

# The Blue Banner

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## Thankfulness for the Lord's Blessings

### *The Lord's Blessings in 1992*

I trust the reader will indulge the following recitation of the blessings, trials and answered prayers which the Lord has showed on FPCR members and families.

#### *The Lord has blessed and sustained us regarding our health.*

After having a bad reaction to changes in medication, Lee Seekamp is doing much better with some medicine which appears to have no side effects. Joshua Seekamp had a bad fall, cutting his lip, but after microsurgery, and almost a year, he seems to be mostly recovered. Mike and Brenda Dolberry are very thankful for Brenda's easy pregnancy and the birth of their daughter Aimee Michele, as well as for their first year of marriage. We are all thankful for the improved health at the Swearingen household, and in particular that Hailey was delivered from any complications over a penny she swallowed. The Dillards praise God for Tom's Dad's recovery from kidney stones without the need for surgery, and for Monica, who is carrying their third child. Jonathan and Sarah have been very healthy! The whole church, and especially the Bacon family, are very thankful for the Lord's sustaining Richard through his heart attack last summer, and his good recovery thus far. God has preserved and protected us in all our respective travels.

#### *The Lord has blessed us in our callings and finances.*

The Lord provided mightily for David Seekamp in providing a new job for him, which has been a great challenge and a better opportunity for him for almost a year now. Also, Elder Seekamp was able to attend General Assembly for the first time this year. There was much to do, but he enjoyed good fellowship with many there. God blessed another of our families with the acquisition of some farm land, for which they are very thankful. Suenan Gober expressed thanks for the Lord's providing a profitable year and much improvement for the family business, and for their wonderful employees. Several of us had many challenges and opportunities in our callings over the last year, for which we are thankful. The church praises God for the end to a long property dispute, which resulted in an equitable settlement. Our present facility is now paid for.

#### *The Lord has been gracious to our children.*

God has blessed and sustained our home schooling mothers in their efforts to teach and train their children. The Seekamp boys had a good year; Nathan is reading, Jeremy is excelling in math, Ben is reading everything in sight, Joshua and Sam have been well occupied with their busy box. The Swearingens also are thankful for a profitable semester of home schooling. The Lord has blessed our families with some new covenant children this past year.

#### *The Lord has upheld us in our worship and family devotions.*

Our families have been reading the Scriptures at home and singing the Psalms in their devotions. The church has been singing Psalms for another whole year and we have learned more melodies. Mike Dolberry is our precenter. As a church in our worship services we have read Genesis through Deut. 1-19, and Matthew, Luke, Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Phillipians, Colossians, and 1 Timothy.

#### *The Lord has blessed our witness.*

While our church is a small one and suffers from the growth problems associated with taking difficult stands on principle, God has given us some success in our witness. One family has been ministering to a friend who has been growing in the Lord and attempting to train her children in the Lord. Others of us have been daily witnesses to our coworkers and neighbors. This newsletter has been well received, and the Lord has been pleased to give the editor strength and time to work and improve it. A wonderful potential rests in a computer bulletin board on which Pastor Bacon has been working, which may soon be accessible from all over the nation.

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## Book Review

*We and Our Children: The Reformed Doctrine of Infant Baptism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1981) by Herman Hanko. 118pp., \$5.95 (paper).

[This critique of Prof. Hanko's book was given recently by the Rev. Henry Kik of Western Theological Seminary. It was reprinted in *Standard Bearer* for December 15, 1992, and is used here with permission of the *Standard Bearer*.]

My selection of the book *We and Our Children*, by Herman Hanko, was in no small part due to my interest in the Protestant Reformed Churches with their strong position on the biblical doctrine of "The Covenant of Grace" and Herman Hoeksema's "battle" with Abraham Kuyper on covenant theology. This eventually (1924) led to Hoeksema's deposition by the Christian Reformed Synod because of his rejection of common grace.

Although Hoeksema highly esteemed Abraham Kuyper, he rejected his viewpoint on God's covenant with Noah, which was not the covenant established with the church, but a *covenant of common grace* established with *every* human being, with the wicked world as such. It is at this juncture that the Christian Reformed Synod formulated the "Three Points":

1. That the grace of God is not particular, not for the elect alone, but sustains a certain covenant of friendship with natural man.
2. That immediately after the fall in paradise a certain operation of grace, though not regenerating a man, prevents him from becoming as corrupt as he would have become without this operation of grace.
3. That with this operation of "common grace" in natural man he can do very much that is good. He leads a relatively good life in this earthly sphere and relationships.

I include this history in my critique because it enriches the biblical meaning of the Covenant of Grace as set forth in the book *We and Our Children*, by Herman Hanko, who had Herman Hoeksema as his mentor (Reverend Herman Hanko is professor of church history and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary). In covenant theology as revealed in Scripture and expounded by Calvin, the grace of God is not inclusive but particular.

The strength of this treatise is found in the fact that it deals with those Baptists who claim they are truly Reformed in their theology. In western Michigan we have "The Reformed Baptist Church of Grand Rapids." In this context Professor Hanko writes that this has forced "all defenders of Paedobaptism to take a second look at their position and examine it in the light of Scripture." The author not only does this, but does it well. He makes his conclusions by evaluating the "Reformed Baptist" position as set forth by David Kingdon entitled *Children of Abraham*.

This small book, Hanko claims, is the most articulate and best reasoned of all defenses of the Reformed Baptist position. Hanko holds that:

"...the defense of Paedobaptism is not always what it ought to be. Many who have written extensively in this field have pre-

sented arguments which are less than convincing to a committed Baptist because they have failed to understand the Scriptural idea of the covenant of grace . . . . Failing to see that the covenant is always organic, they have left large loopholes in their arguments and have given Baptists abundant opportunity to criticize their position on various counts."

In his thesis Hanko makes the following statements:

1. A Reformed Baptist is really an impossibility.
2. The Baptist who defends free will, man's initiative in the work of salvation, resistible grace, the altar call, the free and well-meant offer of the gospel, is the Baptist who is *consistent*.
3. The Baptist, on the other hand, who maintains the doctrine of grace, and repudiates dispensationalism is *inconsistent* in his theology — he may claim that he is a Calvinist . . . he may repudiate dispensationalism — but he is guilty of a happy inconsistency for all that.

These keen observations by Rev. Hanko are basic to a real understanding of the scriptural doctrine of the covenant of grace which he sets forth with scriptural conviction and as the believer's response to the truth of the covenant of grace.

The student who seeks to explore the doctrine of infant baptism would profit greatly from reading Hanko's book, *We and Our Children*. One will appreciate the extensive quotations from Kingdon's book, *Children of Abraham*. This affords the reader an unusual opportunity of sitting in on a great debate on the subject of Paedobaptism.

The Reformed Baptist, as represented by Kingdon, certainly repudiates the dispensational position and rebukes his fellow Baptists for holding to it. Kingdon does this in his effort to affirm the unity of the old and new dispensations for the purpose of affirming the unity of the covenant. His view of circumcision is that it is of national and spiritual significance. He really departs from the Reformed position when he contends that the seed of Abraham belong only to those that are true believers. For this reason Reformed Baptists believe that repentance and faith are necessary for one to belong to the covenant. Hanko rightly observes:

"Kingdon fails to deal with this typical character of the old dispensation. He fails to see that the land of Canaan was but a type and picture of heaven. He fails to see that Israel itself was a picture of the church in every age. . . . Thus the essence of the covenant and the promise of the covenant remained the same."

