religious awakening during adolescence.<sup>2</sup> It would be

---

<sup>1</sup>From personal interviews with Chaplain Bell and Dr. Chaffin.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 106.



helpful to find whether or not most of those baptized as preadolescents do generally go through a crisis type of experience during adolescence. The intimation here is, of course, that the religious awakening of adolescence is the real conversion experience. Unless one comes to have an adolescent religious awakening, the chances of his becoming a solid churchman are small. As of now, there is no evidence to substantiate this contention; but it may very likely be the case.

However, it has been established that just because preadolescents are baptized there is no assurance they are baptized as believers. To be baptized does not establish disciple-ability. There are other explanations for this fact: the Junior child is very pliable; he reacts to the in-group and authority figures. The fact that about 50 per cent of Southern Baptists are baptized as preadolescents may mean that 50 per cent of Southern Baptists are not baptized as believers.

### Standing in the Way

A final objection to the writer's view must now be considered: it would be wrong to stand in the way of a child. This objection will find many different variations: "It would be wrong to stand in the way of the child; what if he never again hears the voice of God and

does not come to Christ as an adolescent?" Or, again, the objection might be, "When a child knows what is right, it would be wrong to stand in his way."

In both of these cases, "standing in the way" means denying baptism and church membership. Or, perhaps more clearly, somehow salvation is identified with walking the aisle and baptism. Therefore, by this logic, a refusal to honor a public confession or to grant baptism is a failure to grant salvation. Confession of Christ, by aisle-walking or baptism, is not to be belittled; but these are the results of personal decisions and not sacraments of grace.

One does not stand in the way by careful, prayerful consideration of what it means to be a Christian and a Baptist church member. Salvation is a personal response to Christ as Lord. This is sealed and confessed by outward symbols; but if one is not capable of being a disciple, it is an error to grant the outward symbols to that one. There is a difference between maintaining certain standards for baptism and church membership and "standing in the way." Because one maintains the ten-year-old is not ready for marriage, that one is not opposing marriage, but rather saying that marriage is only for responsible persons.

But what if the initiative comes from the child? What if the child wants to "make a decision"? Is it not standing in the way to disallow the child his desire? The writer's oldest son is now six years old. He has many "good" desires. For instance, Michael wants to be a soldier and defend our country. This desire is a "good" and "right" inclination, but he is incapable of doing it. This shows that because a preadolescent wants to do something there is no assurance he is capable of that action.

Again, a knowledge of "right" and "wrong" as such does not qualify one to become a disciple. The Nursery child comes to know right from wrong, though for the child these only signify acceptable or unacceptable behavior. If "right" or "wrong" is the standard, one will experience difficulty in denying baptism to the Beginner child. Attention must be called to the meaning of accountability as it applies to the child. The age of accountability is the age when the child's response to Christ will determine his eternal destiny. The knowledge of right or wrong in this context is the knowledge of Christ as Lord. If one cannot know Christ as Lord, any other knowledge of right or wrong is not relevant to determining the age of accountability.

Another version of the same objection is the feeling that preadolescents must be saved, for they can be saved easier as Juniors. Juniors, it has been said:

are close enough to adulthood to have the necessary mental maturity, but they are also close enough to childhood to have the capacity for trust and simplicity of faith that are conditions for entering the kingdom. Juniors have not reached the age of doubt; these are the years when, as someone has said, "there are no shadows in the thinking."<sup>1</sup>

"Faith" as it is used in this context, is not biblical faith. It is the same kind of naïve trust that a child has toward everything. This kind of trust is natural to the child. Thus, if this kind of faith is a saving faith, the child does not need to be saved, for he has always had this faith.

Again, it is maintained as necessary to get the child saved before the age of doubt. To get the child before the age of doubt is to get the child before he is aware of a real choice. Jesus' presentation of his claims was always in the context of choice. As noted before, the call of Jesus was always a call that necessitated a radical choice.<sup>2</sup>

It is quite possible that the preadolescent, to

---

<sup>1</sup>Lillian Moore Rice, Better Bible Teaching for Juniors in Sunday Schools (Nashville: Convention Press, 1952), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>See above, pp. 30 ff.

the best of his ability, may make a decision to honor Christ as his Lord. For his time and place, this is a legitimate decision. But this cannot be called Christian faith. It may be the beginning of faith. But it can only be known as genuine faith after it has stood the test of choice and independence. Only by retrospect would it be possible to judge the genuineness of a preadolescent's "faith." Because baptism may be given only to those known to be believers, baptism cannot be given to those whose "trust" has not been proven to be "faith."

There may be a genuine "kernel" in the trust of the Junior; but, as long as Baptists believe in believers' baptism, baptism must be restricted to those who have stood the tests of doubt and have consciously chosen to serve Christ rather than mammon.

The writer believes that the arguments have been raised and faced. He would not content that these arguments have been demolished (as strawmen), but he feels the burden of proof will rest on those who disagree with his thesis. A point by point refutation will be required to disprove the writer's contention: early adolescence is the time of accountability.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE NATURE AND STATUS OF THE CHILD BEFORE THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Thus far the investigation has dealt with the problem of the age of accountability. During this investigation it has been assumed that prior to accountability the child has a tendency toward sin (his nature); yet he is not condemned before God because of his inherent condition (his status). For most Protestants this is not a moot question because "everybody knows that God will not send little children to hell." The writer agrees with the sentiment, but theological questions can hardly be settled by a consensus of what "everybody knows."

In dealing with accountability, the writer sought to use biblical and Baptist materials as the basis for the consideration. The same methodology will be used in approaching the question of the nature and status of the child before accountability. After looking at the biblical references to the nature and status of the child, Baptist antecedents, and Particular and General Baptists, the investigation will be of Baptist thought

in America. Those elements that have contributed to Southern Baptist thought will thus be sought.

It would be expecting too much to hope to find the writer's view of accountability spelled out clearly in Baptist history. As far as the author has been able to determine, Baptists have not systematically dealt with the problem of accountability. But Baptists have dealt with the nature and status of the child before accountability as a part of their anthropology. There was serious disagreement among early English Baptists on this question. However, today a consensus has been reached that affirms original sin but denies original guilt.<sup>1</sup>

This consensus is the writer's position, but it remains to be seen if this consensus is a legitimate son of the Baptist heritage. The attempt will now be made to demonstrate that the writer's view of accountability is harmonious with the Baptist theological heritage.

---

<sup>1</sup>By "original sin" the writer means an inborn tendency toward evil that will inevitably result in the person's becoming a sinner. By "original guilt" the writer means that an infant is guilty for his inborn condition and is liable to damnation for that guilt.

The Nature and Status of the Child  
in the New Testament

It has been pointed out above that the Old Testament dealt briefly with a concept of accountability.<sup>1</sup> However, the Old Testament did not have a systematic doctrine of the fall of man. Man was known to be sinful, but there was no systematic doctrine of how or why man became a sinner.<sup>2</sup> During the interbiblical period this doctrine was developed and Satan was discovered to be the author of sin.<sup>3</sup> Through Paul this interpretation came into the New Testament, and Augustine developed the classical doctrine of original sin.<sup>4</sup>

Thus in the New Testament the raw materials of an anthropology can be found. But a systematic statement per se is lacking. This is particularly true in regard to the nature and status of children. Jesus assumed that all men are sinful, but he gave no categorical statement on the matter. He dealt with the particular individual and his sin but did not generalize on the condition of the race as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 189-91.