On the basis of Scripture (Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-7) Hanko comes to a meaningful conclusion on this matter:

"It is clear from the passage that Paul compares the church of the old dispensation with that of the new under the figure of a child who grows to manhood. The church of the old dispensation is like a small child who needs instruction. He is indeed the heir of all the possessions of his father. But he cannot have this inheritance yet for he is but a child and will not know what to do with it. And so he is under a schoolmaster . . . . Throughout the whole old dispensation the church was under the instruction of the schoolmaster of the law . . . . But God continued to give this church His instruction . . . (until) the church became, in the fullest sense of the word, sons and heirs of God through Christ."

The instructive thrust of the “debate” between Professor Hanks and Kingdon is most rewarding to follow. In part:

Kingdon: The interpretation that the Apostle Paul gives to the concept of “the seed of Abraham” establishes the principle that the ordinance of baptism should now be applied only to those who show credible evidence of being in union with Christ, for only those in union with him are Abraham’s seed (Galatians 3:29) . . . . The New Testament leaves us in no doubt that such is nothing other than a credible profession of faith in Christ.

Hanks: The serious mistake which Kingdon makes is the error of making a separation between the two dispensations even though he maintains that there is unity in some respects. The whole Baptist position hangs on this point and any refutation of the Baptist position must show that the unity of the two dispensations is far greater than Kingdon will acknowledge . . . . This . . . means that the covenant is one and the promises of the covenant are one; but that they are differently *administered* . . . . This is not difficult to prove.

#### **The Covenant with Believers and their Seed**

One issue that seems to be constantly active is the issue of whether God saves His church in the line of continued generations.

Kingdon: Since I maintain that children as such no longer have covenantal significance it follows . . . (say some), that I deny that God works along the lines of generations, and that therefore I am guilty, in the end, of maintaining a purely individualistic doctrine of conversion . . . . I fail to see that because I reject the baptism of infants that I am obliged to deny that God works in families.

Hanks: That God saves His people in the line of continued generations is clearly taught in Scripture. The first line of proof lies in the fact that repeatedly in Scripture specific commands of God come to children as well as to adults. And the important and interesting part of these commands of Jehovah God is that these commands are given on the grounds that children as well as adults are included in God’s covenant.

The Scriptures cited by Professor Hanks are abundant. They weave a golden thread of covenant grace into a meaningful pattern of both the sign and the seal of the covenant. For me it struck a response of thanksgiving and praise, for it is not what we who are believing parents have done, but rather what our sovereign God has done. This is expressed by Hanks when he writes:

“So it is with God’s covenant. That stream of God’s covenant began already at its source in paradise with Adam. As it runs throughout history, many new streams of new generations come into that covenant from the outside where they lose their original identity and become the people of God.”

The strength of Hanks’s book is that it answers the position of the “Reformed Baptists” — and if you can answer them, you will have little trouble answering the regular Baptists!

In conclusion I quote Hanks:

“And so we baptize infants. It is the command of God through all the ages. Those who fail to do this must recognize that they live in disobedience to the Lord. They have no true conception of the covenant. They cannot avoid dispensationalism. They remain individualistic in their thinking. And they do injustice to

the children God has given to them.”

“To the people of God in every age it is a great comfort that God indeed saves them and their children. It is God’s unfailing mercy and grace. To Him be the glory forever.”

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### **Presbyterian Quotes**

#### *Infant Baptism*

“Infant Baptism, properly considered, is an implication of two doctrines of the Bible — the doctrine of the Visible Church, and the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace.

“It is not at all surprising that those sections of the historically Reformed denominations in which the Reformed doctrines of the Visible Church and the Covenant of Grace are neglected or are not emphasized, are precisely the ones in which infant baptism is at present widely suspect as unscriptural.

“Any church which is weak on the Biblical doctrine of the Visible Church and the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace is bound to become weak and unsure on the doctrine of infant baptism. The same is true of the individual Christian. Any Christian who lacks intelligent conviction of the truth of the Biblical doctrine of the Visible Church and the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace is bound to become weak, hesitating and unsure on the question of infant baptism.

“For infant baptism is a corollary of the two doctrines mentioned. It is implicit in them, and it is properly derived from them by inference. No church and no Christian can be any stronger or sounder on infant baptism than he is on the Biblical doctrines of the Visible Church and the Covenant of Grace.

“This may suggest why there is so much weakness and questioning about infant baptism today in denominations which formerly held it firmly. It may well be that in these denominations there has been a gradual but nevertheless real shift from the historic Reformed and Biblical doctrines of the Church and the Covenant, and that this has involved, as its inevitable consequence, a weakening and in some cases almost a rejection of infant baptism.”

J. G. Vos in *Baptism: Its Subjects and Modes* (Pittsburgh: Crown and Covenant Publications, n.d.).

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### **Presbyterian Bibliography**

In this issue we begin a series on Presbyterian Bibliography, which will periodically appear in *The Blue Banner*. The series begins with a look at the men who served important roles in the Westminster Assembly, which this summer celebrates the 350th anniversary of the seating of that famous synod. This article covers George Gillespie. I initially did this as an appendix to the forthcoming Naphtali Press edition of Gillespie’s *English Popish Ceremonies*, and if it is not a 100% complete bibliography, it is the most complete I’ve seen in one place.

#### *George Gillespie (1613-1648)*

George Gillespie, the young extraordinary Scottish theologian, to whom we owe a great deal (with thanks and glory to God) for the Confession and standards which came out of the Westminster Assembly, was the fourth generation in a line of ministers to

serve the Church of Scotland. He was the son of John Gillespie, minister at Kirkcaldy, a *thundering preacher*. It is fair to suppose that the son inherited the fearless and bold nature of the father. His maternal grandfather was Patrick Simpson (1556-1618), also a minister, and a contender, along with his son-in-law John, against the articles which came forth from the Perth Assembly (1618). Simpson had three brothers, all ministers, as was his father, Andrew Simpson (d.1583). They were all faithful preachers for the Reformation faith, and made distinct contributions to the literature of Scotland. Gillespie, through his grandfather, clearly inherited the Simpson wit and intellect.

Gillespie graduated from St. Andrews in 1629, and stayed on a short while to study theology. Kirkcaldy Presbytery gave some financial support to this endeavor, and we find references to his being bursar of theology till September, 1631. Through Samuel Rutherford's influence he was licensed as domestic chaplain to Viscount Kenmure and served him for a time till Kenmure's death in 1634. He then became tutor to the eldest son of that staunch Presbyterian and Covenanter, John Kennedy (1595-1668), the sixth Earl of Cassillis, who later was one of the three ruling elders appointed commissioner to the Westminster Assembly (he never attended). Gillespie remained there until his ordination in 1638. Previously he would not be ordained at the hands of the Bishop, as it was a clear encroachment upon biblical ordination, and he could not in good conscience submit to it. With the overthrow of Episcopacy in Scotland, the way was finally clear for him to enter the ministry.

While with Cassillis, Gillespie drew upon what he had learned growing up in the Kirkcaldy manse, at St. Andrews, and (no doubt) what he had gleaned from Mr. Rutherford, to produce a book against the Articles imposed at Perth, against which his family had faithfully fought, and for which many suffered. *The Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies* was published anonymously in Holland and smuggled into Scotland in 1637, within weeks of the launching of Jenny Geddes' stool at the Dean of Edinburgh's head and the other riots which followed the attempts to impose the English Service book upon Scotland. Within nine months the Covenant was sworn and Episcopacy was abolished in Scotland. Gillespie had become known as the author of the *Dispute*, and he was immediately propelled into the forefront of the men leading the Second Reformation of Scotland. He was presented to the charge of Wemyss in Fife on January 5, 1638, examined and tried, and on April 26, ordained by the Presbytery. On March 1, 1638, the National Covenant was signed in Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, and among the thousands who signed it was George Gillespie.

In 1642 he was transferred to the ministry of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, but did not serve there long for he was appointed along with Alexander Henderson, Robert Baillie, and Samuel Rutherford as commissioners to attend the Westminster Assembly. He played an integral and vital part in that Assembly, particularly in the debate over church government, with the Erastians, and with the Independents. He returned to Scotland in 1647, and in 1648 moderated the General Assembly. However his health was shattered by all these endeavors, and after the Assembly, he retired to try and recuperate. He died December 17, 1648, a little over a month shy of his 36th birthday. He was greatly lamented. A fuller account of Gillespie's work in the Assembly can be found in Hetherington's or Mitchell's histories of the Assembly. More information on Gillespie's life can be found in John Howie's *Lives of the Scottish Covenanters* and in James Reid's *Memoirs of the Westminster Divines*.



### *The Writings of George Gillespie*

#### **Major Works**

*A Dispute Against The English Popish Ceremonies*, etc. [Anon.] (1637) [Leiden?]. Anr. Edition ([Edinburgh]: 1660).

*Aaron's Rod Blossoming; or, The Divine Ordinance of Church Government Vindicated*, etc. (London: E.G. for Richard Whitaker, 1646). Second edition (London, 1646).

*An Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland in the points of Ruling Elders, and of the Authority of Presbyteries and Synods*. (Edinburgh: for James Bryson, 1641). Another edition (Edinburgh, 1641).

#### **Sermons**

*A Sermon Preached Before The Honourable House of Commons at their late solemn fast, Wednesday, March 27, 1644*. (London: for Robert Bostock, 1644). Second Edition (1644). Anr. edition (Edinburgh: for Evan Tyler, 1644).

*A Sermon Preached Before The Right Honourable The House of Lords, in the Abbey Church at Westminster, August 27, 1645*. (London: By F. Neile for Robert Bostock, 1645). Anr. Edition (London: 1645). These two sermons were reprinted in *An Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature* (Dallas, TX: Naphtali Press, 1988), v. 1, #3.

#### **Dispute on Erastianism with Thomas Coleman**

*A Brotherly Examination of some passages of Mr. Coleman's late Sermon on Job 11:20, as it is now printed and published: By which he hath to the great offence of very many, endeavoured to strike at the very root of all Spiritual and Ecclesiasticall Government*, etc. (printed as part of the above sermon of 1645).

*Nihil Respondes: or A Discovery of the Extreme Unsatisfactoriness of Mr. Coleman's piece, published last week under the title of "A Brotherly Examination Re-examined," etc.* (London: for Robert Bostock, 1645).

*Male Audis; or, an Answer to Mr. Coleman's Male Dicis*, etc. (London: Robert Bostocke, 1646).

### Anonymous Pamphlets

*Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty*, etc. (London: for Christopher Meredith, 1645). Republished in *An Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature*, volume 4 (Dallas, TX: Naphtali Press, 1991).

*A Late Dialogue Betwixt A Civilian and a Divine, concerning the present condition of the Church of England*. (London: for Robert Bostock 1644).

*Faces About. Or, A Recrimination Charged upon Mr. John Goodwin in the point of Fighting Against God and opposing the Way of Christ*, etc. (London, 1644). This twelve page tract is attributed to William Prynne by Wing. Johnston attributes this to Gillespie (his source not noted). *Treasury of the Scottish Covenant*, Rev. J. C. Johnston (Edinburgh, 1887), p. 303. William M. Campbell attributes this work to Gillespie, but also does not mention his source. "George Gillespie," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, volume X. - Part II. 1949). From the standpoint of style it fits Gillespie more than Prynne; also Prynne had already answered Goodwin in a much larger work. A passage in *Wholesome Severity* may link the tract to Gillespie. "In this sir, you have faced about, sure you are not As You Were, for Mr. Goodwin himself, says that," etc. "Wholesome Severity," *Anthology*, volume 4, p. 192.

### Public Papers for the Church of Scotland

*Reasons For Which The Service Book Urged Upon Scotland Ought to be Refused*. (1638) [Edinburgh: G. Anderson?].

*CXI Propositions Concerning the Ministry and Government of the Church*. (Edinburgh: for Evan Tyler, 1647). *Theoremata CXI de ministerio* (Edinburgh: excudebat Evan Tyler, 1647). Anr. Edition (Juxta exemplar quod —, 1648). *A form for church government and ordination of ministers, contained in XCI Propositions, propounded to the late General Assembly at Edinburgh, 1647. Together with an act concerning Erastianisme, Independencie, and Liberty of Conscience*, etc. (London: for R. Bostock, 1647.).

*The humble representation of the Commission of the General Assembly to the Honourable Estates of Parliament, upon their Declaration lately communicate*, etc. 28 April 1648 (London: by Edward Griffin for I. R., 1648)

*The answer of the commissioners of the General Assembly August 15, 1648 unto the observations of the Honourable Committee of Estates upon the Declaration of the late General Assembly* (Edinburgh: by Evan Tyler, 1648).

### Posthumously Published Works

*A Treatise of Miscellany Questions*, etc. (Edinburgh: by Gedeon Lithgow for George Swintoun, 1649); Anr. Edition (printed at Edinburgh, to be sold at London, by Thomas Whitaker, 1649).

*Auseful case of conscience discussed and resolved, concerning associations and confederacies with idolaters, infidels, hereticks, or any known enemies of truth and godliness. Whereunto is subjoined a letter by him to the commissioners of the General Assembly in the time of his sickness, together with his testimony unto this truth, written two days before his death*. (Edinburgh: Heires of George Anderson for Andro Wilson, 1649). Anr. Edition (1649). Anr. Edition (by T.R. and E.M. for Ralph Smith, 1649). This work appeared as chapter fourteen in the *Miscellany*. Some editions contain: *To The Right Reverend The Commission of the General Assembly (July 8, 1648); The Testimony of Mr. George Gillespie Against Association and*

*Compliance with Malignant Enemies of the Truth and Godliness (December 15, 1648); and Part of Mr. Gillespie's Latter Will, Unto Which the Former Testimony Relateth*.