<sup>2</sup>Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (Boston: Charles T. Branford Company, 1960), p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Norman H. Snaith, The Jews From Cyrus to Herod (Wallington Surrey: The Religious Press, Ltd., 1949), p. 135.

<sup>4</sup>Brunner, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>5</sup>Cave, op. cit., p. 13.



There is one saying in the Synoptics attributed to Jesus that has a bearing on the nature and status of children:

And they were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.<sup>1</sup>

This statement is capable of various interpretations. Thus, J. L. Dagg said it told nothing about the nature of children but rather was only an analogy or figure of speech; children are totally depraved.<sup>2</sup> Oscar Cullmann pontificates that this was the early baptismal formula for infants.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, George Barker Stevens said this pointed out that while Jesus regarded all men as sinners, he accepted all men as sons of God.<sup>4</sup>

Paul does not deal with the children of unbelievers, and he just mentions the children of believers.

<sup>1</sup>Mark 10:13-16 and parallels.

<sup>2</sup>A Manual of Theology (Charlestown: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1859), p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>Baptism in the New Testament, trans. J. K. S. Reid ("Studies in Biblical Theology"; London: SCM Ltd., 1950), pp. 76 ff.

<sup>4</sup>The Theology of the New Testament ("International Theological Library"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 97-98.

I Corinthians 7:14 is the reference to children of believers:

For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.

The meaning of this passage is obscure. Richardson says it means the children of a believing parent are "holy," that is, baptized. On the other hand, Richardson says the unbelieving partner is merely "sanctified." He bases this upon the fact that the noun refers to the children but only the verb to the parent!<sup>1</sup>

Moffatt would explain the passage as an extension of the primitive idea that holiness can be physically transmitted; thus, in sexual union, the unbelieving parent and the child were both "sanctified."<sup>2</sup> Thus, while Paul said children of believers are "holy," it is difficult to determine just what that means.

There is reason to believe, however, that Paul did have a view of an organic unity of faith in the family. Writing to Timothy, Paul (or the writer) said: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt

---

<sup>1</sup>Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, p. 359.

<sup>2</sup>James Moffatt, The First Epistle to the Corinthians ("The Moffatt New Testament Commentary"; London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1954), p. 81.

first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure dwells in you!"<sup>1</sup> Again, it is a question of interpretation as to what it means to affirm that Timothy had the same faith that dwelt in his mother and grandmother. While there is in this passage, as well as in Corinthians, the expression of Paul that there is a family unity in the faith or "holiness," the writer feels caution is necessary.

The writer believes that the New Testament indicates that the children of believers are, in some sense, "holy" unto God. There is an organic relation between the believer and his children. On the other hand, there is no evidence to indicate that the children of the believer were considered "Christians" and thus baptized. Because the evidence is rather limited and capable of various interpretations, the writer feels one must not "find" too much in these passages.<sup>2</sup>

#### Baptist Antecedents

Baptist thought did not begin in a vacuum. There were many prior theological currents that affected the thought of Baptists. Thus, some attention must be

---

<sup>1</sup>III Timothy 1:5.

<sup>2</sup>The writer believes it probable that the New Testament accepted the Old Testament view of innocence and accountability. See above, pp. 189-91.

given these antecedents of seventeenth century Baptist thought. First, the Roman Catholic view must be considered, for the Roman Church supplies the background against which these other views must be considered.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Roman Catholic View

There is no ambiguity about the Roman Catholic view of the nature and status of the child. The child is born in sin and as a sinner stands under the wrath of God. The gift of baptism washes away the original sin and guilt: "The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin."<sup>2</sup>

Without baptism there is no salvation. The Council of Trent pronounced "anathema upon anyone who says that baptism is not necessary for salvation."<sup>3</sup> The Roman Church has made specific statements that without the aid of baptism the child is damned.

Whoever says that even infants are vivified without the participation of His Sacrament (Baptism), both opposes the Apostolic preaching and condemns the whole Church which hastens to baptize infants,

---

<sup>1</sup>From this point on it will be understood that "nature and status of the child" refers to the period before the age of accountability.

<sup>2</sup>The Catholic Encyclopedia, ed. Charles G. Herbermann and others (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), II, 258.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

because it unhesitatingly believes that otherwise they cannot possibly be vivified in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Or, more specifically, it is stated that

the Catholic teaching is uncompromising on this point, that 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>2</sup>

There are debates going on in the Roman Church as to what it means that an unbaptized infant is excluded from the "vision of God" in death. 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>3</sup>

The Roman Catholic position is based on her doctrine of original sin: because of Adam's sin, all humanity is damned. Only the Sacrament of Baptism can remove the taint of original sin.

The position of the Roman Church is the most extreme to be found in the ranks of Christendom. Calvin, as it shall be seen, was at one with the Roman Church in

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>3</sup>Reinhold Seeberg, Textbook of the History of Doctrines, trans. Charles Hay (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), II, 117.

the doctrine of original sin; but he said it was election, not baptism, that would save one, even an infant. The position of the Roman Church can be summarized in two points: (1) infants are guilty because of original sin; (2) forgiveness of this sin comes only by baptism.

### John Calvin's View

Today, few Protestants would argue that original sin carries with it original guilt. This tender feeling for the young was not shared by the reformers. Calvin argued that because of Adam's fall every child born shares the same condition of guilt. Each person becomes an active sinner as soon as that one has the opportunity to express his nature. Yet, somehow, even a child is guilty of sin because that child has within himself the seed that will produce evil:

For that reason, 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 iniquity have not yet come forth, they have the seed inclosed within them. Indeed, their whole nature is a seed of sin; hence it can only be hateful and abhorrent to God. From this it follows that it is rightly considered sin in God's sight, for without guilt there would be no accusation.<sup>1</sup>

Though Calvin might quibble with the terminology,

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., I, 251 (II 1:8).

he was affirming that original sin carries with it original guilt. Yet, there is the hope of salvation that is found in the covenant. Baptism brings one into the covenant and thus secures for that one the hope of salvation.<sup>1</sup> It is not clear how this is related to election, for elsewhere Calvin stated that not all baptized are saved and not all saved are baptized.<sup>2</sup>

It must be noted that there is a difference in Calvin's interpretation of infant baptism and the view of the Roman Church. For the Roman Church, baptism is the efficient agent of forgiveness, ex opere operato. Calvin interpreted the sacrament to be a seal of God's forgiveness and the sign of the covenant.

Through baptism, believers are assured that this condemnation has been removed and withdrawn from them, since (as was said) the Lord promises us by this sign that full and complete remission has been made, both of the guilt that should have been imputed to us, and of the punishment that we ought to have undergone because of the guilt.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, Calvin argued that baptism is so important that to deny baptism is possibly to deny salvation.

Finally, we ought to be greatly afraid of that threat, that God will wreak vengeance upon any man who disdains to mark his child with the symbol of the covenant; for by such contempt the proffered grace is refused, and, as it were, foresworn (Gen. 17:14).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 1331-32 (IV:16:9).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 1349 (IV:16:26).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 1311 (IV:15:10).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 676 (III:5:6).

Yet, even this statement must be qualified. Because of Calvin's doctrine of election it is impossible to know for a certainty what is the condition of any given person. Unlike the Roman Catholic, the Calvinist cannot be certain that baptism removes the stigma of original sin; this can be assured only by divine election.<sup>1</sup>

Thus while the Roman Church and John Calvin would agree that the infant is guilty of original sin, they would disagree as to how the child may be saved. They both affirm original sin and original guilt. Turning to James Arminius, one finds another theological tradition.