### Works edited by Hetherington

*Works: A Presbyterian's Armoury*, edited by William M Hetherington (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd, 1844-46), vls. 1-2. This edition was printed a piece at a time and the subscribers to the edition bound it as they wished. This accounts for copies bound in different order and for incomplete sets. None of the anonymous pamphlets were reproduced in this edition. Of the public papers, only the *CXI Propositions* was reprinted. The editor followed the 1660 edition of *Popish Ceremonies*. The following appeared in print for the first time in this edition:

*Notes of Debates and Proceedings of The Assembly of Divines and Other Commissioners at Westminster*, edited by David Meeks from unpublished manuscripts.

### Reprints of the Armoury Edition

*Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, etc. (Harrisonburg, PA: Sprinkle Publications, 1985).

*The Works of George Gillespie* (Edmonton AB: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991), 2 vls. This photo-reprint used an incomplete edition of the *Armoury* set, and omits *Aaron's Rod*, etc., and *An Assertion of the Government*, etc.

### Manuscript Works No Longer Extant

"In Wodrow's *Analecta* it is stated that Gillespie had a manuscript volume of sermons prepared for the press, which were bought from the printer by the Sectaries, and probably destroyed. It is also stated, that there were six octavo volumes of notes written by Gillespie at the Westminster Assembly then extant, containing an abstract of its deliberations. Of these manuscript volumes there are two copies in the Wodrow MSS., Advocates' Library, but neither of them appears to be Gillespie's own hand-writing; the quarto certainly is not, and the octavo seems to be an accurate copy of two of the original volumes. . . . What has become of the missing volumes is not known, and it is to be feared the loss is irrecoverable" ("Hetherington's Memoir of the Rev. George Gillespie," *Works: A Presbyterian's Armoury*, v. 1, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.).

"When the Bishop's War threatened he [Gillespie] was soon to the fore with another pamphlet on defensive war. This, if printed, is not now extant" (Rev. William M. Campbell, Phd., D.Litt., "George Gillespie," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, volume X. — Part II. 1949.). Campbell's article gives some useful information, but he is at points decidedly antagonistic toward Gillespie's character. "Diverse papers went then abroad upon this question, some whereof were not void of scandal; especially one of a pretty schollar, Mr. G. [Gillespie], but too rash a youth in his determinations, if I conceive him right, in many things. To help this inconvenient it was laid on Mr. Henderson, our best penman, to draw up somewhat for the common view." Robert Baillie, <M>Letters and Journals (Edinburgh, 1841-42), vol. I, pp. 189-190. Baillie later came to know Gillespie much better at the Westminster Assembly, and his later entries praise and thank God for the knowledge and ability He had given to the "brave youth."

Christopher Coldwell

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Secret Mission* by A. Van der Jagt, published by Christian Reading Materials, 831 Orchard Drive, Lewiston, NY 14092

Did you ever notice that reading a history textbook is like eating melba toast — it will sustain you but all life and flavor has been removed! *The Secret Mission: A Huguenot's Dangerous Adventures in the Land of Persecution* teaches a lot of history, but it is no dry textbook. It is alive with the spirit and blood of the heroic saints of God who endured the most severe persecution during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France.

Set in 1702, the story centers around a teenage Huguenot named John Dubois, who lived in the Dutch Republic after his recent escape from his homeland of France. In the course of his work, he agreed to accompany his employer to the very heart of France: Versailles, the palace of the wicked King Louis XIV. But the intrigue builds as one secret mission reveals another, which reveals yet another private mission. John traveled through France to complete his multiple missions, in danger of exposure and capture at every turn.

The action is fast-paced enough to hold the attention of any reader and the easily read style makes the book ideal for grades six through nine. But don't let this gem be reserved only for the younger reader as it can be quite a blessing for the believer of any age.

The aspect of the book that I found the most rewarding was that, as the fictional hero journeys through France on his fictional mission, he meets true saints from history and so we are given several actual accounts of the persecution and triumphs of the saints during this dire time of trial. The author has helpfully footnoted each of these true accounts, giving additional historical facts and evidences of authenticity. We view the harsh brutality of the Roman church and the French government as they try, by any means, even death, to force these saints to turn from their Reformed Protestant faith and to deny their Lord. I cried as I read how these faithful Huguenots faced the threat of death, life long imprisonment and mud throwing mobs all with prayers of forgiveness and Psalms of praise on their lips.

When so many of the "heroes" that our children are given in today's society are really no heroes at all, our children need to learn about the true heroes of our precious faith. They need to learn the great worth of the faith of which they are the heirs. A faith so worthy that a man spends 16 years as a war galley slave in the most deprived conditions rather than deny his Lord; so worthy that a young teenager knowingly risks the imprisonment of his parents yet he still tries to convince them to remain faithful to the Lord and not to return to the Roman church; so worthy that two young girls, ages 16 and 17, risk their lives to flee from their ungodly guardians who try to force them to renounce their beliefs. These are the heroes we need to give our children and these are the examples we need to place before them.

I enjoyed the author's footnotes throughout the book and found them extremely helpful in translating foreign words and titles, and in explaining eighteenth century customs and money.

Don't be put off by the minor awkwardness of the first couple of chapters; the flow of the writing smooths out nicely after the action begins in earnest. There are a few proofreading errors for the eagle-eyed reader to find, but again, the value of the story the author is telling is far greater than these very minor drawbacks.

As a final touch, the author gives a brief epilogue that summarizes the history of the Huguenots which was much more complete than any I read in my high school history textbook. And don't miss the map folded snugly into the back cover.

Upon finishing the book, I immediately wanted to find the first book in this series, *The Escape*, which tells of John's original flight from France. Then I made a list of family members and friends of all ages that I wanted to give *The Secret Mission* to. That you, too, will want to read more about John Dubois and give his story to your family and friends is the best recommendation I can make.

Review by Debby Bacon

## A Call For Papers

In observance of the 350th anniversary year of the calling of the Westminster Assembly, The Blue Banner is calling for papers on either the Assembly or its work. Short papers (i.e. papers of 2500 words or less) which are suitable will be printed in The Blue Banner newsletter. Longer papers will be considered for inclusion in a separate volume to be published in late 1993 or early 1994.

Please send an abstract of your proposed paper if you wish for it to be considered for the separate volume. Proposed topics may be of either an historical or doctrinal nature. Authors will retain copyright to their material after its publication by Blue Banner. Send to: Call for Papers, c/o The Blue Banner, P O Box 141084, Dallas, TX 75214.

## Support The Blue Banner

*The Blue Banner* is sent free to subscribers. If you would like to help us defray some of the costs involved in producing this newsletter, please send a donation of any amount made out to *First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett*. It costs around \$12.00 annually to send a domestic subscription.

## Book Comments

This comment was recently made in a letter sent to Pastor Bacon, regarding his book, *The Visible Church & The Outer Darkness*.

"Being Scottish myself, I particularly appreciated the fine way in which you have used your sources in the Puritans and in the great Scottish divines of previous centuries. It is a most timely book and I shall commend it to others."

A.R.D, Florida.

To obtain a copy of *The Visible Church & The Outer Darkness*, send \$6.95 to P O Box 141084, Dallas, TX 75214. Make the check or money order payable to First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett. For a limited time, as long as supplies last, a free copy of Pastor Bacon's book against Paedo-Communion, *What Mean Ye by This Service?* will be sent with every order of *Visible Church*.

## A Practical View of Infant Baptism

Reverend Dr. Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

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It has been shown that the children of believing parents are to be received into the visible Church by baptism. They are holy, i.e. consecrated to God, not merely by the formal act of the parent, consecrating them to Him, but also by His covenant with His people, in which He incorporates them into His visible kingdom, with a view to their training for His spiritual and eternal kingdom; just as, in all human governments, the children, by virtue of their connection with their parents, are incorporated into the state, and are under its laws, with a view to full citizenship when they have the proper qualifications. God's visible kingdom, by its original and unaltered constitution, is such an organization, embracing believers and their seed within its pale. In consequence of this Divine incorporation, the seal of the covenant was applied to them in the days of Abraham, and has been ever since, under both dispensations.

Without repeating the arguments formerly presented, our design at present is to exhibit more fully the practical bearings of this important subject. We are not utilitarians. In the system of theology and philosophy which we hold, utility is neither the *foundation* nor the *measure* of virtue. And yet we are persuaded that in all the great arrangements of providence and of grace, duty and utility lie in the same direction. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is proper for us to consider its advantages. Only thus can the wisdom and goodness of the divine economy be made apparent to our minds. This we shall endeavor to do on the present occasion, by bringing into view, as distinctly as possible, all the parties to this transaction, with their mutual relations, pledges, engagements, and obligations. It will thus be seen, we trust, that in every aspect the ordinance is eminently salutary as well as scriptural.

In the view we take of it, the parties to this transaction are four — the parents, the Church, the child, or children, on the one hand; and the triune God on the other. These all are intimately and deeply concerned. The first three, though separate from each other, yet all stand on one side, allied parties, as it were, while God is the sole party on the other; having an individual relation to each of them in particular and also a grand relation to the three united in covenant with Himself, in this one business. While dwelling upon each of the parties, it will not be practicable to leave the others entirely out of view, as their relations are so very intimate; yet as far as possible attention will be given exclusively to each in succession, and in the order just named. The Church ought to understand what is meant by this solemn ordinance in all its bearings.

I. The parents are the first, and, at the time at least, the most deeply interested party to this transaction. To them it has associations and bearings which are incalculably important.

(a) Their right to bring the child is dependent on a moral qualification within themselves, viz. their faith. "The *unbelieving* husband is sanctified by the *believing* wife else were your

children unclean, but now are they holy." The very act, therefore, of baptism, if it be performed in an intelligent manner, suggests the enquiry, Am I a child of God? Have I that faith which secures a "holy" child? — the child whom God incorporates into His visible kingdom? If not, what do I here? Without faith it is impossible to please God. At the very outset, therefore, he is thrown upon the work of self-examination, and is led to a renewed self-consecration. In this spirit the offering is made with the earnest and confiding hope that the God of providence and grace will accept the lamb.

(b) In the next place, the faith and resolutions of the parent touching the child, are eminently scriptural and salutary. It is by nature impure. It belongs to a fallen race. It must be born again by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is therefore given to Him for purification. Deeply imbued with a sense of its depravity, the faithful parent solemnly promises to watch and guide his offspring with the tenderest care. He will cultivate his own mind and heart, that he may do justice to the child. He will order his own conduct and conversation with a view to molding its character properly. He will govern with prayerful consideration and solicitude, withholding whatever may be injurious, and giving whatever its highest interests may demand. Often his own deficiencies will be matter of deep penitence and humiliation before the Lord; and the resolution of renewed fidelity will be formed. Here there is a guarantee of no small value that the child will grow up under influences of a hallowed nature.

(c) The faith of the parent touching the child's relations to God are eminently important. It belongs to Him — is only lent to us for a heavenly training. The Most High has an interest in it, watches over it, marks parental faithfulness or unfaithfulness, sympathizes with parental anxieties, and will crown the efforts of parental love with His blessing. This again is an invaluable impression made by this ordinance in the early life of our children, and kept alive either by the recollection of what we have done, or witnessing the same thing as done by others. These loved ones are not mine. They belong to God. Jesus claims them for His own. Out of love to them, and in sympathy with the parental yearnings and Christian faith which he has planted in my heart, He will aid the work committed to my hands. He will touch my heart, to wake it up to fidelity — will touch their hearts when and as I cannot touch them — will hear my prayer; water the seed sown, make my work successful, so that with the children He has given me I shall be gathered to heaven at last. Such a faith as this is valuable beyond expression. It is fostered by the ordinance of baptism, without which it is not commonly found.

(d) And then again the faith of the parent touching the Church is of great value as set forth in this ordinance. She is the foster-mother of himself, and his fond recollections of his own hallowed training are kept alive. What he has received by divine grace through the Church leads him to expect the same blessings for his offspring. The children thus incorporated into her, are to be trained for her welfare and according to her laws. He will avail himself of all her facilities, study her peace, and labor for her prosperity. His children will be kept within her pale, taken with him to the house of God, taught to sing the songs of Zion, and to look upon her with filial regard. Thus his own heart is comforted, the Church has in him, and prospectively in his family, just the spirit which her welfare demands, and the chil-

dren secure that example and those influences which are adapted to fit them both for earth and for heaven.

An institution which thus comes to the help of anxious parents, binds up their minds to a high sense of obligation in all these respects, and, at the same time, animates them with such principles and hopes, cannot be over-estimated. The effect it must have on the parents, and through them on the rising generation and on the prosperity of Zion, are incalculable. As a permanent institution of the Church it was intended no doubt to excite and encourage parents in the most important work ever entrusted to human hands, and to secure for the young the utmost possible care and the best possible influences in the molding period of their lives. In this view alone, enough is seen to vindicate the divine wisdom and goodness in appointing the ordinance. Would that it were understood and appreciated in all its bearings by the party under consideration. It speaks in emphatic language as an expression of faith; and it pledges them most solemnly to the child, to God, and to His Church. Are these pledges redeemed? Do your children, in your example and counsels, enjoy the benefit of such a training? Does the Searcher of hearts witness your fidelity, as He looks down on your family? Does the Church, of which you are a member, see that you are dealing with Christ's lambs, as you have promised, as they require, and as she has a right to expect at your hands? Search and see: and the Lord grant you grace to be faithful!

II. The next party named in connection with this ordinance is the Church — the particular church with which the parents are connected, and then the entire flock of Christ. Her interest and responsibility are scarcely inferior to that of the parents. Her relations are as manifold, and almost as solemn — pertaining to the child, to the parents, and to God. . . . As to the child, in this public and solemn manner, through her appointed agents, she receives it into Christ's visible kingdom, pledges to it and to Him her prayers, counsels, sympathies, aid, and oversight. The baptized are not foreigners, but adopted children, in whom she has the deepest concern, and upon whom she promises that all the benefits she can confer shall be cheerfully and faithfully bestowed. She will see that parents discharge their duties and aid them in the same. The ordinances of the gospel must be afforded to her lambs. The healthful influences of a scriptural education and training must be provided. In conjunction with parents, she will pray and labor for the young that they may be led on to maturity, to intelligence, to respectability, to piety, to usefulness, and to heaven. To this end every possible provision for good and safeguard against danger will be made. Surely, this is no inconsiderable blessing to the rising generation, who find here a double guarantee that their culture shall not be neglected.