#### James Arminius' View

Although studying under Theodore Beza, James Arminius came to the theological position that bears his name. This position affirms free will to accept Christ and general atonement for sin, denies original guilt, and

---

<sup>1</sup>Strong, op. cit., p. 663, denies that Calvin taught infant damnation. He quotes the "Presb. and Ref. Rev., Oct. 1890:634-651," in which Calvin says that the view that "infants are precipitated from their mothers' arms into eternal death is a blasphemy to be universally detested." But if salvation is by election alone, is there much difference in when the non-elect dies? It should be noted that in 1903 the Presbyterians amended the Westminster Confession where it inferred that non-elect children are lost. See Yoder, op. cit., p. 43.



usually stands for falling from grace.<sup>1</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.

Arminius titled articles XIII and XIV of his Apology, "Original Sin will condemn no Man"; and "In every nation, all infants who die without actual sins are saved."<sup>2</sup> Thus while holding to original sin, he predicated guilt only to actual sins. Arminius affirmed 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>3</sup> There is no denial of the tendencies of the infant to be sinful; rather Arminius' point was 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>1</sup>See the Five Articles of the Remonstrants, in Henry Bettenson (ed.), Documents of the Christian Church (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 375-77.

<sup>2</sup>The Writings of James Arminius, trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), I, 317.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

With these antecedents as the background, now the study must move into the theology of the seventeenth century English Baptists.

#### English Baptists' Views

As noted in the section on ecclesiology, English Baptists are easily divided into the Particular and General Baptists. As would be expected, the Particular Baptists were Calvinistic in their interpretation of original sin and original guilt while the General Baptists were Arminian.

The General Baptists' View.--John Smyth, in his Short Confession, reflected the Arminian views of the Waterlander Mennonites. He asserted that God created man with freedom of the will and that there is no original sin in the Calvinistic sense:

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.<sup>1</sup>

Though the reference to infants is absent, the Short Confession of Faith, issued by Helwys and his group after splitting from the Smyth group, affirmed the same theological position: original sin damns no one but

---

<sup>1</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, p. 100.

only the actual rejection of God's grace condemns a man.<sup>1</sup>  
 The confession made by Smyth's group after his death stated: "infants are conceived and born in innocency without sin, and that so dying are undoubtedly saved."<sup>2</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 in their own persons, are only subject to the 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 Kingdome of Heaven.<sup>3</sup>

The Orthodox Creed of the General Baptists in 1678 followed the established Arminian tradition of affirming 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.

We do believe, that all little children, dying in their infancy, viz, before they are capable to chuze 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

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

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. Ergo, we conclude that that opinion is false, which saith, that those little infants dying before baptism, are damned.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, there is a clear tradition among General Baptists that the child is not accountable until such time as he is able to choose for himself. This does not deny original sin, in the sense of saying that every person is born with a bent toward sin; rather, this tradition affirms that until such time as the person, as a person, of his own volition, rejects the grace of God and chooses sin, he is innocent and "safe" in the eyes of God. However, turning to the Particular Baptists, one finds the influence of John Calvin.

#### Particular Baptists' Views

The Confession of 1644 affirms original sin and salvation by election; however, there is no precise reference to the fate of infants dying in infancy. But the Second London Confession of 1677 follows Calvin in its repetition of the Westminster Confession. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve:

the guilt of the Sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descend-  
ing from them by ordinary generation, being now

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 330-31.

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>1</sup>

The clue to escape from hell is given in the last phrase; 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>2</sup>

This escape by election is the only hope of salvation regardless of age. Sin is so serious that it is necessary even for an infant to be elect to be saved:

Elect Infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and are saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the Ministry of the Word.<sup>3</sup>

The Calvinistic Particular Baptists were consistent with their heritage. Original sin carries with it, for them, original guilt. Even an infant must be elect if he is to be saved. The only possible implication of this is that nonelect infants dying in infancy are the occupants of hell or limbo, or some other

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

undesirable state of existence.

### Baptist Thought in America

Turning to America, one encounters the task of trying to discern what materials will be used in ascertaining "the Baptist position." This has already been discussed.<sup>1</sup> The Particular Baptist views can be traced to the Philadelphia, Charlestown, and Kehukee Associational Confessions.<sup>2</sup> The General Baptist confessions had little influence in America.<sup>3</sup>

Because of this difficulty, the writer will give the views of those who appear to represent the various views held by Baptists in the South.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 85-87.

<sup>2</sup>For the Kehukee Association Confession, see Ibid., pp. 353-56.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>4</sup>Obviously, this is a value judgment by the author. However, the choice is made easier by the fact that so few Baptists have written for theological publication. In the South, J. L. Dagg, E. Y. Mullins, and W. T. Conner have written the only significant works in systematic theology. As far as the present writer has been able to discover, only A. H. Strong has, among the Northern Baptist writers, manifested much influence on Southern Baptists.

It should be borne in mind that the present writer is trying to show the forces that have shaped Southern Baptists' thinking on the issue under discussion; hence, such men as Rauschenbush and Matthews will not be considered. The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 1406-1407, lists the following men as Baptist Theologians: John Gill, Andrew Fuller, J. L. Dagg, Alvah Hovey, William Newton Clarke, George Washington Northrup, A. H. Strong, Shailer Matthews, F. Y. Mullins, H. W.

### J. L. Dagg's View

J. L. Dagg was one of the most learned and exceptional men of the old South. He was half-blind, half-voiceless, lame<sup>2</sup>, and he never wrote for publication until he retired at the age of sixty. Yet he was the most read and influential theologian in the South during his day.<sup>1</sup>

Dagg was a good Calvinist and a disciple of John Gill, whose works were very influential in the South during his time. He, like Gill, believed in original sin, original guilt, and definite election. His view was representative of staunch Calvinism in the 1850's in the South.

An objection to the doctrine of natural depravity is founded on the fact that Jesus referred to little children as examples for his disciples. This fact, however, will not authorize the inference that little children are not depraved. The same teacher said to his disciples, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." As something may exist, proper to be imitated in animals

---

Robinson, and W. T. Conner. Those who are English theologians were represented either in the General or Particular Baptist camp; Hovey, Clark, and Matthews were not influential in the South; hence Dagg, Mullins, and Conner are left by the process of elimination. (Northrup did not write any significant work.) In the process of research, the writer found a pamphlet written by Franklin Wilson for the Southern Baptist Publication Society in 1857. This pamphlet is included in the study because it represents an acceptable view to the Publication Society at that date.

<sup>1</sup>Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, I, 346 f.

which have no moral character, and even in serpents, notwithstanding their venom, so, something for imitation could be pointed out in children, notwithstanding their depravity.<sup>1</sup>

Dagg then concluded that children share in the corrupt and hence condemned status of their parents.

"I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children."<sup>2</sup> No definite quote could be found concerning the fate of children who die and are not of the elect. However, it is assumed that Dagg would agree with the usual Calvinistic position, for his Calvinism is intact on election: "This renewing grace," Dagg says, God "gives or withholds at his sovereign pleasure."<sup>3</sup>

#### Franklin Wilson's View

At the request of the Southern Baptist Publication Society, Franklin Wilson of Baltimore wrote a pamphlet in 1857 dealing with children and the church. The title explains the purpose: The Comparative Influence of Baptist and Pedobaptist Principles in the Christian Nurture of Children. This pamphlet is important because it expresses what must be assumed to be a very popular position for that day and time.