As to the parents, the Church in this ordinance pledges them her sympathy and assistance in their arduous work. She will combine her faith and importunity with theirs in pleading God's covenant promise. Her influence and example shall be added to theirs in enforcing the teachings of Scripture. Her ministers shall unfold the sacred oracles in the pulpit; enforcing the lessons of the nursery. They shall visit the little ones at home, and in the Sabbath-school, to interest and instruct them in the great truths pertaining to God and to themselves, to time and to eternity. To the humble earnest parent, such co-operation is encouraging and comforting in the highest degree. His own faith is weak, his efforts feeble, his resources limited, his short-comings innumerable;

but here is the whole company of the faithful, appointed of God to help him in his work. Most of them, having children of their own, know how to sympathize with him in his trials. Their faith and prayers accompany and inspire his own. The body of the faithful seems like one great association for mutual assistance in training the young aright. Each individual parent is strengthened by the thought, and she herself is blessed in her heavenly work.

And as to God, to whom the Church is related in this transaction, the posture in which it places her is equally important. She takes under her oversight the lambs of His flock. Her faith takes hold of the divine covenant — "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." Here her hope lies. She lives and is strengthened in this faith as she brings her sons and daughters to the God of Abraham. Here they are. Help us to believe! Show thyself a covenant-keeping God! There she hangs, having anchor-hold on Jehovah. Tear her from this, and where can she rest? How can she hope to live and flourish, if not in and through her own offspring? This has always been the line of her perpetuation — the main channel of her progress. Where will she look, if this be removed? Even those who reject this covenant relation and its seal, yet look to the same source for growth and continuance, i.e. to their offspring, but without a tithe of the confidence and comfort granted to those who lay hold on God as this ordinance teaches. Theirs is but a trembling hope, existing in spite of an unfriendly theory, while ours is a confidence begotten by the truth.

In this aspect then of our subject, the Church as a party, pledging herself to the child, the parents, and to God, we contend that no little importance attaches to infant baptism. It involves and promotes the good of all concerned. Children and parents are blessed by it; while her own interests and the glory of God are promoted. This has always been the view taken by our beloved Zion. Hence her attention to the young. They stand in a peculiar relation to her and she to them. In secular education, therefore, and especially in moral training, she has been unremitting. Her schools, colleges, and seminaries, in all of which religion must be taught and exemplified, are her testimonials in this matter; and the intelligence, stability, sobriety, and moral worth of her children, are at once the fruit, the evidence, and the reward of her fidelity. The Lord has greatly blessed her in her youth, and the world may be challenged to show another such army of cadets as she can produce. This is said, we trust, in a spirit of thankfulness, not of boasting. To Him be all the glory.

Let it inspire us, however, to continued and more vigorous efforts. We have not reached the full measure of duty or of success in this respect. Much remains to be done. A vast improvement may be made. Indeed it may well be doubted whether our Church, as a whole, has yet come to anything like a realizing apprehension of her relations and duties in this matter; and of the mighty power of this lever, by which she may do so much to elevate mankind. In most of our congregations, when children are presented for baptism, the transaction is regarded as mainly one between the parents and God. The Church does not feel herself a responsible party, bound to the parents, the children, and to God, in this solemn ordinance. She excuses herself from her high responsibilities, in the weakness of her faith. To her sinful shortcoming, no doubt it is principally due, that the institution is not more highly and generally esteemed. If it were

made what it was designed and is adapted to be, it could not fail to be appreciated by an admiring world. They would see its suitableness to the very constitution of society, as well as the prosperity of the Church. But more of this in another connection.

III. We come in the next place to the children themselves, the subjects of this ordinance, as a third most deeply interested party. For them especially, i.e. for their good, this ceremony was appointed. In order that we may guard against error here, and exhibit as fully as possible the whole truth on this point, several important questions may be introduced for consideration.

(a) In the first place, is it a regenerating ordinance? So much has been said in modern times about baptismal regeneration that it cannot be out of place to notice the doctrine in this connection. We would notice it with candor; and are therefore constrained to say at the outset, that the doctrine, as held by its advocates, is not commonly understood. They do not attribute to the water itself any regenerating power. Forms of expression may sometimes have been employed which seem to imply this, but that this is the common idea of its advocates we do not believe. They are too sober-minded and sensible, to suppose that a spiritual change is wrought by the mere power of an external application. The most extravagant language used by the fathers implies something added to, or conveyed through the visible element, which does not belong to it inherently. Thus Chrysostom says, "Plain or bare water worketh not in us; but when it hath received the grace of the Holy Spirit, it washeth away our sins." St. Cyril says, "As the water thoroughly heated with fire, burneth as well as the fire, so the waters that wash the body of him that is baptized, are changed into divine power by the working of the Holy Ghost."

Not the water itself, therefore, but some mysterious power conveyed *to* it and then *through* it, works the change in the estimation of these writers. This we believe is the nearest approach to the doctrine of regeneration by water. There probably are some who hold substantially this view at the present time. They consider the ordinance itself mysteriously effective of a spiritual change, but of these, we are persuaded, there cannot be many. Like the Romish dogma of transubstantiation, it contradicts reason, sense, and Scripture, so glaringly that few can believe it unless blinded by ignorance, prejudice, or fanaticism. We will not stop, therefore, to refute it.

The most common and plausible view of baptismal regeneration is, not that there is any mysterious power given to the water, or possessed by the administrator, but that God has bound Himself by covenant with His Church and people, that whenever and wherever this ordinance is properly administered, He changes the heart of the subject by His Holy Spirit. This is certainly a far more rational form of belief than the other; and if it could only be substantiated from Scripture, might well command our cordial reception. But here is the difficulty. The Scriptures do not teach it. Neither promise nor declaration can be found in the Word of God authorizing us to believe that a change of heart is then produced. Nor do facts support this theory. Some indeed may be born again from that hour, or even before, for ought we know, but in the vast majority of cases, subsequent life shows most plainly that regeneration did not take place at baptism. The belief that it did is palpably false, and must be injurious as an article of faith — injurious because untrue, and because the tendency is to beget a superstitious confidence in a mere ceremony, to bring reproach upon the Church of Christ, and

to make both parents and children less careful as to training, and less sensible of their dependence on Divine grace. It is calculated thus to defeat all the ends which this ordinance, rightly understood, is adapted to foster; and must therefore be rejected, as it ever has been in the scriptural judgment of the mass of God's people.

And yet it is more than questionable whether, in the rejection of this unsupported theory, we do not, on the other hand, expect too little in connection with this ordinance and the training which it involves. Our faith, it is to be feared, is as much too weak as theirs is too strong. They believe too much, we too little. It is to us a formal and public consecration of our children to God — an expression of our faith in His covenant promise, and an emblematic representation of their need of purification, and of the nature of the Spirit's work. We administer the ordinance in this firm and intelligent conviction; and yet, after it is done, instead of rising to the proper conception and comfort of the deed, we practically regard our children as the children of the devil still. Now we are persuaded that the faith which ought to exist would enable us to say, These children belong to God — have been given to Him in reliance on His covenant promise on my part, and are accepted by Him, in accordance with His own engagement. The seal of His covenant has been applied to them. We are training them, not for the world, but for His glory; and such is our confidence in Him, that while we cannot and could not presume to limit Him as to time, place, or manner of their conversion, yet we firmly believe in the reality of His covenant, and that after using them for His glory here, He will bring them into His heavenly kingdom at last.

Such a faith, with the intelligent zeal and faithful training which it inspires, would not often be disappointed. The God of the fathers, in accordance with it, will be the God of our children. We fail to make the most of our covenant privileges if we do not come up to some such height of Christian confidence. Let not the people of God be frightened by extravagance or error on the one hand, to throw away what legitimately belongs to them on the other. Baptism does not regenerate — is not always accompanied or followed by regeneration. We cannot dictate to God when, or on whom, this sovereign gracious change shall be wrought. He has tied Himself to no ceremonial observances, nor has He limited Himself to any succession of consecrated hands through which His grace shall flow. Nevertheless, obedience to His will and faith in His promise is not a vain thing. Giving our offspring to Him, we believe in His faithfulness who hath promised. In this spirit we pray, wait, look, hope for the manifestation of a renewed life. Nor shall His people be disappointed. It will appear in due time, though when the change was wrought no one may be able to say. The wind bloweth where it listeth — but it will blow upon these dry bones sooner or later, and they shall live. We have in the covenant promise of God to His people and to their seed almost a tangible rock on which to stand.

(b) But if baptism neither regenerates, nor is uniformly accompanied by regeneration, what does it accomplish? This question has been anticipated in part, but deserves a more specific notice. Would that the young themselves might understand and consider the answer to be given! Our formal reply is fourfold. It brings the child into connection with the visible Church, puts it under the care of God's people, and binds it to walk according to the tenor of her teaching. It brings the Church into

visible connection with the child. She adopts it into her family, and assumes a solemn obligation to watch over it, and by every possible influence to help it forward to usefulness and to heaven. It brings the parents into public covenant with God, with His Church, according to which He engages to be their God and the God of their seed after them. These are its direct practical bearings, so far as the children are concerned. It is the nearest thing that can be done towards bringing them directly to Christ, to be taken into His arms and blessed. It is the strongest, warmest effort of parental love and faith, to bring them into heaven itself. They are brought into the kingdom here, that they may grow up under its laws, familiar with its doctrines and usages, acknowledging its head, advancing its interests, and finally may be transplanted into the enclosure on high.

Have the young themselves no interest or responsibility in all this? Though at the time of their consecration they may be unconscious agents, yet it is to them an all-important fact that they have been given to God. Believing parents could not, would not, dared not do less than consecrate them to Him. They are therefore members of His Church — minors, indeed, but members as truly as they are members of the state. The Lord Himself has made them such by His covenant with His people. They cannot dissolve this connection, nor shake off the responsibility which it involves. The eye of God is fixed upon them with parental tenderness. He expects them under this hallowed nurture to act a worthy part. If they are disposed to do right, they are thereby furnished with every facility. If they are inclined to go astray, He hereby throws every possible hindrance in their pathway to ruin; and furnishes every influence to turn and draw them from destruction. If they will perish, therefore, they must break over the enclosures which God Himself has placed around them, and consequently must go down to ruin with a fearfully aggravated load of guilt resting upon them. Would that they understood their position, and would act the part of wisdom! As they grow up in the commonwealth of the redeemed, let them yield to its laws a wholesome obedience. Thus shall they enjoy its highest favors, and bestow upon the world the truest benefits.

(c) One other important question in connection with this party remains to be noticed. . . . Why is it that so many of our children grow up within the pale of the Church without embracing the Savior? As a practical question, the mind both of ministers and parents is often anxiously directed to this inquiry. Several explanatory answers may be given. One is, that we fail to take clear and strong hold of the covenant of God with us and with them, under which we believe them to stand. We neither realize it ourselves, nor press it properly on their minds. God's precious covenant, on which we profess to rest, dwindles into a mere ceremonial observance. Hence the measure of good which this ordinance was designed to convey is not secured. Our unbelief is the cause of failure. God does not work for us as He would for believing Israel; for without faith it is impossible to please Him. We do not work for our children as we would with a realizing faith, for the motive power is gone when this is wanting. They do not yield to gospel influences as they would if we were full of the spirit of Abraham. This is one explanation.

Another is, that our practical training of them, consequent upon this want of a realizing faith, is highly defective. We ask the attention of the reader to this point. After consecrating them to God, in reliance upon His covenant, we still take it for granted

that they are not His — that they are to grow up in sin, the children of the adversary, until some future and definite time, when they may be brought under conviction for sin, and led to embrace the Savior. Hence they grow up, not looking to God as their Father, to Jesus as their Redeemer, to the Spirit of holiness as their Sanctifier, and to the Church as their home; but with a feeling that they are aliens, and God an enemy. In other words, we put them outside of the kingdom by our treatment, while yet we hold them to be in it according to our theory. We constantly assume that their first actions and emotions of a moral nature will be evil and only evil, instead of believing that by Divine grace, and in the faithfulness of the Most High to His own engagements, they will have true spiritual exercises from childhood. Hence, as they come to years of maturity, they stand aloof, waiting, as it were, for God to enlist them — waiting to *get religion*, as the phrase goes, instead of feeling that they belong to God, and are to love and serve Him from the beginning.

To our apprehension there is a practical error here, of great perniciousness. Having given our children to God, in accordance with His appointment, we ought not to feel or act as though it were a nullity. To our faith, the presumption should be that they are the Lord's, and that as they come to maturity they will develop a life of piety. Instead of waiting, therefore, for a period of definite conviction and conversion, we should rather look for, and endeavor to call out, from the commencement of moral action, the emotions and exercises of a renewed heart. Teach them to hate sin, to think and speak of God as a Father, and of Christ as a Savior. Let them be taught to say, We love the Lord, we love and trust in Jesus, we love His people, we love the Church with all her doctrines and ordinances, we hate sin in all its forms, and are determined, by God's help, that we will not be its slaves. And let us expect that, as they come to years of deliberate action, their lives will correspond to this teaching. Is this too much to expect of our covenant God? Is this presumption? Is this less pleasing to God than a spirit of unbelief, which nullifies His word? We think not. It may be a strong faith is required for such a course, but it is a legitimate faith, well pleasing to God, comforting to ourselves, and most blessed in its bearing upon our children. If we can but exercise it, by His help, vast numbers of our children will be sanctified from the womb, and will indeed grow up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and will stand like olive plants around our table and our dwelling.

This is evidently the course of things contemplated by our Church. "Children born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the Church; and are to be taught to read and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And, when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have a sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and their privilege to come to the Lord's supper" (*Directory for Worship*, chap 9. sec. 1). This is the true view of their position, and indicates the proper mode of dealing with them. They are the Lord's, unless they show by their conduct that they reject His covenant. Let us, therefore, cultivate a stronger faith, and adopt a corresponding treatment. We are persuaded that much harm is done to the young and to the Church by the common failure of Christian

parents in this respect. Adult conversions among her own children are not so much what the Church ought to look for, as sanctification from early life. This corresponds both with the nature of the covenant and with the nature of spiritual life, which is a gradual development. As a matter of fact, we are persuaded that many of those who make a profession of religion at a particular time, have been born again, and growing under Divine influences long before. The life is only more clearly manifested to themselves and others about the time of their professed conversion. It has existed perhaps from childhood — the unseen fruit of this covenant, of which baptism is the seal.