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 314.



This little pamphlet was designed to show the dangers of infant baptism. Those who practice infant baptism, Wilson said, lure their children to complacency by saying baptism makes them members of the covenant. Baptist instruction, on the other hand, points the children to Christ and his cross for conversion.

Wilson strongly reacted to Bushnell's charge that Baptist thought believes the child must be raised in sin to be converted:

The Baptists limit the work of the Holy Spirit to no age. They believe that all who die in infancy are regenerated by grace, and saved through Christ; and that those who live may, in the very dawn of their moral being, yield their tender hearts to Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, Wilson revealed some of the confusion that still exists among Baptists. On the one hand he says that the child can be converted only after he comes of age: "Of course, in this entire discussion, we speak of such children only as have reached the age of accountability."<sup>2</sup> But then referring to the children, he said: "They must be taught that they are sinners, that they are lost, and that no human efforts--nothing but the atonement of Jesus Christ--can save them."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

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

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

Previously, he had contended that the pious mother should teach the little ones of the cross, lead them to "lisp the sweet name of Jesus," and to "bow the knee in prayer."<sup>1</sup> These elements are all present: (1) the child is a sinner; (2) if he dies in infancy, he will be regenerated; (3) he must be saved by conversion; (4) he should be taught to pray as a young child. The writer would submit that it is difficult to harmonize all these elements: by definition a sinner's prayers, except a prayer of repentance, cannot be heard. Therefore, either the child cannot pray to God and be heard or a new definition of his status as a sinner is needed.

#### A. H. Strong's Position

A. H. Strong was a modified Calvinist. While he was not a rigid Calvinist, he was on the Reformed side of Dort. There was a certain "bigness of heart" that would not allow Strong to follow Calvin in his doctrine of the fate of non-elect children. Strong was strong in his doctrine of original sin: "Every member of the human race, without exception, possesses a corrupted nature, which is a source of actual sin, and is itself sin."<sup>2</sup> Here the agreement is with Calvin: every

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 577.

person has from the beginning a corrupted nature, the possession of which is, in itself, sin. This is a belief in original guilt.

But this view of original guilt did not lead Strong to the conclusion that infants dying before conversion are damned. Because they are sinners--and guilty--they must be regenerated to be saved: "Infants are in a state of sin, need to be regenerated, and can be saved only through Christ."<sup>1</sup> Because the infants have not "personally transgressed," they "are the objects of special divine compassion and care, and through the grace of Christ are certain of salvation."<sup>2</sup>

Since there is no evidence that children dying in infancy are regenerated prior to death, either with or without the use of external means, it seems most probable that the work of regeneration may be performed by the Spirit in connection with the infant soul's first view of Christ in the other world. As the remains of natural depravity in the Christian are eradicated, not by death, but at death, through the sight of Christ and union with him, so the first moment of consciousness for the infant may be coincident with a view of Christ the Savior which accomplishes the entire sanctification of its nature.<sup>3</sup>

To the writer this kind of statement is more than "somewhat strained." Logical application of Strong's doctrine of original sin and original guilt led him to

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 661.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 663.

conclude that the infant must be regenerated to be saved. This stratagem, by which the infant is regenerated at the moment of death, was first used in the Second London Confession; however, there, as in the Westminster Confession, regeneration was only for the elect. Strong rejects the "elect only" clause and maintains that all infants will be saved.

Thus Strong's view is that all infants are guilty before accountability, but those dying before accountability will be regenerated by the Spirit at the moment of death. This will have implications for the church's relation to the child before accountability. If he must be regenerated before he can have a positive relation to Christ, little can be done in religious education other than to convince the child that he will need to repent "when he is able."

#### E. Y. Mullins' View

Mullins did not use the term "original sin." Rather, he spoke of the origin of sin and its results. He affirmed that sin came as a result of man's perverting the good by free choice. Mullins was not concerned about the various critical problems attached to Genesis 3 --historical versus symbolical interpretation; rather he was concerned with the meaning of the account: sin came

as a result of the wrong choice by intelligent, free creatures.<sup>1</sup>

Mullins was very precise in his treatment of sin and its results. He was careful in what he said; and, perhaps more important, he was very careful in what he left unsaid. He affirmed the universality of sin, but he avoided Calvinistic or Augustinian overtones:

It is clear from the facts which show the unity of mankind, and the moral and spiritual history of the race, as well as from the teachings of the Scripture, that human sinfulness is universal.<sup>2</sup>

Mullins used the term "total depravity" but denied that man is totally evil and destitute of all good; by total depravity Mullins meant that "all parts of our nature have been affected by sin."<sup>3</sup>

The consequences of sin are guilt and penalty. "Guilt is the ill-desert of the sinner on account of his sin."<sup>4</sup> Guilt is a result of personal rebellion against God:

Here we must keep in mind the personal relation involved in sin. It is transgression of objective law in some cases. It is against the attribute of divine justice. But it is more. Sin is man's personal opposition to the personal God.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 283.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 295.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Because Mullins equated guilt with personal involvement in sin, he clearly denies original guilt:

Condemnation is not for hereditary sin, but only for actual sin. Christ died for the race as a whole and removed the curse so far as condemnation for the racial sin is concerned.<sup>1</sup>

Thus there is no question about the fate of the infant dying in infancy: his racial sin has been removed by the death of Christ, and he has no actual sin. Therefore all infants dying in infancy are "created anew in him and saved."<sup>2</sup>

Mullins' position, then, may be summed up in these points: (1) sin is universal because of man's heredity; (2) condemnation is only a result of personal transgression against God; and, therefore, (3) infants are free of guilt. Mullins, in the terms being used by the writer, affirms original sin but denies original guilt.

#### W. T. Conner's Views

W. T. Conner, one of E. Y. Mullins' most outstanding students, followed his teacher's views. He was firm in his statement of original sin and, like his teacher, quite careful in how he spoke of the doctrine.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

For instance, he would not speak of a "cause" for sin, because it was too mechanical a term. Rather, he spoke of "moral decision and moral responsibility."<sup>1</sup> Sin, for Conner, is best defined as rebellion against God.<sup>2</sup>

Because of his definition of sin as rebellion against God, Conner believed that only a morally responsible person could be guilty of sin. While affirming original sin, as the present writer has defined the term, Conner denied original guilt:

Moreover, there are such seeds of evil tendency in the child's nature . . . that it inevitably commits transgressions when it comes to the age of moral responsibility. In that sense the child is a sinner. It does not have personal guilt. That is impossible where the conditions of personal responsibility are lacking. . . . There can be no personal guilt except in the case of a personal agent.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Conner concluded that "those dying in infancy are saved."<sup>4</sup> Conner, then, affirms original sin, denies original guilt, and teaches that all dying in infancy are saved. He bases the last point on the belief that Christ's atonement provided for "all disability up to the point of positive transgression and deliberate rejection of moral light."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-35.