If these views be correct, how important is the period of childhood in a Christian family — how wonderful the wisdom and goodness of God in putting the plastic mind of the young under influences so well calculated to mold it; and how responsible, yea, how God-like, the work of every parent and the work of the Church! Here truly is the hope of the world. If the Church will but wake up to the great truth that she is the school of Christ, in which the world is to be educated through the natural and simple way of training up her children in the way they should go, a glorious day of prosperity will soon dawn upon her. But if she undervalue this training, and attempts to reach her proper end in some other way, let nothing but disappointment be expected. The Lord will show that His appointed agency cannot be harmlessly neglected.

IV. The only remaining party mentioned in connection with this ordinance is Jehovah Himself, the triune God. We have seen the relations and duties of the other parties, and throughout the discussion have taken for granted that God has intimate relations to each. But let us with reverence and delight look at them more specifically. Here, in fact, is the foundation of the whole matter. If it be not true that God is a party, the whole transaction is unmeaning and useless. We have nothing, if we cannot take hold of Him as engaging, in a most kindly, condescending manner, to perform His part of the covenant. It is pleasant and profitable, therefore, to consider Him as related to the parents, to the children, and to His Church in this transaction.

(a) To the first of these, He says expressly, "The promise is to you and to your children." "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." This is equivalent to saying, "What I am to you I will be to them. As I have chosen you, called you, loved you, accepted and blessed you, so will I do to them." What a comfort this to the anxious parent! His heart swells with heavenly emotions as he says, like David, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come." This hope is the legitimate resting-place of every pious parent. We are the seed of Abraham and heirs of the promises, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

(b) Not only to the parents, however, but to the children also, the Lord stands peculiarly related. They are His, in a different sense from all others, even before they have reached years of maturity. "Now are they holy;" i.e. consecrated to Him by His own act of incorporation. By His engagement they shall have a place in His vineyard, the culture of His ordinances, the restraints of His law, the incentives of His truth, the movings of His Spirit,

the watchfulness of His ministers, the repeated calls of His gospel, the open door of access to Him at all times, and the increased readiness to bless for the parents' sake. Over them the Great Shepherd will spread His sheltering hands, and into them infuse His Spirit. They are not like the children of the heathen and the stranger. Some of their advantages may indeed be enjoyed by others who dwell around them, but it is only incidentally as it were; while for them the very design of the economy which He has adopted was to provide these blessings. His regard for them and His fidelity to His covenant, are manifested in that He has actually secured them for the children of the faithful. Let them remember the obligations under which they are brought by this beneficent arrangement.

(c) To the Church, also, He looks in the same condescending manner. She lives by His grace. She is dear to Him as the apple of His eye. He provides for her peace and perpetuity, and for the welfare of all her families in the arrangement under consideration. The natural yearnings of her heart draw her towards her offspring. She is permitted to cherish and follow out these yearnings to their fullest scope. As in the domestic circle, her children are in a great degree her charge. In her efforts to take hold of Jehovah's promise, and to train them up for His glory, the Lord will smile upon her. He gave her the covenant with its seal, and all that the ordinance comprehends for her encouragement. In observing its conditions, she has blessed work, by which she is enlarged, perpetuated, and comforted, while the children in her families are trained for usefulness and for heaven. Surely the value of these enlargements cannot be over-estimated. The Lord is faithful; and having bound Himself thus to the three parties before mentioned, the parents, the children, and the Church, He will fulfil all He has spoken. He is pleased with the confidence they all may repose in Him, and will show that it is not misplaced.

Enough has now been said, we trust, to show the practical bearing and value of this ordinance. In every aspect it is incalculably beneficial. Christian parents are incited, animated, encouraged, and comforted in their arduous work. The Church, through this channel, is abundantly blessed. Through it she has hold upon her families, her members and her lambs on the one hand, and on her God on the other. She holds them, and holds to Him, while by His divine Spirit He preserves and sanctifies through His grace. The children, too, have every possible influence that may tend to good, with every possible safeguard against evil. All the great ends and interests of the individual, the family, the Church, the state, and the world, are promoted by it. God's glory and man's good are unitedly secured. Instead, therefore, of undervaluing this ordinance, which seems to have been the tendency in modern times, we ought to appreciate it more highly. It opens up to us a most deeply interesting view of the divine economy through the Church, and should direct both our faith and our efforts in accordance with the declaration "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

## Letters

### The Blue Banner

Sirs:

Thank you for The Blue Banner. It is a pleasure to read a publication that is zealous for glorifying our Lord and His infallible Word. I have found your editorial content to be stimulating and thought-provoking even when I have not agreed with your conclusions. Keep up the good work!

I was interested to read Bohlin's review [Dec. 92 issue] of Philip Johnson's book Darwin on Trial. As Bohlin points out, the book does a masterful job of exposing the theory of evolution for what it is: religious dogma masquerading as "objective" science.

However, there is one point that Bohlin failed to make which is of importance to Reformed believers. While Johnson is effective in his polemic against evolution, he does not embrace wholeheartedly the Biblical alternative. Although he never completely clarifies his own position, he does criticize "scientific creationists" and gives at least implicit approval to a theistic evolutionary viewpoint. Such comments reveal a lack of commitment to the presupposed authority of God's word, an authority which extends not only to science but to all other academic disciplines.

The bottom line is that while Johnson's exposure of the religious nature of evolution is devastating, he leaves the reader wondering what the alternative may be. In fact God has made that alternative clear in the pages of Scripture. Nevertheless, the book makes a valuable contribution to the contemporary debate over the origins of man.

Steve Herreid  
Grapevine, TX

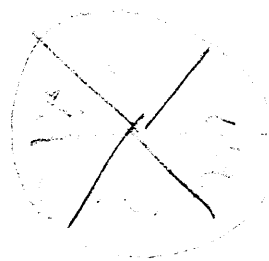
## Blue Banner News

You may have noticed we shortened the first volume of *The Blue Banner*, and are starting January 1993 with volume 2 #1. Also, for those of you who use computers and link up to bulletin boards, the Blue Banner has a board which is now accessible nationally via NewLife Christian Network. Numerous text files are available for download, as well as various computer utilities. Interactive conferences are ongoing on subjects ranging from abortion to creation, ministry, computers in ministry, theology, Bible, church history, etc. The local number for the bulletin board is 214-475-8393.

## The Blue Banner

First Presbyterian Church  
8210 Schrade  
Rowlett, TX 75088

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125 STA 61 9  
MR. G. P. HUTCHINSON  
3604 DOVER ROAD  
GAINSVILLE GA 30507

- Charles Hodge, *A Practical View of Infant Baptism*, p. 7-11.
- Presbyterian Bibliography: George Gillespie, p. 3-5