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

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

### Southern Baptist Consensus

Though all generalizations are open to criticism, the consensus of Southern Baptist opinion can be expressed in these points: (1) a doctrine of original sin, (2) a denial of original guilt, and (3) the belief in salvation for all who die in infancy. Southern Baptists as a body are, with the exception of the doctrine of perseverance, thoroughgoing Arminians. The Free Will Confession of 1834 probably expresses the feelings of most Southern Baptists:

We believe that all children dying in infancy, having not actually transgressed against the law of God, in their own persons are only subject to the first death, which was brought on by the fall of the first Adam, and not that any one of them dying in that state shall suffer punishment in Hell by the guilt of Adam's sin, for of such is the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

The fate of infants dying in infancy was not even a subject of discussion in 1925; there is no reference to infants in the Confession of 1925. However, the article on the fall of man relates to the question at hand. As a result of Adam's sin, he:

fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and in bondage to sin, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, p. 372.  
<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 392.



The phrase "actual transgressors" seems to qualify the statement that Adam's posterity is under condemnation. It is important that this is a major reworking of the New Hampshire article on the fall of man. There is no reference in the New Hampshire Confession to a distinction between one before and after becoming an "actual transgressor." Thus the apparant meaning is that those prior to becoming "actual transgressors" are not under condemnation. This explanation seems to be reasonable; presumably there was a reason the New Hampshire article was changed, and this seems the most logical interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

The Curriculum Guide has the same assumptions designated above as the Southern Baptist consensus of opinion. Man is a sinner, corrupt in his moral nature and inclined toward evil; yet sin is "an act of will or an attitude of mind on the part of responsible persons in relation to God."<sup>2</sup> Thus one is not a responsible person until he reaches an age of accountability:

By virtue of man's fall into sin, all persons are by nature corrupted by evil. They thus need redemption from sin. . . . They can, at the age of personal accountability, respond to God's grace

---

<sup>1</sup>Compare the 1925 statement with the New Hampshire Confession in Lumpkin, Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>2</sup>W. T. Howse and Clifton W. Allen (eds.) (Nashville: Convention Press, 1960), p. 8.

and become true children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The Curriculum Guide does not give the concept of original guilt any consideration; in fact, its denial is assumed. Because of this, there is little attempt to teach the child he is a "sinner" until he is a Junior.<sup>2</sup> This presumes the child is not a responsible sinner until the Junior years.

The present writer has spoken to many pastors and other leaders in Baptist ranks during the course of this investigation. He has yet to find a single person among those interviewed or spoken to who would seriously disagree with the position identified with the Southern Baptist consensus. Thus, the great majority of Southern Baptists would agree with this statement: because of the history of the race, all men are born with a tendency toward sin; all men enter the world destined to sin. However, the individual is not responsible for the sins of the race or his inherited nature. The individual becomes an actual sinner in the eyes of God when, as a morally responsible person he chooses sin and rebels against God. There is a time between birth and moral

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Based on the statements under the goal "conversion" for the various age groups in the Curriculum Guide.

accountability when the child is not guilty for sin. This is an affirmation of original sin but a denial of original guilt.<sup>1</sup>

#### Conclusion

It has been shown that once there was disagreement among Baptists on the nature and status of the child prior to an age of personal responsibility. The Particular Baptists affirmed original guilt and believed only the elect infant dying in infancy would be saved. However, it has been seen that there is a Baptist tradition going back to John Smyth that affirms one is guilty only for actual sins. This view came to be the dominant one among Baptists in America.

Some, such as A. H. Strong, still affirmed original guilt but believed all infants would be saved by regeneration at death. Thus, while some in the nineteenth century affirmed original guilt, the sting of the doctrine was removed: all infants dying in infancy would be saved.

It was concluded that Southern Baptists have reached a consensus that affirms original sin but denies

---

<sup>1</sup>See the articles "Infants, salvation of," and "Innocence" in Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, I, 685.

original guilt. Now the implications of this view must be spelled out for the church's relation to the child. If the child, prior to the age of accountability, is not guilty or a "sinner" in the de facto sense, how is the church to be related to this one?

The previous conclusion was that the child reaches the age of accountability in early adolescence. At that time the church must accept the task of evangelizing the person. Now the question must be answered: what is the task of the church prior to this time? This consideration will come in the final chapter, "The Religion of Childhood."

## CHAPTER X

### THE RELIGION OF CHILDHOOD

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the final question of this thesis, namely, how is a church to relate herself to the child prior to the age of accountability? This question will be answered by a consideration of the religion of childhood. As the present writer uses the term, "the religion of childhood," it refers to the child's response to religious interests at his own level. Thus the term includes the child's reaction to such ideas or concepts as death, right and wrong, and God.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Religion of Childhood and Discipleship

It is evident that children have religious experiences. They are concerned, in their own way, at their own level, with religious questions. Dobbins expressed this conviction when he described the second stage of religious development as God-consciousness.

---

<sup>1</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, p. 816, defines religion as "the feeling or expression of human love, fear, or awe of some superhuman or overruling power."

The child asks such questions as: "What is God like? Where does he live? Does he know my name?"<sup>1</sup>

Yoder believes that God begins his activity very early in the child's life.

Very early God confronts the child with His love in the social context of friendship. However, in the more specific sense it begins at the dawn of self-consciousness (ages three to five).<sup>2</sup>

There are some children who, because of lack of encouragement, fail to demonstrate religious tendencies.

However: "any child, regardless of his home environment and what he knows or does not know, can be interested in God and the things of God."<sup>3</sup>

It is no accident that Gesell and Ilg, in The Child from Five to Ten, are concerned with the religious aspects in the development of the child's personality; religious development is recognized as an essential part of the child's growth. It should also be remembered that the standard works on child psychology consulted in Chapter Seven gave a place of importance to the child's religious life. Thus, it is recognized by many authorities that the child does have religious experience.

In view of the previous conclusions, how can one

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>Strickland and Leatherwood, op. cit., p. 6.

understand this experience? This religious experience cannot be equated with the religion of the adult. The adult, who needs to be converted, is a responsible sinner because he has rejected the Lordship of Christ. The child, on the other hand, is not a responsible sinner because he has not rejected Christ as Lord. He cannot be considered a candidate for conversion until he reaches the age of accountability. Therefore, until the child reaches early adolescence, something other than adult categories must be used to describe the religion of the child.

The religion of childhood may be called the religion of innocence. Many use this term. However, with Yoder: "one may describe religious experience during childhood as the period of time in the child's life when he is developing religious consciousness."<sup>1</sup> In Christian terminology, the religion of childhood is the religious experience of the child that precedes his ability to become a disciple of Jesus.

The distinction being made here between the religion of childhood and discipleship is quite important. Children are not little adults who can be converted by use of a "simplified" plan of salvation; they are persons

---

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 80.

in the process of development. As the baby cannot be taught to speak a foreign language (for he does not have the ability to learn it), so the young child cannot be converted because he is not capable of becoming a Christian.

The failure to recognize a legitimate religion of childhood has led to many problems in the Christian churches. Hertzberg criticized Baptists at this very point. Because Baptists believe only believers are to be related to the church, children are a source of embarrassment. They are too young to be a part of the church; yet, they are definitely involved in the life of the church.<sup>1</sup>

The present writer contends that by making a clear distinction between the religion of childhood and discipleship, the values of Christian nurture can be combined with the values of evangelical conversion. That is, the child may have religious responses on his own level; and when the child expresses his religious experience, it is not equated with Christian commitment.

The religion of childhood may be characterized by two elements:

---

<sup>1</sup>Peter Hertzberg, The Place of Children in Four Denominations (unpublished Th. M. thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1950), p. 78.



1) The religion of childhood is a religion of innocence and self-centeredness. This innocence is a time of open-eyed credulity. This tendency to be a "natural believer" has sometimes been confused with Christian commitment. The child accepts with "raw credulity" the religious concepts that he is taught.<sup>1</sup>

Self-centeredness in this context is not sin. The child is in the process of becoming a person. In the first stages of this development, the child is striving to establish his identity. The failure to understand this self-centeredness of childhood has led some to identify this characteristic with sinfulness.<sup>2</sup>

2) The religion of childhood is an inherited religion. While the child has firsthand religious experience--he prays, loves Jesus, and worships--his religious frame of reference is limited to his environment. The natural innocence and credulity of the child expresses itself through the traditions he inherits. Until the child reaches the plateau of parental independence--and chooses his religious frame of reference for himself--his religion is a reflection of the beliefs of his superiors.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Allport, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>Dobbins, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>3</sup>Allport, op. cit., p. 123.

## The Churches and the Religion of Childhood

Three things have been affirmed: (1) the child is not a condemned sinner prior to personal accountability; (2) the child prior to adolescence is not capable of becoming a disciple of Jesus; and (3) the child does have religious experience prior to personal accountability. How will the churches react to this situation? By accepting the point of view the writer has indicated, Southern Baptists will have a theological basis for their relation to children during the years of childhood.

### Cultivation of the Religion of Childhood

The religious experience of children has not been adequately appreciated by Baptists in most instances. Because Baptists have been so concerned about the conversion-type experience of the child, they have not closely viewed the other religious experience of the child. For instance, some would say, "What good does it do to teach a Primary to pray if he is not able to become a Christian until he is older?" Or, again, "Can a child be heard by God before he is converted?" The religion of childhood affirms that the child not only is heard by God; he is acceptable to God just as he is. The

religious experience of the child is to be cultivated because it is a legitimate expression of the child's religious nature.

Some writers in the field of religious education have shown an awareness of the religion of childhood: "as the children become more aware of God's love and care, they need training and experience in reaching out to him in prayer, praise, and giving."<sup>1</sup> Thus the child needs training and guidance so that they may "find in Jesus the best Friend of little children."<sup>2</sup> Speaking of Primaries, Ann Bradford said that the child can be taught to see God at work in the world and to feel the nearness of God at all times.<sup>3</sup>

This does not mean that the child will naturally and inevitably become a Christian; rather, it means that the child can have meaningful religious experience. Jenkins concluded that during the ages of six to twelve the child has very significant religious experiences.<sup>4</sup> With the recognition of the religion of childhood, Baptists can legitimately cultivate the religion of

---

<sup>1</sup>Strickland and Leatherwood, op. cit., p. 10.

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

<sup>3</sup>Working with Primaries (Nashville: Convention Press, 1961), pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup>Op. cit., p. 53.

childhood.<sup>1</sup>

The view being presented here will clear away two obstacles between the church and her children. First, the stigma of original guilt is removed from the child. Whitley believed that infant baptism grew as a result of the doctrine of original guilt.<sup>2</sup> As the child was considered guilty of Adam's sin, the loving parent would naturally want to secure the child's forgiveness of sin through the Sacrament. This view of original guilt led to a perversion of the gospel.

The second obstacle that is removed is very similar to the first; it is related to it. An acceptance of the religion of childhood relieves one of the pressure for early and spurious evangelism. If one feels his child is damned, naturally that one will do anything to get his child saved. Yoder feels that this is a very subtle yet real threat. He believes that many subconsciously do not feel their children are "safe" until they are baptized, even if they believe in believers' baptism.<sup>3</sup> If one believes his child is safe in the arms

<sup>1</sup>It is to be remembered that the present writer will not attempt to say how this may be implemented; rather, he is trying to establish a theological basis for such a task.

<sup>2</sup>History of British Baptists, pp. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit., p. 46.

of God, there will be no pressure to press for premature conversions.

Finally, the recognition of the religion of childhood will allow a child to have religious responses without the adult reading too much into those experiences. When a child says, "I love Jesus and want to do right," it should be accepted at face value. The child is sincere in his religious expression; he is responding, on his own level, to the legitimate religious urgings of his own nature. It is a fledgling affirmation in the quest for the fulfillment of the divine image. But the adult must not distort the meaning of that experience.

And the truth to be remembered is that the religion of a child should be suited to a child's nature and capacities; its contents of the simplest and most elementary kind. Sometimes parents and teachers fall into the error of making their own religious experiences and beliefs a standard for the little ones, and encourage on the part of children emotions and language appropriate only to those of riper years. This is to do unwholesome violence to the child-nature. What should be encouraged is a child's religion, not a child's imitation of a man's religion.<sup>1</sup>

The church has the responsibility of cultivating this religion of childhood. It forms the basis of later religious experience that should result in Christian

---

<sup>1</sup>George Hill, "Baptists and the Children," The Child and Religion, ed. Thomas Stephens (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1905), p. 298.

commitment.

Nurture and the Religion  
of Childhood

Sometimes it is assumed that Christian nurture cannot be utilized by churches practicing believers' baptism. Some would contend that "education" and "decision" are mutually exclusive. Such is not the case.

There is nothing in Baptist beliefs that may not be harmonized with the theory of Bushnell that children should be "nurtured in the admonition of the Lord" from their earliest years, and be trained with the hope and expectation that they will "grow up Christians from childhood, never knowing themselves as being otherwise." The nurture and training of young children may be a means of grace and salvation as surely as the preaching that is addressed to adults.<sup>1</sup>

Nurture refers to nourishing, training, and educating.<sup>2</sup> Christian nurture is the process of training a child in the Christian graces. It should be remembered that Bushnell did not believe that one automatically grows to be a Christian, but rather that Christian nurture involves "a struggle with evil, a fall, and a rescue."<sup>3</sup> Nurture, then, does not make decisions for the responsible person. Nurture is the church's attempt to instruct the child in the Christian

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>2</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, p. 662.

<sup>3</sup>Vergilius Ferm (ed.), Classics of Protestantism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 351.

graces and influence him so that when he becomes a responsible person he will decide for Christ.

G. W. Rusling says that the church must never presume to make vows for the child. This would be a repudiation of believers' baptism. However, the church does have an obligation to make a place for the child in the ministry of the church.<sup>1</sup> The child has a place in the church, not as a member, but as a catechumen of the church. The child has some experience that is genuinely religious; he can pray and have some measure of trust in Jesus. But he is not a member; he is one who is being nurtured.<sup>2</sup>

The aim and purpose behind these various ministries is nothing else but that of the catechumenate, for everything that is being done in the hope that he will in due course make his personal response in repentance, faith, and baptism.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, as a catechumen, the child has a relation to the church. He is not a disciple, but he is one "in process." What must be done by the church is to "make allowance for the idea of it in our theology of the Church."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>G. W. Rusling, "The Status of Children," The Baptist Quarterly, XVIII:6 (April, 1960), p. 246.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

This must be the normal--not the abnormal--situation in the church. The church must always have her catechumens. The definition of the church must always allow for the fact that there must always be those, not yet Christian, who are in a positive and growing relation to the church. "Though not yet baptized, those who are in the catechumenate stage are in a creative relationship with the Body of Christ."<sup>1</sup> The church must always have a positive relation to those in process of becoming Christians; without this relation, the church ceases to be the church.

The writer would endorse Rusling's opinion as it has been repeated here. However, two qualifications must be made.

1) The church must not assume that nurture will automatically bring a person to Christian discipleship, and

2) proper care must be exercised to see that the child of his own will is brought to the place of Christian commitment.

Within these limitations, Christian nurture fulfills the necessary role of moderator between the church and her children.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 248.



Personal Commitment and the  
Religion of Childhood

The practical question must now be raised: What is the relation of personal decision for Christ and the religion of childhood? The present writer will only attempt to outline the approach to this question.<sup>1</sup>

First, it must be emphasized that each person is an individual. There cannot be any hard or fast rules in interpretation of the individual's development. Writers in the field of child psychology always underline this fact. It is impossible to erect a stereotype that will cover every individual case.

Secondly, it must also be admitted that environment conditions the expression of one's religious experience. It seems that those who are expected to have an emotional expression of their religious experiences generally do.<sup>2</sup> Yet, there are exceptions to this statement. The New England Puritans encountered problems when the second generation did not have the emotional conversion experience their elders considered necessary. They were God-fearing, religious, disciplined Christians, but they could neither testify to a crisis type of

---

<sup>1</sup>A consideration of the conversion of children is such a detailed study that it would merit a thesis by itself.

<sup>2</sup>Allport, op. cit., p. 33.

conversion, nor could they conjure up the same.<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, Baptists have insisted on the crisis type of conversion. Robert Ferm believes that all are capable of the crisis type of conversion.<sup>2</sup> But when he applies this theory to the experience of children, he has his difficulties. He admits that children with religious backgrounds come to the crisis experience slower than those outside the church.<sup>3</sup> This, he explains, is because:

it is possible to provide an intellectual climate within the atmosphere of any religion that will either eliminate the crisis experience altogether or will greatly diminish its force and brilliance.<sup>4</sup>

An analysis of Ferm's own evidence shows that some come to Christ by "nurture" or gradual growth as opposed to a dramatic crisis experience. When Ferm's survey showed that many who were "converted" in early childhood could not remember a crisis experience, he insisted that they had such an experience; time had blurred the memory of that experience.<sup>5</sup>

It seems to the present writer that a better

<sup>1</sup>Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1961), p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>The Psychology of Conversion (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1959).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 141-42. Also see p. 183.

explanation is that:

forces and factors leading up to conversion may begin in earliest infancy and continue through childhood. Sometimes the whole process is so gradual that when the individual makes his public profession of faith he cannot point to a time or place and say this is when God worked his miracles of grace--regeneration.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of transition from the religion of childhood to Christian discipleship is perhaps less a practical problem than a theological one. The Spirit can speak in a burst of flaming conviction to claim his own, or he can bring one to discipleship by growth and development. Emphasis must not be placed on the type of transition; rather, it is the business of Baptist churches to be sure that those baptized as believers have accepted Christ as Lord.

That the precise date and place of their conversion cannot be fixed militates not a whit against its genuineness. The change may be, and probably is, gradual; and the gradualness excludes definiteness of date. . . . St. Paul could fix the date of his conversion, a great persecutor that he had been. But if you inquired of Timothy the time he became a Christian, he would make the answer: I cannot tell--I was brought up in it. But he was as genuine a Christian as the Apostle.<sup>2</sup>

The churches must nurture their children, hoping to prepare them for Christian commitment; however, only

---

<sup>1</sup>Edge, op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>2</sup>J. Cynddylan Jones, "The Conversion of Children," Stephens, op. cit., pp. 212-13.

those known to be believers are accepted as members. Just how the commitment to Christ is made is an individual matter, known only to God.

#### The Religion of Childhood and Baptism

What is the meaning of baptism to a child before he reaches the age of accountability? This question must now be considered in view of the previous conclusions. It must be admitted candidly that baptism granted the preadolescent is not believers' baptism. Baptism may be given because the child has responded to the best of his ability, but the preadolescent's ability is less than necessary to become a disciple of Jesus.

When the churches baptize the preadolescent, the ordinance assumes a covenant meaning. What this act really means is this: the child has made a response to an invitation. He is sincere; to the best of his ability he loves Jesus and wants to do right. Baptism in this context is not a declaration of discipleship, but rather an awareness that God has begun a work in the life of the child. It is a declaration of faith that the church believes God will continue to work in the life of the child and will, at the age of accountability, bring the total life of the person under the Lordship of Christ.

Thus baptism given the preadolescent is not

believers' baptism; it is an affirmation of the beginning of the grace of God that, it is believed, will culminate in genuine discipleship when the child has the ability to become a disciple of Jesus.

#### Summary of Conclusions

The conclusions of this study may be summarized in the following points.

1) To be a Christian is to accept Christ as Lord.

2) Baptist churches have, historically, believed that only disciples of Jesus are to be members of Baptist churches.

3) The individual becomes responsible for his eternal destiny (the age of accountability) when as a responsible person he is confronted with the claims of Christ.

4) Early adolescence is the time when most children will reach the age of accountability.

5) Prior to the age of accountability, the child may have legitimate religious experience befitting his age and development.

6) Through Christian nurture, the child is to be related to the church in a creative way; he is a catechumen of the church.

7) Baptism granted the preadolescent is not believers' baptism. Southern Baptists must either cease baptizing preadolescents or cease claiming to practice believers' baptism.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY<sup>1</sup>

### Books

- Allport, Gordon. The Individual and His Religion. New York: MacMillan Co., 1950.
- Arminius, James. The Writings of James Arminius. trans. James Nichols. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956.
- Baker's Dictionary of Theology. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960.
- The Baptist Doctrine of the Church. A Statement approved by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, March, 1948. London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1948.
- Baptist World Alliance, Second Congress. Philadelphia: Harper and Brothers, Co., 1911.
- Barnes, W. W. The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954.
- Bettenson, Henry (ed.). Documents of the Christian Church. New York: Oxford University Press, 1947.
- Bicknell, E. J. A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles. Revised by H. J. Carpenter. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1955.
- Blair, Arthur Witt, and Burton, William H. Growth and Development of the Preadolescent. New York: Appleton-Crofts, Inc., 1951.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. The Cost of Discipleship. Revised ed. New York: MacMillan Co., 1960.
- Bradford, Ann. Working with Primaries. Nashville: Convention Press, 1961.

---

<sup>1</sup>Only of sources quoted.



- Bright, John. The Kingdom of God. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953.
- Brown, J. Newton. The Baptist Church Manual. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1853.
- Brunner, Emil. The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption. trans. Olive Wyon. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952.
- Burrage, Champlin. The Early English Dissenters. Cambridge: University Press, 1912.
- Byran, Allene. Primary Sunday School Work. Nashville: Convention Press, 1956.
- Calvin, John. Institutes of the Christian Religion. Ed. by John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. "Library of Christian Classics." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.
- Carver, W. O. The Acts of the Apostles. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1916.
- The Catholic Encyclopedia. ed. Charles G. Herbermann and Others. Vol. 2. New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1907.
- Conner, W. T. The Gospel of Redemption. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1945.
- Cook, Henry. What Baptists Stand For. London: Kingsgate Press, 1947.
- Cox, Norman. We Southern Baptists. Nashville: Convention Press, 1961.
- Cullmann, Oscar. Baptism in the New Testament. trans. J. K. S. Reid. "Studies in Biblical Theology." London: SCM Press, 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Christology of the New Testament. London: SCM, 1959.
- Dagg, J. L. A Manual of Theology. Charlestown: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1859.

- Davies, J. T. Lord of All. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953.
- Devin, Robert. A History of the Grassy Creek Baptist Church to 1880. Raleigh: Edwards, Broughton & Co., 1880.
- Dobbins, Gaines S. Winning the Children. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1953.
- Edge, Findley B. A Quest for Vitality in Religion. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963.
- Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists. 2 vols. ed. Norman Cox. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958.
- Elliott, Ralph. The Message of Genesis. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961.
- Ferm, Robert. Psychology of Conversion. Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1959.
- Ferm, Vergilius (ed.). Classics of Protestantism. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.
- First Baptist Congress. London: Baptist Union Publications Department, 1905.
- Fourth Baptist World Congress. ed. W. T. Whitley. Toronto: Stewart Printing Co., 1928.
- Fuller, Reginald H. The Mission and Achievement of Jesus. "Studies in Biblical Theology." Chicago: Alec. R. Allenson, Inc., 1956.
- Garrett, James Leo, Jr. (ed.). Baptist Church Discipline. "A Broadman Historical Monograph." Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962.
- Gesell, Arnold, and Ilg, Francis. The Child from Five to Ten. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946.
- Gesell, Arnold, Ilg, Francis, and Ames, Louise Bates. Youth, The Years from Ten to Sixteen. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956.
- Graves, J. R. Old Landmarkism: What Is It? Texarkana, Texas: Baptist Sunday School Committee, 1928.

- Heim, Carl. Jesus the Lord. trans. D. H. Van Daalen. London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959.
- Howse, W. T., and Allen, Clifton J. (eds.). The Curriculum Guide. Nashville: Convention Press, 1960.
- Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons.
- Hudson, W. S. (ed.). Baptist Concepts of the Church. Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959.
- Hull, William. "The Crisis in Child Evangelism." Unpublished Paper, 1961.
- Hunter, A. M. The Message of the New Testament. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944.
- Hurlock, Elizabeth B. Adolescent Development. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1949.
- The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. ed. James Orr. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1943.
- The Interpreter's Bible. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951-1954.
- James, William. Varieties of Religious Experience. The Modern Library. New York: Random House, no date.
- Jeremias, Joachin. The Parables of Jesus. trans. S. H. Hooke. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.
- Jersild, Arthur T. Child Psychology. Fourth edition. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Psychology of Adolescence. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1957.
- The Jewish Encyclopedia. Vol. II. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1909.
- Kittel, Gerhard. Bible Key Words. trans. J. R. Coates. New York: Harpers and Co., 1951.

- Knight, G. A. F. A Christian Theology of the Old Testament. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959.
- Kohler, Ludwig. Old Testament Theology. trans. A. S. Todd. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958.
- Kummel, W. G. Promise and Fulfillment. "Studies in Biblical Theology." London: SCM Press, 1957.
- Littell, F. H. The Free Church. Boston: Starr King Press, 1957.
- Lumpkin, W. L. (ed.). Baptist Confessions of Faith. Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959.
- Lumpkin, W. L. Baptist Foundations in the South. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961.
- Major, H. D., Manson, T. W., and Wright, C. J. The Mission and Message of Jesus. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1953.
- Manson, William. The Gospel of Luke. "The Moffatt New Testament Commentary." New York: Harper and Brothers, no date.
- Manson, T. W. The Teachings of Jesus. London: Cambridge Press, 1959.
- McCall, Duke K. (ed.). What is the Church? Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958.
- Moffatt, James. The First Epistle to the Corinthians. "The Moffatt New Testament Commentary." London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1954.
- Miller, Perry. From Colony to Province. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1961.
- Miller, Randolph Crump. Biblical Theology and Christian Education. New York: Charles' Scribner's Sons, 1956.
- Mullins, E. Y. The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression. Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1917.

- Payne, E. A. The Fellowship of Believers. London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1952.
- Purefory, Elder George W. A History of Sandy Creek Baptist Association, 1758-1858. New York: Sheldon and Co., 1859.
- Rice, Lillian Moore. Better Bible Teaching for Juniors in the Sunday School. Nashville: Convention Press, 1952.
- Richardson, Alan. An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament. London: SCM, 1958.
- Richardson, Alan (ed.). A Theological Word Book of the Bible. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959.
- Robinson, T. H. The Gospel of Matthew. "Moffatt New Testament Commentary." New York: Harper's, no date.
- Robinson, H. Wheeler. Baptist Principles. London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Life and Faith of Baptists. London: The Kingsgate Press, 1946.
- Rust, Eric. Nature and Man in Biblical Thought. London: The Lutterworth Press, 1953.
- Scarborough, L. R. With Christ After the Lost. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952.
- Schweizer, Eduard. Lordship and Discipleship. "Studies in Biblical Theology." Chicago: Alec. R. Allenson, Inc., 1960.
- Seeberg, Reinhold. Textbook of the History of Doctrines. trans. Charles Hay. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954.
- Shakespeare, J. H. Baptist and Congregational Pioneers. London: Kingsgate Press, 1906.
- Sherrill, Lewis J. The Opening Doors of Childhood. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1939.
- Smyth, John. The Works of. ed. W. T. Whitley. 2 vols. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1915.

- Snaith, Norman H. The Jews From Cyrus to Herod. Wallington Surrey: The Religious Press, Ltd., 1949.
- Southard, Samuel. Pastoral Evangelism. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962.
- Stephans, Thomas (ed.). The Child and Religion. New York: Putman's Sons, 1905.
- Stevens, George Barker. The Theology of the New Testament. "International Theological Library." New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.
- Strickland, Hazel N., and Leatherwood, Mattie C. Beginner Sunday School Work. Nashville: Convention Press, 1955.
- Strong, A. H. Systematic Theology. Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1953.
- Stealey, Sydnor L. (ed.). A Baptist Treasury. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1958.
- Torbet, Robert G. A History of Baptists. Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1950.
- Underwood, A. C. A History of English Baptists. London: Carey Kingsgate Press.
- Vriezen, Th. C. An Outline of Old Testament Theology. Boston: Charles T. Branford Company, 1960.
- Walton, R. C. The Gathered Church. London: Cary Press, 1946.
- Wamble, Hugh. Through Trial to Triumph. Nashville: Convention Press, 1958.
- Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. Third edition. Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1927.
- Whitley, W. T. A History of British Baptists. London: Chas. Griffin and Co., 1923.
- Whitley, W. T. (ed.). Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society. Vol. I. London: Baptist Union Publication Department, 1908.

Wilson, Franklin. The Comparative Influence of Baptist and Pedobaptist Principles in the Christian Nurture of Children. Charlestown: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1857.

Yeaxlee, Basil A. Religion and the Growing Mind. Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1952.

Yoder, Gideon. The Nurture and Evangelism of Children. Scottdale, Penn.: The Herald Press, 1959.

#### Periodicals

The Baptist Quarterly. XVIII:6 (April, 1960).

#### Unpublished Materials

Child Life Conference. Book of Proceedings. Nashville, 1960.

Deaton, Norman. "A Study of Post Baptismal Conversion." Unpublished Th. M. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1959.

Hertzberg, Peter. "The Place of Children in Four Denominations." Unpublished Master's thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1950.

Jenkins, Gerald. "A Pastoral Care Study of the Religious Experience of Child Six to Twelve Years." Unpublished Th. M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1959.

Ohrn, Arnold T. "The Holland Lectures." Ft. Worth: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1950.